

1998

Swansea
University
Student
Community
Action



Imagine as you are read this, (if you don't have any of these disabilities), that you can't hear any of the sounds around you, or that you can't see anything and someone is reading this to you.

Or that you can't hold the booklet because of a disability, or you're in a wheelchair; would any of these things make you a different person? Of course not; but you'd find people treated you differently.

In Community Action, in order to treat people as people, we view our work not as "helping" people, but working with those who have social, physical, mental or emotional disabilities, for a beneficial experience that we hope works positively for everyone.

So, whilst you're at university, don't isolate yourself from those who are isolated without a choice.

Swansea Student Community Action (S.S.C.A.) is committed to equal opportunities for all people to be fully involved in our work. We recognise that discrimination exists in all levels of society, including at University, and that discriminatory practice leads to isolation. We are aiming to fight this, especially within S.C.A., by taking positive action to move towards redressing the balance. The chance to participate is open to anyone, regardless of age, gender, physical ability, race, sexual preference, colour or religion and we would positively encourage anyone who feels discriminated against to feel able to take part in S.C.A. We strive for all our activities and publicity to reflect this, and welcome any comments or criticisms.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome (or welcome back) to Swansea. This pack is to introduce you to the work of Swansea Student Community Action and how you can get involved.

Swansea Student Community Action (SSCA) aims to establish and develop positive links between students and the community. This is done by students actively giving part of their time, energy, ideas and enthusiasm freely (i.e. unpaid) to help others. Through this process you will learn many new things as well as building positive relationships with people from different communities.

HOW IS THIS DONE ?

Through community projects, some of which are linked into existing community-projects. These are all listed later in the pack.

SSCA believes students (as well as having a role to play as volunteer within the projects) should be encouraged to be organising all of SSCA's activities, and to be part of the organisation.

STUDENT-

The structure of SSCA reflects the needs of the community. The Executive Committee, comprised of students who decide on policy, new initiatives, etc. The Chair of this is **LIZ GILLETT**.

Each project is co-ordinated by a project manager. These people meet to discuss the project at a regular Forum.

The Board of Management consists of student trustees and deal with the day to day running of the organisation.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Welcome (or welcome back) to Swansea. This pack is to introduce you to the work of Swansea Student Community Action and how you can get involved.

Swansea Student Community Action (SSCA) aims to establish and develop positive links between students and the community around us. This is done by students actively giving part of their time, energy, ideas and enthusiasm freely (i.e. unpaid) to work with others. Through this process you will learn many new skills, as well as building positive relationships with people in Swansea's communities.

HOW IS THIS DONE ?

Through community projects, some of which are student-run, others are linked into existing community-based organisations. These are all listed later in the pack.

SSCA believes students (as well as having the opportunities to volunteer within the projects) should be involved in running and organising all of SSCA's activities, including managing the organisation

STUDENT-RUN

The structure of SSCA reflects this belief. Firstly there is an Executive Committee, comprised of a group of interested students, who decide on policy, new initiatives and day-to-day issues. The Chair of this is **LIZ GILLETT**.

Each project is co-ordinated by a student or team of students, and these people meet to discuss project issues at the Project Leaders' Forum.

The Board of Management (half of whom are students) act as trustees and deal with budgeting and staff issues.

STAFF

SSCA employs two Workers who offer advice, support and assistance to you in your involvement with SSCA. **JOHN EVANS**, as full-time Co-Ordinator, draws together all the activities and **GINA THRELFALL**, our part-time Admin Worker, is responsible for secretarial back-up and the data-base.

OFFICE AND NOTICE BOARD

The office is situated on the 1st floor of Mandela House (Students' Union) opposite the Coffee Bar. We have an open office which is open from 10am to 4pm for advice, information or just a friendly chat.

The notice board is at the front of Fulton House. All notices to do with SSCA are put on this.

HOW DO I GET STARTED ?

At the core of SSCA's existence is our Statement of Equal Opportunities, that every person is able to be involved in every opportunity within SSCA. We are constantly trying to make the organisation accessible, for example we have a bus with a wheelchair lift.

