VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

England & Wales · Charity number 1127300

Details

Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	06638750
Registered	2008-12-29
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	Norvin House 45-55 Commercial Street London E1 6BD
Phone	07595 219603
Email	info@vcth.org.uk
Website	www.vcth.org.uk

Activities

Objects: 1) THE PROMOTION OF ANY CHARITABLE PURPOSE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMUNITY OF TOWER HAMLETS, GREATER LONDON, IN PARTICULAR THE RELIEF OF THOSE IN NEED BY REASON OF YOUTH, AGE, ILL-HEALTH, DISABILITY OR OTHER SOCIAL OR ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE.2) THE PROMOTION AND ADVANCEMENT OF VOLUNTARY WORK FOR CHARITABLE PURPOSES FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMUNITY, PREDOMINANTLY IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS BUT ADDITIONALLY PROMOTION AND ADVANCEMENT OF VOLUNTARY WORK SUB-REGIONALLY AND NATIONALLY.

Activities: Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) is the Volunteer Infrastructure Organisation for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Our mission is to provide a comprehensive volunteering infrastructure service to non-profit groups and communities in Tower Hamlets, so that we increase the quality, quantity and impact of volunteering in the borough.

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Classification

- **How:** Provides Human Resources, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Acts As An Umbrella Or Resource Body
- **What:** Education/training, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Economic/community Development/employment, Other Charitable Purposes
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, People Of A Particular Ethnic Or Racial Origin, Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, Other Defined Groups, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** LOCAL
- Tower Hamlets

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-09-30	£213,517	£186,500	-	-
2023-09-30	£156,641	£168,974	-	-
2022-09-30	£187,041	£182,237	-	-
2021-09-30	£193,267	£210,010	-	-
2020-09-30	£233,200	£197,528	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Megan Elizabeth Cowley	Chair	2021-05-11
Ivan Tiutiunnikov		2026-05-21
Leo David Zawadzki		2021-05-11
Louise Theophile		2022-08-16
Ricardo Miguel Lobo		2024-09-17

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VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

England & Wales - Charity number 1127300

Accounts

Charity registration number 1127300 (England and Wales)

Company registration number 6638750

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees	Karin Maschler Leo Zawadzki Megan Cowley Louise Theophile Ricardo Lobo	 (Appointed 29 August 2024)
Senior management	Catherine Bavage	Chief executive officer
Charity number (England and Wales)	1127300	
Company number	6638750	
Registered office	Norvin House 45-55 Commercial Street London E1 6BD	
Auditor	Kingston Burrowes Audit Ltd 308 Ewell Road Surbiton Surrey KT6 7AL	
Bankers	The Co-operative Bank PLC PO Box 250 Delf House Skelmersdale WN8 6WT	

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

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VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

TRUSTEES REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

The trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2024.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's governing document, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)".

Objectives and activities
Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) is the recognised volunteering infrastructure agency in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Our charity's objects are:

- The promotion of any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community of Tower Hamlets, Greater London, in particular the relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability or other social or economic disadvantage.

- The promotion and advancement of voluntary work for charitable purposes for the benefit of the community, predominantly in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, but additionally promotion and advancement of voluntary work sub-regionally, regionally and nationally.

In forming our objectives, the trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard for the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

Mission
Our mission is to provide a comprehensive volunteering infrastructure service to non-profit groups and communities in Tower Hamlets, to increase the quality, quantity and impact of volunteering in the borough.

Core Functions
Our 5 core functions are:

Volunteer Brokerage – ensuring that the general public and all sectors are better informed about and have access to an effective and efficient brokerage service

Good Practice Development – helping organisations to improve or attain positive consistency in their volunteering programmes

Developing Volunteering Opportunities – increasing and improving the quantity, quality, and diversity of volunteering locally

Voice of Volunteering – creating an increased awareness of issues impacting volunteering

Strategic Development of Volunteering – engagement with local networks and decision-makers to create a positive environment in which volunteering is flourishing.

Achievements and performance

1. Volunteer Brokerage

Our brokerage service linked potential volunteers to not-for-profit organisations that needed help. We brokered people aged 16+ who lived, worked or studied in Tower Hamlets, providing them with information about suitable volunteering roles and encouraging applications. We promoted volunteering via our website, and by sending regular email alerts to individuals who registered with us and expressed an interest in starting to volunteer.

