



# Supporting Active Communities Volunteer Strategy for Southwark 2021 - 2024

## > Introduction

Since 2012, the Council has worked with firstly the Volunteering Centre and then Community Southwark to produce a volunteer strategy for the borough. Each strategy has been developed at key points in time when the landscape for volunteering has undergone significant shift and the current time is not an exception. The last strategy ended in 2020.

The purpose of the strategy is to reflect the needs and aspiration for volunteering and community based social action across the borough. The new strategy for 2021 to 2024 shifts the focus to ensure that needs of volunteers, as well as host organisations, are both equally reflected in the way forward.

We recognise that not all communities access formal volunteering opportunities equally, and the focus of the work over the next three years will be how we change this, as well as supporting in particular Black, Asian, and minority ethnic community led groups and their volunteers.

This strategy supports the growth and nurturing of community power and recognises that communities have a wealth of knowledge and assets within themselves, which acts as a foundation stone for this work. Volunteering is a key pillar of thriving communities and this strategy is written to contribute to how we can practically support our communities and neighbourhoods thrive, be more resilient to the shocks that they could face be great places to live and work and be places where everyone can have pride and feel that they belong.

## > Local volunteering and its value to Southwark

In 2019, there were over 1,324 registered charities in the borough, and a further estimated 3000 – 4500 unregistered community groups. In 2021, there were over 45,086 filled volunteer positions in the borough; 4,626 of these are trustees and 1066 corporate volunteers. Over 6 million volunteering hours were completed, which at the rate of London living wage, brings an economic contribution to the life of the borough worth over £65 Million.

During COVID-19 we saw a huge increase in the uptake of volunteers. Pre COVID-19 at Community Southwark, there were about 200 volunteers a year attending the volunteer advice appointments and around 40% of these went onto actively volunteer. From March 2020 to April 2021, following the first lockdown, there have been over 700 volunteers; an increase of 250%.

During the pandemic, there was a huge increase of small grass roots organisations coming together to support their communities. The majority of these were mutual aid groups. 65 mutual aid groups formed in Southwark, all working together to support their neighbours and communities. In addition, hundreds of thousands of volunteers nationally stood up to support the NHS through the GoodSAM programme.



## > Vision

*We want Southwark to be a place where everyone feels confident to help and support their neighbours and local groups by getting involved in their communities. We want to build a Southwark where everyone has access to volunteering, so individuals and the places where we live, work, worship and visit can thrive.*

**We think we will achieve this by focusing on the following three objectives:**



### **1) Increase awareness and knowledge of volunteering**

We want to celebrate and raise the profile of volunteering. We know that people cannot take up opportunities if they do not know about them. We want everyone to have access to volunteering and feel that this is an activity they can take part in, a normal part of life, and gain the benefits from this way of taking part. We want people to feel valued for their contributions to supporting communities to thrive.



### **2) Provide appropriate support to organisations that host volunteers**

Volunteers are often the backbone to organisations; they provide the much-needed support in so many different areas. Many grass roots organisations and community groups are volunteer led and are only able to function because of volunteers. We want to make sure all groups and organisations who have volunteers are fully supported through best practice, and reward and recognition.



### **3) Make volunteering inclusive, accessible, meaningful and valued**

We want to ensure volunteering is open to all. We know that currently the profile of who volunteers does not reflect the profile of the borough, and that therefore many people do not access the benefits being a volunteer can bring. We want to change this. People who want to give their time should be able to easily find an opportunity and access volunteering no matter where they are from, live or their protected characteristics. Many look to volunteering to enhance their work skills and we want to support organisations to ensure their volunteering programme can create appropriate pathways into work.



## ➤ Principles to protect

*" any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual." (NCVO)*

- **Volunteering is independently chosen and freely given**  
Volunteering must be voluntary.
- **Has a community or social benefit**  
Volunteering should support local communities and the people within them.
- **Volunteering is enabling and flexible wherever possible**  
Volunteering must be inclusive for all.
- **Volunteering is mutually beneficial**  
Volunteering must be both a positive experience for the individual, beneficiaries and communities, and also help further the aims of the non-profit organisation.
- **Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work**  
The contribution of volunteers must add value but not be a substitute for work that should be paid.



