



# Volunteering with a criminal record

Success stories from across Greater Manchester



NEARIS/GMAC 2008

## About this booklet

The aim of this booklet is to share stories we have gathered about ex-offenders from Greater Manchester who have made a success of volunteering. We hope it provides inspiration and useful contacts for:

- Those who are advising or supporting ex-offenders in moving their lives forward;
- Organisations that involve volunteers;
- Potential volunteers.

The booklet is the result of a research project carried out during 2008 by NEARIS, a Greater Manchester voluntary organisation. The project looked at the experiences of adult offenders (over 18) in volunteering. This booklet does not cover the experiences of under-18s, though some of the 'Useful Contacts' section will still be relevant for under-18s.

As well as individual stories, the booklet presents some of the themes that emerged about the volunteering experience.

The project was commissioned by the Greater Manchester Employment Learning and Skills Partnership Board – a group of organisations working to improve employment and training opportunities for offenders. The funding for the research project and this booklet was provided by the Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council under Local Initiative Development funding.

Thanks to the volunteers who have agreed for their stories and pictures to be published as an inspiration to others. We think they should be proud of their contribution to the community and the positive ways they have moved their lives forward.

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# Introduction

Volunteering is a journey. Different people have different journeys, which are not always straightforward and can lead in unexpected directions. The true-life stories in this booklet have been gathered together to provide inspiration and a better understanding about the volunteering journey for ex-offenders.

About one quarter of the working age population in the UK has some kind of criminal record.\* Many have the ability, experience and enthusiasm to be star-quality volunteers. The biggest barrier to volunteering for many is embarrassment about a situation where they have to disclose their offences. Disclosure could often be better handled by organisations that involve volunteers.

Volunteering has many benefits for the volunteer and the community. One of the potential benefits for the volunteer is as a routeway to paid employment. All volunteering can provide useful work experience, development of skills, a reference, and huge leaps forward in confidence and ambition. Several of the volunteers in this booklet have used difficult personal experiences to help others who may be struggling, and this can lead to a vocation within a helping profession. Ex-offenders often have a great deal of life experiences and experience of 'the system', which can be invaluable to help others move forward.

Many different people can be involved in someone's volunteering journey. This will include friends and family, support/advice workers, as well as those who recruit and manage volunteers. Some types of help seem to make a crucial difference, and we have picked these out.

\* NACRO and Volunteering England 'Involving Ex-Offenders in Volunteering', 2006

## Nikki's Story

Nikki is a volunteer at the Phoenix Centre in Oldham. He takes part in workshops informing members of the community about the dangers of substance misuse.

He says he has gained more confidence since taking part in voluntary work, and this has led him to apply for courses in first aid and food hygiene. Nikki would quite like to move on to some different voluntary work in a café. Nikki hopes that this, in turn, may lead to full-time work within the catering industry.

**Often the experience of volunteering can help someone identify a career direction. This may or may not be the same type of work as the volunteering.**



*It makes me feel better, like I'm doing something useful.'*

- Nikki

## Sarah's Story

Sarah's offences were mostly theft and deception, largely connected with her history of drug and alcohol abuse. /She had been 'dry' for around three years and felt it was time to prove that she is a useful member of society.

Sarah felt that voluntary work would help her to gain valuable skills and experience and would prove her commitment and interest in changing her life. She spoke to a guidance worker at the training centre she had been attending, who identified a few possibilities.

Her long term goal is to one day work as a carer with elderly people, which is why she decided to apply for voluntary work with Age Concern. She thinks that it may be difficult to find the job she would like, due to having a criminal record and no previous experience, but hopes that her voluntary work may help her to progress to work in the care industry. Sarah feels that her progression would be helped if she can gain training in health and social care but says it would also help if employers and training providers understand that her offences are now in the past.

**Those who signpost to voluntary work should be aware of real and perceived barriers to moving forward.**

*"I feel that volunteering in the day care environment will help me gain relevant experience and prove myself"*

- Sarah



## Janet's Story

Janet has done voluntary work in the past but has not done any form of work at all since her conviction in 2006. She decided that volunteering again would help her see how she copes with working.

She found out about the voluntary opportunities at the P.D.S.A charity shop via an internet search. She hopes, at some point to work with animals but also enjoys working in a retail environment. She is hoping that her experience working with this organisation will lead to a full time job in a pet shop.

