

Speech to GoldStar regional road shows

Transcript of a speech by Phil Hope MP, Minister for the Third Sector, to GoldStar regional road show events, September 2007

Hello and welcome to this GoldStar event. As the new Minister for the Third Sector, I am delighted to oversee the GoldStar volunteering and mentoring programme and over the past months I have been learning about the great work of organisations such as yours.

The government recognises that volunteering and mentoring make an enormous contribution to our society. Volunteers play a vital role in building the capacity of local and voluntary groups and the communities they serve, with more than half the population volunteering on a regular basis.

Demonstrating good practice, the main emphasis behind this programme, is vital to ensuring that the benefits of volunteering extend to all in society. This is particularly important for groups at risk of social exclusion such as people with no qualifications, people with disabilities or limiting illness and people from black and minority ethnic groups, as volunteering offers a key opportunity to reduce isolation and connect with others in the community.

That's why the GoldStar programme is so important in enabling more people who might otherwise have felt on the margins not only to gain confidence and skills through volunteering, but also to give something back and use their experiences to empower others.

I am pleased that the GoldStar programme is flourishing in its second year and offer my wholehearted support. But there is more to be done and I am therefore delighted to welcome you to the GoldStar regional conferences,

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which provide an excellent opportunity for voluntary and community organisations throughout the country to recognise and acknowledge the huge contribution that volunteers from all walks of life make to their communities.

These events play an important role in offering a key opportunity for local organisations such as yours to network and for individuals and organisations to learn from each other. I hope you will find today interesting and useful and will make new contacts and new support networks.

Although I cannot be with you in person, I extend my wholehearted congratulations, and thanks, to all of you for your fine work and look forward to meeting many of you at other events over the coming months.