## > Delivery of the strategy

We aim to achieve this strategy through the steering group. This will be co-ordinated by Community Southwark, working closely with Southwark Council. The Steering group will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the strategy, and leadership of the work programme. This will be done through use of statistics from Community Southwark's monitoring, Time bank and surveys, information and feedback from the managers' network, lived experience of volunteers, and experience of volunteer organisations and brokers. The partnership approach should build wider confidence and integrate work through the borough. The group will be working collaboratively through their perspective skill set, knowledge, and experience to deliver the objectives.

Membership of the steering group will be composed of individuals and organisations that are able to provide leadership on each of the work themes, so that the delivery programme is lead and guided by actors who have expertise and knowledge in the various work areas, and are able to share this in shaping and evaluating the programme.

In addition, the delivery programme is aligned with council priorities through its focus on:

- Young people and strengthening the pathways into work that volunteering can facilitate.
- Increasing the diversity of people who take part in volunteering.
- Inclusivity and better addressing community needs through increasing capacity of organisations to deliver services that address concerns such as loneliness, as well as increasing the confidence and capacity of organisations to work with volunteers who have a range of needs, such as autism.

One of the key ways of promoting inclusion and opportunities, is through taking key themes such as climate change or supporting refugees, and using these themes as a means to promote and encourage social action and volunteering. This reflects our learning from the community volunteering response to the pandemic, and more recently, the Afghan refugee crisis. This approach will inform the ways in which we will deliver the work streams, integrate the various work streams where we can, and ensure that the volunteer strategy is able to continue to be aligned to council priorities and remains able to be flexible to emerging needs.

## Vision

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## Outcomes

- More people from our Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities engage in volunteering
- The diversity of Trustees on VCS boards increases
- More people accessing employment through the experience gained by volunteering
- More organisations offer opportunities to volunteers
- Improved experience of volunteering through support of host organisations
- Residents feel supported in their neighbourhoods by active communities
- Young adults are active volunteers

## Objectives

Increase awareness and knowledge of volunteering

Provide appropriate support to organisations that host volunteers

Make volunteering inclusive, accessible, meaningful and valued

## Activities

- Promoting volunteering
- Increase understanding and knowledge of reward and recognition and championing benefits of volunteering
- Provide support to organisations in best practice and volunteer management
- Providing support to grassroots organisations
- Creating better pathways
- Creating meaningful, accessible and inclusive volunteering

## Assumptions

Volunteering is beneficial for society. It is good for the wellbeing of individuals, increases community cohesion and increases the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to meet the needs of local people.