She had little difficulty gaining her post but needed help filling in her application form, as she wanted to make sure that any referral to her offence was worded sensitively.

She feels that there are a few small things which would have made the experience easier. The main one would have been an interview which combined the filling in of the application form as she feels it would have made it easier for the organisation to see her as a person rather than an ex-offender. She is also hoping that, eventually, she will be allowed to build up her hours into those similar to a full-time position as she feels it will prepare her more adequately for paid work.

**The thought of disclosing offences can be off-putting, but the process can be handled confidently.**



*"I've found it very easy. It feels like I'm part of the furniture, as though my life has started again."*

- Janet

# Stages on the volunteering journey

## Journey into volunteering

Here are some of the different ingredients that help someone make a good start as a volunteer. Some of the ingredients may be enhanced by the support of an advice and guidance worker, or a supportive friend/family member.

<b>Previous experience</b>	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Encouragement</b>
Good experiences of receiving services, being part of a group, helping others.  Difficult experiences that can provide insight.	May be: gaining new skills, creating a routine, enhancing social life, gaining confidence, 'giving something back'.	An adviser, support worker, friends/family, and peers can all provide the initial spark of interest/encouragement.

<b>Thinking about what to do</b>	<b>Getting information</b>	<b>Making first contact</b>
Different types of 'cause' to get involved in. Different types of 'role' to play.  Considering any possible restrictions on role, related to offences.	There are excellent sources of information about volunteering roles, but help may be needed in finding these.	Support and advice may make all the difference for that intimidating 'first phone call'.

<p><b>Application process</b></p> <p>This may involve an information session, an application form, an interview.</p> <p>Practical support can help.</p>	<p><b>Disclosing?</b></p> <p>Accurate information and an opportunity to talk it through can help the ex-offender to handle disclosure of offences.</p>	<p><b>CRB check</b></p> <p>Disclosure and CRB checks work best if the volunteer manager is confident about disclosure and their own policies.</p>
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<p><b>Induction</b></p> <p>Opportunity to gain confidence in what is expected and what support is available.</p>	<p><b>Feedback</b></p> <p>Chance to feedback both ways if things are not working out early on, so that the volunteer can make a strong start or find something else more suitable.</p>
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## Moving onto paid work

Here are some of the ingredients that can help volunteers who want to move on to paid work. The hosting organisation may not be able to facilitate all of these, but it helps if the volunteer manager understands that some volunteers will be actively heading towards paid work.

<b>Workplace experience</b>	<b>Increased confidence</b>	<b>Making a contribution</b>
Experience of fulfilling a role, complying with procedures, working with others.	Confidence in different social settings and own abilities.	Having a role and a purpose gives enhanced sense of value and own potential.

<b>Supervision</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Accreditation</b>
Opportunities to check that the volunteer is getting their needs met.	Group training sessions and one to one skills coaching creates a better volunteer and more employable individual.	Training with a qualification can be useful for a volunteer to demonstrate skills to potential employers.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Identifying own direction</b></p> <p>A supportive colleague, friend or manager can help a volunteer consider their own career direction.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Understanding the job market</b></p> <p>A realistic picture is needed of what jobs might be available and how much they pay.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Moving towards career direction</b></p> <p>Maybe the volunteer can access further training to help them move on to their next opportunity.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Applying for jobs</b></p> <p>The volunteering organisation may be able to help with applications as a way of saying 'thank you' for a volunteer's input.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Being able to leave</b></p> <p>A volunteer manager should never make it hard for a volunteer to leave in order to do paid work.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reference</b></p> <p>Should be a standard offer to all volunteers.</p>
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## Charlie's Story

Charlie received help from Experience Volunteering (in East Manchester) to explore voluntary work options.

Charlie decided to volunteer for a Manchester City Council project after spending time living in sheltered accommodation. He supports adults age 50+ in the community centre, serving drinks, food, playing games and providing a listening ear to those who need it. He also helps out at organised events, including Neighbours' Day and the Christmas party.

His confidence has improved greatly as a result of his work and he is happy with his treatment as a volunteer. Charlie is not sure whether his voluntary work will lead to paid work but looks forward to learning new skills and the experiences provided by a variety of activities within the voluntary sector.

