

Centre Manager's Report March 2017

The Centre continues to be busy with a variety of groups, meetings and classes. Over 800 people visited our café last month and we started some new groups which are already proving to be popular.

We are meeting with professional sensory garden designers in early March and looking forward to getting underway with plans to transform the Sensory Garden. A drop in session is planned from 10th – 13th March to share draft plans with Centre Users. We now have a new welcoming archway above the entrance to the garden.

Alison Harris, MSP for Centre Scotland is paying a visit to the Centre on 10 March to meet Centre Users and find out more about the Centre.

Digital company Neatebox visited the Centre on 1 March to share an update on the mobile technology they have developed to help make customer service experience better for people with sensory impairment. This technology will shortly be installed in our Centre and we will be amongst the first organisations within the UK to benefit from it.

We are hosting an international visit by integrated care clinicians to the Centre on 13 March

Publicity

Our latest newsletter is out now and available for download from our website. It is packed with information not only about recent events but also upcoming activities and groups. It also sees the welcome return of Jim McLean who writes us 'A Letter from Appin'. Jim returns at the request of Centre Users.

The main item this month was the publishing of the BBC video on David Black and Peter Wilson. This received over 14.m views on Facebook and led to messages of support being given to the Centre from around the world. We are expecting a visitor from as far away as Canada as a result of this piece.

The duo were also featured on BBC World Service programme, The Food Chain. If you would like to listen again follow this link <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04skky5>

This led to a large amount of interest on social media too and the Centre now has over 400 Twitter followers, including mental health charity Penumbra. This means we are reaching a very strong and influential audience. Our Facebook engagement also continues to grow.

The Falkirk Herald are looking to do a feature on our Carer's Wellbeing Café and come in and interview some of the participants. Martin has also spoken to Central FM this week and there is a further potential story promoting this project in the next few days.

Following the response to the first BBC programme, the producer has contacted the Centre with a view to recording a second piece, focusing on David's personal safety classes and training which he has done with The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety. We hope the next piece is as successful as the last.

Partnerships

TSB, Lloyds, MITIE and Go Green and Arthur McKay have joined forces to work with us to source furniture and fixtures and refit café, waiting area and halls and at a vastly reduced cost. We are still in discussion with these organisations to agree timescales for the work. We have requested sample materials and furnishings wherever possible so that these can be shared with Centre Users to ensure they are user friendly.

We continue to work with **Neatebox**, a digital company who produce smart phone apps to help make customer service experience and pedestrian crossings more user friendly for blind and partially sighted people. We have recently submitted a joint proposal to encourage **Tesco** to trial the customer service app. Within the 3 major Tesco stores in the Falkirk area. If successful, this initiative will be launched in June to coincide with Deafblind Awareness Week in June. Discussions with Tesco are ongoing.

First Bus Larbert Depot Manager Jim Brennan has been invited along to meet Centre Users at the next Centre User group meeting on 28 March 2017. It is hoped that we can continue to build on a partnership which will encourage safer bus journeys for sensory impaired people

Slimming World group meets on Wednesday from 17:30 – 19:00 class. BSL interpreter is on hand and materials are also available in large print and audio format. The group is open to sensory impaired people and people from the wider community. On average there are 100 attendees per week at the Centre Slimming World groups.

Developing the Young Workforce (Forth Valley) Established links with several High Schools to raise awareness of sensory impairment and develop projects for enterprise and philanthropy. We are working with young entrepreneurs to encourage them to host their very own employer event at the Centre to promote awareness of Sensory Impairment issues to HR Managers

Fire Scotland are interested in working with us to deliver community safety information to some of our Centre Groups. Potential sessions include CPR awareness, Sparks projects for children, fire safety and road safety, cook-safe project. There is also the possibility of a Fire Station "touch tour" for BPS Centre users. Fire Service are also keen to explore fundraising and volunteering opportunities with the Centre.

Fundraising:

Up & Coming Events:

- Donate new £1 coin (Launch 28/03) pictures will be taken and posted on Facebook
- Bag Packing event at Tesco, Asda and Morrisons (Tesco 28th April)
- Springtime Afternoon Tea £10 ticket – 30th April 1pm – 4pm
- Ladies Pamper Evening £10 ticket (bar provided) – 19th May 7pm – 11pm

- Grangemouth Charity Shop 17 – 22 July (more volunteers available this year i.e. DWP volunteers)
- Deaf Awareness week – Sensory Centre Staff, BSL OAP Group & Centre – participate in sponsored silence (more information to follow)

Centre User Fundraising Group was set up in February and already has a number of fundraising activities planned including a Dine in the Dark (possibility will be held at the Park Hotel) - date TBC at next meeting 13/03

Some recent fundraising successes include:

- £200 donation from Asda, Falkirk
- £400 Community Cooking Activity Grant from NHS FV
- £1750 Common Good Fund - Provost Reid supported the Centre as this fund to be a third party sponsor in order for funds already generated from TESCO and community donations to be matched by Falkirk Environment Trust

NHS Choir have offered to raise funds for the Centre

Next in Falkirk Retail Park – have requested staff training in sensory impairment awareness for their staff working in the store. In return, NEXT will donate homeware goods to support the Centre Café refurbishment.

