



*Empowering people to transform their lives*



## Annual Report

2018 - 2019

*“Works for us has helped me gain the confidence I needed to move forward in my life. I realized I had more to offer than I thought. They are so friendly, helpful and encouraging”*

*“From the day I walked through the door I have been met with positivity, encouragement and above all friendship. Everyone here has your interests at heart. A wonderful place that really helped me to turn my life around. Thank you”*

*“I would like to thank everyone from Works for Us for all the support and comfort, I’ve been taking courses for the last three years, starting with ESOL and ending up in Art. The group made me feel welcome and helped me fit in. I would especially like to thank Susie the head of the Art Group for all her support, encouragement and understanding”*

*“Works for Us is a place that provides good advice, friendship and a place for learning”*

*“I found myself out of a job for the first time in over 30 years due to redundancy and felt like a rabbit stuck in the headlights with no direction as to where to go next. My CV was out of date, LinkedIn profile was blank and had no idea what to expect from an interview.*

*Works for Us changed all this with advice through 1-2-1 careers advice, courses exploring interview techniques, CV's and even advice on how to dress to impress. Staff and volunteers are welcoming and friendly and I now have the confidence to look for a new role knowing I have the skills to do so.”*

# Chairs Report

**Dear Friends,**

As it comes to the end of our 40<sup>th</sup> year, it is also our third, and final, year of project funding from the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund. The POP project has been successful and effective in achieving positive outcomes for our clients. Together with some ESF funding we have, during the last three years, engaged with over 950 clients; meeting and exceeding our initial outcomes targets, with over 175 people moving on to paid employment or further education/training.

The funding has allowed us to provide a range of support to our clients which includes ESOL, Computer Literacy, Interpersonal skills, Preparation for Work courses, building confidence through Art classes, one to one coaching, Dress for Success, practice interviews and volunteering opportunities. This year we have also managed to increase our reserves to a more sustainable level.

This year, we have also spent a significant amount of time in working towards securing future funding to continue our services and best meet the needs of our clients. We have focused on developing a proposal to apply for further funding from the National Lottery - with additional support from Milton Keynes Council and MK Community Foundation.

In order to inform the bid, a range of focus groups have been held with a wide cross representation of community members in Milton Keynes which provided valuable insight into what has worked well and what we need to change and adapt. The bid will be a joint project in partnership with Citizens Advice Milton Keynes with a view to establishing a 'One Stop Shop' (based at the Library in CMK). People will be able to get advice and help on money, benefits, housing and employment in one place at the same time. The insight gained from the focus groups has helped to steer the bid to deliver the most effective pathway for our clients. This new bid has also helped to start to deliver on one of our strategic objectives of finding a suitable partner to help improve our services to clients who are looking for work or wishing to change or improve their job.

Once again, I wish to convey my sincere gratitude to Works for Us Staff, Tutors and Volunteers without whom this would not be possible. This year we said farewell to Natasha Evans, our Supported Volunteering Co-ordinator who has moved to pastures new. A special thank you to our Funders and Supporters throughout this year - we are indebted to you. I am also extremely grateful to fellow Trustees and delighted we have two new Trustees on the Board, Chris Wood (Treasurer) and Nikki Goldman (KPMG), thank you for your input and support.

As we have come to expect, this year has had its own set of challenges to overcome and we are still here and delivering. We all look forward to what 2019/20 brings us.

**Alexa C Wilkinson, MBE**

**Chair of Trustees, Works for Us**

**March 2019**

## **Services and training offered**

The charity provides the following Services and training:

- Careers Information, Advice and Guidance
- Employability and progression support
- Volunteering/work experience – support to find appropriate roles to develop work-based skills and confidence.
- Job Clubs – supported job search, CV preparation and help with job applications
- Personal Development – Interpersonal Skills, Confidence building courses and Art workshops
- Basic skills– Computing and English for non- British clients (ESOL) classes
- Support to improve health and wellbeing - through access to NLP coaching and courses on Improving Wellbeing, Dealing with Stress & Anxiety and Making Positive Changes (A Solution Focused approach)
- Job related skills - Getting Ready for Work (GRoW) provides job related skills including identifying skills and strengths, CV preparation and interview techniques and skills coaching
- Access to one- to- one support and the provision of good quality work clothing (through the Dress for Success project) for interviews and for those starting work
- Access to external job-related services such as National Careers Service and the Neighbourhood Employment Project
- Support to improve health and wellbeing – through access to informal learning opportunities and clubs.