*"I do believe everybody has a talent of some description but, for whatever reason, it just won't come out.*

*Maybe I can help."*

- Charlie



## Brian's Story

Brian received a life sentence after being sectioned under the Mental Health Act in 2001. He wanted to become involved in voluntary work to repay the help he felt he was receiving from other organisations.

He met the HearingVoices Network whilst in prison and was encouraged to take part in voluntary work by them. He chose his placement at the Ann Lee Centre as he felt it gave him the opportunity to help others in a similar situation to himself. At first, he found it hard to concentrate on his work and still finds himself tired from his medication. He still finds it hard at times but his love of his work keeps him going.

Brian feels that more offenders and ex-offenders should be given the chance to take part in voluntary work. His voluntary work led him into paid work for 6 months but, unfortunately, the funding for his post ran out. He hopes that, by continuing to volunteer, he may attain another paid position.

### Volunteering can lead to paid work.



*"I've built up my self esteem. I'm able to communicate with people and I'm learning to get on with my life the best way I can."*

*"Helping people seems to help me."*

- Brian

# Disclosing your offences

## Do you need to disclose?

You may not need to disclose your offences to the organisation where you want to volunteer. It may be that any offending history is not relevant to the volunteering role. The organisation should make it clear.

## Spent and unspent convictions

- The organisation may ask you to disclose if you have any 'unspent' convictions. These will be recent convictions, although very serious offences are never 'spent'.
- In some specialist roles (working with children or vulnerable adults in certain role), the organisation may also ask you to declare if you have any 'spent' convictions, i.e. convictions that you would not normally have to declare because they were some time ago.

## How to disclose your offence

- If the organisation has asked you to disclose any convictions, it's probably useful to attach a covering letter, with information about the offence and your current attitude towards it. Make sure that any explanation you give for your past offending does not sound like an excuse.
- Explain how you have changed your life since the offence occurred, and show that you will be trustworthy and reliable in the role. For example, you could show how you have taken on commitments (such as your own flat or undertaking a training course) which show that you

have too much to lose by getting into trouble again.

- If you are having an interview for the voluntary role, remember that it does take courage to discuss past offences and you might want to practice discussing this with someone you trust beforehand.

### How does a CRB check work?

- The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) can provide information to organisations about criminal records and convictions. Organisations that wish to run police checks must stick to the CRB's Code of Practice, which includes treating the disclosure information confidentially.

- The initial stage of a CRB check is to fill out a form (with someone from the organisation) giving details about yourself and providing evidence of your ID and address. This information is then sent off by the organisation to the CRB Bureau, who conduct a search of the records held. A report (with any convictions listed) is printed out by the CRB, and they send one copy to you and one copy to the organisation.

- The organisation should make its own decision about what role you can take up.

For information about 'spent' convictions and other issues, visit the NACRO Resettlement Plus website [www.resettlement.info](http://www.resettlement.info) , or phone the helpline on (Freephone) 0800 0181 259

## Disclosure tips for organisations

Here are some tips about recruiting volunteers:

- It's good practice for volunteer-involving organisations to have a policy and agreed procedures about the recruitment of ex-offenders. These policies and procedures should seek to exclude the minority who might cause harm from the opportunity to do so, but not exclude those whose offences are irrelevant.
- If the volunteering role does not involve working with children or vulnerable adults, it's unlikely to need a CRB check. (A 'vulnerable adult' is someone who has a specific condition, and as a result of this condition is in receipt of a specific service.)
- Give potential volunteers an opportunity to declare any relevant offences (and then discuss this with them) before conducting a CRB check.
- If the volunteering role involves working in a supervisory capacity with children or vulnerable adults, you can require the applicant to declare spent and unspent convictions.
- To conduct CRB checks, it's usually easiest to register with an 'umbrella body' and pay them an administration fee to conduct the check. Contact your local Volunteer Centre for information about umbrella bodies.
- If you conduct CRB checks, you are legally bound by the Disclosure Code of Good Practice, which requires you to have certain policies in place and to keep disclosure information confidential.
- A CRB check is not an effective tool on its own. Interviews, taking up

references, trial periods, and ongoing supervision all help to determine whether someone is suitable for a role.

