**Improving Lives Officer**

**Background Information**

The launch of the UKSPF in Coventry at the start of 2024, is a green light for the development of the social economy for the city. Awarded to Voluntary Action Coventry, the charity championing community resilience, the focus will be to support residents to participate in social action and to showcase volunteering opportunities and the achievements of the city’s good causes.

There will be a series of exciting volunteering events across the city, where participants can come and try different volunteering activities to increase their confidence and well-being. There will be training, guidance and one to one support provided. The activities will be confidence boosting and can act as a stepping stone into potential employment.

The launch of the UKSPF in Coventry is a real boost for the future of volunteering here in Coventry. Those that face barriers daily, will receive specialist support to access volunteering, training, and employment opportunities. Through this fund, causes across the city will be uniting to provide high-quality volunteering opportunities for Coventry people.

**About The UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

[The UK Shared Prosperity Fund](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus) is a central pillar of the UK government’s Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. [Find out more here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus)

**About Voluntary Action Coventry**

We influence change and innovation in systems and services locally, to shape a more fair and equal future and improve people's lives. We do this by encouraging resilience in communities, supporting people to build their capacity and enabling them to do more for themselves. We’ve been doing this in Coventry for 65 years, enabling thousands of people to make a contribution/play their part. In 2023 we relocated to Harp Place, Sandy Road, Radford. [Read our annual report here](https://issuu.com/chatcentral/docs/annual_review_0908)

**Our Improving Lives project**

We will deliver our Improving Lives courses to up to at least 65 participants, courses usually have 8-12 participants, participants will be drawn from the Coventry population that include a combination of:

* People who have a disability or long-term health condition;
* People aged 50 years and over;
* Economically inactive and low paid women;
* People whose ethnic origin is not White British, including those recently arrived in the UK;
* People with other complex barriers to attaining and sustaining employment – for example - those with recent or current criminal convictions, people experiencing substance dependency, people who are victims of domestic abuse, people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
* People with low confidence/self esteem

The Improving Lives course consists of 12 structured sessions of engaging activities, discussions, visits, and support. Additionally, participants can access one-to-one support and guidance to help them with volunteering or employment barriers.  The course aim is to support participants to focus on their futures and realise their potential, improving confidence in their own skills and abilities and what they have to offer, and to learn about and practice elements necessary for finding, applying for, and securing volunteer or work roles.

What participants will gain from the course:

* Know more about different volunteer roles, community groups and services in Coventry.
* Identify the benefits of volunteering for well-being and how they can use volunteering experience to transition into employment.
* Take part in group visits/volunteering activities to different organisations that involve volunteers to build on their strengths and skills.
* Receive advice and guidance on planning their volunteer and/or employment journey.
* Gain support to develop a CV and to practise application forms and interviews for volunteer roles.
* Know how to use VAC’s volunteer database: a system that informs participants of volunteering opportunities and connects them to voluntary organisations who need volunteers.
* Increased confidence and well-being through volunteering.

On-going site visits and additional drop-in peer mentoring sessions will review client’s progress and support job search.