Most of our work is undertaken with those that are considered to be furthest away from the job market and who face multiple barriers or challenges to gaining secure and stable employment. We have a successful history of helping disadvantaged people - these include those: with low skills; from ethnic and migrant communities; with physical and/or mental health issues, having few or no qualifications; recovering from domestic violence; and, carers and lone parents. Many of the clients we see will be affected by more than one issue and the above list is not exhaustive.

## **Performance and Achievements**

This year, Works for Us were able to increase our provision of services and support (through additional funding) and our tutors include several professionals who have provided pro bono coaching support to our clients.

### **Big Lottery Fund – Reaching Communities (the POP Project)**

We have continued to provide our core services and have achieved successful outcomes on our third (and final) year of project funding from the Big Lottery ‘Reaching Communities’ Award. The Personalised Opportunities Package (POP) is a three-year project which aims to develop and improve a range of skills for people who are unemployed – in particular, those furthest away from the labour market. The project began in February 2016, and officially finished at the end of January 2019, however an accrued under spend has allowed us to continue running the project beyond this date.

The POP project has enabled us to provide an important service to help address the barriers that disadvantaged people face in gaining, and remaining in, work. Over the course of the project, we have engaged with over 870 clients, with 338 clients (38%) registering in this third year. Overall, we have met and exceeded our initial outcomes targets, with over 150 people moving on to paid employment or further education/training. Analysis of our client characteristics shows that we have a considerable spread across the different areas of Milton Keynes and that we meet a wide range of needs across our client base.

### **European Social Fund Community Grants Programme: Dress for Success Project**

During this year we also secured another six months’ funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) to run a tailor-made job-related support package (the *Dress for Success* project). Clients attended the Getting Ready for Work course where they received training in identifying transferable skills and strengths, creating a CV and developing interview techniques. Following this, they could also access one-to-one career related Information Advice and Guidance support; a session on how to present oneself at an interview; and a style consultation with our tutor followed by a set of good quality interview clothes. This project was extremely successful supporting 50 clients, with five gaining employment; eight moving onto volunteering, and 16 clients are now accessing further training with external education providers. Several have completed an entry level accreditation in Developing Enterprise skills, and one has also completed a level 2 qualification in Customer Service.

Core funding from Comic Relief (administered through the Community Foundation) has helped to strengthen our capacity this year. The funding paid for an extra day a week of management and administrative time and has made a substantive difference to our operations.

## **Supported Volunteering project**

We have also continued to demonstrate the importance of volunteering as a means to improving skills and confidence and helping people to progress towards employment. Our Supported Volunteering project was reconfigured to incorporate coaching sessions to retain more productive contact with clients, and our clients have benefited from the opportunities provided.

Since our move to the Point (December 2017), we have seen a slight change in the clients we support with an increase in the number of people dropping in who are either passing by or who have heard about us via word of mouth. To begin with, approximately half of our referrals were via the Job Centre Plus (JCP) – over time this proportion has reduced to just over a third - with 37% of our referrals now originating from word of mouth or other informal sources.

During this year we have continued to maintain strong and effective partnerships with other providers; partners across the sector; and, public sector agencies and have started to make some inroads into building contacts and connections across the commercial and private sector. Our most recent Matrix assessment (June 2019) identified our partnership working as effective and a particular strength of our approach.

## **Ongoing work**

A Capability review, undertaken in 2017, recommended the charity should actively look for opportunities to collaborate with a partner organisation to help build sustainability and further reduce its vulnerability. This year, we have made some positive progress in moving this forward and are in active discussions with a potential partner and researching possible funding opportunities.

We continue to make good progress on our current funded projects, together with embedding and strengthening monitoring and evaluation in order to identify local need and to inform future funding applications.

We wish to strengthen governance by recruiting additional trustees with specific skills.

We wish to deliver outreach provision in those areas of Milton Keynes identified where unemployment and child poverty levels are higher than the borough average and would like to have a greater focus on working with priority groups, for example, refugees and people with disabilities.

## **Plans for future periods**

Our plans for the period April 2019 – March 2020 are ambitious but achievable and we aim to continue to deliver our core services. In addition, we will:

- Continue to seek permanent premises where we can deliver services and generate income
- Seek new funding to flexibly deliver support and training for our clients
- Seek to maintain and strengthen the link between volunteering and unpaid work
- Enter into an arrangement with a local partner to explore more efficient ways of dispersing core costs.

