

## **Trainee Community Organiser Job Pack**

**Employer:** CoCo (the Community Organisers' Company) and seconded to Firmstart (Manchester) CIC

**Salary:** £8.50 per hour (subject to tax and national insurance)

**Duration:** 51 weeks

**Hours:** Full time (30-35 hours per week)

**Work base:** St Wilfrid's Enterprise Centre, Hulme, Manchester

### **Purpose:**

To learn to build relationships which enable residents, groups, associations, and businesses in areas of South Manchester to develop their collective power to act together for the common good, using Root Solution Listening Matters, a dialogue and action-based programme that supports transformational change in individuals, groups, organisations and institutions.

### **Key Objectives:**

Within 51 weeks to:

- a) Effectively motivate and mobilise people in neighbourhoods by using Root Solution Listening Matters organising strategy and process to create community-led change.
- b) Achieve a certificate sized accreditation at Level 2 or 3 in the Foundations of Community Organising within 26 weeks of the start of the trainee role
- c) During the second 25 weeks, via the Go Deeper options, incorporate other tools and approaches for animating and focusing community action and change.
- d) Identify and train a team of active volunteer community organisers who will become the Community Holding Team

### **To train in, gain experience of and be successful at community organising by:**

1. Actively participating in training, reflecting on and applying learning to develop personal/professional Community Organising practice.
2. Following the specified process and deadlines to achieve accreditation in the Foundations of Community Organising.
3. Taking responsibility for own learning by attending all Employment Support and Supervision sessions, all Live Online training sessions, responding to requests for information from Programme staff and completing all required paperwork.

4. Listening widely to people of all ages and backgrounds in a specified area within their own homes and in other locations to engage them in meaningful conversations which enable their voices to be heard.
5. Encouraging and supporting people to develop their skills and knowledge to motivate them to take action to enable positive change within the community.
6. Supporting the development of a Community Holding Team who will listen in the community, research, plan and take co-ordinated action.
7. Providing support to motivated people of all ages to transform ideas into projects and enterprises, which build on strengths, meet needs and aspirations and tackle concerns in the community.
8. Beginning to develop new power relationships with the local community and political, public, voluntary and business sectors.
9. Developing a communication strategy including using social media which helps to build the network of active residents.
10. Contributing to the Community Organisers Legacy Body's knowledge and understanding about community organising.
11. Adhering to and modelling the programme's Code of Conduct and the equal opportunities strategies of Locality and the host organisation.

### Person Specification

Essential skills	Competencies	Method of assessing
<b>Organisational skills and literacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-organised and with high level of self-motivation to achieve in the role.</li> <li>• Flexible. Available to manage own time effectively and work anti-social hours (evenings, weekends) as necessary.</li> <li>• Functionally literate, able and willing to keep written and electronic records.</li> <li>• Reasonably confident with computers including email, word processing, social media, basic Excel spreadsheets. Able to participate in on-line learning with basic training on the technology used.</li> </ul>	<p>CV/PS Interview</p> <p>CV/PS Interview</p> <p>CV/PS Interview</p>
<b>Listening and communication skill and mature social and interpersonal skills.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to learn to listen deeply for facts and feelings, and identify verbal and non-verbal communication cues.</li> <li>• Able to create and sustain meaningful conversations with those you might not usually speak to: gently leading, encouraging and uncovering feelings and opinions.</li> <li>• Respectful, open, and sensitive to others' history and experience. Sensitive to local cultures and languages. Positively committed to anti-discriminatory practice and social justice.</li> <li>• Able to develop an understanding of power and influence and willing to explore the root causes of (dis)empowerment issues in communities.</li> </ul>	<p>Interview</p> <p>CV/PS Interview</p> <p>CV/PS Interview</p> <p>CV/PS Interview</p>

<p><b>Leadership skills. Able to lead and work in a team framework. Able to involve, empower and develop colleagues, especially volunteers.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dynamic, motivated, energetic and creative with a can-do approach to problem-solving.</li> <li>• Resilient. Able to take challenge and criticism and cope with negative and apathetic attitudes.</li> <li>• Able to motivate and inspire. Enjoys and values helping others achieve and develop their potential.</li> <li>• Has personal integrity. Willing to be accountable and adhere to the Code of Conduct, understand confidentiality and Data Protection issues.</li> </ul>	<p>CV/PS Interview CV/PS Interview CV/PS Interview Interview</p>
<p><b>Reflective and analytical</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingness to develop an awareness of own power and ego and able to put aside their own agenda to listen without prejudging.</li> <li>• Reflective and self-aware: to be alert, adaptable and responsive and focussed in the moment; to reflect both in action and on action.</li> <li>• Committed to self-development and learning: able to apply, transfer and build on what they do. Willing to support the learning of others - including fellow trainees and the wider community.</li> </ul>	<p>Interview Interview CV/PS Interview</p>

