

Voluntary and Community Action

Bossard House . West Street . Leighton Buzzard . Bedfordshire . LU7 1DA

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31 January 2012

Dear Applicant

PROGRAMME COORDINATOR VACANCY

Thank you for your interest in this post. We enclose further details, which we hope will enable you to consider making an application for this key role. With this letter you will find:

- Job Description for Programme Coordinator
- Person Specification
- Summary of Terms and Conditions of Employment
- Sandhills Community Action Project – An Overview
- Equality and Diversity Policy (Extracts for Job Application Pack)
- Job Application Form
- Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

These documents can also be down loaded from our website www.action-centralbeds.org.uk. If you would like us to provide any of this information in large print, on disc or by email, please contact us to discuss your requirements. If you decide to apply for the post, application must be made on our application form and delivered to the address shown above. CVs and faxed or email applications will not be accepted.

In making an application please ensure you **specifically address each of the criteria set out in the Person Specification** as these will be used to short list applicants.

Please **return your completed Application Form by 10.00am Wednesday 22 February 2012**, together with the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. Short listed candidates will be advised of the interview arrangements by telephone and in writing, usually within seven days. Interviews will take place at the Community House on 29 February or 1 March 2012.

If you are an applicant with a disability and believe there will be a need for us to make reasonable adjustments to the interview arrangements, or in the job if you are successful, advising us of this information when you return your application will help us meet these needs.

We will not routinely acknowledge the receipt of applications. If you would like us to acknowledge receipt, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. If you do apply and have not heard from us within three weeks of the closing date you should assume that, on this occasion, you have been unsuccessful. We thank you in advance for your application.

Yours faithfully

John Gelder
Director

Registered Name: Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire . Registered Office as above
Company limited by guarantee . Registered in England No. 5386570 . Registered Charity No. 1108879
Member of the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action . Member of Volunteering England and licensed Volunteer Centre

Volunteering . Development . Training . Funding Advice . Information . Partnerships

Voluntary and Community Action

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Programme Coordinator

Post Holder:

Team: Sandhills Community Action Project

Responsible to: Community House Duty Manager

Responsible for: -

Working Relationships: Director, staff and volunteers
Residents of Sandhills
Southern Leighton Buzzard Partnership and Partners
Equipment, stationery, food and other suppliers
Cleaning and other facilities maintenance contractors

Organisation Purpose: To develop, enable, promote and support local voluntary and community action throughout Bedfordshire.

Team Purpose: To facilitate the development of new social infrastructure within Sandhills by empowering residents to build community capacity, address issues and provide services for themselves, and bring about sustainable change that builds a strong and cohesive community.

Job Purpose: To provide, programme and facilities management support to the Sandhills Community Action Project and be responsible for maintaining information management and administrative systems for the day-to-day running of the Community House.

Key Areas and Functions:

Programme Management: Coordinating a programme of activities and events at the Community House and encouraging its use as a base for developing and delivering social infrastructure activities.

Liaising with service providers and community groups on the organisation and administration of workshops, meetings and events organised at the Community House.

Maintaining effective systems for scheduling events and booking rooms at the Community House.

Maintaining efficient participant booking systems, and informing participants of arrangements for workshops, meetings and events.

Programme Management: Ensuring that attendance registers are prepared; issued to the

(continued)

Community Development Officer, Duty Manager, service provider or community group (as appropriate); are duly completed and that data is logged for future analysis.

Providing logistical support for seminars, meetings, social activities and events held at the Community House, as appropriate.

Information Management: Maintaining a database of users, service providers, partners and opinion formers.

Dealing with telephone, email, written and personal enquiries from residents, voluntary organisations, community groups, public sector agencies and others, as appropriate.

Assisting with the preparation, production and distribution of a community newsletter and other marketing materials for the Community House and community-led activities and events.

Undertaking the distribution, collation, data entry and analysis of data from residents' surveys, focus groups and other feedback.

Organising and administering the storage and retrieval of office documents, correspondence and files.

Managing the project's ICT functions and acting as ICT system administrator.

Finance:

Checking and installing the cash float in the Community Café till at the start of business; cashing up at the end of business and securing cash in the office.