# 1. Increased awareness and knowledge of volunteering

Objectives	Responsibility	Activities	Potential Impact
<p>1) Increased awareness and knowledge amongst Southwark residents of the scope of volunteering opportunities in the borough.</p>	<p>Steering Group</p>	<p>Promoting volunteering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a) Promote trustee roles to underrepresented groups via Trustee Week and throughout the year</li> <li>• b) Work with Culture Team to support and learn from the Olmec black on board project</li> <li>• c) Use current hot topics to promote themed volunteering campaigns e.g. in November, begin a campaign on climate change based volunteering for a few months</li> <li>• d) Promote the CS volunteering service to the digitally excluded</li> <li>• e) Online promotion of volunteering opportunities</li> <li>• f) Showcase case studies</li> <li>• g) Hold and attend volunteer fairs/events (in person or online)</li> <li>• h) Use social media in different ways to reach younger people.</li> <li>• i) Deliver outreach in communities</li> <li>• j) Clients to understand the volunteering journey, what volunteering is and how it can help with mental health</li> <li>• k) Deliver a round table with mental health charities and employment charities on volunteering</li> <li>• l) Create partnerships with schools, universities, and students and deliver outreach</li> </ul>	<p>We believe by delivering these specific activities we will be targeting specific groups and engaging individuals and communities about volunteering opportunities, what volunteering is and how they can volunteer in the borough.</p> <p>This will lead into the benefits of volunteering appearing in our communities; more young people volunteering to help their CV and job prospects, and more Southwark residents volunteering, which can lead to less isolation, mental health decreasing, confidence boosting, neighbours supporting each other and a happier and thriving borough with more social integration.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• m) Volunteers to become - Digital champions - network set up re COVID</li> <li>• n) Sharing training opportunities with volunteers</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2) Increased awareness of the benefits of volunteering and impact of volunteering, both formal and informal, in the borough</b></p>	<p>Steering Group</p>	<p>Reward and recognition and championing benefits of volunteering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a) Hold Southwark Stars Awards</li> <li>• b) Hold civic awards</li> <li>• c) Recognise and reward volunteers during Volunteers' week</li> <li>• d) Promote benefits of informal volunteering to underrepresented groups through cases studies digital and non-digital</li> <li>• e) Articles on the benefits of volunteering</li> <li>• f) Social media campaign on the benefits of volunteering</li> <li>• g) Incorporate social action within communities and the positives of informal volunteering and formal volunteering through training at local level</li> <li>• h) Create partnerships and deliver outreach with local communities, churches, schools, communities groups and TRA's etc</li> <li>• i) Run a workshop on the benefits of volunteering to clients and staff</li> <li>• j) Target young people on benefits of volunteering</li> <li>• k) Celebrate informal volunteers through a resource or paper</li> <li>• l) Volunteer fair in the community</li> </ul>	<p>By delivering these activities, we believe Southwark residents will have a better understanding of why volunteering is so important, useful, and helpful to their communities, themselves and each other. What they can gain for spending time volunteering, how it will help in their daily life and their neighbours.</p> <p>We believe that over the next 3 years we will see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More people from our Black Asian and ethnic minority communities engage in volunteering</li> <li>• The diversity of Trustees on VCS boards increases</li> <li>• More people accessing employment through the experience gained by volunteering</li> <li>• Young adults are active volunteers</li> </ul>



## 2. Provide appropriate support to organisations that host volunteers

Objectives	Responsibility	Activities	Potential Impact
<p>1) Increased awareness of the benefits of volunteering and impact of volunteering, both formal and informal, in the borough</p>	<p>Steering Group</p>	<p>Providing support to organisations/employers in best practice and volunteer management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a) Run and promote the Volunteer Manager's network</li> <li>• b) Create new resources to be to stake holders of best practice advice and management</li> <li>• c) Deliver training on best practice</li> <li>• d) Revive Southwark Good Practice Charter and encourage organisations to sign up</li> <li>• e) Provide 1:1 support to organisations</li> <li>• f) Create and promote good practice through e-bulletins</li> <li>• g) Use CS to gain 1:1 support</li> <li>• h) Deliver a round table for organisations in the borough to discuss lessons learnt</li> <li>• i) Attend CS or any other organisations training on best practice</li> <li>• j) Promoting awards such as investors in volunteers awards at both local and regional level</li> </ul>	<p>By delivering these activities, we believe organisations will be in the best position to support their volunteers, which includes them using best practice to ensure the volunteers journey is safe and rewarding. If a volunteer feels valued then they are likely to stay, spread the positive word to their family and friends, which has a positive impact on others volunteering in the borough.</p> <p>We believe that over the next 3 years we will see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved experience of volunteering through support of host organisations</li> <li>• More people from our Black Asian and ethnic minority communities engaging in volunteering</li> <li>• The diversity of Trustees on VCS boards increases</li> <li>• Young adults are active volunteers</li> </ul>
<p>2) Small and grassroots organisations have increased resources and support to better involve volunteers through best practice that is suitable for them</p>	<p>Steering Group</p>	<p>Providing support to grassroots organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a) Volunteer Kite Mark - Make it more flexible for the smaller groups.</li> <li>• b) Create a resource for the smaller groups around best practice</li> </ul>	<p>By delivering these activities, we believe that small and grassroots organisations will have more understanding and knowledge around best practice that is specific to them and that they are able to support their volunteers better through their journey.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• c) Share Southwark CAN newsletters and website to the groups</li> <li>• d) Deliver a round table of lessons learnt and ways forward</li> <li>• e) Create pathways and links to community groups in the borough</li> <li>• f) Signpost and share through social media - training, resources, and networks that would help and support</li> <li>• g) Deliver outreach</li> <li>• h) Invite smaller groups to volunteer manager's network</li> <li>• i) Signpost any organisations to Community Southwark for support</li> <li>• j) Signpost any clients looking to volunteer in their community through the smaller organisations and Community Southwark</li> <li>• k) Ensuring in the work that we are also supporting grass roots organisations in other areas and sign posting to appropriate services in CS and elsewhere</li> </ul>	<p>We believe that over the next 3 years we will see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More people from our Black Asian and ethnic minority communities engage in volunteering</li> <li>• More people accessing employment through the experience gained by volunteering</li> <li>• Improved experience of volunteering through support of host organisations</li> <li>• Residents feel supported in their neighbourhoods by active communities</li> <li>• Young adults are active volunteers</li> </ul>
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### 3. Make volunteering inclusive, accessible, meaningful and valued

