

What difference can a day make? We'll show you...

CSV Make a Difference Day is the UK's biggest annual day of volunteering! Volunteer Centre Newcastle Positive Choices project decided to have a day to promote wellbeing and positive mental health through volunteering. We contacted all the organisations we support and asked them if they had a project we could complete in one day.

Make a date to make a difference...

We selected our project and we set the date for Friday 23rd October and started to advertise. We specifically wanted to get people that wanted to have a go, meet new people and develop confidence from joining in.

Unfortunately with just one week to go the original project had to be withdrawn – so we had to come up with a Plan B and quick!

Getting involved...

We contacted one of our partners Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle to see if they could help rescue the day – and thankfully they could! Rhoda and Alene the coordinators went away and discussed how they could get involved and combine their expertise with the Green Gym and our Make A Difference Day potential volunteers.

The Green Gym in Leazes Park is part of the New Leaf New Life Portfolio funded by the Big Lottery



We made a difference... volunteers from Volunteer Centre Newcastle Positive Choices, Groundwork and Side by Side



Lort Burn: Before



Lort Burn: After

Fund and hosted by the North East Strategic Health Authority and is one of a range of projects across New castle and South Tyneside.

The response from Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle to our plight was fantastic. They organised with Adam Greenw old, Leazes Park manager, for us to go to Leazes Park for our Make a Difference Day event. They also supported us to complete the risk assessment and produced the lists of tasks for the day.

Volunteering...

As a charitable organisation Groundwork South Tyneside and New castle really value the fabulous work our volunteers do in the community. The Green Gym operates at three parks in New castle and promotes the impact that volunteering can have on your wellbeing and mental health.

Positive Choices our new project at the Volunteer Centre also promotes the positive impact getting involved can have on your life. Providing encouragement and support for individuals to get stuck-in!

What a Difference we made...

The two groups met in the Park, where Adam the Park Manager explained our task for the day was to clean the art installation "Lort Burn". Tom Grimsey's sculpture is part of the city's Hidden Rivers public arts project, which comprises five works of art, inspired by the large numbers of small rivers, or burns, which flow towards the Tyne beneath the city. The Lort Burn consists of:

- A ceramic source pool with metal sculptures representing the water droplets that can also be used as public seating.
- A 'stream' of pigmented terrazzo slabs scattered with inlaid ceramic and steel flowers alternating with planting areas with real flowers.
- A scattering of steel flowers along the pathways, leading into the lake - a stopped up section of the Lort Burn - and out the other side towards Richardson Road.

Our task was to clear away the damage caused by the autumnal



Discovering hidden treasures



Many hands make light work



Hiding beneath the leaves...



...a pathway of flowers

leaves, edge the slabs and clean them to restore their colour and vigour, and if we could to plant some flowers and bulbs to add even more colour.

Despite the grey sky and the near threatening rain everyone quite literally mucked-in; chatting as they mopped, slopped and wiped. Others raked leaves and filled compost bags, helped by people they had just met. Some picked litter and others offered words of encouragement and banter.

After two hours the pathway became clearer and the mops muckier; leaving a trail of shining ornamental paving stones from the blue sculpture down to the lake. As we gathered the rakes and spades together, and made our way to the Park keepers cottage for a cuppa, everyone felt we had done a great job.

Thoughts on the day.....

One person who had never volunteered before said:

"It was a canny day – better than I expected because I usually like to garden by myself!"

Other volunteers said:

"I didn't want to come because of the rain but I had fun and I will come again"

"I have enjoyed preserving Leazes Park; I have met many more friends and hope to work in the park in the future."

"I had a brilliant time."

"I enjoyed meeting the new people and getting involved."

The pictures show the difference we made on the day, but if any of the volunteers go on to do other things, as a result of their experience, then they will continue to make a difference to themselves and their community.