

MAYOR OF LONDON

Volunteering Summit

Summary Document

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Volunteering Summit – Summary of Discussions

Hosted by Greater London Authority, London Plus and London Boroughs Faiths Network and joined by over 140 attendees from across all 32 London Boroughs.

The Summit aimed to:

- Bring together stakeholders representing different boroughs in London as well as regional bodies across civil society and government
- Allow us to address ways to support volunteering and volunteers in the capital
- Ensure that volunteering infrastructure across the city is ready to tackle challenges which we are likely to face in 2021.

Through 17 breakout sessions, representing borough pairs, participants had the opportunity to discuss 4 key questions, sharing their thoughts verbally and via virtual post-it notes. Our facilitators also captured key themes coming out of these discussions.

We have analysed and summarised the key findings from the Summit below by question. The word clouds summarise all content collected, and we have summarised the key themes and examples across questions 1&2 and questions 3&4. You will find headlines from each breakout session in the appendix.

1 - What have you learnt from Wave one that you have been able to put into practice?



Examples of successful practice:

- Used a reverse model - pool of DBS checked volunteers organised by skills that organisations could access. (Camden and Islington)
- Larger charities such as housing associations were able to support and signpost volunteers to the smaller charities; Smaller charities really benefited from this and community volunteers were able to train new volunteers e.g. Somalian women teaching non-somalian volunteers to make samosas (Newham and Tower Hamlets)
- Really knowing who you have in your volunteer workforce - hidden skills and experience that have been very useful. (Barking and Dagenham and Havering)
- Whatsapp worked well as a different way of keeping connected. (Croydon and Sutton)
- Guidance and resource packs produced to support multiple mutual groups that emerged. (Wandsworth and Richmond)
- Useful to survey the new volunteers to understand how much time they are prepared to commit in both short and long term. (Wandsworth and Richmond)
- Richmond council created a short film highlighting the work of local organisations and their volunteers, encouraging other people to join.
- Buddy system between trained and new volunteers was very useful - building a 1:1 support network for volunteers. (Harrow and Brent)

3 - What are the opportunities to do things differently over the coming months?



4 - How can collaboration across different volunteer involving organisations be improved?



Question 3 & 4 Summary - What are the opportunities to do things differently and how can collaboration be improved?

Many boroughs highlighted the fact that the profile of volunteering had been raised during the pandemic and that people new to volunteering had been attracted to take part. We have an **opportunity to embrace the enthusiasm for volunteering** by doing things differently. This includes:

- The need to capture what it was that enabled us to cut through red tape and work together easily in the crisis.
- Balancing the mix of “traditional volunteers” who might like structure and face to face contact with the “new” type of (potentially highly skilled) seen over the pandemic period. Likewise the balance between micro-volunteering and long-term volunteering.
- Opportunity to build ‘banks’ of general volunteers or basic training to reduce the individual recruitment and training burden on organisations.

Participants welcomed the increased level of local collaboration that had taken place over the last year but many also felt that collaboration can suffer from a lack of co-ordination. Some opportunities to do things differently included:

- Focusing on retaining collaborations and reducing competition through sharing resources, expertise, best practice and through funding models.
- Seizing the opportunity to improve communication from national to local orgs

- Embed stronger links with other agencies and break down policies that may slow down further joint responses / mutual AID working (already been significantly improved and barriers removed)
- Local generalist groups (e.g. churches) need to know where to find specialist skills (e.g. languages).