Comprehensive guides to help organisations 'get things right':

- The government produced new guidelines about CRB checks for volunteer-involving organisations in 2008. Broadly speaking, the new guidance was issued to stop organisations misusing CRB checks for inappropriate roles. You can get a copy from the Cabinet Office website [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk) or their publications phoneline on: 0845 015 0010
- NACRO and Volunteering England have produced a booklet on 'Involving Ex-offenders as volunteers' in 2006. You can download a copy for free from the website [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk) or Freephone: 0800 028 3304



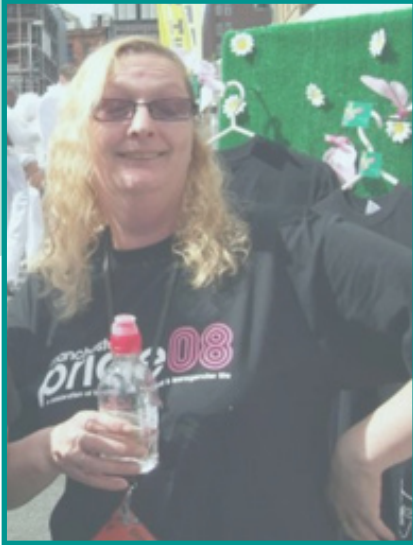
## Angela's Story

Angela is a recovering alcoholic and an ex-offender, released in 2006. She had not considered voluntary work before starting a training course to develop her IT skills. During her class, the tutor pointed out that, as well as doing her own work, Angela was helping the other students with theirs. She suggested that Angela should apply to be a volunteer.

Her alcohol support worker suggested it might help Angela get out of the house and would take her mind off drinking. She initially started volunteering in the training centre where she was doing her course. This gave her the confidence to join the volunteer team at Manchester Pride and this, in turn, led her apply to become a volunteer at Body Positive.

She says she would love to do paid work at some point but worries about employers being prejudiced about her past or her disabilities. However, she has been told by one of the managers at her detox unit that, if she can stay away from alcohol, she can apply to be a volunteer there. She says that this, along with her current voluntary work, has given her the strength to stay sober.

**A range of people can provide the encouragement or spark of interest leading to someone starting volunteering.**



*"I feel happier in myself from helping others and seeing peoples' excitement. I feel good seeing others achieve.*

*It makes me feel good too and I've learned lots of new skills from doing the job."*

- Angela

## Andrew's Story

I first became involved in what was to develop into the DEAL project over two years ago at the beginning of 2006, when I was attending a group at Probation. Some of the more successful and stable members of the group were asked to form a breakaway group that was to be something positive and responsible. As a core of six members, we discussed some ideas. We realised we all shared a common theme of substance misuse; we all had various personal stories and experiences, and we all wanted to give something back to the community, so we set up the DEAL project.

We have put on twenty to thirty presentations to various groups, such as schools, colleges, youth groups, magistrates and trainee police officers. I myself have been a volunteer for the last eighteen months. As a founder member, I've had a great sense of pride and accomplishment.

I've also learned a greater sense of responsibility and I have a lot more confidence, not just with public speaking but within myself as a person and a member of the local community, because this positive role allows me to give something back, no matter how great or small.

We know though that to keep the group fresh and positive, we need new people with new ideas, so we can both grow and evolve not only as a community project but as individuals too.

**Volunteering is not just about applying for existing positions – it might involve working with others to set up something new for the community.**



*"It gives me a certain amount of routine as I'm currently unemployed and gives me a sense of togetherness, as we work closely as a group.*

*We're a close team who've learned to trust each other."*

- Andrew

## Useful contacts

### How do I find out about volunteering opportunities?

#### **DO-IT' website - [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)**

'Do-it' is a national website of volunteer opportunities from across the country. It's like a job centre for volunteer positions. You can look up volunteer opportunities by postcode, geographical area, or type of work.

#### **Local Volunteer Centres**

Volunteer Centres act as a central point for advertising for volunteers. Some Volunteer Centres can book a one-to-one appointment with an individual to discuss their interests and help match them up to something relevant. It's important to phone first to book an appointment. (The City of Manchester does not have its own Volunteer Centre.)

