



# Co-operative Councils

## Innovation Network

## VOLUNTEERING

### Telford & Wrekin Council

## Strong communities place the least demand on public services

As a Co-operative Council, we are committed to working in partnership with our local communities to deliver the best we can with our collective resources and volunteering is a key element of this. For many years now we have been working with residents to build their skills and confidence to become active participants within their communities, with our dedicated team developing a range of volunteering schemes within the Council and providing support externally to those that need it too.

Our approach has been to target our resources at areas in the greatest need of support, working more effectively with the resources and assets that are already in place. We now have over 1,500 volunteers supporting council services, contributing in many ways - some examples of which include:

### Health and wellbeing

- We have recruited and trained nearly 100 [Health Champions](#) so far to act as health ambassadors in their local communities. They encourage and support others to make positive changes to their health and wellbeing through information sharing information and signposting, discussing general health and wellbeing with family and friends or getting active in their communities.

Meet Penny. Penny is 70 something and knows how important it is to spend time with other people socially. She is one of the founder members and committee member of the Senior Gym Club and she attends weekly gym sessions. Penny is also a founder member of the Prime Time Short Tennis club in Oakengates, which has been running for over 13 years.

To ensure the gym sessions and short tennis club meet both the emotional and physical needs of those attending (over 55's), they ensure that following each session there is an

opportunity for a hot drink and catch up. This extends the session, encouraging members to spend time socially with others. Penny ensures everyone is made to feel welcome and is very proactive in promoting the sessions and if needed will support people to attend

Penny has for some time had an interest in becoming a Health Champion. She has completed her training, engaged with some practical projects and is now fully committed to her voluntary role as a Health Champion. She was nominated for an Active Lifestyle Award, under the category of Ageing Well-Celebrating Age and won! Here she is with her award.



- **Feed the Birds.** A growing number of people are housebound, isolated and lonely, or at risk of becoming so. Bird feeding can provide great pleasure to those who are housebound and a weekly visit from a bird feeding friend can offer valuable, regular social contact. Working in conjunction with Shropshire Wildlife Trust we have recruited volunteers to visit clients in their home once or twice a week, for up to an hour at a time, to help feed the birds. We have over 30 volunteers supporting this scheme at the moment.

The impact this scheme is having is extremely positive – not just for the clients but for the volunteers too – see our [video case study](#) for more information.

## Environment



Through our Pride in our Community Programme we have recruited over 700 [Street Champions](#) who take pride and support us to keep their local areas clean and green. They do this by reporting environmental issues, litter picking and taking part in other environmental projects through partnership working with us, local Parish & Town Councils, schools, businesses and other organisations.

Alongside this we have around 350 [Snow Wardens](#) who have a seasonal role, having been trained and are prepared to act quickly, helping clear pavements of snow and ice in their local area when the weather takes a turn for the worse.



## Employment

Volunteering is a great way for people to build confidence, develop new skills and further their career progression and is seen favourably by colleges, universities and employers. That's why we have developed relationships with local educational establishments and the Job Centre to promote the benefits of volunteering and offer guidance and support on how to find a suitable role.

We now attend monthly drop in sessions at the Job Centre to discuss people's requirements and signpost them appropriately. This has proved very successful so far and we are now expanding this offer to our Future Focus service – which provides information, advice and guidance to support young people into education, employment, and training.

Alongside this we have incorporated volunteering into our 'Stepping into Work' programme at our Skills Hub. This programme supports people with physical and learning disabilities gain valuable skills and experience to support them into employment and participants now take part in volunteering activities to support this.

So far this year (2019/20) we have helped over 610 people through these projects.

## Advice and Support

As an organisation we work in a connected way with our voluntary and community sector to support them as much as possible. We provide a range of [resource guides](#) to support people with planning, recruiting and managing volunteers and we manage the [Volunteer Telford website](#) that promotes volunteer opportunities from across the borough. We currently have over 80 organisations registered to promote their opportunities, with over 180 opportunities being promoted and typically we get over 3,000 hits a month from people searching the site.

Volunteering is a great way to get involved in community life. It is a way of giving something back, meeting new people, making a difference and achieving something. Many of our volunteers find it gives them a purpose and contributes to their wellbeing – it's a great way to boost confidence and have fun!

**Whatever the reason, we are very proud of all our volunteers and the valuable contribution they make to our communities.**

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### For further information contact:

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