Good practice and ideas

- Review marketing approaches to make volunteering more inclusive and representative of the communities being served. (Newham and Tower Hamlets)
- More events where organisations can share good practice and build networks. (newham and Tower Hamlets)
- Additional support for volunteers who are new. Could we centralise some training such as first aid, safeguarding etc. And then this means orgs will only need to provide org specific training. (Barking and Dagenham and Havering)
- Councils to create a cross borough strategic plan to encourage collaboration, enable more long-term planning and not just responding to situations. More incentives for organisations to work together. (Bexley and Bromley)
- Opportunity to explore how much of a safeguard DBS is and how much of a barrier. One local mutual aid group put their own system in place, instead of DBS, to speak to volunteers before assigning them which worked well (Greenwich and Lewisham)
- There is an opportunity for those organisations that are in a strong position with regards to funding and volunteers to be able to signpost people to where the need is. Sharing volunteers and signposting. (Greenwich and Lewisham)
- Sharing of policies/protocols and normalising/standardising language/terminology across organisations.

Appendix

Summary of Responses to Question 1 & 2 by Breakout Room

Breakout Room	Key Learnings and Strengths
Enfield and Barnet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptability and sense of possibility during Covid response ‘2 years work done in 2 weeks’. • Improved profile and understanding of volunteering. • Good cross-sector engagement e.g. with between volunteer orgs and Local Authorities.
Haringey and Hackney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital poverty/digital exclusion impacting staff, volunteers, beneficiaries. • Trust between Councils and VCS vital in ensuring response was quick. • Local volunteers for local communities works really well. • Improved working relationship between Mutual Aid and VCS now, building trust and understanding between the two types of groups • Local communication and coordination is very important
Camden and Islington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In first wave, didn’t have capacity to induct the increase of volunteers that wanted to engage • Used a reverse model - pool of DBS checked volunteers organised by skills that organisations could access. • Using digital tools effectively to engage with volunteers and bring on new organisations. • Good communication across boroughs with those willing to volunteer their time able to find opportunities e.g. in Islington volunteer numbers doubled on database.
Waltham Forest and Redbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication with local VCS became even more important with remote working. • Volunteers were adaptable and resilient to the situation in Wave 1. • There was a willingness in the boroughs to work in partnership. • Also a willingness to try new ways of working, in some cases the Local Authority taking the lead from VCOS.

<p>Newham and Tower Hamlets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services are not accessible by ethnic minority groups e.g. language barriers for Somalian women and those providing services are more than often not representative of the people accessing the services. • Organisations in Tower Hamlets have created inclusive services to ensure that the black community 's voices and needs are represented with services being delivered by Black/minority ethnic volunteers to improve accessibility. • Larger charities such as housing associations were able to support and signpost volunteers to the smaller charities; Smaller charities really benefited from this and community volunteers were able to train new volunteers e.g. Somalian women teaching non-somalian volunteers to make samosas • Tower Hamlet Volunteer Centre went over and above and supplied volunteers as and when organisations needed them. • Mutual Aid groups were very responsive and they are still providing services and supporting the community.
<p>Barking and Dagenham & Havering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of being able to take training and support online. The need for wellbeing of volunteers to be paramount. • Really knowing who you have in your volunteer workforce - hidden skills and experience that have been very useful. • The necessity to not rely on volunteers as if their situation changes you will be in a precarious situation. • Borough wide mobilisation of volunteers with the ability for groups to dip in and out of the service as needed.
<p>Bexley and Bromley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More flexible when recruiting volunteers and being more creative around roles. Learnt to be adaptable and change long held systems to good effect. • Many volunteer roles can be carried out digitally with maximum effect and reaches more volunteers who wfh. • Communication with the community is crucial. Continuing with leaflets and newsletters important for those that are digitally excluded. • Relationship with council has strengthened across the Borough and they value what the sector has and can achieve. • Collaboration, sharing resources and mutual support to fill gaps in provision and resources has strengthened networks in Bexley.