### Useful Experience and Skills:

Please tell us if you have skills or experience in any of these areas – they are not essential but any will come in useful in undertaking this role. This information will not be used to shortlist applicants it is for information purposes only.

- knowledge of local area
- community action or organisation
- community development
- community enterprise
- campaigning
- staff recruitment and people management
- group facilitation
- project planning, development and budgeting
- negotiation or mediation (within voluntary, public and business sectors)
- customer and public relations
- social and market research
- journalism and media
- sales and merchandising
- business and marketing experience
- fundraising

## Background to Role

[Locality](#), the national network for communities ambitious for change, is coordinating the [government-funded](#) nationwide programme of Community Organising. This 4-year programme, delivered in partnership with [Action to Regenerate Community Trust \(RE:generate\)](#), will provide training and learning placements around England for people wanting to gain experience and qualifications in Community Organising. The core of the Partnership's approach to community organising is [Root Solution Listening Matters](#), which is described as "a learning and action-based programme created to support transformational change in individuals, groups, organisations and institutions. The foundation of the work and training is 1:1 systematic listening and dialogue that builds trusting, respectful relationships, networks and connectivity between and across diverse communities that stimulates action for transformation that shifts power relationships."

A new notforprofit company, CoCo, has been established by Locality, OCS and RE:generate as the Legacy Body for Community Organising in England. CoCo will take on the legal obligations as employer for trainee Community Organisers in the programme, while Locality will provide all practical employment and payment arrangements including HR and IT support.

As CoCo develops it will be able to provide training and professional development for Community Organisers and information for employers and communities, raise funding for and research the effectiveness of community organising and develop the standards to which community organisers work. As they qualify Community Organisers will be able to join and help govern CoCo.

## Training Information

This is a one year experiential learning programme to develop skills and experience in [Community Organising](#). Trainees will gain an Open College Network (OCN) Certificate in Foundations of Community Organising after the first six months and then choose from a range of options for their Go Deeper training in the second six months. These options offer various levels of higher accreditation and there are also practice-based non-accredited options for those who would like to specialise in community planning and enterprise, or digital organising.

Trainees are recruited locally in or near to the area they will work. Most trainee COs are hosted by a local organisation who provides them with a work base, local support and management, and a learning environment, but they work independently from and do not undertake any work on behalf of the Host. For this reason most Trainees will be employed by CoCo/Locality and seconded back to the Host. Trainee COs are always placed in teams (of 2-5 COs) and the team is an important source of support and reflection.

The programme begins with a 3.5-day residential training course to give trainees the opportunity to get a much deeper understanding of Root Solution Listening Matters and the Community Organising role. All candidates who are made a trainee job offer must attend the course. Contracts will not be provided until the residential training course, so that COs can 'experience' the programme and the approach before making a final decision to take up the role.

Trainees then return to their community to begin putting the learning into practice, first listening to relatives, friends and colleagues, and then in the wider community. There will be regular opportunities for reflection and development via a series of live online sessions and mentoring and guided actions by RE:generate. It is expected that trainees will achieve their OCN accreditation at the end of the first six months. To obtain accreditation participants will need to complete reflections and assessments based on their work in the field.

## **Terms and Conditions:**

**Employer:** The contract will usually be with CoCo, with HR provided by Locality. The trainee will be seconded to Firmstart (Manchester) CIC (the host) for the duration of the contract.

**Timescale:** The Contract will start on March 25<sup>th</sup> 2013 and conclude on March 17<sup>th</sup> 2014

**Terms and conditions:** 51 week fixed term contract at £8.50 per hour (before tax) with statutory holidays, statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay. Childcare vouchers can be bought in exchange for a 'salary sacrifice'. Based at St Wilfrid's Enterprise Centre with the ability to work from home but spending most of the working time out in community settings, especially knocking doors and in public places. Anti-social hours can be expected and time off in lieu will be given. The host will hold an expenses budget on behalf of the organiser for IT, travel and other organising costs, and provide a work base.