Bolton Volunteer Centre

Web: [www.boltoncvs.co.uk](http://www.boltoncvs.co.uk)

Tel: 01204 546060

Bury Volunteer Service

Web: [www.b3sda.org.uk](http://www.b3sda.org.uk)

Tel: 0161 797 1968

Experience Volunteering (East Manchester)

Email: [volunteering@eastmanchestercommunity.net](mailto:volunteering@eastmanchestercommunity.net)

Tel: 0161 220 8600

Voluntary Action Oldham  
Web: [www.vaoldham.co.uk](http://www.vaoldham.co.uk)  
Tel: 0161 633 6222

CVS Rochdale  
Web: [www.cvsr.org.uk](http://www.cvsr.org.uk)  
Tel: 01706 631291

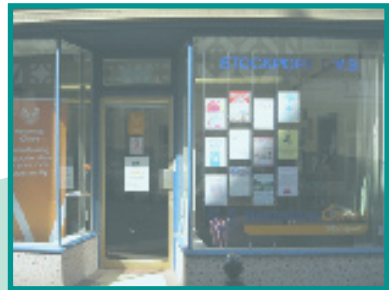
Salford Volunteer Centre  
Web: [www.salfordcvs.org.uk](http://www.salfordcvs.org.uk)  
Tel: 0161 707 7067

Stockport Volunteer Centre  
Web: [www.volunteercentre.net/stockport](http://www.volunteercentre.net/stockport)  
Tel: 0161 477 0246

Volunteer Centre Tameside  
Web: [www.tamesidevb.org.uk](http://www.tamesidevb.org.uk)  
Tel: 0161 3392345

Trafford Volunteer Centre  
Web: [www.salecommunityweb.co.uk/volcentre.htm](http://www.salecommunityweb.co.uk/volcentre.htm)  
Tel: 0161 976 2447

Wigan and Leigh Volunteer Bureau  
Web: [www.cvswl.org](http://www.cvswl.org)  
Tel: 01942 201503



# Useful contacts

## Developing skills and finding employment

### **Train To Gain**

Government funding for any organisation wanting to develop the skills of their own workforce. Train To Gain funding can now be used for volunteers as well as paid staff. Phone to speak to a 'skills broker' who will discuss with you the skills needs among your workforce.

Web: [www.traintogain.gov.uk](http://www.traintogain.gov.uk)

Tel: 0800 015 55 45

### **Nextstep**

The England-wide careers and training guidance service for those aged 20 and over. Nextstep advisers run group training sessions with unemployed adults, as well as one to one advice sessions about finding work or a training course.

Web: [www.nextstepgreatermanchester.org.uk](http://www.nextstepgreatermanchester.org.uk)

Freephone: 0800 107 4060

### **Connexions**

The careers and advice service for young people up to 20. There is a Connexions service in each of the 10 districts of Greater Manchester.

Web: [www.gmconnexions.co.uk](http://www.gmconnexions.co.uk)

Tel: 0800 032 2727

## Stepping Stones

Jobcentre Plus project providing specialist advisers to offer help through training advice, motivation and other routes to help people move from incapacity benefit or income support into or closer to work.

Tel: 0800 783 1080

In addition there is a wide range of job-shops, training centres and employment support agencies across Greater Manchester.



## Good practice in volunteer management

### **Volunteering England**

Provides factsheets (e.g. CRB checks, volunteering and benefits, insurance), a free advice line, and example policies and procedures which you can adapt.

Web: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

Freephone: 0800 028 3304

### **'Involving Ex-offenders in Volunteering'**

This useful 20 page booklet (produced by Volunteering England and NACRO in 2006) contains tips for organisations. It can be downloaded for free from the Volunteering England website, [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

Freephone: 0800 028 3304

### **Goldstar**

National project promoting inclusive volunteering among traditionally excluded groups, providing case studies, good practice toolkits, and sharing/exchange forum for organisations.

Web: [www.goldstar.org.uk](http://www.goldstar.org.uk)

### **Local Volunteer Centres**

Your local volunteer centre (see list on page 23) will provide advice and support for organisations which involve volunteers. Many of the volunteer centres also provide training, special projects, and volunteer recognition schemes. The list of local Volunteer Centres can be found

on page 23. (Unfortunately there is no volunteer centre for the City of Manchester.)

### **Criminal Records Bureau**

The CRB is responsible for the disclosure service and can provide information about its administration.

Web: [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk)

Tel: 0870 909 0811

### **Independent Safeguarding Authority**

In October 2009 the new ISA will come into force, provide an enhanced framework for police checks which will change the current CRB system.