Greenwich and Lewisham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning how to keep members motivated, engaged and inspired remotely. • Keeping contact with volunteers has been important in keeping people enthused and ready to go. • Strength in taking a voluntary sector led approach. The council recognised that there was already a good level of provision; it was a question of how to strengthen in order to be able to cope. • A letter went to every household in the borough and volunteering was put front and centre. The council were very supportive.
Southwark and Lambeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting to digital working and ensuring accessibility and inclusion (e.g. digital ambassadors, online portal). • Sharing knowledge and resources / collaboration between organisations. • Importance connecting volunteers with each other / wellbeing support.
Croydon and Sutton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping in touch with volunteers is vital - both formally and informally. Needed to communicate better and keep morale up. • Whatsapp worked well as a different way of keeping connected. • Quickly worked in partnership and joined together, good already knew contacts and could move quickly. • It was good to make links to new volunteers with new skills who would usually be at work and don't usually volunteer
Kingston and Merton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More collaboration with a wider range of partners. People became less protective over services and resources. • Red tape also reduced massively. Services now think less about reinventing the wheel, but supporting others and allowing other groups to work more effectively. • Some organisations have found it revolutionary to shift services. Some are able to include more people as a result of digital (despite digital divide). Others have swapped their services to a new 'market' and excelled (e.g. switching from night time support, to day).
Wandsworth and Richmond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge pressure on leadership and trustees of small organisations. • Supply of volunteers outstripped demand, but there was little capacity to utilise that opportunity. Organisations' databases were often not capable of handling avalanche of volunteering requests either.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick and effective communication is key, and so is avoiding overlap between different bodies. It was also to keep good communication with the council; regular check-ins with volunteers to monitor their emotional wellbeing. • A steep learning curve for a lot of organisations who haven't used Zoom or digital technology before. • Guidance and resource packs produced to support multiple mutual groups that emerged. • Useful to survey the new volunteers to understand how much time they are prepared to commit in both short and long term. • Local community has been extremely generous both with their donations and their volunteering time. • Wandsworth council have cooperated extremely well with the charity sector, redirecting volunteers to where support was most needed. • Organisations using their assets: e.g. allowing to use their communal kitchen for foodbank users etc; or using transport assets for food and necessities deliveries. • Digital allowed organisations to network and collaborate. • Richmond council created a short film highlighting the work of local organisations and their volunteers, encouraging other people to join. • There seems to be much more joined up working, including submitting joined bids for funding.
<p>Hounslow and Hillingdon</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speeding up the process of and using technology to recruit volunteers • Diversifying roles and supervising in a more agile way • Speeding up safeguarding checks to avoid loss of interest • Utilising individual/personal life skills - identify and signpost to areas in need • Preparing for the future, reflecting and organising • Dedicating time for ourselves, self care, to look after one another • More partnership working and networking - identified a common goal. • Resilience and flexibility, positive mindset • Restrictions on travel have got people interested in their local area - potential catalyst for new lifestyle
<p>Harrow and Brent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddy system between trained and new volunteers was very useful - building a 1:1 support network for volunteers. • Essential to establish clear lines of communication with volunteers and other organisations. Need to consolidate these lines of communication.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support by Volunteer Centres to connect organisations, signpost and provide services - at times struggled because of the information gap. • Proactive in engaging with and working with the Local Authority.
Ealing and Hammersmith & Fulham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incredible community spirit - people want to help. • The importance of keeping channels of communication open so groups didn't feel isolated. • Importance of digital support and data packages to help vulnerable communities to connect • That some things delivered face to face work surprisingly well online. • Strength in use of green space. • If the apparent offer is about something tangible like food - it may still mean that the much more important offer is the befriending and human contact. • Struggle for those who cannot go out - say refugees - young parents who are stuck in multi-occupancy buildings; but want to be seen to be following the rules.
Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learned about the extent of digital exclusion. • At first people were getting information through too many different sources. Amalgamating information into one portal was helpful. • Working with charity partners - how much can we ask of a charity to know that an opportunity is safe? Have had to change processes to risk assessments. • Students have not been willing to commit - need more ad hoc provision
All boroughs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability and opportunity to attract and inspire new types of volunteers and manage this increase in volunteer interest. • The need to move to digital and develop digital skills has often been addressed by volunteer groups. • Opportunity to explore new ways to deliver services where previously would have been nervous to take this step.

