# Growing and enhancing volunteering in Basildon

As a service we are committed to supporting, enabling and celebrating volunteering in all its diversity. Our Volunteer Centre is part of the Volunteer Essex network, encompassing 14 volunteer centres across Essex. In fulfilling this mission we undertake a range of functions including supporting the strategic development of volunteering, good practice development and brokerage.

## Brokerage

Through the Volunteer Centre’s activities we aim to ensure that the general public and all sectors are better informed about and have access to an effective and efficient brokerage service. Central to this work is matching both individuals and groups interested in volunteering with appropriate opportunities in the local community. We hold a comprehensive range of opportunities and offer potential volunteers support and advice matching their motivation to volunteer with appropriate volunteering opportunities.

We are pleased to advise that the appetite for volunteering remains as healthy as ever. This year

* 461 new volunteers from the Basildon borough registered with the Volunteer Essex website, an increase of 20%.
* We received 929 enquiries from volunteers and made 653 referrals (compared with 982 enquiries and 656 referrals the previous year).
* As always, some volunteers decide not to continue pursuing the role once in contact with the organisation. However, of those who completed the recruitment process for their chosen role, 86.1% went on to take a volunteer placement.

The Centre continued to be active in promoting volunteering and during Volunteers Week our Volunteer Coordinator organised a 5 day “marketplace” style event in Eastgate Shopping Centre. This enabled 17 local organisations to promote their work and recruit volunteers in a prominent location within the borough.

## Strategic Development of Volunteering

Through the activity of the Volunteer Centre and its engagement with local networks and decision makers we try to ensure that there is a positive environment in which volunteering is flourishing. To shape this environment we worked on three new initiatives:

* The South Essex Active Travel (SEAT) Project
* Volunteering in Pitsea, a Value Modes project in partnership with Basildon Council, Essex County Council and the Campaign Company
* Time Bank roll out

## The SEAT Project

**T**he South Essex Active Travel Programme is a partnership between Southend Borough Council, Thurrock Council and Essex County Council. The project aims to use targeted travel engagement with jobseekers, young people, newly recruited employees, students, lower socio-economic communities and volunteers so they can use active travel to get to work, training and educational opportunities and fully contribute to the local economy. The Volunteer Centre is supporting the project by working with local charities and volunteers to encourage and promote sustainable travel, as well as develop new volunteering opportunities related to active travel. This project is still in its infancy and we will continue to report on its progress throughout the year.

## Timebanking

In June we were delighted to receive the notification that the Essex Time Banks successfully secured an award of more than £350,000 from the National Lottery, via the Big Lottery Fund, to support Timebanking for the next four years.

Led by Community360, the Essex Time Banks partnership offers people the chance to exchange their time with one another. Each hour of voluntary work that helps the local community can be exchanged for a range of skills or opportunities offered by other members of the Time Bank (hour for an hour basis). All activities are valued equally. Exchanges can include learning a language, providing gardening or DIY skills, taking part in social events or befriending someone. Whatever the skill, talent or interest you may have, you can connect with another person through the Time Bank to share it or help them. Organisations can also join to get involved, with public agencies and businesses across the county sharing their time.

The funding will support our Time Bank to enable people to tackle loneliness and isolation, to help others to live independently at home, to improve opportunities for those who want to gain employability skills or improve their health and well-being.

The award of funding is a real boost to communities across Essex who will be able to participate in Timebanking. Everyone has something of value that they can give by sharing their time. Timebanking encourages stronger neighbourhood connections, creates friendships and assists people to reach personal goals.

Since that time we are pleased to report that the Basildon Timebank has grown steadily and we now have both individual and organisational members signed up in the Basildon, Billericay and Wickford area. We are increasing the number and location of our drop-in sessions and also investigating the development of a possible reward scheme in partnership with Active Essex.

Critical to the development of the local Time Bank is Tricia Marshall, a volunteer coordinator, so our thanks go to her for her fantastic contribution.

## Good Practice Development in Volunteering

To share, promote and celebrate good practice we reconvened the volunteer coordinators network. With coordinators and managers from across the area agendas have included group exercises on writing good volunteer role descriptions, organisational updates, volunteer week activities, and networking opportunities.

Last year we reported on the award of ISO 9001 accreditation to the Volunteer Centre network. Rightly celebrated, we have continued to embed these systems into our everyday practice in anticipation of our audit in 2018-19. The accreditation provides assurance to commissioners and funders, as well as members of the public and volunteer involving organisations, that the Volunteer Centre is providing a high quality and effective service.