Receiving and accounting for payments associated with activities and events run at the Community House.

Transferring takings from the Community Café and other payments to the Information and Resources Coordinator for banking.

Administering requests for petty cash and periodic reconciliations.

Liaising with the Information and Resources Coordinator on all purchase orders; the payment of invoices, expense claims and sundry cheque requests; and the invoicing of service users.

Facilities Management: Opening up the Community House and checking that the premises have remained safe and secure.

Locking up the Community House in accordance with the locking up procedure and ensuring the premises are safe and secure.

Dealing with the issue and return of keys to, and the briefing of, service providers and community groups given out of hours access.

Setting up rooms and equipment for use by other staff, partners and community groups.

Opening, date stamping and distributing all incoming post and shared emails, and stamping all outgoing post for collection by Royal Mail.

Facilities Management:
(continued)

Ordering the purchase of supplies for the Community Café, as and when required.

Ordering and maintaining stationery, office and domestic supplies, and ensuring these are stocked and serviced appropriately.

Providing access to the Community House Car Park; monitoring its use and reporting with any unauthorised parking by residents.

Liaising with the landlord (or their agent), contractors, suppliers and others in relation to the upkeep of the Community House.

Making arrangements for the maintenance of the premises, fire and burglar alarms, kitchen facilities and equipment, furniture and other equipment.

General:

Supporting the development of Voluntary and Community Action as an organisation that is fully committed to social justice, equality and diversity, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

Promoting and implementing arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Supporting the development of Voluntary and Community Action as an organisation that is fully committed to sustainable development and assessing the environmental impact of community action.

Contributing to the formulation, development and implementation of business plans, strategies, work programmes and quality standards for Voluntary and Community Action and the Sandhills Community Action project.

Undertaking social action research, monitoring, reflection, evaluation and learning to identify the lessons learned from evidence-based practice and outcomes, and inform the future delivery of social infrastructure.

Recording and reporting (in any required format) on the activities and outcomes of the Sandhills Community Action Project.

Informing own practice and professional development through being informed about key issues, reading, networking, training and examining the policy and practice of similar initiatives in Bedfordshire and elsewhere.

Undertaking other tasks and responsibilities appropriate to the role.

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PERSON SPECIFICATION – PROGRAMME COORDINATOR

SKILLS AND ABILITIES	Essential/ Desirable
Good organisational and programme management skills	E
Good numeracy skills, including the ability to reconcile financial records	E
Good interpersonal and customer service skills	E
Ability to communicate confidently and effectively in writing and face to face	E
Ability to work on own initiative, organise own workload and manage time	E
Ability to work flexibly, in partnership with others & contribute positively as part of a team	E
Ability and willingness to set rooms and equipment for a variety of uses	E
Good ICT skills (Microsoft windows based packages, e-mail and internet)	E
KNOWLEDGE	
Understanding and commitment to equal opportunity issues and practice	E
Understanding of community engagement, social isolation and living in a new community	D
EXPERIENCE	
Experience of programme management	E
Experience of creating, updating and maintaining customer records and feedback	E
Experience of managing community facilities or premises	D
Experience of volunteering in a voluntary organisation or community group	D
OTHER ATTRIBUTES	
Educational attainment to A level or similar demonstrable level of ability	E
Ability and openness to adapt style and approach to new situations	E
Commitment to the project outcomes and objectives, and the purpose and function of Voluntary and Community Action.	E