## Financial Accounts Review

Year ended 31 March 2019	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total
<b>INCOME &amp; ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>			
Grants	-	76,470	76,470
Donations & Legacies	10,085	-	10,085
Fundraising activities	1,794	-	1,794
Investment income/interest	9	-	9
<b>TOTAL INCOME &amp; ENDOWMENTS</b>	11,888	76,470	88,358
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>			
Charitable expenditure	910	23,005	23,915
Support costs	4,070	62,943	67,013
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	4,980	85,948	90,928
<b>NET BEFORE TRANSFERS</b>	6,908	(9,478)	(2,570)
Transfer between funds	4,470	(4,470)	- -
<b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>	11,378	(13,948)	(2,570)
Funds brought forward	11,318	57,724	69,042
<b>Funds carried forward</b>	22,696	43,776	66,472

This year we continued to receive funding from a variety of sources – namely: the Big Lottery Fund (now known as the National Lottery Community Fund), the European Social Fund Community Grants Programme, Comic Relief and the Milton Keynes Community Foundation. We continue to identify relevant funding streams and are looking to diversify our income streams through collaboration in partnership with others; corporate fundraising and sponsorship.

### Fundraising and donations

This year Works for Us was able to support other charities and organisations by sharing their facilities, to which these organisations have paid a donation towards overhead costs. We also held a quiz night which was successful and raised funds on the night. Several members of staff and a friend of Works for Us took part in a half marathon to raise funds to pay for heaters for our offices. We were also able to apply for funds from several Milton Keynes Council Ward Councillors who recognise the support we provide to residents in their communities.

## About Us – The Team

The trustees 2018/19	Staff
Alexa Wilkinson - Chair	Marion Cole – Chief Executive
Yvonne Elliott – Vice-chair	Tracy Whitmore – Operational Manager
Chris Wood – Treasurer	Kelly Murdoch – Information Advice & Guidance Services Manager
Sam Bridger	Natasha Evans – Supported Volunteer Co-ordinator
Amanda Carter-Philpott	
Nikki Goldman	
Marie Maguire (Resigned 23 May 2018)	
Tutors	
Wamedh Abdulkereem	Jay Bassral
Tajinder Bhui	Susie Ford
Avril Francome	Arti Kakkad
Roy McDonald	Annette Norrish
Mehjabeen Rais	
Volunteers	
Debbie Buscaglia	Glen Brockwell
Maxine Brown	David Caswell
Maggie Clarke	Alex Connon
Jack Elliott	Jo Farmer
Michael Hawes	Lesley Henson
Wenda Hooton	Marnie May
Jackie McCracken	Karen Peach
Kelly Treadway	Gullnaz Usmani

It is with regret that we have had to say goodbye to Natasha our Supported volunteer co-ordinator whose successful project finished, we wish her all the best for the future.

Our volunteers are an integral part of our operations and this model of working continues to be successful as a stepping-stone into work. We currently have 12 volunteers working with us who help with our client registration sessions, Job Clubs, reception duties and administrative support. Our volunteers have also worked towards gaining qualifications including an accredited NCFE online level 2 IAG certificate. This qualification then helps us with registration sessions in addition to developing their skills.

We have also said goodbye to several long-standing volunteers most who have moved into paid employment but have continued to recruit additional volunteers who are taking on reception, administration and information, Advice and Guidance roles.



## Thank you for your support!

We would like to thank the individuals, organisations, companies and funders who have helped us this year – we really appreciate and value your support.

These have included:

**Mirus IT** who continue to provide invaluable support to us on an ongoing basis - and especially when IT problems arise.

**Evidence Talks** - Our thanks to Elizabeth Sheldon, Chief Executive who continues to support us in many ways.

**Soroptimists International** (Milton Keynes branch) who have funded some research for us this year and also provided us with bags of good quality clothes and outfits contributing to our range of clothes for our Working Wardrobe.

**Coaching Forever**. Roy McDonald and his colleagues who continue to provide pro bono coaching for our clients on a regular basis.

**Isotrak** – who have donated computer monitors and other IT equipment.

As always, our thanks to our patron, Dr Ann Limb CBE DL for her continued support.

**And finally**, a big thank you to all our volunteers who make an invaluable contribution to all the work we do!



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