Web: [www.isa-gov.org.uk](http://www.isa-gov.org.uk)

Tel: 0300 123 1111

## Criminal Justice and rehabilitation system

### **NACRO resettlement helpline**

NACRO is a national charity working to reduce crime and provide a fresh start for offenders, by running projects and undertaking research. The Resettlement helpline provides information about issues relating to ex-offenders.

Web: [www.nacro.org.uk](http://www.nacro.org.uk) and [www.resettlement.info](http://www.resettlement.info)  
Freephone: 0800 0181 259

### **Greater Manchester Probation**

The Probation service is a statutory agency and part of the National Offender Management Service. It oversees the supervision of offenders in the community and on licence on release from prison. It also delivers interventions such as unpaid work, programmes to change behaviour, and accommodation in approved hostels. It works with other organisations to cut crime, protect the public and reintegrate offenders into the community. There are 40 probation sites across Greater Manchester.

Web: [www.gm-probation.org.uk](http://www.gm-probation.org.uk)  
Tel: 0161 872 4802

### **Youth Offending Teams**

There is a Youth Offending Team in each of the 10 districts of Greater Manchester, providing services to young people aged 10-17 who have come into contact with the criminal justice system or are in danger.

### **GMAC (Greater Manchester Against Crime)**

GMAC is a partnership brings partners together to reduce crime across Greater Manchester. Web: [www.gmac.org.uk](http://www.gmac.org.uk)

## Paul's Story

Whilst in prison, Paul shared a cell with a man who struggled with literacy and numeracy. Paul spent a lot of time helping him with his basic skills and greatly enjoyed it.

When he was released on licence, Paul briefly lived in a probation hostel, during which time a worker from NEARIS visited and talked about the organisation's education work with ex-offenders. Having found prison a de-humanising experience, Paul felt helping others might make him feel more human again. With a referral letter from his probation officer he attended a volunteer induction at NEARIS. He began volunteering as a support worker in computing sessions, which is what he has mainly done since.

Paul has continued to update his skills. He enrolled on Counselling courses and found them very rewarding. He would have continued to do the Diploma but he was unable to find an organisation that was willing to offer a counselling placement due to his record. He has never attempted to hide his conviction and found it helpful that the volunteer co-ordinator at NEARIS was happy to discuss the conviction with him.

**It's important to create realistic expectations – there are some roles which may not be achievable.**



*'I can feel that I am contributing something to others and I believe that I have the positive regard of people whom I esteem. I am seen as a human being.'*

- Paul

## Alan's Story

Alan has been unemployed for several years and was having difficulty finding work due to a history of offences. He wanted to slowly get involved in something constructive to break out of the cycle he had found himself in.

He spoke to his mentor about voluntary work. Wythenshawe farm is near to where he lives and, as he has always loved animals, it seemed like the perfect opportunity and the obvious choice for volunteering.

Alan finds the work tiring and hard after being out of work for so long. He has various health problems but hopes that, despite this, he may still be able to progress into paid work as a result of his work at the farm. He would like to get advice on suitable training which will help him to move into employment.

**There is a wide range of voluntary opportunities out there – enough for anyone's aptitude and interests.**

*"It's giving me something to do, breaking the cycle, helping me to meet new people and gain new skills"*

- Alan at Wythenshawe farm



## Hami's Story

Hami is a 37 year old man with a previous history of drug offences. He decided to become a volunteer in order to give something back for all the help he had received.

Hami applied to volunteer with Manchester Drug Service. He had to have a period of being drug-free and not using the service himself. He was given exactly the same induction that is given to the full-time, paid staff. He escorts patients, who have drug problems, on visits, helps with administration work and sits in on group sessions where he finds the experience of his own past helps those who are now in similar situations.

An initial problem he found with his work was that he had difficulty with time keeping and would often sleep too late. The responsibility of his work, knowing that the people he helps were facing more difficult situations than himself, and the understanding and support of the staff have helped him greatly in overcoming this.

Hami hopes one day to find paid work but feels he needs to gain more courage first. He has, however, found the courage to go back to university and will be starting the second year of his Humanities degree, which he had to give up in the past due to his problems, in September. He is hoping that, eventually this will help him to gain employment as a drug and alcohol worker.