Although we did not offer a full employer supported volunteering (ESV) service, we provided a signposting function for companies. We received 71 enquiries from private sector companies interested in ESV and referred 65 companies to local Volunteer Involving Organisations that offered corporate team volunteering events.

Since 1 November 2023, Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets has been delivering two new projects – METS and IETV - both funded by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets through the Mayor's Community Grants Programme.

Minoritised Ethnic Trustees (METs) Project

The METs Project aims to increase diversity in charity leadership by supporting Tower Hamlets residents from Global Majority communities to become trustees. Participants complete a short training course on the essentials of being a trustee. Training enhances participants' knowledge and confidence in governance, preparing them for future board roles. Trainees are matched to trustee vacancies in participating charities, where they contribute their skills, lived experience and local knowledge.

In the first year of METs delivery:

- 24 participants successfully completed trustee training
- 18 trainees were matched with charity boards (target: 19)
- 20 of the 24 participants (83%) were women (target: 60%)
- 18 charities participated, of which 12 (67%) appointed trustees.
- 100% of survey respondents increased their knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of trustees, and 95% increased their confidence in applying for trusteeships as a result of the training, exceeding our target of 90%.

Improving Employability Through Volunteering (IETV)

Our Improving Employability Through Volunteering (IETV) project helps Tower Hamlets residents who are unemployed, under-employed or in unsatisfactory employment to build their skills and confidence and gain workplace experience through volunteering. The project targets excluded groups, many of who are furthest from the labour market.

Each year our target is to provide 120 individuals with one-to-one or group support, with at least 75% reporting increased confidence and employability skills. The aim is for 60 participants a year to start volunteering in roles that provide relevant experience for future employment.

To achieve these targets the project offered outreach presentations, workshops and personalised support to match individuals with suitable opportunities. Partnerships with the council's WorkPath, New City College, Idea Stores and other key referral agencies helped to ensure that volunteering placements align with participants' career goals. Regular monitoring tracked progress, ensuring participants gained meaningful experience. We also delivered two online workshops on 'Filling in Volunteer Role Applications & Preparing for Volunteering Interviews'.

In the first year of IETV delivery:

- 129 participants were enrolled and are being supported into volunteering opportunities tailored to their interests.
- 24 volunteers have already confirmed that they have started volunteering.

Volunteering Fair
As part of the IETV project we delivered the Tower Hamlets Volunteering Fair on 3 June 2024 at the Town Hall, in partnership with the council's Workpath. The Fair took place during Volunteers' Week. Twenty eight charities recruiting volunteers held stalls, offering a wide range of roles. 79% of stallholders received more expressions of interest in their volunteer roles than expected, and 100% were keen to attend a future fair. 430 residents attended the Fair, with 96% reporting having found roles that interested them, and 89% reporting that the Fair had exceeded their expectations.

Rising Volunteer Numbers
Between 1 October 2023 and 30 September 2024, 980 new volunteers registered with us, averaging just under 82 per month – a very significant increase of 44.8% on the previous year (2022-23: 677). This is a notable achievement in contrast with the national picture of falling interest in volunteering.

Client Demographics
We aimed to provide an inclusive brokerage service to a wide range of volunteers, reflecting the diverse communities in Tower Hamlets. We requested equalities data from all volunteers at the point of registration, but many chose to withhold some information on their protected characteristics. The resulting data on volunteer demographics that follows is therefore incomplete, but gives a fair indication of the people using our services and of shifting patterns.

Age
81% (791 of 980 volunteers) provided information on their age. Almost half (49%) of all volunteers were aged 20-34 (386 of 791 volunteers), a very similar picture to 2022-23. According to Census 2021 data, 37.8% of Tower Hamlets residents are aged 20-34, so VCTH performed extremely well at attracting younger adults to volunteer.

