

Organisation Briefing Pack

ORGANISATION OVERVIEW

“Thousands of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well other disabilities that severely limit mobility, cannot use standard accessible toilets. People may be limited in their own mobility so need equipment to help them or may need support from one or two carers to either get on the toilet or to have their continence pad changed. Standard accessible toilets (or “disabled toilets”) do not provide changing benches or hoists and most are too small to accommodate more than one person the person with disabilities is put at risk, and families are forced to risk their own health and safety by changing their loved one on a toilet floor. This is dangerous, unhygienic and undignified.”

www.changing-places.org

Vehicles for Change (VfC) was established as a charity in March 2018 with the aim to provide mobile fully accessible toilet/changing facilities at events across the UK. These enable people with disabilities and serious health conditions to attend and participate in events with greater ease and comfort. Our units are larger than a standard accessible WC, and include specialist equipment, such as a hoist and an adult-sized changing bench. By enabling disabled children and adults to use the toilet, or be changed in a mobile unit, our RevoLOOtion service helps to break down barriers that often exclude them from participating in activities and events. Lack of appropriate facilities can be a major obstacle for disabled individuals and their families and the RevoLOOtion service operated by VfC can make a real difference in their lives.

VfC launched its service in 2018 with the specialised conversion of the first 3 vehicles, then quickly acquired a further six to meet the significant market demand. Since then, VfC has generated sufficient income, largely from vehicle hire but increasingly from fundraising sources, to meet the financial needs of the charity.



Our RevoLOOs at the Bristol Balloon Fiesta and at the Royal Albert Hall, London

“D.... was superb, a really pleasant person. Toilets were easy to use, very clean and a godsend to people with disabilities.

Thank you for your service" (Service user)

As at 2024, we have a dedicated Board comprising eight Trustees, supported by a Company Secretary; all roles are voluntary. The operations of VfC are led by an Operations Manager supported a group of dedicated Driver/Attendants (DAs) who deliver, and ensure the convenient use of, the mobile toilet/changing facilities at a wide variety of events. Our vehicle fleet now comprises 11 mobile units and our customers include many household names that provide artistic, exhibition, sporting, musical or leisure events across the UK, indoors and out. In the year ended December 2023, our specialised vehicles attended 1,294 days of events, with an estimated 5,176 individual users of our service. This represents our busiest summer season to date, and a 56% increase in event days compared to the previous reporting period. Charity accounts are reported for each calendar year and are currently up-to-date, with the latest published accounts being for the period ending 31st December 2023 - <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5113446/charity-overview>

BACKGROUND

The 2010 Equality Act made it discriminatory for organisations to put arrangements in place that apply to everyone but that put someone with a protected characteristic, such as disability, at an unfair disadvantage. Sadly, over a decade later, many organisations still do not make adequate provision for people with disabilities for whom a standard "accessible" toilet is not appropriate. VfC was established as a charity to offer specially adapted fully accessible toilet/changing facilities that can meet their needs. Each mobile unit comprises a tail-lift that can accommodate a person in a powered wheelchair and a carer, an accessible toilet and washbasin, a changing table with a hoist, and a shower. Our units can travel across the UK, be connected to regular power supplies on-site and can operate with or without piped water.



CHARITABLE PURPOSE

The relief of those in need because of disability; in particular by the provision of hygienic, safe and dignified mobile facilities for, and assistance with, toileting, changing and personal care which meet the requirements of people with disabilities.

VfC owns and maintains vehicles that are specially-adapted to the toileting/changing needs of profoundly disabled people. VfC hires out the vehicles, provided with a dedicated Driver/Attendant, to organisers of leisure and community events. Paid-for hire is offered to commercial organisations at a price point that ensures that all the charity's costs of operation are fully covered. VfC has a policy to offer lower-cost hire to not-for-profit organisations with income less than £1M.

ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

VfC has defined an Ethical Framework as a guide to the principles and values that the charity works towards. The charity will look to work with individual and organisational stakeholders that meet our values and principles, and we will uphold them within our organisation, including employees and volunteers. It is essential to uphold best practices in our operations, whilst allowing all beneficiaries/customers to experience the facilities on offer to them with:

SAFETY- a primary consideration. VfC commits that all activities will be carried out in such a way that they meet relevant Health & Safety regulations and Safeguarding requirements. This covers the installations and services provided by VfC, as well as incorporating risk assessments for venues as well as vetting checks and training for any personnel involved.

DIGNITY- all activities will protect the dignity of all beneficiaries/customers from the first moment of interaction until completion. VfC will not endorse any activities which are believed to compromise the dignity of its beneficiaries/customers.

EQUALITY- everyone has the right to be active and to be given equal opportunity to enjoy public events. VfC is opposed to discrimination of any kind, specifically where this relates to the 'protected characteristics' detailed in the Equality Act: age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

There are six actions that, as a sector, we and others can take to make events more accessible to the wider disability community. We will:

- Use the power of our brand and activities to promote benefits for physical and mental health and well-being
- Promote and adopt accessibility and best practices within our community, unlocking opportunities for participation in events, regardless of physical or mental disability
- Promote positive messages using diverse role models and ambassadors to show how events and activities can be accessible for all
- Actively tackle discrimination to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect
- Work to open access to activities and events in the community by improving stakeholder awareness through marketing, communication and visible physical presence
- Regularly monitor our performance, assess progress and take positive action on making the services provided by VfC accessible to all.