Summary of Responses to Question 3 & 4 by Breakout Room

Breakout Room	
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Enfield and Barnet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication from national to local orgs e.g. greater clarity in comms for vaccine volunteers. • Ensure we are striking the appropriate balance between meeting immediate need and sustaining volunteer engagement in the longer term.
Haringey and Hackney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus needs to be on retaining collaborations and reducing competition through sharing resources, expertise, best practice and through funding models. • Embrace the enthusiasm of those who have newly volunteered/would not ordinarily volunteer. • Bring larger, national charities closer to the local networks, this would help with local volunteer deployment. • Have as many types of organisations around the table as possible - has to be a good balance of power.
Camden and Islington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need resource/funding to support the management of volunteers, this dedicated resource is essential. • Need support for staff working to manage volunteers. • Need to promote what has been achieved through the pandemic, but also highlight what volunteers were already doing! • Identify opportunities to work with charities with different skills to target different groups of volunteers e.g. through social media. • Better networks are needed so knowledge of what other charities are doing can be shared more easily.
Waltham Forest and Redbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a better understanding of what motivates people to volunteer and highlight the benefits of volunteering to society, the economy and the individual. • Get a balance between micro-volunteering and long term volunteering, promotion small acts of kindness e.g. Waltham Forest's Civic Actions. • Need continual communication and better information sharing across VCS sector to know what others are doing. • Volunteer training or support that is applicable to more than one role and so is 'portable'.

<p>Newham and Tower Hamlets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review marketing approaches to make volunteering more inclusive and representative of the communities being served. • In response to unemployment rates in the future, up-skill people through volunteering who want to be re-skilled in sectors where there is demand but would need funding to offer training, qualifications etc. to volunteers. • Break down the needs of the communities, so nobody gets overlooked. Move away from the term BAME as this puts everyone into one big group, and does not speak to the diverse needs within BAME. • Review volunteer roles to make them more inclusive to attract more diverse groups of people. • More events where organisations can share good practice and build networks. • Make better use of technology to work smarter.
<p>Barking and Dagenham & Havering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sharing of process across boroughs e.g To ensure all volunteering is safe and with strong structures. e.g those going shopping, how do we deal with cash? • Additional support for volunteers who are new. Could we centralise some training such as first aid, safeguarding etc. And then this means orgs will only need to provide org specific training. • Regular remote idea sharing sessions - thematic /and maybe regional ones too. • Sharing training resources - rather than having to build from scratch every time, can just be edited to suit organisational aims. • A local volunteering forum where ideas are shared and opportunities are made to cross over work
<p>Bexley and Bromley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upskill more staff, volunteers and members of the community around digital skills and IT. Create more digital roles. • More support to remote working volunteers via Zoom calls and telephone support to ensure best practice. • Councils to create a cross borough strategic plan to encourage collaboration, enable more long term planning and not just responding to situations. More incentives for organisations to work together. • More communication between faith groups and smaller community groups and funders regarding funding opportunities. Easier to access funding information generally – one stop shop.

