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Volunteer Development Project

In this project, Music Alive aims to increase the number of volunteers involved in its work and develop their skills so that they can more effectively support Music Alive and fulfil their own aspirations.

This project has three main inputs:

- the creation of the post of full-time Volunteer Facilitator;
- the provision of a budget to support costs associated with volunteers - travel expenses, training expenses and support from Personal Assistants for some volunteers with disabilities;
- the upgrading of Music Alive's premises and resources - comprising setting up an accessible office/training space, provision of rest facilities and purchase of new computer equipment for use by the Volunteer Facilitator and volunteers.

The project outputs are as follows:

A full-time Volunteer Facilitator who will undertake the following roles:

- Create a structured range of interesting volunteering opportunities and activities that make a genuine contribution to the work of Music Alive.
- Publicise the scheme appropriately.
- Recruit volunteers through local networking with disabled and non-disabled groups and by distributing the printed materials.
- Manage the scheme including placing volunteers in appropriate roles and co-ordinating its smooth running.
- Support and supervise volunteers to ensure that they are able to achieve and develop in their roles, liaising with Personal Assistants where appropriate.
- Initiate individual and group training sessions that enable volunteers to improve and develop new and existing skills and abilities. The volunteer facilitator will conduct training themselves, both formally and informally, identify appropriate external training courses for volunteers to access and host 4 training sessions per year delivered by external trainers.
- Signpost volunteers to other opportunities locally.

Music Alive's premises and resources have been upgraded to create accessible facilities that can be regularly used by increased numbers of volunteers. It includes:

- New office/training space on a ground floor location including a self-contained bathroom and kitchen (work is in progress in adapting these facilities);
- This additional space provides for the flexibility to provide a rest area for volunteers for whom fatigue is part of their disability;
- 2 new computers - a PC for administration by the Volunteer Facilitator and volunteers, plus an Apple Mac for music-based volunteer activity. These utilise additional assistive technology (eg. specialist interfaces), plus hard drives for back-up purposes and a projector and screen so that IT training can take place in groups.

Expected Outcomes:

More volunteers have improved skills to participate in and support Music Alive work in providing opportunities in music for and with disabled people. Music Alive volunteers are (and will be) both disabled and non-disabled people who come from a wide variety of backgrounds and abilities. They include music enthusiasts, local musicians who value the opportunity to share their musical skills and people with specialist skills such as accountancy, IT etc. who can give valuable support to our work.

Music Alive exists for the benefit of children and adults with disabilities. Amongst its objects are to improve access to music for disabled people, to support disabled people to achieve more independent, fulfilled and integrated lives and to complement the work of other organisations and individuals who support people with disabilities. This project will enable us to achieve all of these aims: more volunteers will be able to be supported in a role at Music Alive, enabling them to gain skills and experience, and we will be able to run more creative music-making sessions as a result. Music Alive's services will better reflect the needs of disabled people by their direct involvement in shaping, designing and being part of the service we offer.

Music Alive will become a more robust and sustainable organisation with a better range of skills available that will enable us to offer a more comprehensive service for our volunteers and service users.

Other local organisations working with disabled children and adults and with volunteers will be able to access more volunteering opportunities for people with and without disabilities.

More CPD (Continuing Professional Development) opportunities will be available to more organisations and individuals.

Support for the project:

Finances are available for this work provided by funding from the Big Lottery Fund until June 2009.

A strong steering group exists including Music Alive staff, volunteers and three representatives from partner organisations.

Music Alive already has a pool of committed volunteers and an effective Volunteer Policy. Work has already been initiated to create and define volunteer roles.

Our music rooms are ideally suited to our activities and client group. We provide access to an inspiring range of musical instruments and technology to facilitate disabled adults and children to make music and develop their skills.

Music Alive has made contact with a wide range of relevant organisations and individuals that will enable the Volunteer Development Project to maximise its impact in the wider community.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Music Alive routinely collects monitoring information about our service users and volunteers, including information on disability, age, gender, cultural background and postcode. We also keep a log of events, workshops and visits that includes who attends and the kind of activity engaged in. For this project, the information will be collated by the Volunteer Facilitator and reviewed by the Steering Group, who meet on a quarterly basis.

The Volunteer Facilitator will collect qualitative information through volunteer reviews, project evaluation and feedback from the carers and support agencies of our service users and disabled volunteers. In this way, we are able to involve our service users and volunteers in measuring the progress of the project.