Objectives	Responsibility	Activities	Potential Impact
<p>1) Organisations have the support to give volunteers a pathway to help them with gaining experiences and new skills for future employment, growth in their role or education</p>	<p>Steering Group</p>	<p>Creating better pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a) Advise organisations/ employers on providing support to volunteers, through progression, development goals, reward and recognition for future employment and education.</li> </ul>	<p>By delivering these activities, we believe that organisations have the right tools and understanding to help their volunteers on a journey to gain new skills and growth in their role.</p>

- b) Linking with employment organisations and employers (offering work experience/ work trials etc)
- c) Create a resource for supporting volunteers with skills development and employability skills gained during volunteering
- d) Improve the matching of volunteers to opportunities through the work of the advice and support officer.
- e) Invite guest speaker to Volunteer Manager's Network to give talk
- f) Deliver outreach /talk to schools, community groups, youth clubs, churches etc about volunteering and the benefits
- g) Link involve corporates with organisations who have unemployed volunteers for career advice and support
- h) Linking employers to support volunteers through unpaid work placements, work experience and shadowing
- i) Develop a charter for employers to sign up to when hosting volunteers for work experience
- j) Deliver a roundtable about how pathways can be done for volunteers
- k) Workshops on, practical skills, applications for jobs and utilising volunteer experience in interviews, CVs and application forms
- l) Linking and informing the DWP about the volunteering opportunities available for those on benefits.
- m) Seek DWP involvement in steering group

Linking the volunteers' journey and their future goals by supporting them through to allow for, improved CV's, upskilling, and future employment which helps a thriving borough.

We believe that over the next 3 years we will see:

- More people accessing employment through the experience gained by volunteering
- More organisations offer opportunities to volunteers
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**2) People in the borough have access to meaningful, accessible, and inclusive volunteering**

Steering Group

- Creating meaningful, accessible and inclusive volunteering
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- a) Deliver training “Building an inclusive space for volunteers and trustees” looking at all the different barriers
- b) Use themed approaches to support volunteering e.g. promotions volunteer to support refugees, or address climate change
- c) Support organisations to create volunteer roles that are inclusive and accessible
- d) Ensure digitally excluded volunteers can access Community Southwark through leaflets and posters etc
- e) Promote benefits of volunteering to unrepresentative groups through case studies
- f) Deliver outreach in the community
- g) Create resource on creating an accessible, flexible, and inclusive volunteer programme
- h) Work with the R.E.A.CH alliance and its members to gain insight and intelligence
- i) Use Volunteer Manager’s network to have guest speakers for exchanging of knowledge and support
- j) Ensure volunteering is on the agenda with clients and staff during group and 1:1 sessions.
- k) Putting Community Southwark in touch with relevant individuals in the borough who need support
- l) Deliver a workshop to organisations on mental health volunteering inclusion
- m) Hold a round table for organisations, and volunteers to discuss inclusion

We believe by delivering these specific activities organisations are better equipped with the right knowledge, skills and understanding to create more accessible, meaningful, and inclusive volunteering roles. People in the borough will have better access to volunteering, understand what volunteering is, how they can volunteer and the benefits and that volunteering in Southwark is open to all.

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