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SUMMARY OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Job Title:	Programme Coordinator
Grade:	5
Term:	Permanent
Hours:	30 hours per week over five days with occasional evening and week-end working by arrangement. There is flexi-time working outside of the core hours of 9.30am – 3.00pm.
Salary:	Local Government Salary Scale Point 18. £17,161 per annum pro rata. Salary for 30 hpw amounts to £13,914.32 pa. Annual cost of living salary increases are usually payable from April. Salaries are paid monthly, by credit transfer, on or before the 27 th of each month.
Travel Expenses:	Travel expenses and a mileage allowance will be paid at the agreed rates.
Pension Payments:	Optional Voluntary Sector Pension Scheme with a 3% or 5% employer contribution matched by an equivalent employee contribution.
Sickness Payments:	One week's pay during the first six months of service, increasing thereafter to four weeks at full pay and a further two weeks at half pay. After two years' service, entitlement increases to eight weeks at full pay and a further four weeks at half pay in any consecutive 12 months, less Statutory Sick Pay.
Location:	<p>The post is based at the Sandhills Community House, 6 Plover Road, Leighton Buzzard LU7 4AW, where staff car and cycle parking is available.</p> <p>The post holder is expected to undertake travel in and around Leighton Buzzard and occasionally elsewhere in Bedfordshire and the UK if required, using their own private transport or public transport. A <i>dashDirect</i> seasonal bus pass is also provided.</p>
Probationary Period:	The appointment is subject to a three month probationary period, though this may be extended if more time is needed to assess suitability for employment, after which there will be a probation appraisal before the appointment is confirmed.
Notice Period:	After appointment is confirmed, one month's notice in writing by employer or employee.
Annual Leave:	25 days holiday per annum and public holidays increasing to 27 days after two years service, plus five days volunteering leave matched with annual leave.
Continuing Professional Development:	All staff are encouraged and required to participate in relevant training to develop their skills and contribute to the development of Voluntary and Community Action.

Voluntary and Community Action

THE SANDHILLS COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT – AN OVERVIEW

Introduction

The voluntary and community sector has an important part to play in the development of new sustainable communities across Luton and southern Central Bedfordshire, an area where substantial housing growth will take place over the next 15 years. This involves advocating, creating and delivering new social infrastructure to address the needs of residents in new communities.

Building new communities is not just about erecting hundreds of new dwellings. It must have regard to the people that will make up those new communities by empowering them to develop and sustain new social networks, activities and community groups needed to shape and create a strong sense of community, place and belonging.

To address these issues, this project was first conceived in August 2003. It has taken eight years to bring it to fruition. The project started in April 2011 and will conclude in April 2016.

Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure is the organisations and activities that enable people to create, run and sustain the voluntary and community groups, volunteering opportunities and social networks required for existing and new communities. It focuses on creating communities of people, complementing work to create communities of place. Social infrastructure includes:

- the voluntary organisations and community groups that operate in new (and existing) communities by providing services and activities
- the communities of interest, place and culture that exist in and across localities
- the volunteers and volunteering opportunities that exist within local volunteer-involving organisations
- the networks of people and organisations that provide contacts, links and association with one another
- opportunities for social action and community engagement
- social interaction between people, neighbours and communities
- capacity building activity to support new community groups
- the recruitment, development and support of community leaders
- opportunities for social inclusion, lifelong learning and community development.

To develop effective Social Infrastructure new communities need:

- a meeting place or a base that is available, welcoming and accessible to all;
- access to start-up funding/small grants to stimulate grass-roots activity and capacity building;
- access to support provided by workers with community development skills;
- a forum or network that is inclusive, open and participatory, which is owned by and accountable to the community (e.g. a community or residents association);
- access to appropriate learning and skills development opportunities to equip people for active involvement and to support their own groups;
- a pool of volunteers, from within the community, prepared to mobilise others and organise community action.

Southern Leighton Buzzard – Its Geography and Growth

The Southern Leighton Buzzard Urban Extension comprises four main sites designated for residential development and two larger sites designated for recreational use. New dwellings have been, are currently being or will be, built on restored sand quarries, apart from a small area of pasture land at Grovebury Farm. The two larger sites designated for recreational use are currently working sand quarries. The area is divided in two by Billington Road. To the east of Billington Road are Pratt's Pit and Pratt's Quarry. To the west of Billington Road are Brickyard Quarry and Grovebury Farm.

The residential development on the eastern side of the urban extension is known by most residents as Sandhills, but some may refer to where they live by way of the 'marketing name' given to the building phase at the time they purchased the property. There is no agreed name for the area and it is possible that local residents may choose to confirm or change the name of the area in the future. We currently refer to the area to the east of Billington Road as Sandhills; this is where the Community Action Project is taking place.

