



Tales from the TSI Network

Supporting Volunteering For All

All across Scotland

raising mental health awareness – CVS Inverclyde



As part of Scottish Mental Health Week, volunteer development officers Catriona MacLeod and Valerie Campbell wanted to create a fun, fundraising event, involving a variety of volunteers in the planning, including people with mental health issues.

While the team already knew some volunteers, others were referred from the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH). Event proceeds would go to SAMH. The challenge was to ensure that the concept would work and there was ample motivation for this group of volunteers. Some faced a range of barriers due to their mental health, which could impact upon their involvement at any time. Would they be able to get the show on the road?

How CVS Inverclyde has included volunteers with mental health experience

Catriona and Valerie came up with the concept of an Escape Room - a physical adventure game in which players solve a series of fun puzzles using clues to complete goals and 'escape the room' within a set time. A fictional harbour setting was recreated in the historic Dutch Gable House in Greenock, with a theme of bygone days, sailing ships and people awaiting passage to Canada. Participants would have an hour within the mock waiting room to solve a variety of puzzles and collect stamps on their passport, before deciphering the final clue to gain the key to escape.

As this was a short-term project with no long-term commitment, the team were able to ensure ample flexibility. Although a planning meeting took place every two weeks, there was no pressure on volunteers to contribute or attend at any specific time, particularly crucial for anyone living with mental health issues and vital to the success of the project. If people were unable to attend, Catriona and Valerie would maintain discrete contact by email to ensure everything was OK with them.



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With the volunteers on board, preparations began in June. The team made sure that tasks would be fun, not onerous, carefully marrying roles to the skills of each volunteer, including an artist, a photographer and a person who loved to create puzzles.

Thanks to their approach, Catriona and Valerie experienced no problems. The volunteers were fully engaged in the activities, doing everything asked of them and turning up when they said they would.

When it came to the event itself, held during the October school holidays, they attracted a wide range of participants from families to corporate teams all joining in the fun. Everyone came up trumps, doing their bit to ensure delivery of a successful event, raising funds for SAMH and having a ball together in the process.

Catriona and Valerie are very proud of their volunteers' achievements and can see that **the project has left them far more assured in themselves. One volunteer has already returned to work and others continue to do well, each benefitting from their enjoyable Escape Room experience.**



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volunteering in Inverclyde
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Voluntary Action Scotland is the national
network of Third Sector Interfaces
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