



# Hands & Gillingham Volunteer Centre

**Information Handbook**



# Hands & Gillingham Volunteer Centre

Cranford House  
24a Longley Road  
Rainham  
Kent  
ME8 7RU

Registered Charity No. 290169

## Office Hours

**VOLUNTEER CENTRE** - Monday - Thursday 9.00am - 4.30pm  
Friday 9.00am - 4.00pm  
Tel: (01634) 362119  
Fax: (01634) 264464

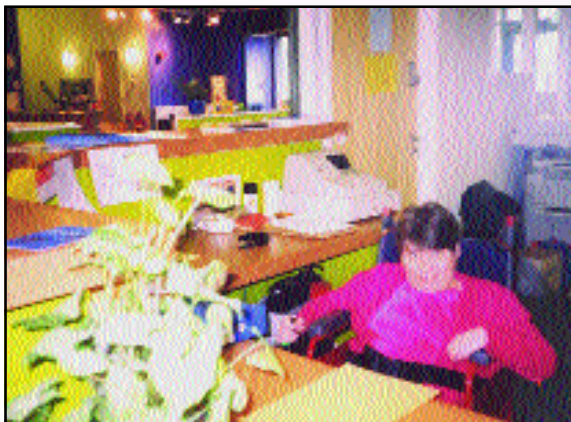
**COMMUNITY FRIENDSHIP** - Monday - Thursday 9.00am - 4.30pm  
Friday 9.00am - 4.00pm  
Tel: (01634) 362119

**HANDS TRANSPORT** - Monday - Friday 9.30am - 12.30pm  
Tel: (01634) 264464  
(24 hour answerphone when office is not staffed)

E-mail: [enquiries@gillinghamvolunteercentre.com](mailto:enquiries@gillinghamvolunteercentre.com)  
Web: [www.gillinghamvolunteercentre.com](http://www.gillinghamvolunteercentre.com)



# The Story of Hands and Gillingham Volunteer Centre



In 1969 Revd. Peter Absolon set up a good neighbours scheme from the front room of his house in Strood, which quickly became established and known to everyone throughout Medway as 'Hands'.

In 1973 Gillingham Hands operated from Parkwood and in 1985 was registered as a charity, becoming known as 'Hands and Gillingham Volunteer Bureau'. In 1991 it was located in a church hall in Trafalgar Street, Gillingham. The Bureau became known as a Volunteer Centre following its accreditation with Volunteering England in 2007.

The main duties covered volunteer recruitment and placement, volunteer drivers, shopping, minor decorating and other similar services for those unable to carry out such tasks themselves. Despite rather cramped conditions and a poorly fitting window, they were so committed to what they were doing that they stayed on, responding to calls from the public for help for several years.

## Strength-to-strength

With increased demand, it was realised that there was a need to expand and to look at ways to develop a caring, professional and vibrant organisation. Responding again to demand, the Centre became aware that there was a large number of people who were living in isolation and needed to make social contacts. And so, the Community Friendship project was established, assisted by grants from the Community Fund.

Eventually the Centre secured a move to more suitable offices in the Healthy Living Centre in Richmond Road, Gillingham, being seen as an essential part of local community services. Having outgrown its cramped offices there, the Centre has now moved to new offices in the centre of Rainham, where it has become a vibrant part of the local community.

The organisation has gone from strength-to-strength and the work force now consists of a Manager, a Volunteer Co-ordinator, a Project Manager and volunteers - who help run the Hands Direct Services, the data-base, statistics and administration for the Community Friendship scheme - plus of course approximately 60 of our own volunteers working in the community.



# Volunteer Centre

*Volunteer Work Development, Support & Placement*

**T**he Gillingham Volunteer Centre actively supports the ongoing development and expansion of all aspects of voluntary work and is involved in promoting public awareness and appreciation of the continuing need for the voluntary sector.

The Centre recruits volunteers by local advertising, publicity, word of mouth, talks and presentations and through the do-it.org website. Volunteers' records and all information held on both volunteers and clients is kept strictly confidential. Volunteers are interviewed on a one-to-one basis and asked to complete a skills register before being referred to one or more of the many local organisations, including our own direct services schemes.

## Aims and objectives

The basic aims of the Centre are to promote volunteering and to recruit, place and support volunteers. Over the years, we have found that everyone can contribute in some way, no matter how small, to voluntary work.

People of all ages and from all sections of the community can benefit from becoming a volunteer, giving people the opportunity to use their skills to help others. Volunteering can also help people make new friends, develop new skills, build up self-esteem and confidence and possibly lead to employment.