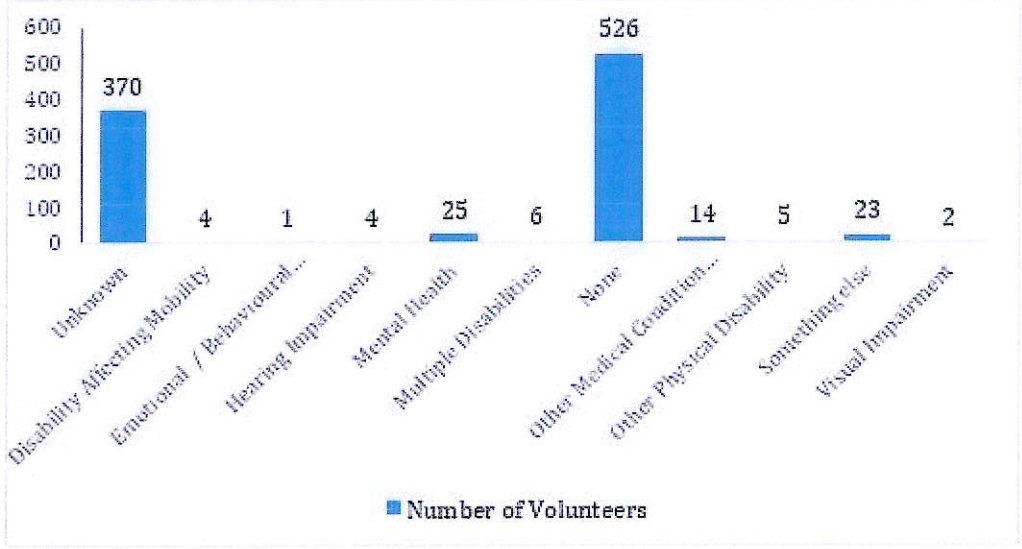
In 2022-23 young people aged 15 to 19 accounted for 13% of our clients. This year that figure rose to 17% (136 of 791 volunteers), illustrating a growing appetite for volunteering among younger people.

People over 50 made up just 8% (65 of 791 volunteers) of our clients.



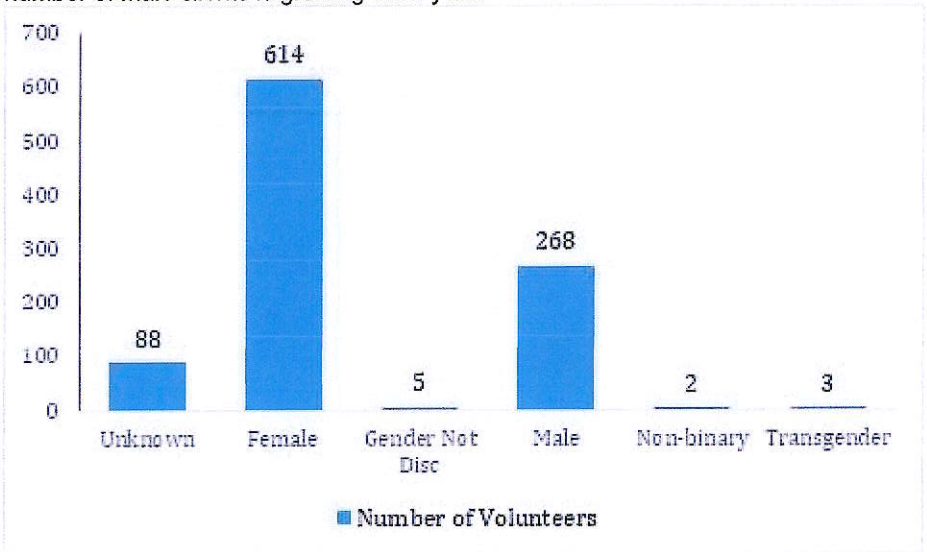
Disability

62% (610 of 980 volunteers) disclosed information about disability. Of them, 86% (526 of 610 volunteers) told us that they had no disability, while 14% (84 of 610 volunteers) disclosed they had a disability, down slightly from 19% in 2022-23. The largest group had mental health conditions. At 14%, the number of Disabled people accessing our brokerage service was lower than the borough profile. According to the Census 2021, 20.1% of Tower Hamlets residents declared long-term health conditions or disabilities that limit their day-to-day activities.