House building commenced in April 2003 and consecutive building phases provide additional properties, as follows:

April 2003 and June 2005 the first 407 new dwellings were built at *Kingswood Park* and *Sandhills* (being site 14, formerly known as Pratt's Pit).

Between May 2005 and December 2008 a further 549 new dwellings were built at *Pages Priory* and *Eden Gardens* (being site 15A, on the adjoining Pratt's Quarry site).

Between March 2009 and June 2011 a further 132 properties were built at *Billington Grove* and *Willow Chase* (Phase 1) (being site 15B, part of the Pratt's Quarry site).

Work on a further 230 properties commenced in January 2011 at *Billington Grove* and *Willow Chase* (Phase 2) (being site 15D, part of the Pratt's Quarry site). Planning permission is currently being sought for a further 68 lakeside properties to be built at *Billington Grove* and *Willow Chase* (Phase 3). These sites are expected to be completed sometime during 2014.

Thereafter (at a time as yet undefined) a further 234 properties will be built on site 15C. Planning and design work for this site commenced in early 2011. A new lower school will also be built on site 15D (at a time as yet undefined).

To the west of Billington Road is Brickyard Quarry, where a further 165 properties will be built, and Grovebury Farm, where a further 527 properties will be built, along with a neighbourhood centre providing retail units, food outlets, health services and a community centre (at times as yet undefined).

With 1088 properties already built the estimated population for the Southern Leighton Buzzard Urban Extension is 2,675 new residents, of which 695 are likely to commit to formal volunteering (through groups, clubs or organisations) each week. Such a population is expected to establish and sustain 14 new community groups.

A further 1,224 dwellings are planned: 532 dwellings on the Pratt's Quarry site (east of Billington Road); 527 dwellings on the Grovebury Farm site (west of Billington Road) and 165 dwellings on the Brickyard Quarry site. This will provide for an additional population of 3,011 new residents, of which 783 are likely to commit to formal volunteering. A further 15 new community groups are expected to be formed.

The table below shows the build up of properties, population, community groups and volunteers as development progresses:

Site	Number of New Dwellings built/to be built	Estimated Population based on household density of 2.46*	NEW Voluntary and Community Organisations based on 5.6 per 1,000 head of population	NEW Volunteers based on 26% of population undertaking formal volunteering**
14 Kingswood Park/Sandhills	407	1000	5	260
15A Pages Priory/Eden Gardens	549	1350	7	351
15B Billington Grove/Willow Chase (Phase 1)	132	325	2	84
TOTAL by June 2011	1088	2675	14	695
15D Billington Grove/Willow Chase (Phase 2)	230	565	3	147
15D Billington Grove/Willow Chase (Phase 3)	68	167	0	43
15C Pratt's Quarry	234	576	3	150
TOTAL by circa 2014	1620	3983	20	1035
31 Brickyard Quarry	165	406	2	106
17 Grovebury Farm	527	1296	7	337
TOTAL	2312	5685	29	1478

* average household density in the 2001 Census.

** Bedfordshire Volunteering Survey, March 2010: 26% of population in Central Bedfordshire undertook formal volunteering for at least two hours a week.

Project Core Values

There are six core values underpinning the project:

Social inclusion – a sense of belonging where people from different backgrounds feel valued for the part they can play in making their community a better place to live, as well as having the ability to network beyond their own neighbourhood.

Participatory governance – enabling citizens, individually and collectively, to identify their own needs and to have a greater say in decisions that affect their community's well-being.

Empowerment – individuals, groups and communities are empowered to take control of their future and are able to take action with reducing levels of external support.

Community self-help and support – building confidence and the capacity of individuals and groups to plan and deliver community-led activities and programmes to meet local needs through structures that are supported and maintained from within the community.

Partnership working – public, private, voluntary and community service providers are coordinated and there is a commitment to open, honest and effective communications between the community and service providers to build trust and effective relationships.

Learning – action research and other systems for monitoring, reflection, evaluation and learning provide evidence-based practice and outcomes that inform future delivery of social infrastructure.

