



## Magna

### Background

Magna Science Adventure Centre opened in April 2001 and has welcomed 1.4m visitors and over 35,000 school visitors per year. Magna is a hands on interactive experience which is housed in the former Templeborough Steelworks and is the UK's first science adventure centre. Magna was created with the help of £46m from the Millennium Commission to regenerate the Rotherham area and help put South Yorkshire on the tourism map. An award winning venue and widely recognised within the local, regional and national tourism industry as one of the most successful regeneration projects outside of London. The centre employs the equivalent of 80 full time staff, some of which are on a volunteer basis.

### Responding to a need

Magna was developed to provide a flexible venue capable of meeting and responding to the changing needs of the local environment and community.

Recognising the important role the steel plant has played in shaping the local environment, the volunteer programme was created as a means of engaging with the community and creating varied opportunities.

Esme McQuillan, Volunteer Co-ordinator said:

*"Through the volunteer programme we have actively sought to create an environment where individuals can contribute to their local environment. We benefit from a great skill set amongst our volunteers and the sheer diversity they bring to the centre is one of our greatest assets. It helps to enrich the centre and the experiences of people visiting".*

*"People choose to volunteer at Magna for many different reasons. Some of our volunteers worked in the steel industry here, while others are using the opportunity as a way of gaining experience and preparing for full-time employment. The volunteer team helps to add a new dimension to Magna and the work is extremely rewarding."*

Volunteers are recruited to Magna through a close working relationship with South Yorkshire's four Volunteer Centres and via Magna's web-site. Opportunities for individuals are identified for people interested in volunteering, with the aim of providing individuals with the chance to learn new skills and training.



### PROFILE IN BRIEF

## Magna

### Services offered

- Volunteer placements
- Support for long-term unemployed
- Helping businesses to develop corporate social responsibility programmes

### Who do you work with?

- Volunteers
- Local businesses

### Contact

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## Engaging with Businesses

Alongside the centre's highly successful volunteer programme, Magna is also used by many businesses to invest in the local community. Esme said:

*"There are many businesses in the region that enjoy strong links with the steel industry. We receive quite a few enquiries from local businesses who are looking for help in developing a corporate responsibility programme, and we are always keen to help."*

*"When a business is looking to invest in the community, many automatically assume that this is a financial commitment. In many cases this couldn't be further from the truth. Equipment, skilled workers and a desire to help the local community can all make a huge amount of difference."*

Working with businesses, Magna has successfully secured funding through a number of corporate sponsorship agreements. The money is invested back into the centre to help launch new initiatives that would otherwise be difficult to undertake.

One recent success has seen Magna collaborate with Corus. Workers from the steel plant were invited to help create a new conservation area close to the centre. The scheme enables visitors to learn more about their local environment, as well as giving Corus a chance to invest back into the community.

## Amazing Achievements

Magna's volunteer programme is widely recognised as an example of best practice. Esme believes that the volunteer programme has made a considerable difference to the way in which Magna operates, but a vital element of the success of scheme has been to understand the needs of volunteers taking part:

*"Volunteers choose to get involved with a project because they are interested in contributing. There is often no financial gain, but it is about achieving personal satisfaction. When individuals give up their free time, it is important to recognise that they are genuinely committed to helping. They are extremely valuable and the diversity of skills and knowledge that they often bring helps to enrich the centre."*

*"Paid workers and volunteers work hand-in-hand. As a result we have created a strong culture of understanding within the centre."*

