

Tales from the TSI Network

# Supporting Volunteering For All

All across Scotland

*creating new volunteering opportunities – TSI Moray*



Finding, enabling and creating volunteering roles that previously didn't exist is a key part of the work of Sue Davies, Third Sector and Volunteering Development Officer with Elgin-based TSI Moray. One young lady with special needs who came along with her employment mentor, would require a carefully tailored role to meet her requirements.

For some people, particularly those with pronounced barriers such as a disability, language, learning or as an

ex-offender, opportunities might be harder to access, or might not even exist. However, TSI Moray is not one to let any potential hurdle stand in its way.

## How TSI Moray has helped

TSI Moray already has close to 300 volunteering opportunities at any one time throughout the region, offering a wide variety of placements. There is everything from mentoring to driving, cat fostering to jam making -- something for everyone you would imagine, yet the team are working to develop new roles, with VIO's, particularly for people who might need a bit more help to achieve the right kind of match.

This doesn't happen immediately and can take time – more weeks than days and can mean meeting with the volunteer more than once. Sue says the role of employment mentors has also been key, as they often provide the initial weeks of supported volunteering. This ensures a more successful placement not prone to failure and makes it far easier for organisations to say 'yes' to volunteers needing a bit more hands-on support.



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Sue takes a person-centred approach, ensuring flexibility as she creates bespoke volunteer placements, often segmenting roles if the person is unable to carry out all elements normally asked of the position. Such was the case with a young disabled woman who came to the TSI with her employment mentor. She was 30 and had never worked or volunteered before. She was ‘fed up’ going to her day centre and wanted to do something much more with her life. Together, they worked on new roles that stemmed directly from the young woman’s passions – advocacy and being with young children.

The two were signposted to the new advocacy service in Moray. They were honest about their own limitations in supporting her, and although her employment mentor could volunteer with her for the initial 6 weeks, this would eventually end. The two came back to the tsi to see if a volunteer buddy could be found for her to volunteer with – to help her with her keyboard and some office tasks that were more physically difficult.

The tsi then brought everyone together to ‘drill down’ the role for her and her buddy. The local Foodbank, who had successfully developed a volunteer buddying model, was also brought in to support the Advocacy Service to learn how volunteer buddying can be done. This was instrumental in helping the Advocacy Service understand it was all do-able.

At the same time, The tsi contacted a nursery very near the young woman’s home, asking about a more bespoke volunteer role, and suggesting the possibility that the young woman read to the children. The logistics were worked out -- the times, the turning radius of her wheelchair etc., Two weeks later, she was introduced to the nursery class.

In the library, she read a story to them. They listened. After the story, the manager asked the class, do you notice anything different about our new person? To which a boy replied, “Yes, she’s brand new.’

This young woman who had previously never volunteered before, is now volunteering with two organisations. These are volunteer roles that did not exist 6 months ago.



## creating new volunteering opportunities – TSI Moray

As well as facilitating introductions, a real strength of the TSI is the continuity it can give to a **volunteer**. The relationship with the employment mentor has concluded, but the relationship with the tsi and VIO continues. With Sue tightly defining roles for this young woman, she helped unlock her aspirations by creating placements where she feels comfortable. Sue sees volunteering as the ultimate tool to capacity building. People like this young woman take control of their own lives - barriers are broken and stronger communities are built in the process.

The VIO's have realised that they can say yes – if support, particularly in the initial stage, is given to them. The role of volunteer buddying – volunteers helping other more vulnerable volunteers to actually volunteer, works -- and it allows VIO's to consider such roles, particularly if they do not have volunteer co-ordinators to offer the kind of time and support that is required.

Using a person centred approach to develop more bespoke volunteering roles is working with other volunteers – from people who are new to Scotland and learning English, to young people who are experiencing anxiety, to people whose lives have changed dramatically due to illness or disability.

**It starts with one placement at a time, but it is slowly changing the volunteering landscape in Moray to a more accessible one.**



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