

The Highland Council

Finance, Housing and Resources Committee – 26 February
2014

Agenda Item	29
Report No	FHR/ 51/14

Mental Health & Wellbeing Grant Funds

Report by the Head of Policy and Reform

Summary

This report seeks Members' approval for Mental Health & Wellbeing grants to The Conservation Volunteers, Inverness Samaritans and Caithness Samaritans.

1. Background

1.1 This paper presents three grant applications, each of which takes the total grant to the applicants over £10,000, and so require Committee consideration.

The applicants are:

- The Conservation Volunteers Scotland, who have applied for a third year's funding of £7,500
- Inverness Samaritans, who have applied for two years' funding of £6,000 per year
- Caithness Samaritans who have applied for two years' funding of £4,000 per year

1.2 Both the TCV Mental Health Green Gym and the Samaritans support the Council's Programme commitment that 'In developing our care systems the Council will implement the Fairer Highland Plan including the general and specific duties of the Equality Act (2010), ensuring that people are treated fairly and with respect'.

1.3 The Green Gym operates using a community growing model which supports the Programme commitment to 'ensure the provision of allotments and the maintenance of green spaces and public parks across the Highlands and encourage various schemes such as community growing'.

1.4 Samaritans' service also supports the Council's programme commitment to 'work so that adults who may be at risk of harm are better supported and protected'.

2 The Conservation Volunteers

2.1 The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) run Green Gyms in Inverness and Dingwall. A Green Gym provides structured activities in a natural environment, with benefits for the health of participants as well as for the environment. The Inverness Mental Health Green Gym is a three-year project to evaluate the mental health benefits to participants. The Council has previously funded two years of the three year programme.

2.2 The initial application was made in 2012, for three years' funding of £7,500 per year. In 2013, Members approved the second year's funding and at the same time agreed in principle to award the third year's funding (£7,500) subject to evaluation of the benefit of the grant. The project report in appendix A includes an interim evaluation of the effectiveness of the Green Gym after 2 years of the 3-year project. The key point from this evaluation is that 100% of support workers see benefits for their clients in attending the Green Gym and would expect to see further benefits from its continuation.

2.3 The funds are used to provide tools and materials, plants, trees, transport for participants, protective clothing and part funding for a volunteer development officer.

3. Samaritans

3.1 The two Samaritans branches in Highland, based in Inverness and Caithness, have applied for grants to support training which will enable them to maintain their service availability and recruitment. This will lead to an extension of their service hours and so provide more comprehensive support for people in distress and with suicidal feelings in Highland. The Council has provided similar funding to both Samaritans branches in each of the past five years.

3.2 Samaritans delivers crisis helpline services to people experiencing emotional distress and especially those with suicidal thoughts and behaviours. They also offer outreach services to communities across the Highlands. The two Highland branches, in Inverness and Caithness, actively support and contribute to the suicide prevention work led by the Council. This is part of our Mental Health Inclusion work which was presented to Members at the Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee in December 2013. The Council-led suicide prevention strategy has supported the 20.5% reduction in suicide since it was established 10 years ago. At the beginning of this strategy, Highland was considered to be significantly above the Scottish average and for the past 3 years this has no longer been the case. Services delivered by the two Samaritans branches have been key in achieving this.

3.3 In Highland, Samaritans provides its support services by telephone, email, SMS Text messaging and in face-to-face sessions. They also run outreach services in remote locations. Each year, support is provided to 15,000 service users between the two branches. Grant applications have been received for £6,000 and £4,000 per year for two years (2013/14 and 2014/15), respectively for the Inverness and Caithness branches.

4. Implications

4.1 Resource implications

Funding is available in the Chief Executive's Service budget for discretionary funding to third sector groups and all grants in this paper have been budgeted for.

4.2 Legal and risk implications

There are no legal or risk implications arising from this application.

4.3 Equalities implications

Disability is a legally protected characteristic in the Equality Act (2010) and includes mental ill health. The Council's support of these applications will help to demonstrate that the Council is advancing equality of opportunity for people with mental ill health, as part of its general duty under the Act.

4.4 Climate change implications

The environmental benefits of Green Gyms have a positive impact on climate change through increased living biomass providing a net carbon sink and through some local food production, reducing food miles.

5. Recommendation

5.1 Members are asked to agree the grant awards of:

- £7,500 to The Conservation Volunteers Scotland to support the third and final year of the Mental Health Green Gym.
- £6,000 for Inverness Samaritans in each of 2013/14 and 2014/15, to support training and recruitment of volunteers and
- £4,000 for Caithness Samaritans in each of 2013/14 and 2014/15, to support training and recruitment of volunteers.