Centre Groups:

Bo'ness Outreach Group – Last monthly group outing was to Deanston Distillery in February this was enjoyed by all.

Dining Group – Enjoyed afternoon tea at Blossoms Tearoom at Torwood Garden Centre at the end of February. The next dining group outing will be a lunch trip to the Sanam Indian restaurant in Falkirk.

The Sensory Singers continue to meet fortnightly on a Monday. The group have been consulted about how they would like to use the funds they raised over the Christmas period. One suggestion is that the group could record a CD. The group are still considering their options.

Stirling Outreach Group – Met on 14 February at the Mayfield Centre in Bannockburn. The group enjoyed a Burns/Valentines Lunch provided by a local butcher.

Wednesday Group – Ian Scott local historian will be attending this group on a monthly basis to give history talks. Ian is unavailable for the May meeting – group will be consulted regarding an alternative for this meeting.

Health & Wellbeing Sessions continue to be delivered at the Centre of a weekly basis. of the Students have linked with the Carers project to instruct the Carer's Project in hand and arm massage.

Wellbeing Café Carer Sessions

A lunch and well-being group for carers and the people they care for takes place on Thursdays 12 – 2:30pm. Information sessions are provided for unpaid carers by Central Carers and social activities are provided for cared for people by FVSC. Sessions are free of charge and include a healthy lunch for carers and cared for people. Contact Brenda Whyte for more information and to book a place

Knit and Natter Group – Started the 13th February then every fortnight after that. Originally the time was 12.30 – 1.30 but due to the good feedback it was agreed to extend the time until 2pm.

An evaluation of **BPS Social Group** members identified that they would like to more outings, occasional speakers and entertainers. A few places were suggested for the summer outing but overall they all agreed that they would like to go for a sail on Loch Katrine.

Tennis – The first 16+ tennis group started on Friday 10th February. Participants enjoyed it so much so that they requested it become fortnightly rather than monthly.

BPS Reading Group – Are looking for new members. Anyone interested contact reception. Group meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 10am.

Slimming World holds classes every Wednesday from 5.30pm. BSL interpreter available.

Foot Practitioner Service weekly on Tuesdays- Contact reception for an appointment.

A taster session for a new Art group is taking place on the 8th March at Camelon Community Centre from 1.00 – 3.00. Brendan Gallagher a contemporary artist will be encouraging participants to get creative using materials such as paper, wire, cardboard, clay, etc.

Braveheart Walks – Braveheart are offering a regular programme of supported walks leaving from Camelon Community Centre. Volunteers will be on hand to provide guided support for blind and partially sighted people and deaf people to escort walkers from the Sensory Centre to the Community Centre if required. For an update on dates and walking routes please check our website www.forthvalleysensorycentre.org or Braveheart www.braveheart.uk.net

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Social Group – Group meets on the 3rd Monday of each month from 7pm – 9pm. Activities include line dancing, arts and crafts, use of IT suite, pamper and well-being sessions. The next group will take place on Monday 20 March. Contact Lynne Frail at the Centre for more information

Personal Safety Awareness Sessions We are planning to start delivering these at the Centre in April 2017. David Black successfully completed his accredited training course with the Scottish Centre for Personal Safety in February. Contact the Centre for more information

Carrongrange Social Drop in Group The monthly evening group for young people aged 16+ with a sensory impairment or additional support needs. Group provides an informal, relaxed environment socialise and meet new friends.

Volunteering

We are planning to host a Volunteer and Fundraising Celebration Event on Tuesday April 25th from 1-3 pm. Invitations will be sent out in the next couple of weeks. This will be our chance to celebrate what the volunteers and supporting organisations are doing and for us to be able to say thank you. We have 3 new volunteers who have started to drive for the Centre and a couple of new volunteers who are going to volunteer in the Café. We have 3 new applications from people who are interested in volunteering within groups. We had a 10 pin bowling night on the 22nd February for the young volunteer which was our chance to thank them for supporting the Centre.

We are continuing to work towards completing the portfolio for the Volunteer Friendly Award which we hope to have completed by Volunteer Celebration Event in April. We have also developed a new Volunteer Handbook which will start to be distributed to all volunteers within the next couple of weeks.

We have Gemma a student from Falkirk High School coming in once a week to help with admin work and Aine from St Mungo's who has been great at helping to design posters for us

Forthcoming Centre Events:

Monday 10 April – Easter Egg Hunt

Tuesday 25 April – Volunteer and Fundraising Thank you event

Sunday 30 April - Spring Afternoon Tea including ladies fashion show

Friday 19 May – Ladies Pamper Evening

Monday 17 – Saturday 22 July Charity Pop-up shop, Grangemouth

Sunday 3 September – Ladies fashion show and afternoon tea

Sunday 1 October – Great Scottish Run

Saturday 18 November – Dine and Disco, Park Hotel Falkirk