Strategic Outcomes and Objectives

There are three strategic outcomes for the project:

1. Residents living at, or moving into, Sandhills will have their information needs clearly identified and met so that they can access local services and improve their well-being.
2. Sandhills residents will feel less isolated or lonely as a result of having participated in new social networks, activities or other services offered at the Community House.
3. Sandhills residents will be more actively involved in their community as a result of being able to participate in new community activities, forums and groups, and through local volunteering opportunities.

These outcomes are underpinned by six objectives:

1. To establish, promote and utilise a Community House as a base for developing and delivering social infrastructure activities within Sandhills.
2. To undertake surveys and consultations with residents to establish their views on what they believe is needed and to identify the impact of the project.
3. To identify and meet the information needs of new and existing residents (e.g. on local services, travel options, community activities, volunteering opportunities, leisure and recreation).
4. To identify the resources, interventions and support needed to empower residents to meet their own needs; and to create, develop and sustain new social networks, activities and community groups.
5. To promote and develop volunteering; and identify the extent to which it helps to establish and build new social networks and community groups.
6. To identify the lessons learned from evidence-based practice and outcomes to inform the future delivery of social infrastructure and support the development of new sustainable communities within Luton and southern Central Bedfordshire.

Identifying Needs

The project starts with a set of presumed needs and will work towards needs clearly identified by residents. The presumed needs (identified from research on the development of new communities) recognise that people living in, or moving to, a new community:

- do not know other residents and are at risk of social exclusion, so there is a need to facilitate social activities and provide opportunities for residents to get to know others in their community
- do not know the availability of local services, so there is a need to provide information, advice and guidance on a range of local services, including, retail, travel, health and council services, community groups and volunteering
- do not have opportunities to associate with others or influence local decisions, so there is a need to create, develop and run local community groups and activities, and enable residents to actively participate in these
- may have increased feelings of isolation, insecurity and mental stress caused by 'new town blues', so there is a need to empower residents to shape, create and develop a strong sense of community, place and belonging.

The underlying presumption is that long term sustainable change is really only possible if people themselves recognise the needs addressed as their own, along with the methods used, the actions taken, and the institutional frameworks developed.

To enable residents to be the architects of services that meet their needs, a Community Development Officer assists residents to articulate and share their needs; identify appropriate solutions; and develop, deliver and commission services for themselves.

Community House

Interim community facilities (in the form of a Community House) have now been provided on site 15B (east of Billington Road) and, in due course, will also be provided on site 17 (west of Billington Road). Developers have provided a four-bed roomed property for use as a temporary Community House at 6 Plover Road (on the Billington Grove development). The use of this innovatively designed facility is invaluable to residents as a meeting point and a focus for activity, as an information hub, and as a vital resource base with access to community workers and other service providers.

Within the Community House, two upstairs rooms are used as offices for partner agency staff and community workers; there is also a room for community group meetings and training sessions. Downstairs rooms provide a disabled toilet; an interview room; a kitchen with catering facilities for those using the Community House and for use as a community café; and a large reception room provides space for informal social gatherings and events.

Developing Effective Community Action

The Project Team includes local volunteers, staff and volunteers from partner agencies, and two part-time staff – a Partnerships Officer and a Community Development Officer – provided by Voluntary and Community Action. Together, they will:

- welcome new residents;
- provide information and advice on local facilities and services;
- facilitate opportunities for people to meet, socialise and organise themselves through new community groups;
- promote and facilitate access to local volunteering opportunities; and
- identify and support local community leaders.

The project will use a community mobilisation approach – an innovative way of supporting communities to engage directly with the issues that affects them the most. There is a strong emphasis of working alongside rather than providing services for residents. This requires much more involvement of local residents, not only in providing, but also in instigating, planning and resourcing community based activities.

The Community Development Officer works along side people, enabling them to do things for themselves and bring about sustainable change. She is an activist, not a provider, who responds to the particular needs of the area and is committed to community participation, empowerment and mobilisation as a response to the problems and issues identified by residents.