**Supervision and support:** Local guidance and supervision will be provided by Firmstart (Manchester) CIC. Helen Wallis-Dowling, RE:generate's Training Director provides active support and guidance to all COs.

**Accountable to:** Trainee Community Organisers are accountable to Locality as the Programme Manager for following the Root Solutions Listening Matters programme and for participation in and achievement of learning outcomes. Hosts have a role in ensuring the outcome are achieved and COs need to comply with Hosts essential policies and procedures. Locality will manage all grievance and disciplinary issues and any breach of the Code of Conduct.

**Advice:** We have commissioned Toynbee Hall to provide a Benefits Advice Helpline so that anyone with an offer of interview can get independent and confidential advice on how any benefits they receive will be affected if they are offered and take up the role. Once in post all COs have access to an Employee Assistance Programme and a range of other HR support.



## Application

Your application is by CV and supporting letter, which should clearly show how you meet the essential and preferred criteria for Trainee Community Organiser as outlined in the person specification, including describing your experience and knowledge gained from paid and unpaid work roles. Candidates must be able to demonstrate that they are eligible to work in the UK and **must be available for a three day/four night residential training course from March 19<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013**

Selection will be via an assessment day in Leeds on the 7<sup>th</sup> February, followed by a local interview. Successful candidates will then be made a conditional offer and contracts and secondment agreements will be issued at the three day residential training course, giving candidates the opportunity to 'experience' the work before making a final decision on accepting the post.

Appointment is subject to satisfactory references and criminal disclosure procedures.

For an informal chat, please call Firmstart (Manchester) CIC - 07770 226 054

**Closing Date: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2012 @ 12 noon.**

**Please send application to:**

CoCo c/o  
Firmstart (Manchester) CIC  
St Wilfrid's Enterprise Centre  
Royce Road  
Hulme  
M15 5BJ

### **The Community Organiser Code of Conduct**

- i. Help people to develop their collective power to act together for the common good of the whole community
- ii. Put the wellbeing, development and progress of vulnerable people first
- iii. Take responsibility for maintaining the quality and ethos of Community Organising
- iv. Demonstrate respect for diversity and promote equality
- v. Do not do for others what they can do for themselves
- vi. Build on what already exists if that is what the community needs and wants, and co-operate with others
- vii. Demonstrate honesty and integrity and uphold public trust and confidence
- viii. Act within the law but if the law is unjust, support people to change it
- ix. Remain politically neutral and do not use community organising to promote a personal (your own) or organisational (your host's) agenda
- x. Manage conflict constructively and non-violently
- xi. Do not put yourself or others in danger
- xii. Seek win-win solutions
- xiii. Do not promise what you cannot deliver
- xiv. Use the community's starting point as your own, and move at their pace according to need

## **Being a community organiser – things to consider before making an application**

When reading a job description and personal specification it can be difficult as a potential candidate to see beyond the words and to appreciate why we place particular value and emphasis on certain qualities and skills. It's easy to think 'oh yes, I can do that' without really thinking it through. Here are some additional insights into why, in our experience as community organisers, certain skills and qualities are particularly important:

One important thing to say upfront: the community organiser role at its heart is about knocking on doors – usually private homes – and listening to what people say to you when you engage them in conversation. You come across a variety of people when door knocking – single adults with young children, teenagers or young adults, older people living alone, large boisterous families, people in good moods, people in bad moods, people willing to talk forever, and people who are more reticent. Door knocking is often done alone and sometimes with other community organiser colleagues.

This is why we ask for strong skills in listening and in creating dialogue – you'll need the flexibility and confidence to listen deeply to a wide variety of people.

But you'll also need to be confident enough to door knock in the first place so please consider this before you apply for the role of a community organiser. Would you have significant qualms about doing this? And could your reservations be overcome?

### ***Ability to work alone and also in a team***

You will be employed as part of a small team of community organisers – typically 2-5 - working out of a base provided by a host organisation. You will be responsible for working in a particular neighbourhood or ward. Therefore much of your work will be listening in 'your' patch. However you are part of a small team of fellow trainees and the expectation is that you share learning together in a mature way which mirrors the qualities you'll show as a community organiser. We expect the community organiser teams to provide support and constructive challenge and all members to actively participate in team meetings.

