

Volunteer Centre Manchester – At Last!

Volunteer Centre Manchester is now open for business. Development Worker Jen Halfpenny came into post in early November and Volunteer Centre Manager Mark Pritchard coming into post mid December.

The Volunteer Centre will champion volunteering within the city and promote good practice to organisations which involve volunteer. The Centre is based in the MACC offices on Swan Street, part of the redevelopment of MACC as the lead infrastructure body for Manchester's voluntary and community sector.

The Centre aims to become accredited through Volunteering England by completing Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation alongside other centres in Greater Manchester. This Volunteering England standards aim to bring continuity in delivering the six core functions of a Volunteer Centre in their local area. These are:

- Brokerage
- Developing volunteering opportunities
- Marketing volunteering
- Good practice development
- Strategic development of volunteering
- Policy response and campaigning

If your organisation works in Manchester and involves volunteers we encourage you to get in touch with us to register with the Volunteer Centre. This is straight forward and can be done online (details at the end of this article.) Jen is happy to come out and visit you at your organisation to gain a better understanding of your need for volunteers and how your organisation operates. We can also offer support and advice to look at developing new roles, alongside a health check of volunteer roles which remain unfilled or which have poor retention rates.

We will be redeveloping our existing volunteering website within Manchester Community Central and volunteering opportunities will be advertised widely across social media, Do-it.org and discussed in one to one interviews with potential volunteers.

We will be offering "Introduction to Volunteering sessions" to local people considering volunteering and a selection of local opportunities. These events and other outreach drop-in events will be held at local community venues and allow potential volunteers to make informal enquiries and arrange private one to one appointments. These sessions enable us to put together individual volunteer plans and allow us to find the most suitable volunteer vacancies.

In order to promote and develop good practice, we will be working with the Volunteering Network to set up a Volunteer Co-ordinators Forum early in 2012. This will bring together co-ordinators, both paid and unpaid from a variety of organisations. This Forum will be a chance to share good practice, dispel myths and offer peer support. If you are interested in getting involved in the first forum meeting please indicate on the organisation registration form below.

The launch of the Volunteer Centre in Manchester is an exciting opportunity and comes as a result of a lot of hard work by a wide range of people. We'd like to take this opportunity to express our admiration for the perseverance and enthusiasm of all the people involved: Lynne Kent at GMCVO's Greater Manchester Volunteering project, Alex Fairweather, Martin Duffy and all at GMYN, Lance Bell and the former staff and trustees of MYVP, Claire Evans and all at 4CT and many other individuals who have worked to make this happen during the last few years.

We would also like to thank Manchester City Council for funding this new initiative and their recognition of the contribution of volunteers to a huge range of activities in Manchester.

You can find the organisation and opportunity registration form at: www.manchestercommunitycentral.org.uk/volunteering. If you need any help completing these forms or have any questions please get in touch.

For further information about Volunteer Centre Manchester, contact Jen or Mark, on 0161 834 9823, or email jen@macc.org.uk.