CHARITY BENEFICIARIES

Our beneficiaries are, typically, adults or children with severe disabilities and wheelchair users whose needs for toileting or changing exceed what is provided by a standard "accessible" toilet. They may use a larger powered wheelchair; they may require a carer to support them; they may require assistance to get out of their chair. We also consider their friends, families and carers to be our beneficiaries, as our service strives to enable everyone to enjoy leisure time with their loved ones at events that others may take for granted.

In the reporting period to December 2023 our records show that 5,176 individuals used our service.



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STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

VfC maintains a lean staffing model comprising a staff “Hub” –CEO, Operations Manager, and support staff – and a team of vital Drivers/Attendants (D/As). Our D/A colleagues provide the service, driving the vehicles to each event and remaining with the vehicle during the agreed service hours to greet our service users, operate the tail lift and ensure the unit is kept clean and serviceable throughout the event. Our D/As often show great commitment by staying away from home overnight for a multi-day event and may work into the late evening, depending on the type of event. Our D/As are the basis for the wonderful feedback we receive from service users after each event. D/As work mostly in the summer season and we recruit new DAs each year to supplement our experienced D/A team. Because of the uncertainty in the number and type of bookings, our D/As are employed on flexible employment contracts. Trustees greatly value the expertise and compassion of the D/As and regularly review how VfC can best offer meaningful work and retain experienced staff from year to year, whilst having the necessary flexibility and low-cost base.

Other functions are supported by contracted services in fleet management, human resources, book-keeping, information technology, fundraising and social media. This ensures the necessary expertise is available to the charity in a flexible and affordable way.

The main group of volunteers is the Board of Trustees, which currently numbers eight people (Q2 2024). They are supported by an experienced volunteer Company Secretary. Additionally, VfC has been grateful for the pro bono support of individuals and organisations, including professional legal services (accessed via Law Works).

MARKET POSITION AND STAKEHOLDERS

Established in 2005, the Changing Places Consortium is a group of organisations and individuals working individually to support the rights of people with disabilities and together as the home of the Changing Places Campaign in the UK (www.changingplaces.org). At the heart of the campaign is the call for Changing Places toilets to be installed in all large public spaces so that everyone can fully access their community. A Changing Places toilet is larger than a standard accessible WC and includes specialist equipment, such as a hoist and an adult-sized changing bench.

Accessible mobile toilet/changing facilities may not be able to meet the full specification of a Changing Places toilet - mainly due to the size limitations of a vehicle - but can fill a key gap where no permanent facility is yet provided or can be provided. Our amazing mobile vehicles can help to increase capacity for major events and can provide a fully accessible service at “pop-up” events and any indoor and outdoor events which lack suitable facilities.

Between 2018 and 2023 VfC was the only organisation able to provide hire of fully-accessible mobile toilet/changing facilities in England, Wales or Scotland. In 2023 VfC ceased using its original trading name, “Mobiloo”, and rebranded our established service as “RevoLOOtion” (see

www.RevoLOotion.org.uk).

Our mobile units specifically support users of both manual and powered wheelchairs, as well as other individuals with physical disabilities who need the support of one or more carers to access the service, or who need more space for their equipment. We are currently considering how we can ensure that our service is made more accessible for sensory and learning disabilities as well as the neurodiverse communities.

Historically, VfC has not had the resources to engage in focused networking with other charities and organisations in the disability community. We have received regular and repeat event bookings and published the locations of our vehicles using our social media channels and via our website. Our current Board is determined that we should seek relevant strategic partnerships and charitable funding to enable us to raise greater awareness of our service amongst potential service users and event and exhibition organisers, therefore enabling more people with disabilities and their carers/families to participate fully in sporting, social, cultural and professional life in the UK.

CHARITY OPERATIONS

An experienced Operations Manager is responsible for ensuring the delivery of our high-quality mobile changing place service with outstanding customer experience through effective planning and coordination. Other responsibilities include oversight of fleet management, financial operations, bookings management, customer communications and business development, and line management/supervision of D/As and contractors.

The fleet is currently based in Calne, Wiltshire, in a secure yard from which the vehicles are collected by the D/A. After performing and recording mandatory vehicle safety checks they then drive to the event. The Operations Manager will ensure journeys are scheduled to a realistic timetable and are planned to take into account the need for rest periods. All vehicles are additionally fitted with a tracking system.

Once at the event, and with the unit placed on level ground and pre-checks completed, operation can begin swiftly. Water and power supplies are preferred, but not essential, as the vehicles can be self-sufficient. D/As are responsible for the greeting of beneficiaries, and operating wheelchair lifts, as well as general maintenance, cleaning and hygiene. During the first 5 years of operation, VfC has increased its fleet of mobile units to 11 and now operates using a digital system for recording bookings and allocating resources, to manage the high level of demand.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Our service is well-established and trusted within the events community, with a proven model of delivery, and our service development aims are largely to ensure the reliability and sustainability of our service and expand our capacity to meet demand. For example, during some summer weekends in 2022 and 2023, which is the peak period in terms of social and outdoor events, our booking enquiries have exceeded our available fleet capacity.

However, our business is highly seasonal and we need to build our 'off season' offer to improve cashflow and resource optimisation. This in turn, will enable us to expand to new service offerings, particularly where customers require a longer term solution rather than a temporary weekend 'fix'.

We are firmly committed to increasing engagement with the community of our beneficiaries to help ensure the quality of experience for them, to target the events and exhibitions sectors that matter most to them as well as having a positive impact to shape our overall services for the future.