

VOLUNTEERING FUTURES: HELPING HANDS

Project Summary

Helping Hands is an ambitious 2-year project designed to enable more people to volunteer in Cumbria's theatres, museums, village halls, arts centres and events. It aims to achieve three things:

1. To improve individual and community wellbeing
2. To grow capacity & workforce diversity across the Cumbrian culture sector
3. To break down barriers to volunteering that exist across a large, complex, rural county

Helping hands is led by Cumbria Museum Consortium - a partnership between Tullie House Museum in Carlisle, Lakeland Arts in Windermere / Kendal and Wordsworth Grasmere. The project brings together 45 partners working together in 5 place-based Clusters across the county to bring about a step-change in volunteering. It is structured in a way that harnesses countywide partnerships while reaching deep into the county's villages, towns and cities. Helping Hands is about improving access to volunteer opportunities, wherever people live.

Helping Hands is based on a shared commitment to removing the barriers that often prevent people from volunteering. These include rural isolation, transport costs, childcare, physical access, language, racism, lack of confidence or familiarity with cultural settings. Acknowledging that Cumbria is a 'county of contrasts', each Cluster will identify and break down barriers local to them.

Arts Council England funding of £490,000 over two years will enable us to recruit 6 full time project staff: 1 Project Manager and 5 Inclusive Volunteering Leads, each responsible for a local Cluster. Employed by Tullie House Museum, the staff will be based in cultural venues around the county. Helping Hands will be supported by a wide range of partners:

Strategic: 7 larger Arts Council-funded cultural organisations including Theatre by the Lake in Keswick, Rosehill Theatre in Whitehaven, BarrowFull in Barrow in Furness, Brewery Arts in Kendal and Highlights Rural Touring Scheme based in Penrith. Five organisations will host Inclusive Volunteering Leads. Cumbria CVS & Cumbria County Council (Library Service) will provide expert support in volunteer recruitment and management.

Cultural Delivery: Over 20 museums, theatres, arts organisations, rural touring village halls which will create and host volunteer opportunities. They include English Heritage & National Trust museums.

Community Diversity: Organisations with expert knowledge of their communities and beneficiary groups including Cumbria Youth Alliance; Anti Racist Cumbria; Prism Arts; Multicultural Cumbria; Cumbria Deaf Association; Triple A (Autism) Project; University of Cumbria Institute of the Arts. They will help to co-design and promote volunteer opportunities to meet participant needs and to train staff in host organisations.

Network: Cumbria Arts & Culture Network; Cumbria Museum Directors Group and Carlisle's Thriving Communities network all working to share project opportunities and progress.

Helping Hands will begin in Spring 2022 with recruitment of project staff and creation of local Clusters. Project partners will then work together to recruit and support new volunteers, with the first in place in September 2022. The project will conclude in March 2024 with a conference to share what we've learned across Cumbria and beyond. In total we expect to recruit and support around 500 new volunteers. We'll also

enable staff in almost 30 Cumbrian museums, theatres and arts organisations to sustain inclusive volunteering into the future.