The Community Development Officer works with residents to help them:

- identify the problem or issue they want to address or the need that want to meet
- clearly identify the outcome they want to achieve
- to involve others
- scope and plan what it is they want to do
- acquire the resources they need: volunteers, funding, equipment, premises etc
- acquire and develop the knowledge and skills needed through bespoke training and access to courses put on by other agencies; some may want to get involved in formal qualifications
- plan, publicise and organise the activity or event
- review and evaluate what they do
- develop and sustain the activity, for example by setting up a community group

Volunteers are crucial to the success of the project. Volunteers welcome new residents, deliver promotional material to residents, run the community café, organise social events and create, develop and sustain new community groups. New residents interested in taking up local volunteering opportunities are provided with information and offered an informal interview to ascertain their skills, knowledge and interests so that suitable volunteering opportunities can be offered.

Partnership Working

Inter-agency collaboration is crucial to the efficiency and sustainability of service provision within local communities. However, it is also clear that such inter-agency collaboration is difficult to achieve, primarily because of the necessity for specialised nature of different agencies' approach

and target groups. The success and sustainability of local services will be highly dependant upon a well functioning and well integrated multi-agency approach.

Partnership working is therefore crucial to ensuring the long term sustainability of Sandhills as a community. To achieve this, a Partnerships Officer works closely with partner agencies and service providers in order to understand what their services are, and to work on their behalf to inform and advise residents of local facilities and services. Partner agencies will also work with residents to develop a range of community activities and events.

Project Management

Project co-ordination and management is provided by the Director of Voluntary and Community Action; who is a qualified Youth and Community Worker, with direct experience of working with groups on new housing developments.

Current activity [April – September 2011] revolves around five key areas:

- **fitting out of the Community House** – fixtures, fittings and equipment are currently being installed and a fire risk assessment will be undertaken, prior to it being available for use;
- **recruiting volunteers** to help run the Community House – designing a range of volunteer roles, preparing role descriptions and person specifications, marketing the opportunities and putting in place arrangement to manage and support volunteers;
- **developing an initial programme of activities** – arranging an opening event, setting up the Community Café and working with partners to determine the activity sessions they can offer;
- **preparing marketing and communications** to promote the Community House and a programme of activities to local residents;
- **securing additional revenue funding** for staff costs, community activities, marketing and communications, and for new community groups, for a period of five years.

A Community House Preview event is being held on the 9 August 2011, followed by a community-based event for residents, and the official house opening, being held on the 10 August 2011.

A Project Steering Group of those agencies involved in delivering the project oversees the project's planning, implementation and evaluation. Its members also consider issues and challenges facing the project, assist in dealing with 'blockages' and in providing solutions.

Ongoing evaluation will identify the lessons learned and good practice that could be adapted and used to support the development of new communities within Bedfordshire and elsewhere. It will also be used to influence the policy framework for social infrastructure and to inform debate and decision making by local planning authorities and other agencies concerned with growth.

Further Information

For further information on the delivery framework for the project please contact John Gelder at Voluntary and Community Action, Bossard House, West Street, Leighton Buzzard LU7 1DA; by email to john@action-centralbeds.org.uk, or by telephone on 01525 850559.

You can also contact Helen Nottingham, Partnerships Officer, and Lucy Crayk, Community Development Officer, at the Community House, 6 Plover Road, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 4AW; by email to communityhouse@action-centralbeds.org.uk, or by telephone on 01525 374600 (Community House) or 07779 133177 (Helen) or 07779 120672 (Lucy).

Voluntary and Community Action

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY *EXTRACTS FOR JOB APPLICATION PACK*

General Policy Statement

Voluntary and Community Action recognises that Central Bedfordshire is socially and culturally diverse and believes its work is enriched by the varying qualities and experience brought by people from Central Bedfordshire's communities to the voluntary and community sector, their organisations and their work as trustees, employees or volunteers. This diversity is recognised, respected and valued.

Voluntary and Community Action seeks to ensure that its work programme, services and advocacy reflects the perspectives of, and that its staff and trustee composition is representative of, Central Bedfordshire's communities. Where under representation is identified every effort will be made to attract, encourage and support participation and application by that sector of the community.