Designation: Head of Policy and Reform

Date: 12th February 2014

Author: Keith Walker, Policy Officer – Health Improvement (01463 702247)



Mental Health Green Gym Project Report 2013

Introduction

The Conservation Volunteers and Occupational Therapists from New Craig's Hospital have worked together during this year to carry out Green Gym sessions with clients from new Craig's hospital and clients with additional support needs from the wider community. The Conservation Volunteers were funded to run **seventeen** outdoor sessions and **four** community outreach sessions. The Conservation Volunteers have been attending the Green Gym fortnightly to ensure that sessions stretched out throughout the year. **Sixteen** of these sessions have been run so far, with some indoor wildlife related activities planned for over the winter.

This year there have been a total of **44 different volunteers** who have attended the Mental Health Green Gym sessions this year. These people have either been referred to the Green Gym through New Craig's or seen the publicity for the sessions.

Group Session Activities

The group have been working on a variety of community gardens in the Inverness area. These have been Newcraig's Hospital garden, Hawthorn Project (Fairfield Road) and the Corbett Centre (Merkinch).

The clients work with their support workers to carry the range of activities. Each week they can choose something different or do the same task as they did the week before. Activities that the group have been undertaking include:

- Weeding
- Planting
- Digging out flowerbeds
- Painting
- Path creation
- Tool use
- Plant maintenance

Group logistics

The group officially starts at 1pm and runs until 3pm. Some clients arrive later depending on their needs. We carry out work for approximately 1 hour and then have a tea and coffee break for 20 minutes. This allows the clients and support workers to socialise with each other which creates links between participants. Some of the participants have started bringing biscuits to the group to share with everyone.

Feedback Results

Feedback forms were given out to clients and support workers to measure the success of the Mental Health Green Gym. These are the results:

Question	Yes	No
Do you like the Green Gym?	100%	0
Do you like meeting new people?	100%	0
Would you like to keep coming to the Green Gym?	100%	0

Question	Yes	No	Comment
Does the client talk about the Green Gym?	67%	33%	➤ The client talks about the activities and people who are there.
Does the client appear to enjoy the Green Gym?	100%		➤ They talk about looking forward to the Green Gym
Is there anything that the client does not enjoy about the Green Gym?	20%	80%	➤ Does not like other supported persons being too loud- but this is not a problem as he can work in different parts of the garden.
Does the client have a favourite activity at the Green Gym?	100%		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tidying up ➤ Likes moving things around the garden ➤ The client enjoys all aspects of the Green Gym ➤ The client loves watering the plants, painting and sawing
Has the client appeared anxious prior or following the Green Gym?	80%	20%	➤ Client can appear anxious if someone is too loud
Does the client understand the leaflet about the Green Gym?	67%	33%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use of symbols are helpful ➤ Use of symbols are helpful ➤ The client refers to the

			Green Gym leaflet
Has the client coped with the variety of locations? And do you think the client has benefited from the variety?	100%		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Different symbols for different locations has helped ➤ The clients with autism benefit from different locations to avoid a fixed mindset
Overall do you think the client has benefited from participating in the Green Gym?	100%		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Good exercise, and good experience of working with others ➤ The client has benefited from the Green Gym both physically and socially
Do you think your client would benefit from continued attendance at the Green Gym?	100%		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The client has benefited on a social level

Conclusion

Every client that has participated in the Mental Health Green Gym has stated that they enjoy coming along to it and that they would like to keep attending. Every support worker interviewed stated that they believed their client would benefit from continued attendance with the Green Gym.

The Mental Health Green Gym not only benefits the clients that come along and participate but also the community at large. The group undertakes work on visible local sites and improves these greenspaces for the community. The Mental Health Green Gym encourages positive projection of groups of people with additional support needs and mental health problems. The participants are seen undertaking valuable work in the community which creates a positive projection of this group.

The Green Gym also gives participants the chance to socialise and mix with different people. It provides a safe environment where people can talk to each other and make new friends.

Quotes to support the Green Gym:

Clients:

The Green gym is a 'relaxing place to go'

The Green Gym 'makes me happy'

'The Green Gym is a nice place to work and meet new faces'

'I like talking to everyone'

Support Workers:

'[My client]... gets so much benefit from the Green Gym'

'[My client]... benefits both physically and socially from the Green Gym'

'[My client]...talks about looking forward to the Green Gym'

'All supported people I work with at the Green Gym appear to enjoy the activities offered by the Green Gym'

'[The Green Gym is]...good exercise, gets them out in the fresh are, doing meaningful activity'

Katy Green: Volunteer Development Officer- November 2013