



Abbey

Community



Contributing to communities

Our strategy for 2005 was to encourage the involvement of staff in supporting those communities where Abbey has a significant presence. This was realised through support for staff fundraising, volunteering and donations to local charities made by our seven Community Partnership Groups.

The total value of the support we provided to charities and the voluntary sector in 2005 was £1,778,160 including £1,556,947 in cash donations, mainly through our Charitable Trust. This was a reduction from the previous year, due to the cost challenges faced by Abbey, however the level of support for 2006 has been increased.

Support for the Tsunami and Asia Earthquake appeals was substantial in 2005 and is reflected in the 36% increase in the amount given to the relief of suffering this year, mainly through the staff matched donation scheme. 290 donations were made within our three charitable priorities, which accounts for over 57% of our giving, with £474,000 made to education projects and £150,000 to support financial literacy.

The re-branding exercise gave us the opportunity to distribute out-of-date clothing and stationery items to developing countries and increased the amount of support given through goods and services by 18%.

Our matched donation scheme saw over £569,000 distributed to causes supported via staff fundraising. In January 2006 our promotion of effective staff giving was recognised when Abbey achieved the Payroll Giving Gold Award from HM Government and the Institute of Fundraising for helping more than 10% of our staff to make this regular commitment.

Priority areas

The Abbey Charitable Trust was set up in 1990 and is committed to supporting local communities and disadvantaged people based on the following three priority areas:

- Education and training
- Financial advice
- Cross community regeneration

These priorities were formulated after extensive consultation with a cross section of our stakeholders - charities, employees and customers.

Community data

	2005	2004
What we give (£)		
Cash	1,556,947	2,342,087
Goods & services	75,229	63,908
Management costs	145,914	110,000
Total community contribution	1,778,160	2,515,995
How we gave (£)*		
Central donations	347,016	732,520
Matching staff fundraising	569,004	586,793
Community Partnership Groups	374,288	278,410
Local Branches	17,531	46,239
Who benefited (£)*		
Education	474,359	576,608
Community regeneration	132,216	281,985
Financial advice	150,249	319,382
Disability	35,626	54,329
Employment	250	33,189
Relief of suffering	478,860	351,791
Other causes	36,280	73,818
Number of donations*	1,490	1,658

* Data for Charitable Trust donations only

We use the London Benchmarking Group reporting model to calculate our contributions to good causes.

The LBG model provides a standardised way of managing and measuring a company's community involvement.





Community partnership

Our seven Community Partnership Groups (CPG) are based in areas where we have major UK offices and a significant number of employees. They are made up of current and retired staff as well as a representative from a local charity. We have groups in Camden, Belfast, Glasgow, Bradford, Sheffield, Teesside and Milton Keynes. These groups have a key role in appraising local charity requests and in visiting the successful applicants. More importantly they are members of their local communities and therefore have a good understanding of the issues faced by the charities working in their areas.

A system for capturing the impact of our donations has been put in place and is helping us to assess the effectiveness of our grant making. Each year we invite charities that we have supported to give us feedback on our grant giving process and to tell us about the lasting differences that our donations have made.

Throughout 2005 we continued to promote our charitable priorities by attending funding fairs and other events organised by local networks. These events give funders and fundraisers the rare opportunity to have a two-way discussion, hopefully gaining a better understanding of each other's requirements in the process. In 2006 we intend to adopt a more proactive approach to grant making by approaching appropriate charities and helping them to fully understand our priorities and then inviting them to make an application.

Carr Gomm

Carr Gomm supports vulnerable people with mental health needs, learning disabilities or addiction problems. The charity found the inability to manage money was a key issue inhibiting people's development and ability to live independently.

Clients had requested help in understanding how to budget and how to manage their financial commitments. Concerns included opening bank accounts, setting up direct debits, using cash points and being susceptible to fraud. There were also worries about going to banks: not understanding what they would have to do and being too scared to ask for help.

Budgeting and managing money was identified as the main concern and Carr Gomm worked with clients to plan the content of a workshop and create materials. These were designed to be as realistic and colourful as possible and the charity found that these materials were crucial in attracting clients to the workshop.

"The grant from Abbey Charitable Trust has enabled us to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people to have a better understanding of budgeting. By being able to create such attractive and interactive materials and to plan specific workshops we have really been able to support clients to be more aware and have more control of their finances."

Virginia Lawrence, Fundraising Officer.





Age Concern

Age Concern Training has created the 'WorkWise' project to identify, influence and promote work opportunities and options for people aged 50 and over. The project has been informed by many years of experience working with employers, workforce development organisations, the Department of Work and Pensions and older people.

Working with Age Concern St Helens and other local partners the project will help unemployed people aged 50 and over make informed choices about their options which could include improving their employability, full or part time work, developing their personal skills or starting their own business.

The WorkWise pilot project, which has been supported by a £100,000 donation from Abbey, will run in St Helens over a period of one year. This unique initiative will work closely with local employers to create sustainable opportunities for older workers and ensure long-term retention and a good skills match, consequently influencing policy and employee's attitudes. The scheme will coincide with new age discrimination legislation due to become effective in autumn 2006.