Greenwich and Lewisham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We had 2500 volunteers sign up. Throughout wave 1 to September we managed to engage 750. A huge barrier was DBS check. Weren’t able to be as creative as we would have liked to have been in putting people into roles. Opportunity to explore how much of a safeguard DBS actually is and how much of a barrier.” • One local mutual aid group put their own system in place, instead of DBS, to speak to volunteers before assigning them. That worked well and removed barriers. • There is an opportunity for those organisations that are in a strong position and not competitive about funding and volunteers to be able to signpost people to where the need is. Mapping of who the organisations are that can get volunteers to where they are needed. Sharing volunteers and signposting.
Southwark and Lambeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and prepare for the future and do things differently/try new things. • Continue the legacy of the amazing volunteering that has happened during the pandemic and the increased knowledge / understanding of volunteering. • Keep new partnerships alive. • Funders rethinking what they ask of volunteers (as a result of Covid) - not all about numbers, quality becomes more important. Plan and prepare for the future and do things differently/try new things. • More opportunities to network (way to identify organisations whose work relates to each other) - database of organisations, area hubs. • Centralised system for resource needs/referrals (e.g. Amazon system for requesting funding - but for resources/time). • Need for someone in a role to pull everything together borough-wide. • Sharing of policies/protocols and normalising/standardising language/terminology across organisations.
Croydon and Sutton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to capture what it was that enabled us to cut through red tape and work together easily in the crisis. • Make the use of skilled volunteers who would not usually be available who may prefer flexibility of timing and may be more used to technology. • Balancing the mix of “traditional volunteers” who might like structure and face to face contact with the “new” type of (potentially highly skilled) seen over the pandemic period. Still need the traditional longer term volunteers of all ages.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer centres have a vital role in knowing what types of support/training is needed for different jobs.
Kingston and Merton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More understanding of how to collaborate quickly. Will take some structures back into normal services (e.g. regular meetings for related, specialised groups). • Some organisations are now more likely to continue digital volunteering and integrate it with their regular programmes (e.g. digital activity during winter, in-person activity during summer). • Services also want to give time for volunteers, staff, and service providers to reflect on the trauma and stress of the last few months. • Opportunity to build 'banks' of general volunteers or basic training to reduce the individual recruitment and training burden on organisations.
Wandsworth and Richmond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital has saved a lot of time, and there is a lot of scope to continue working and collaborating online, however, some things do need to be done differently. E.g. any online training should be delivered in more bite-size chunks. • Continuing to develop socially distanced and online activities allows for more flexibility but important to find a balance between online and face-to face. • A platform for collaboration would be very welcome. • It is important to nurture the new volunteers. • An emphasis on informal collaboration, informal networking opportunities, knowing the organisations in the area etc. • A regular volunteering forum would be welcome.
Hounslow and Hillingdon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed stronger links with other agencies and break down policies that may slow down further joint responses / mutual AID working (already been significantly improved and barriers removed). • Focusing on essential services. • Overcoming issues around vetting and doing checks with risk assessments. • Now know what to expect from virtual volunteers and they are better prepared for carrying their roles remotely. Clients are more accepting of non face to face contact with volunteers. In working remotely volunteers are more in control of what they can/can't do. • Built a knowledge base and tested different approaches - able to implement what worked. Transition to online life - sustainable for the future.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to reflect on what is important and what to address (Respecting the environment. Gender Gap is important, diversity, Isolation of young people). • Understanding everyone can play a role, sharing cultural differences to work in synergy and recognise each other's talent to complete the team. • Combining forces to avoid duplicating support offered - enhancing each other so clients/service users have access to wider services (despite costs/lack of funding). • Improved communications platform for publishing duties and activities so that volunteers and beneficiaries can be linked up. • Increase awareness of other people's skills and avoid people missing out.
Harrow and Brent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making most of links which are already there - sharing information through established council services. • Sharing relevant information is a key role of volunteers and the organisations that manage them. • All coordinators need to have a good knowledge of resources available in their particular boroughs so they can support volunteers and service users accordingly.
Ealing and Hammersmith & Fulham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More connections between orgs serving the same communities. • We have enough individual volunteers we need to reach out to more organisations. • Local generalist groups (e.g. churches) need to know where to find specialist skills (e.g. languages).
Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pandemic has raised the profile of the voluntary sector and highlighted the potential of volunteers to make practical change. • Need to present more learning opps for volunteers about how local areas work. • People are tired now, especially from first lockdowns.
All boroughs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration became vital during the pandemic and the coming months are a golden opportunity to make this a normal approach. • Large increase in informal volunteering, which is hugely beneficial but difficult to measure. • Time to galvanise the current high levels of volunteer interest. • Collaboration currently suffers from a lack of co-ordination. The NHS volunteering was a great principle, but many volunteers did not get to give their time. There is a fear that this may

How would you like us to engage with you going forward?



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