**Being part of a supportive team helps people gain confidence to do other things.**

## Thanks and acknowledgements

This booklet was researched and put together by Kerry Maskell and David Fisher at NEARIS, with contributions from many other people.

The original idea came from the Greater Manchester Offender Employment Learning and Skills Partnership Board. This board wanted to investigate the experiences of offenders in voluntary work, particularly in gaining useful skills and experience for employment.

NEARIS set up an Advisory Group with representatives from Probation, Tameside Volunteer Centre, Work Solutions, and Greater Manchester Against Crime. We contacted as many organisations as we could in Greater Manchester in order to gather stories. We also looked at existing initiatives in other parts of the country. Many thanks to the ex-offenders and other representatives who came along to our focus group workshop in July 2008 to review 'the story so far'.

This booklet was born out of what we heard during our research. We wanted to promote the sources of guidance and information around volunteering by ex-offenders. We also wanted to share some real life stories to provide inspiration. This booklet was launched at a 'Volunteering and ex-offenders' workshop on 30 October 2008 at the Manchester Mechanics Institute.



## About NEARIS

NEARIS (Northern Education and Resettlement Information Services) is a Greater Manchester charity. Each year NEARIS helps around 800 adults move from a disrupted past towards a positive future.

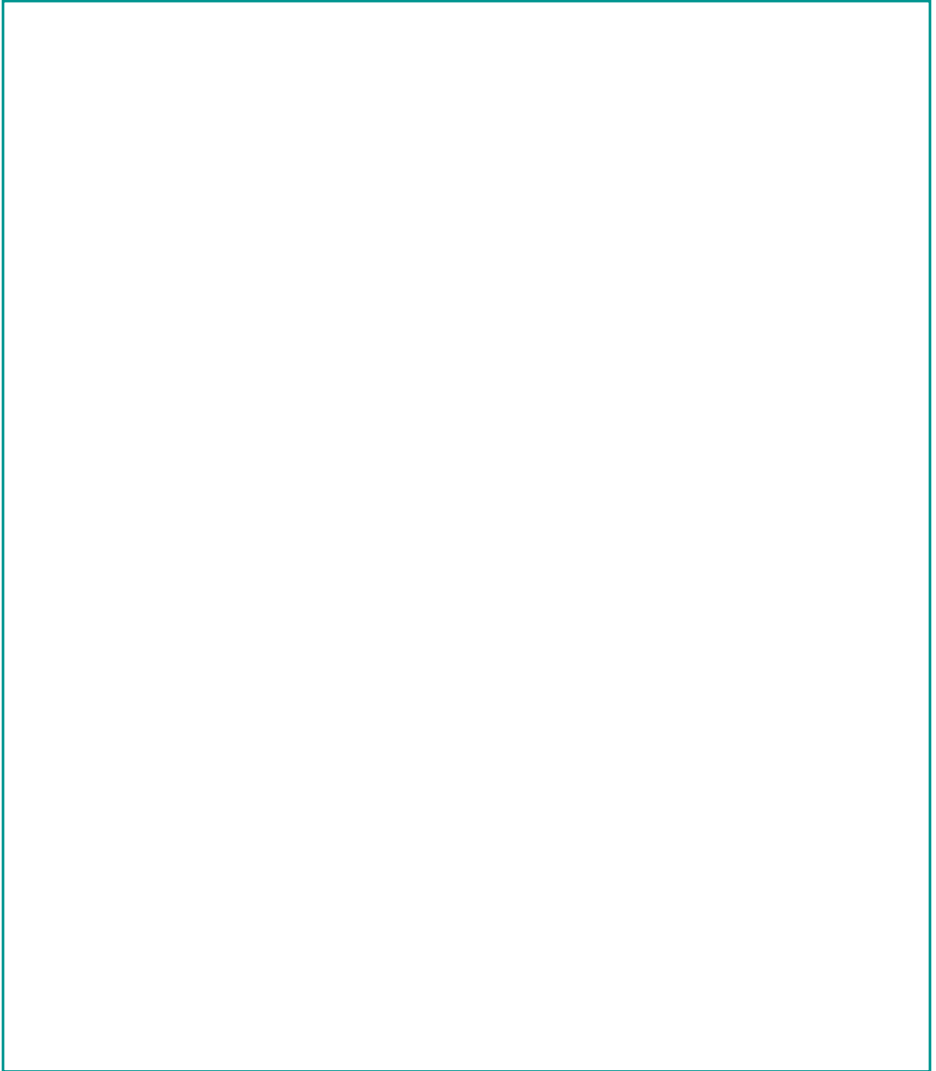
NEARIS works with adults after a period of disruption due to substance misuse, trouble with the law, homelessness, seeking asylum, or other problems. We offer a positive taste of education and training, via courses in hostels, day centres, probation offices and our own education centres. We run courses in computing, basic skills, art, music, drama, and workplace skills.