Steps to starting:

1 **READ THROUGH THIS PACK AND CHOOSE A FEW PROJECTS THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN.**

Think about

- What type of work suits you best? A group of noisy kids, on your own, befriending a person, a structured place or freedom to do your own thing.
- What time do you have available? Don't over commit yourself. Do you prefer one weekend a term or a couple of hours a week.
- How confident do you feel about the tasks? Don't be put off by your fears, because SSCA is all about new experiences and learning. However, the danger can be jumping in the deep end without thinking things through first.

2 **FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT WORK AND HOW TO GET INVOLVED.**

SSCA's office in the Students' Union is where the Workers are based, so use this resource to help you decide. You can also leave notes for Project Leaders here.

Find out when projects meet and where. It's up to you to go along to enable you to get involved.

N.B. Be clear about the commitment the project needs. Please don't start a project where a strong commitment is needed if you're unsure. Come to the office to talk about it.

3 REGISTER WITH SSCA AND START THE PROJECT.

Fill in the Registration Form and hand it into the office once you're sure which project you want to do.

Some projects will have training for you before you start direct work, others may have a short induction.

4 GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO SETTLE DOWN.

Things may not fall into place instantly. Once you've begun a project, you'll need time to settle in; to make relationships with people; to get into a routine. If you're not comfortable, talk to the Project Leader, or the SSCA Co-Ordinator.

Things to note:

- SSCA pays all volunteers' expenses (including travel), claim back what you pay out. Details are available in the office.
- Be aware of the project/organisation's principles. Your own attitudes may be challenged, but talk it through with the Project Leader.
- If you have any grievances or complaints, then speak firstly to the Project Leader. If you're still not happy, then to the Co-Ordinator.

ENJOY WHAT YOU'RE DOING. YOU SHOULD HAVE FUN, CHALLENGE AND LEARNING.

5 IF YOU WANT TO GIVE UP A PROJECT, TELL SOMEONE

PLEASE don't just give up as it can do a lot of damage within a project. Tell someone.

Don't forget, the office and the Workers are there for you.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

HOPPITS HOLIDAYS

Two weekends and two day trips each term. Meets Mondays 6.30pm in College Bar.

Hoppits works with children and young people with learning difficulties (or mental handicaps) in two age groups of 6-14 years and 14 years upwards. The weekends are designed to be interesting, challenging and fun, and everyone who goes has an excellent time. People usually go on one weekend a term, so the commitment is not high.

FRIENDS IN ACTION

At times you are available. Support meetings every 2-3 weeks.

This project involves befriending young people (18+ years) with learning difficulties, who because of practical issues find socialising a challenge. Volunteers take people (on a one-to-one basis) to the cinema, the pub, bowling etc. It is a very rewarding project but needs regular commitment.

FRIENDSHIP HOUSE

Tuesday 6.30pm - 8pm. Meet at Fulton House steps.

Teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills to adults with learning difficulties. Adults labelled "mentally handicapped" are often wrongly viewed by society as mentally restricted. However, the case is that, due to a variety of reasons, someone with learning difficulties needs more time to learn life skills. Often, because of institutional care in their lives, these opportunities are and have been very limited, and Friendship House is an example of ways in which to introduce these skills.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

PHAB CLUB (Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied)

Monday 7.15pm - 10.00pm. Meet on Fulton House steps.

PHAB is a social club for students and for young people with physical disabilities. People with a physical disability still face social isolation, and this club aims to break this down through activities (such as visiting the cinema, bowling, the pub etc.) and building relationships. It's also good fun!

SIGN LANGUAGE COURSE

Wednesday 6.30pm - 8.30pm. Venue: details from SSCA office.

This is a 25 week course that lasts the whole year. The Tutor - Charlotte, is deaf herself and her course covers the alphabet, numbers and the signs in everyday use to communicate with people who are deaf. Also involved are trips to the local deaf clubs, and some study time at home. The course (run through the Adult & Continuing Education Department) costs £6-00 and starts on Wednesday, 14th October.

READING PROJECT

Any time you have available

There are a number of students at the University who are visually impaired (blind or partially sighted). As such they need their text books recorded onto tape. If you have any time and would like to volunteer, contact either **JOHN EVANS**, the SSCA Co-Ordinator, or **DR. R. THOMAS** in the Admissions Department in the Abbey.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

GINGERBREAD

Fridays 7.30pm-9pm. Brynmill Community Centre, St. Albans Road.

