

Event report

Event title: GL11 Open Day

- Date:** Wednesday 20 July 2011
- Time:** 2 to 7 p.m.
- Location:** GL11 Community Project, Fairmead, Cam, Dursley
- Staff:** Ann Wheeler, Jane McKerron, Viv Jones, Helen Stiley, Caron Whitlock, Zac McKerron
- Volunteers:** Shelagh Thomas, Eve Squire, Angie Fisher, Paul Ayland, Vera Ward, Vicky Harmer, Sandy Smith, Dave Butterfield, Coralie Wright, Stuart Heffernan, Frances Neale, Mary Mowforth.
- Exhibitors:** Stroud College, Allsorts, Carers Glos, Alzheimers Society

Aim of event: The purpose was to provide an opportunity for the whole community – residents, service users, organisations/agencies, partners – to come in and look at the whole “Glebe House” site where GL11 has been based for the last 10 years. GL11 has shared the site until a month ago with a day care centre which is now closed. Glos County Council has given GL11 the green light to take over the whole of the site and this is a very exciting opportunity to develop an additional range of sessional activities aimed primarily at adults with early memory loss and mild to moderate learning disabilities.

These new services, which will be in addition to GL11’s well developed training and education programmes, drop-in groups and volunteering opportunities, will be in place by October 2011.

Much work has been going on since the start of the year to ensure that many local community and organisations/agencies working in the field of adult social care have been included in discussions. A detailed Consultation Plan was drawn up and GL11 volunteers have played a major role in implementing this plan. The Open Day was the single largest event within that Plan and proved to be a great demonstration of staff, volunteers and the community working together to develop a range of exciting plans.

This Open Day provided the following:

- 1) An opportunity for a group of volunteers to work together, supported by staff, to raise awareness of the event – through the production and distribution of posters, flyers to households, questionnaires
- 2) An opportunity for volunteers and staff to plan, co-ordinate and host an event for the entire community, which attracted visitors from across the county, as we showcased the current and new work of GL11
- 3) An opportunity for local residents to visit informally, wander through the entire building and gardens, meet staff and volunteers – get a real sense of the wonderful facilities on their doorstep
- 4) The opportunity for residents to sign up to training courses, drop-in groups and volunteering
- 5) Community engagement across all age groups as we welcomed existing and new supporters to the work of GL11
- 6) An opportunity for residents to engage directly with exhibitors and other professionals attending

Preparation: 7 Volunteers attended an Introduction to Volunteering course at GL11 leading up to our Open Day, aimed at developing communication and team working skills. Community consultation was a practical element within the course - linked to the Open Day. The group worked together to develop, test and review questionnaires for local residents. They created posters and flyers to deliver locally.

Staff led small teams of volunteers in updating and re-designing notice boards throughout the premises, and in defining what activities should be happening in which rooms on the day. Rooms were cleared and tidied to make them available for defined activities. Large notices were displayed in windows up to 2 weeks ahead of the event, with bunting and 'welcome' notices on the day.

Staff and volunteers met to agree their roles on the day, and to ensure sufficient resources (eg refreshments, display boards, tables/chairs) were available. They also discussed how they would respond to questions about the premises, and future services, so that consistent and accurate information was given by anyone representing GL11.

The Stroud College tutor running a Simply Cooking course encouraged the students to make cakes which were available to visitors later in the afternoon.

Activities included:

Simply Cooking course session – courses run throughout the year

Reflexology for Over 50s – meets monthly

Arts and Craft activity – tile painting – suitable for all ages and abilities

Gardening – all ages and abilities

Bike Shed – young people

Sparkles – young people

Computers - we run regular IT courses throughout the year

Format: The Open Day started at 2 p.m. with the Project Manager welcoming visitors who quickly arrived from that point on, and kept on arriving! The Project Manager was keen to personally welcome everyone and introduce herself, with the intention of gauging how many people were residents, representatives from organisations/agencies, or service users of ours or other local groups/service providers. Visitors were then passed to a volunteer or member of staff and directed around the premises, encouraged to move around freely and ask questions.

We had systems in place to capture names and contact details of individuals wishing for us to get back in touch with them, or to sign up for courses, or as new volunteers, or just wishing to be kept in touch. We did not keep a record of everyone coming through the door – the intention was to have an informal event and not one where people were compelled to share their contact details with us. Such details were collected only as and where appropriate.

Over the 5 hours that the event ran, we welcomed in excess of 100 visitors. Staff and volunteers worked hard to ensure everyone was welcomed and given time. There were opportunities to talk to exhibitors and to observe or take part in some of a number of activities that were running that day – outlined below.

With the additional enticement of tea, coffee and home made cake (freshly made by Simply Cooking students) – many visitors lingered and appeared to really enjoy the social aspect of the day. A number of residents met up with friends they had not see for some while – and there was a true 'sense of community' throughout the event.

Information Stalls: Display Boards promoting the work of GL11 were available in the main foyer, supported by noticeboards throughout the building promoting current and future

activities. Exhibitors were able to hand out promotional information and had the opportunity to talk to, and answer questions from, residents, as well as network amongst themselves.

Evaluation: This was a real example of volunteers and staff working together for the benefit of GL11. It was a good example of multi-agency community engagement with partners. It was also a wonderful opportunity to let local people come in and see the excellent facilities that are here for them. The building itself has a strong reputation for delivering services for local people, but those services have varied over the years. We are now entering another phase in the building's history – with GL11's normal programmes continuing, but with the added benefit of new opportunities for vulnerable people to socialise and integrate through the provision of sessional groups and drop-in activities.

Outcomes:

For GL11: this has raised our profile considerably amongst organisations/agencies, particularly those involved with adult social care.

For our partner organisations: it has created opportunity for our partners to engage with each other in a way they have not previously – looking at reducing duplication, using resources more creatively and effectively

For the community: this has raised awareness of this part of the county and drawn attention to the wide variety of local community groups and all that they have been offering over many years, and to the exciting developments now taking place.

For individuals: this has provided something positive in the area in response to months of anxiety as we adapt to many changes in service provision – it is creating an opportunity for the local community to help shape and be part of something that we can all be proud of.

Ann Wheeler

Project Manager, July 2011