

sundayherald

# recruitment

## Lessons the business world can learn from the voluntary sector

### WORKING WEEK



BY KAREN PEATTIE

**C**HARITIES have a fine line to tread. They rely on fundraising for their survival, yet cannot provide much-needed services and facilities without well-trained, committed people. The clipboard-brandishing fundraisers that we do our best to dodge in our shopping thoroughfares do not always make us warm to charities and the way they operate today.

Yet the most successful charities are those with a sharp business approach that have the ability to think a little differently and, in turn, attract high-calibre individuals who want to develop their skills within that organisation. One such charity is Quarriers. As one of Scotland's leading social care charities, Quarriers is in a unique position as it provides a particularly diverse range of services – around 80 projects that include working with children and families facing poverty or a breakdown of the family; homeless young people; and adults with learning disabilities.

What I didn't know, however, is that Quarriers Village in Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire, is home to the National Epilepsy Assessment Centre, an independent hospital which is the only epilepsy unit of its kind in Scotland. And last week, it became the first hospital in

Scotland to receive European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Committed to Excellence recognition.

This is a European-recognised award, offering two possible later phases, implemented over a period of around 12 months and validated by Quality Scotland, the not-for-profit organisation that promotes business excellence across Scotland in the private, public and voluntary sectors. David Williams, service director with Quarriers, explains: "We're obviously thrilled to win this award, but what particularly pleases me is that the whole thing was initiated by the staff themselves and the process involved everyone, including our cooks and domestic staff."

"It came out of a team development day which involved a whole range of staff – nurses, social care specialists, clinical assessors, psychologists – and we decided we wanted to demonstrate how proud we are of this service and how good it is. We also wanted to make improvements and increase the number of referrals, as well as work with patients to evaluate their experiences."

The epilepsy centre, a 10-bed hospital employing 25 staff, assesses people with epilepsy and provides support. Patients are able to stay overnight for anything up to eight weeks to determine the cause of and best treatment for their seizures. "We get referrals from all over Scotland," says Williams. "Sometimes their condition can be very complex and we try to help patients have a more settled way of life so that they are managing their epilepsy, not the other way round."

Stewart McCorkindale, the centre's service co-ordinator, went on secondment to the Quarriers quality department to gain a better understanding of what EFQM was looking for. "When they assessed us, they identified a number of clear targets so we knew there were

issues around marketing, for example. It was important for us to raise our profile so the programme allowed us to spend time with marketing professionals who gave us free advice," he says.

"We also needed to change the way we got feedback from patients so we got outside help which led to us completely revamping the feedback forms."

"We're also getting feedback from the doctors who refer to the service and all of this has been invaluable in helping us identify things we can do better or –differently. It's been challenging, but the staff embraced the challenge with everyone showing real focus and commitment."

According to Williams, working towards the EFQM award has helped forge new relationships with some parts of the NHS. "We already have strong links with the Institute of Neurological Sciences at the Southern General in Glasgow, but this has led to new dialogue with people we had no contact with 12 months ago and that will be extremely beneficial going forward."

"We've raised the bar for Quarriers and sent out a message that voluntary sector providers can be efficient and effective without losing sight of the needs of the people they support and the people who provide the services. Sometimes you have to step out of your routine to make changes, and the wider business community can learn from us."

"Once we decided to go for the EFQM award, we had to convince our managers it was a worthwhile exercise so we had to present our case. We managed to secure funding from the Quarriers innovation fund. In due course, we hope to go for the level two award."

[www.quarriers.org.uk](http://www.quarriers.org.uk)  
[www.efqm.org/](http://www.efqm.org/)  
[www.qualityscotland.co.uk](http://www.qualityscotland.co.uk)





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