This is a club run for children of single parents who meet as part of the Gingerbread organisation. The activities at the club include games, craft, drama, as well as developing friendships with the children.

CWM SWIMMING CLUB

Thursdays 5.30pm - 8.30pm. Meet in SSCA office.

The Cwm club takes about 8 children (6-14 years) swimming to the local Leisure Centre. The children are from a large estate in East Swansea and are very challenging in terms of their attitudes and behaviour. The project is an active and rewarding experience.

TUESDAY NIGHT CLUB

Tuesdays 6.00pm-8.30pm. Meet on Fulton House steps.

This project works with young people (14-17 years) in Bon-y-Maen, East Swansea. It works on an outreach basis (i.e. it's not based in a building) to build relationships with the teenagers. The project aims to tackle some big issues in the lives of the young people and needs people committed to the work. So if you're looking for a challenge, here it is!

KIDS AWAY

Weekend and day trips. Meet on Wednesdays 12.30 in College bar.

Kids Away have 3 weekends each term, for children in age groups of 6-8, 9-12, 13-15. You'll probably have the chance to attend one a term. The children are referred through Social Services, and the aim is to give them an enjoyable, memorable holiday. The holidays have been to Stratford, London, Bristol as well as within Wales.

POOH BEAR

Mornings or afternoons. Takes place in individual schools.

People work with children in primary schools in Swansea giving valuable attention to children with special learning needs. As a volunteer, SSCA pays for your transport to the schools; this needs a regular weekly commitment in the responsibility towards the children's development

BUNCH OF GRAPES

At times you are available. Based in Singleton Hospital (next to university)

This is a new project, involving people visiting children in hospital, providing play activities and games. Hospital can be a traumatic experience for children, and hopefully a positive contact can help children through the experience.

CRECHE

At times you are available. In Union Creche on campus.

Students with children are provided with Creche facilities on campus, and to back up staff in providing one-to-one contact with children, and for play and games. SSCA volunteers spend time in the Creche, in working with these under-5's, many of whom are from overseas, the aim is to assist in their understanding of and use of the English language.

WORKING WITH ADULTS

LEARNING IN THE COMMUNITY (LINC)

At times you are available. Details from SSCA Office.

This project links volunteers with people in the local community for whom English is a second language. Many of these are Asian women, and as well as teaching language skills we also share cultural experiences. Also there are places working with Asian children in local schools developing language skills.

DINAS FECHIN CLUB

Thursdays 6.30pm onwards. Meet on the steps of Fulton House.

This project works with people who are homeless and in temporary accommodation (a Centre called Dinas Fechin) run by Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless (SASH). It's a social club which is great fun. Some of the people have quite challenging attitudes, but it is extremely rewarding.

HOMELESS SHELTER

December - February

This is an emergency night shelter run by SASH for people who are homeless over the winter. Volunteers are needed for the night shifts, to talk with those using the Shelter. Details from the Dinas Fechin Project Leader or John Evans.

MIND DROP IN CENTRE

***Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday 10.30am - 1pm.
Wednesday evening 7pm - 9pm.***

Drop in Centre, St. Helen's Road.

This is a social centre for people recovering from a mental illness. Volunteers help serve refreshments, play board games or just have a chat. If you'd like to help run activities there is plenty of scope.

CEFN COED VOLUNTEERING PROJECT

At times you are available. Cefn Coed Hospital, Cockett, Swansea.

This involves befriending people who have a mental illness. The volunteer organiser at the hospital offers close support for people, and many of those who have built relationships in the past have really enjoyed the project.

WORKING WITH ELDERLY PEOPLE

GARDENING & DECORATING

Wednesday, 2pm - 5pm. Meet in SSCA office.

This project is a practical way of providing help for elderly people, by offering a basic gardening and decorating service. You don't need to be highly skilled, just able to push the mower. It's great fun and there's a good team spirit amongst the volunteers who give real practical, and much needed, help.

VISITING THE ELDERLY

Thursdays, 2.30pm. Meet in the SSCA office.

A weekly visit to elderly people at a nursing home near the University. This time is not set in stone, if you want to do this project at another time, ask in the office. The people really appreciate the visit and it soon becomes a focal part of their week. As such the commitment to the project is quite important.