NEARIS believes in the potential that everyone has within them. All our students have low levels of confidence and skills, and many have had some kind of trouble with the law. With the right encouragement and training they are able to move on to a positive outcome such as a college course, voluntary work, or employment.

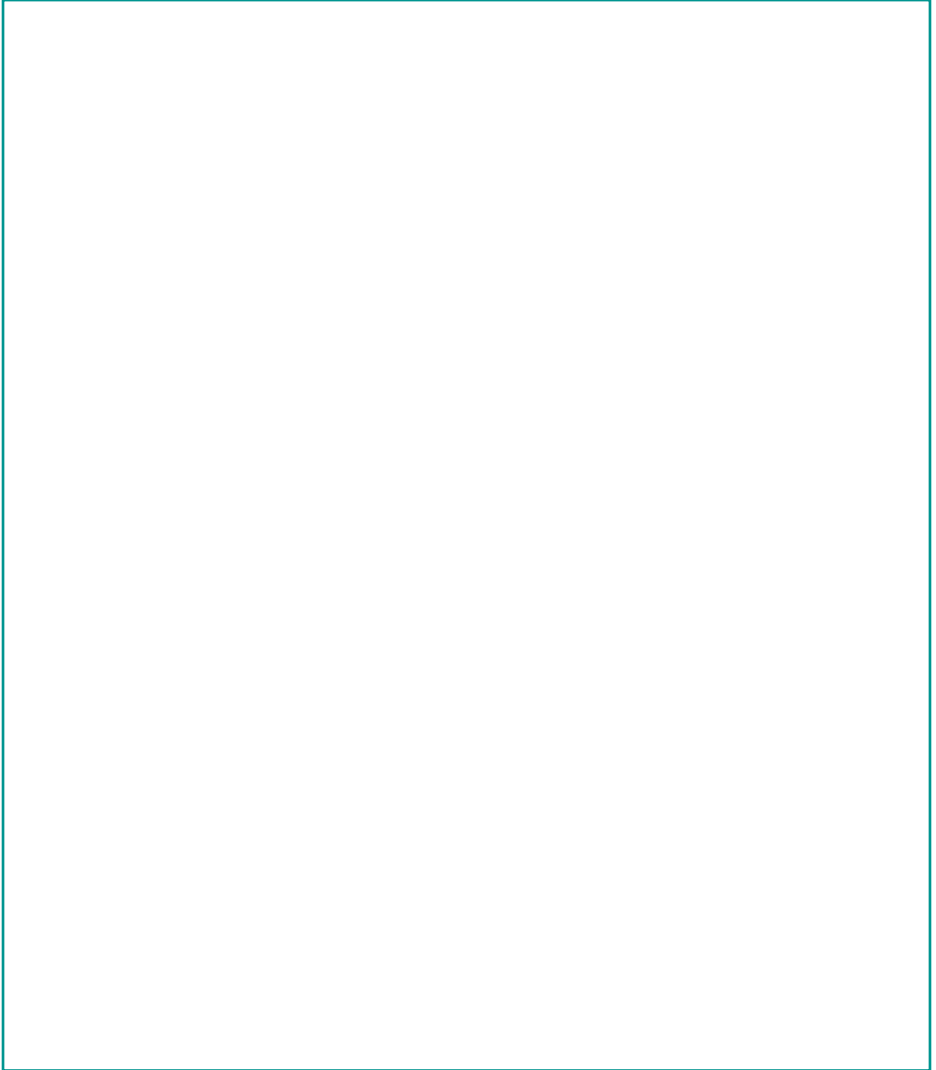
NEARIS benefits from the support of around 40 volunteers each year, and seeks to set a good example as a workplace where volunteers or staff with a criminal record can fulfil their potential.



## Notes



## Notes



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