



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
Scotland

Name: Visibility

Profile: Charitable organisation providing a range of services for visually impaired people.

Size: 43 employees, 33 volunteers

Location: Glasgow and surrounding local authority areas

Website: www.visibility.org.uk



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Fiona Sandford, Chief Executive

Background

Visibility as an organisation has been around for more than 140 years. It started off as The Mission to the Outdoor Blind and has evolved into today's dynamic, forward-looking organisation, passionate about the people it serves.

The move from a philanthropic organisation to one committed to assisting visually impaired people to remain independent, evolved over recent years. During this period we went through a major rebranding exercise changing from Glasgow and West of Scotland Society for the Blind to Visibility. This coincided with the loss of a major source of funding.

The loss of funding resulted in a number of staffing redundancies in management and support services, which made it a difficult and turbulent time for the whole organisation. However, the loss of funding meant that the organisation was no longer tied to previous restrictions and new opportunities opened up.

Over the next few years we entered into new areas of work with a number of different partners. Staffing numbers grew and a large investment was made in training, developing and supporting staff through this period of change and growth. We reviewed and improved communications and working practices. We also emphasised the importance of work/life balance by implementing a flexi-time system and flexible working policy open to all staff.



Why Investors in People?

The process of contracting for services through Local Authorities highlighted the need for a recognised standard of quality and Investors in People served this purpose well.

It was also a useful framework in determining the very positive outcome of the organisation's investment in learning and staff development. The work we did towards gaining the Standard was also very helpful in a subsequent inspection by the Care Commission.

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Finally, we recognise that it is important for donors to know that we value our staff and Investors in People is an identifiable way to let people know that Visibility is a good employer.

What are the benefits?

Adoption of best practice policies has resulted in an extremely low staff turnover rate and very low absenteeism.

The outcome of the Investors in People assessment showed that staff feel valued and supported and as a result we have a very highly motivated workforce.



What difference has achieving the Standard made to your organisation and the way it works?

Achievement of the Standard sends a very positive message to staff, directors and volunteers. It makes the organisation more attractive to prospective new staff and volunteers. In the competitive world of fundraising having the Investors in People logo definitely puts the organisation at an advantage.

What is your overall philosophy about your relationship with your staff?

The staff of visibility are its main asset and we strive to continue to protect this asset by rigorous recruitment and selection procedures, targeted training and development for existing staff and a supportive and trusting environment in which staff flourish.

How do you reward people who have shown special initiative?

We believe that all staff play an important part in our work. Rather than reward individuals, we celebrate the success of the organisation as a whole.

One way we do this is through team building days – the first of which took place held in 2004 at Cumbernauld Outdoor Activity Centre. It was an opportunity to bring together office and community-based staff and build on the team building work throughout the year. We decided to make it an annual event and in 2005 we headed for Loch Lomond with Walk about Scotland.



What would you say to anyone considering Investors in People?

Visibility's mission is to listen and respond to people affected by sight loss to promote choice and independence by provision of services tailored to the individual. For us to successfully develop and deliver our services, it is essential that staff are motivated and enthusiastic about their work. It is also important that we recruit the right people and retain our staff.

Investors in People is a clear and recognisable indicator that we value our staff, therefore it helps us deliver our mission.

I would definitely encourage organisations to go for Investors in People. The process helps individuals see where they fit into the organisation and that their contribution is valued. It was a very motivating experience.

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