Voluntary and Community Action is aware of individual, institutional and cultural discrimination, which can be direct and indirect, through lack of awareness, stereotyping, prejudice, victimisation, harassment, marginalisation, exclusion or oppression, and of the impact this has on discriminated groups or individuals.

Voluntary and Community Action, and all projects managed by it, is fully committed to social justice, equality of opportunity and the elimination of all forms of discrimination as a fundamental principle of its work. It seeks to prevent discrimination and promote equality of opportunity in the provision of services, in its employment practices, and in its dealings with individuals, members, clients, volunteers, groups and organisations. It is committed to ensuring that no individual or group of people is less favourably treated or denied opportunities because of their background, including:

- Colour, 'race' and ethnic or cultural origin
- nationality (or statelessness)
- religion, faith or belief *
- social or economic background
- locality
- gender
- sexuality
- age
- disability or recovery from mental illness
- employment status
- marital status
- caring responsibilities
- HIV status
- unrelated criminal conviction
- association with others who experience the above

* Voluntary and Community Action will discriminate on the grounds a person's belief where this is contrary to the values of the organisation, as expressed in this policy.

Voluntary and Community Action will work to achieve policies and practices which ensure that both existing and potential employees, trustees and volunteers are positively encouraged and that all individuals have their needs considered and, wherever practically appropriate, support needs provided. It will also work to achieve equality of opportunity for the people and organisations it exists to serve.

Voluntary and Community Action demonstrates its commitment to this policy by adopting a code of practice, which gives guidance on employment practice, service provision and the work of the organisation.

Employment

- Within the framework of employment law and this policy Voluntary and Community Action works to ensure equal opportunity in all areas of employment including recruitment and selection, training and development, promotion, conditions and benefits of service, employment

procedures, health and safety, and cessation of employment. In particular it aims to ensure there is no unfair discrimination in employment practices.

- The role of Voluntary and Community Action is to provide effective services to the voluntary and community sector in Central Bedfordshire and therefore recruits and develops staff on the basis of their suitability for this role. All employees and applicants for employment will therefore be treated according to their relevant merits and abilities in delivering these services.
- The conditions of service offered to part-time employees will be comparable to those offered to full-time employees.
- As far as is practicable within the constraints of providing a service to our members/clients, flexible working arrangements (e.g. part-time work, job share, hours of work, time off work) will be considered across all types of jobs to meet individual requirements.

Recruitment and Selection

- Job descriptions and person specifications will be produced, provided to potential applicants and used throughout the recruitment and selection process as objective criteria for measuring applicants' relevant aptitudes, potential, skills, knowledge and experience.
- Except where there is a need to re-deploy existing staff or there is a Genuine Occupational Qualification, all jobs are open to those with the relevant skills, knowledge and experience.
- Application forms should not provide the potential to discriminate at the point of application, by revealing details of age, disability, nationality or ethnic origin, gender, marital status, dependants, religion or sexuality.
- Recruitment monitoring forms will be used for all vacancies to collect data on the ethnic origin, age, gender and disability status of applicants. Such data will be kept separately and used for monitoring purposes only.
- Due regard shall be paid to the gender and cultural bias of any panel and the effect that it may have on short listing and interview proceedings.
- Staff, trustees and others involved in recruitment and selection will be encouraged to undertake training on, and will receive written guidelines covering, equality and diversity issues in interview preparation, questioning techniques, systematic assessment and decision-making.
- Short listing and interview assessment forms based on the Person Specification should be completed by all panel members for all candidates and retained on file. Voluntary and Community Action should be able to justify any decision made through written documentation.

Complaints

- Voluntary and Community Action will ensure that all alleged incidents of discrimination or harassment are taken seriously, handled sensitively, investigated and resolved through its Complaints Procedure and/or Disciplinary Procedures, as appropriate.
- The Complaints Procedure provides for complaints to be dealt with, in the first instance, by the member of staff directly involved and then, if not satisfactorily resolved, by the Director and, in the final instance, by the Trustee Board. Any serious complaint must be brought to the attention of the Director who will raise the matter with the Chairperson.

Full copies of the Equality and Diversity Policy will be provided to staff upon appointment and are available to potential applicants upon request.