St Christopher's Fellowship

St Christopher's Fellowship runs Blackheath Crescent Supported Housing project in Milton Keynes, and support services for disadvantaged young people at risk of homelessness in the town. These schemes help many young people from the area, through equipping them with the support and skills needed to successfully move on to live independent lifestyles.

As part of this provision, St Christopher's Fellowship has established a comprehensive 'LifeSkills' Project, made possible with a £20,000 grant from Abbey, to better equip residents to make the transition into independent living, and engage with further educational opportunities. In 2005, over 40 young people have benefited from the scheme and 17 young people have received intensive support, undertaking writing, art and CV workshops, basic skills work, and receiving help accessing further training opportunities, qualifications and employment. This support is vital to reduce social isolation whilst increasing self-esteem, social skills, and capacity to participate more fully in community life.

Volunteering

Abbey's commitment to volunteering spans over 16 years, with opportunities co-ordinated in our seven key locations. We launched eight new initiatives this year in Camden, Sheffield, Milton Keynes and Belfast bringing 85 new volunteers into the programme. To support staff that volunteer we offer a matched time scheme where we give up to 35 hours a year of paid work time to enable employees to help their favourite causes. In 2005 this ranged from Scout and Girl Guide groups to hospitals, hospices, prisons and schools.

School programmes

We have worked with the charity Young Enterprise for over three years, providing volunteering opportunities for staff in Belfast, Bradford, Sheffield and Milton Keynes. Young Enterprise provides educational programmes which cater for children from 5 to 18 years, and our staff help pupils understand the world of work and the dynamics of running a business.

We also work with primary schools in Camden and Milton Keynes, organising a Number Partners scheme, and employees have been participating each week to improve children's confidence with mental arithmetic. The volunteers go to the school and play a selection of specially designed board games. These games encourage the children to think through problems and find the solution.



In 2005 we introduced a Reading Partners programme in a local primary school in Camden. Every week staff work one-to-one with a child helping them gain confidence in their reading ability. Volunteer Dan McLoughlin summarised his involvement, "It's great fun and a breath of fresh air to step out of the office and into a classroom. It helps you think about your communication skills and the kids keep you on your toes with all their questions. It's great when they tell you they've been waiting all week for you to come in and listen to them read, and as they get better it's nice to think that I've helped them with that".

Our work with schools also involves older pupils, with several mentoring and e-mentoring programmes. These have been created to help students prepare for the world of work, assisting students in preparing CVs and acquiring interview skills.

Fundraising

Abbey staff have always provided tremendous support for both UK and international charities and our aim is to maximise this enthusiasm. Through the matched donation scheme we can increase the amount of money employees raise and provide vital support to many worthwhile causes.

Last year there were 1,200 requests for matched donations, equating to over £569,000. This means that together Abbey and our employees donated over £1million to good causes in 2005.



Major national fundraising initiatives are supported throughout the year including the Marie Curie Cancer Care daffodil appeal, Cancer Research UK and Comic Relief. It is rewarding for staff to know that through their efforts they have contributed to helping charities support people with terminal cancer, research treatments for the disease and help disadvantaged people overseas.

Two of the most popular events supported last year were Macmillan Coffee Morning, with staff raising over £14,000 by hosting coffee events in head office and branch locations, and Children in Need with over £13,500 raised to help children in the UK.



Recognition of staff

To recognise this valuable, and entirely voluntary contribution, the Abbey People Awards highlight staff who dedicate their own time and energy to charities and their local community. The three 2005 winners have given over 30 years of volunteering between them.

Beryl Wooldridge works for Scottish Provident in the Isle of Man and has dedicated the past 12 years to working with the Special Olympics team there. Over the years she has raised around £70,000 for the organisation.



Mark O'Sullivan, an analyst in the Protection & Life Business, based in Glasgow, raised over £5,000 for Maggie's Cancer Care Centre by hiking the Inca Trail along the Andes for seven days.



Stockton Branch Manager Janet Watkins has been volunteering her time to helping charities in the Teesside area through her work with the local Community Partnership Group. Janet's spare time is taken up with reviewing donation requests, deciding on funding and visiting charities to make sure funds go to projects which will make a lasting impact.



Commitments for 2006

In 2006 we will develop a more proactive approach to grant giving through the following means:

- by identifying and talking with appropriate charities and inviting them to apply
- actively involving our branches in identifying suitable local charities that meet our priorities
- increasing the proportion of funds allocated to the seven Community Partnership Groups
- generating further support to organisations that promote financial inclusion.

Our staff activity will be focused on maximising the motivational and team-building benefits of fundraising to help support the best bank to work for strategy. We will be concentrating on a small number of key partnerships with UK charities in order to target our resources and increase involvement across the branch and head office network.

Independent Assurance Statement

Abbey is an active member of the LBG (London Benchmarking Group). The LBG model helps businesses to improve the management, measurement and reporting of their corporate community involvement programmes. It moves beyond charitable donations to include the full range of contributions (in time, in kind and in cash) made to community causes, and assesses the actual results for the community and for the business. (See www.lbg-online.net for more information).

As managers of the Group, we have worked with Abbey to ensure that it understands the LBG model and applies its principles to the measurement of community involvement programmes. Having conducted an assessment, we are satisfied that this has been achieved. Our work has not extended to an independent audit of the data.



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