### ***Personal resilience***

Community organising is challenging – you won't be expected to morph into an ideal community organiser immediately – you are on a 51 week training period in the Foundations of Community Organising, supported by accreditation. It takes time and application to sharpen your community organising skills – it's not a piece of cake.

Like any job, this one goes through highs and lows, peaks and troughs – you'll have doors shut in your face and have to deal with negativity as well as an abundance of energy and ideas. The first few months can be especially difficult, and later on other challenges around converting listenings into action can arise.

You'll receive plenty of training and support, and of course have your community organising team and wider group to draw upon, but personal resilience and reasonable self-esteem to cope with doubt and deal with bad days is a huge advantage.

### ***Initiative***

You receive support from your host organisation, from RE:generate, from Locality and from fellow organisers – there are no shortage of people for you to go with questions. It is made clear to you at the start of training who to talk to about training, accreditation, employment and overall wellbeing.

However, you still need to have an attitude of self-reliance and be able to use your judgement and think through problems and take responsibility for decision-making without constantly referring to others.

### ***Literacy***

A community organiser needs to be able to keep good records of who they have talked to. This is vital in building a network of people willing to take action. You need to make notes and record the answers to a set of questions, reflect on these conversations, keep daily or weekly diaries, and analyse the information, with others, from these listenings to produce simple reports and decide on action. You will also be expected to learn about your patch through reading the newspaper etc.

The accreditation process is not academic and there are no exams, but it does require you to think about questions you will be posed, reflect on and record your answers and evidence your learning through creating diaries, stories, posters, recorded interviews etc. This does not all have to be written – but you do need to be willing to work through the accreditation process.

So if you class yourself as 'allergic to paperwork', this is not the job for you.

### ***IT skills***

The community organiser's job uses IT in a number of ways:

- To communicate and share information with people in your community
- To communicate and share information with your host and the Community Organisers trainers and support team
- To participate in regular on-line learning sessions and with your fellow trainees around the country

You do need to be in possession of reasonable experience and confidence in how to do the following:

- send and receive emails
- use a mobile phone for calls, texts and emailing
- type up word documents on a computer and post them online
- use the basic features of an Excel spreadsheet

- be familiar with or have enough confidence to learn to use Adobe Connect for on-line learning sessions

### **Community Organising: Is it for me?**

Use this first set of questions to help you decide whether you're interested in applying for the post of Trainee Community Organiser.

- Do I have a positive and optimistic outlook on life?
- Am I open to doing things differently?
- Do I believe that individual human beings are capable of changing their behaviour, attitudes and assumptions?
- Do I believe that people can work purposefully together for the common good?
- Am I willing to develop my understanding of myself in relationship to groups, the community and the wider world?
- Am I willing to challenge myself on my own attitudes and assumptions – about people and their potential, about power and politics?
- Can I take criticism?
- Can I stand firm and be courageous in the face of conflict or attack?
- Do I learn from my mistakes and experience?
- Can I laugh at myself and see humour in situations?
- Am I comfortable in my own skin?
- Do I have the self-confidence to initiate discussions with people I've never met before – whether that might be in a pub, or a front room or meeting hall?
- Do I know my strengths and am I willing to use them to empower others for the common good?
- Do I know my weakness and am I willing to share them for the common good?
- Do I like people? Can I love people?
- Am I prepared to put in the time to meet and engage with people in their own territory?

If you have answered 'yes' to most of these questions, you could well make a good Community Organiser. Give it a try!

Use this second set of questions to help you put your application together, along with the Job Description and Essential Criteria.

- My Journey to Organising - Where have I come from?
- What attracts me or draws me to this work?
- Who or What has inspired me?
- Who or What keeps me going when the going gets tough?
- Where am I most comfortable?
- What attracts me to this kind of work?
- What experience do I bring – positive experiences and negative experiences?
- Why do I want to try this?
- Thinking about the stories below of Regenerate, Freire and Alinsky – what excites me, interests me, frightens me? Where do I sit?

[RE:generate \(Action to Regenerate Community Trust\)](#) is an enterprising social action charity based in the UK. Root Solution – Listening Matters is a homegrown organising strategy developed while working with communities throughout the UK in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This working model for transformation has been developed and tested in major cities, large towns, market towns, villages, disadvantaged estates and mixed communities. It is called Root Solution – Listening Matters, because we believe that in the root cause of issues faced in society lie the root solutions.