Hands and Gillingham Volunteer Centre is a fully accredited member of Volunteering England, following their guidelines, and also operates Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety and Vulnerable Adult policies. The Centre has also adopted the PQASO self-monitoring system to ensure it maintains its already high standards. The Centre liaises with other voluntary and community organisations as well as local statutory authorities.





# Hands

*Provides Practical Help to those in need*



**H**ands provides practical help and assistance to elderly and disabled people throughout the local community through the use of a dedicated group of volunteers.

## Community Transport Scheme

An important area of support is in providing a community transport scheme, operated by volunteer drivers who use their own cars to take clients to medical appointments, day-care centres, shopping, visiting friends or relatives - or a whole host of other places that people simply would not be able to get to on their own.

A mileage rate is charged to cover drivers' expenses, plus a small administration charge. Volunteer expenses are reimbursed, usually by the client, but in exceptional circumstances from our own limited funds.

## Befriending Scheme

Many elderly or disabled people are unable to get out much due to their infirmity, and so can become lonely. Our befrienders can visit them at home to bring in a little of the outside world. They may have a chat about everyday issues, enjoy a game of cards or encourage the client to contact old friends again.

## Gardening Scheme

For elderly and disabled people the sight of their overgrown garden, which once they carefully tended, can be depressing. It can also be a sign that a vulnerable person lives in the house. The Manager undertakes risk assessments before the gardeners are assigned their duties. Our team of volunteer gardeners undertake simple tasks to ensure the garden is tidy. They work under strict Health & Safety guidelines. The clients not only benefit from the practical help but also enjoy the company of a friendly volunteer. A small charge is made to cover expenses.

**Hands** also works closely with the statutory bodies, such as Social Services, local Health Authorities and Medway Council, as well as other local and national charities, in order to provide a wide range of services to the community. A recent addition to our range of services is in providing ESOL training to help newcomers from abroad integrate more easily into the local community.





# Community Friendship

*Volunteer Support for those in Isolation*

**T**he Community Friendship project was set up by funds from the Community Fund and aims to help those living alone and in isolation from the community. The scheme helps to fill the gap between simple befriending and statutory authority care.

The need for the scheme was identified by the many everyday difficulties experienced by clients who already used the services offered by Hands and Gillingham Volunteer Centre and other requests for help. The Manager matches and supports both befrienders and clients and, in appropriate cases, initiates support from other agencies.

Once befrienders have been introduced to clients particular matters and individual concerns are addressed and regular visiting times arranged at their mutual convenience. A key part of the Community Friendship scheme is to maintain regular contact between clients and befrienders to establish a strong bond and encourage participation in group or community activities. This greatly assists in helping people attain their personal goals, whatever they might be.

## Activity groups

The scheme runs regular groups in Gillingham, Rainham and Rochester offering a wide range of activities to encompass as many interests as possible. Guest speakers are invited to address the groups on a variety of subjects. Coach outings to places of interest are always well attended and actively encourage clients to meet other people and become involved in community activities.

The kind of people who have already benefited from the scheme include the recently bereaved or those who are suffering from depression or low self-esteem, but is open to anyone who feels isolated or alone in the community. Many members regain their confidence and self-esteem and go on to join other activities within the community. Some of them become volunteers themselves, either for the scheme or another voluntary organisation, while others go on to find employment.





## How does it all work?

**H**ands and Gillingham Volunteer Centre has a Board of Trustees which decides and implements the overall aims and objectives of the organisation. Working sub-groups of staff, trustees and volunteers look at fund raising, promotion, business planning and training.

As well as developing the work of the Volunteer Centre as a whole, the staff deal with the day-to-day administration and co-ordination of the activities of the organisation, its volunteers and clients.

Through our offices in Rainham requests for help from individual clients and community groups needing volunteers are matched with our volunteers, all of whom have been interviewed and assessed by the Centre.

### Fund raising

Hands and Gillingham Volunteer Centre is a non-profit making organisation and relies primarily on grants and donations to finance its administration and running costs.

Grants have been received from several funding bodies, including the National Lottery Charities Board, now known as the Big Lottery, Awards for All, Lloyds TSB, Henry Smith Foundation, the Alchemy Foundation, SEEDA and Medway Council. Additional money has been raised through collections, raffles, quizzes and other events.

Raising funds is always a challenge, with more and more charities chasing an ever-dwindling pot of money, but one way or another the organisation continues. In 2006 we decided to adopt a new approach to fund raising. We persuaded rock superstar and keyboard legend Rick Wakeman to stage a spectacular concert at Rochester Cathedral to support us. Not only did we raise much-needed funds, but we also raised our profile in the local community considerably through the wide-reaching publicity we generated. We hope this will be the first of many similar events in the future.



*Hands & Gillingham Centre gratefully acknowledges financial support from Medway Council, SEEDA and Awards for All.*