AGE CONCERN LIFELINE PROJECT

At a time when you are available. SSCA office.

Many elderly people want to stay in their own homes, yet can face isolation especially in emergencies. Age Concern instal telephones with emergency pendants, for elderly people. Volunteers then follow up by going to the person's home to explain the use of the 'phone. Volunteers get the training and support needed for this task.

BRUNSWICK STREET RESTAURANT

At a time you are available. Brunswick Street Methodist Church Hall (Brynmill).

The restaurant is a place for elderly people to meet and socialise, and volunteers can help serve food, play games or chat. Excellent fun, and guarantees a wider circle of friends!

OTHER PROJECTS

TULATH HOUSE

At a time you are available. Tulath House, Sketty Road, Sketty (near Hendrefoilan Student Village).

This is a house for young people, providing both a range of activities as well as a home. The young people have a variety of special needs - some emotional, some with learning difficulties. Volunteers can run activities or befriend young people.

CO-OPERATIVE YOUTH INITIATIVE (CYI)

Watch SSCA board (front of Fulton House) or office for details.

CYI works in local schools to promote the ideas of co-operation as a foundation for business and communication skills. When there is a big presentation, CYI need volunteers to work with groups of 10-15 school kids on basic exercises; all training is provided + expenses.

IN-TANDEM

Wednesday afternoons (although this is not regular).

This gives people with a visual impairment a chance to ride a bike. Volunteers take the front of the tandem, and enjoy the ride. Riding in all sorts of venues, In-Tandem is great fun; and there are plenty of opportunities to practise beforehand.

FIRST AID

We offer First Aid courses through St. John Ambulance Brigade.

The first course will be run during late October/early November.

See notice board for details.

ONE-OFF EVENTS

If you are unsure how much time you want to, or can commit, there are a variety of one-off events throughout the year where you can volunteer for just the event (and any training needed).

These include:

INTEGRATED ACTIVITY DAYS - for children, some with special needs. These are one day events with activities such as face-painting, a bouncy castle, disco, party food etc.

CHRISTMAS PARTIES (Hoppits & Kids Away) - two parties 6-14 years and 14+ years, with disco, games, Father Christmas and all the rest!

CHILDREN'S PARTY - in conjunction with RAG, held mid-November.

TEA DANCE for elderly people.

SSCA also hold a 'Community Action Week' at the end of January which includes workshops on a variety of issues and skills.

TRAINING & SUPPORT

TRAINING

It is important when you start, and as you progress in your volunteering, that you feel equipped to do the job. For this you may need some information and practical training. The projects often offer their own training, so please attend when you can. They often have regular meetings which are important for you to feel confident within the group. Try to attend these to give yourself time to fit into the group, and you will reap the benefits. SSCA runs a number of training events. Do attend these. Also, if you want training, please ask, as we can always try to arrange training sessions.

SUPPORT

As a volunteer you have a right to be supported in the work that you're doing. This may come in the form of information, training, a chance to feed back your thoughts or feelings to co-volunteers, the Project Leaders or the Workers. This can be done by informal chats or at meetings. To be effective in what you're doing, get support to help you move forward in your community work. SSCA consists entirely of volunteers, so the collective support we can give each other only enhances our effectiveness.

ABOUT THE SCA NETWORK

Swansea is one of a network of Student Community Action Groups throughout Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England. These are divided into 9 regions and we are part of the South Wales/South West region. We elect regional Reps onto the Student Community Action Network Committee (SCANC) which deals with policy on a national level. The whole network is serviced by three Workers at the Development Unit in London called SCADU.

A few notes and helpful hints about getting involved...

Think about what type of work you want to do, and about yourself - would working with a group of noisy kids, or quietly on a one to one basis, suit you best?

Give the project a chance, it may take you a few weeks to settle in.

Make sure you are clear about what you are taking on, the commitment in terms of time and energy. Ask others involved.

If you feel unhappy with the project, lack of training etc. please talk to any one involved in S.C.A. or use the volunteer support sessions- if you're not getting anywhere, it's likely those you're working with aren't either.

Make sure you are never 'out of pocket' - claim expenses.

Occasionally you may be told things in confidence, please respect this confidentiality.

Be aware of the principles of the organisation with which you are going to volunteer, and how it runs.

If you decide to leave, please tell someone.