Community Organisers with purpose, process and strategy are capable of becoming the “critical yeast” to galvanise, catalyse, and encourage individuals, families, charities, communities and institutions to come together to solve problems in their areas.

RE:generate’s Root Solution Listening Matters approach is a strategy and tool for aspiring Community Organisers. By the end of their training programme, Community Organisers will have developed

- A deeper respect for individuals and groups and for their right to better understand and work to transform their own communities
  - A firm belief in the ability of individuals, groups and institutions to find solutions to their own problems when and if they acquire the power to do so
  - Listening capacities and skills to build individual, group and community cohesion and action
- Over time they will “go deeper” and develop skills and experience and learn new tools to deliver and develop:
- Facilitation and Organising skills delivering power balance in communities
  - Participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation
  - Skills to organise business, enterprise and project development training for local people
  - A network that will prioritise the common good

Root Solutions Listening Matters incorporates the work and teachings of two international activist-teachers - [Paulo Freire](#) in Brazil and [Saul Alinsky](#) in the USA.

Paulo Freire's book, "Education for Critical Consciousness", inspired social activists in different parts of the world to help people to become critically aware of the root-causes of their problems and to work together in communities to find possible solutions. For Freire education/training is not neutral and should aim at the radical transformation of all situations that diminish the dignity of individuals, families, communities and country. Radical means understanding the root causes of problems in order to bring about real transformation through community organisation and action.

RE:generate shares Alinsky's concern: "with people who do not participate in the endless responsibilities of citizenship and are resigned to live lives determined by others". Because "to lose your identity as a citizen of democracy is but a step from losing your identity as a person. People react to this frustration by not acting at all". And Alinsky's philosophy is "anchored in optimism. It must be, for optimism brings with it hope for a future with a purpose - and therefore a will to fight for a better world. Without optimism there is no reason to carry on."

RE:generate's philosophy and principles also reflect those of Paulo Freire who created and gave new meaning to words like:

- 'Conscientization': a process enabling people to become critically aware of the root-causes of challenges and issues they face and to participate actively in shaping their community to make it more just and respectful of human dignity and human rights
- 'Problem-posing approach' which helps people to search together for solutions to common problems and needs
- 'Empowerment of people' where people have the right to own and control processes that shape their lives and the lives of their communities
- 'Transformation' – the human vocation for all people is to work to make their world / society / community a better and more just place for all

Freire stresses the importance of dialogue and critical reflection: "Dialogue requires an intense faith in human beings; their power to make and remake, to create and recreate; faith that the vocation to be fully human is the birthright of all people, not the privilege of an elite. Trust and confidence, the basis of community action, are established by dialogue"

RE:generate's process is rooted in dialogue and reflection about people's life experience that builds trust and transforms attitudes and behaviour – across cultural and educational divides.

Quotations from his book "Rules for Radicals" illustrate Alinsky's principles for strategic and sustainable community action and change:

- As a community organiser, start from where the world is and not as you would like it to be
- People are ready to work to change situations and to tackle problems that most affect and frustrate them. Organise people around issues and problems that are important to them
- People start to change from where they are and from the reality they know best. Change starts in the minds and hearts of the people.

## Notes

Application is via CV (Curriculum Vitae—a list of your educational and training qualifications and working history) and a supporting letter (which should list the jobs that you have had in the past – voluntary work counts here). The interviewers will be looking for education, training and working experience which fits with the job description (that is, they do not need to know that you have had x number of jobs, going back into the dim and distant past, just the most important ones).

Remember to save talking about some of your achievements for the interview, all the interviewers have to judge your suitability is the cv and the letter. During the interview, you may be asked to expand on one or more of the jobs you have held in the past.

Try to give examples of all the qualities that you have which fit with those that are listed in the job description, think of it as a shopping list – in a sense all the people who will select you for an interview are looking for is whether you are a suitably strong applicant, if you don't say that you can do it you will not be shortlisted.

This job involves a lot of record keeping and the use of computers, full computer facilities and any necessary training will be provided for you by Firmstart (Manchester) CIC . We are here to help you carry out this job effectively, as we are looking for successful community development in our area.

All travel and subsistence costs will be paid for by locality/CoCo

The rest is up to you.