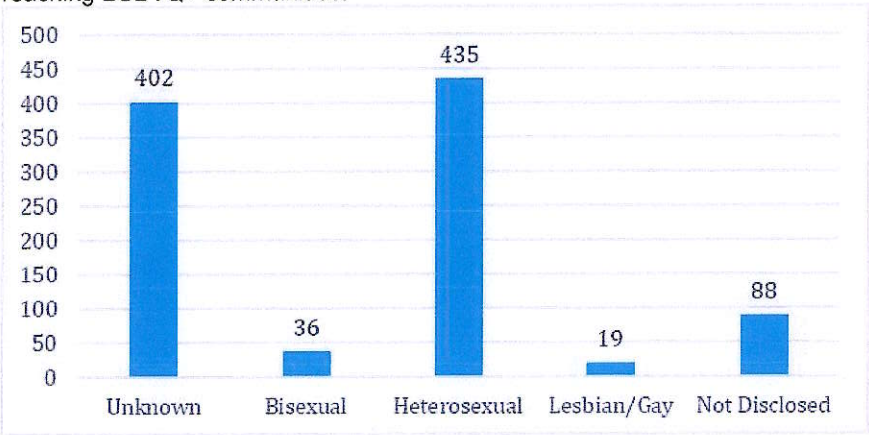
Gender

91% (892 of 980 volunteers) disclosed their gender. Of these, 69% (614 of 892) defined as female (2022-23: 72%) and 30% (268 of 892) identified as male - a small increase from 28% in 2022-23. Five volunteers chose not to disclose their gender, while two identified as non-binary and three as transgender. According to the Census 2021, the borough's residents are 50.2% male and 49.8% female. VCTH excelled at reaching women, although the number of male clients is growing each year.



Sexuality

50% (490 of 980 volunteers) disclosed information about their sexuality - a small increase from 45% disclosing in 2022-23. Of these respondents, 89% (435 of 490) identified as heterosexual. The proportion of volunteers identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual increased to 11% (55 of 490) from 8% in 2022-23. According to Census 2021 data, 6.48% of the Tower Hamlets population identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual, so VCTH is doing well at reaching LGBTQ+ communities.



Ethnicity

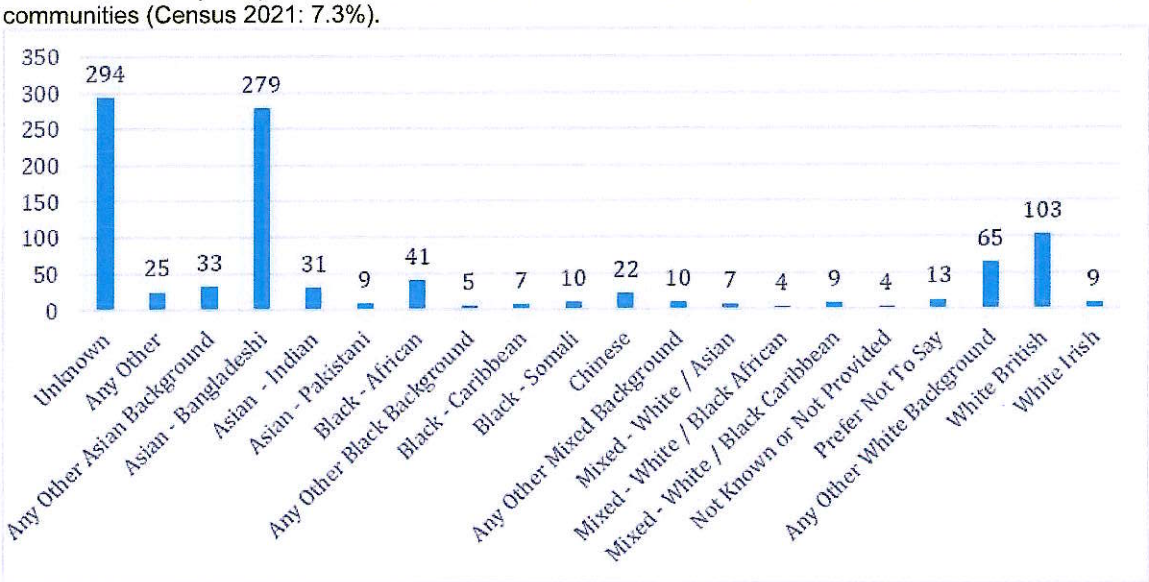
70% (686 of 980 volunteers) provided data on their ethnicity, almost 10% higher than the previous year (2022-23: 61%). The ethnicities of volunteers registering with VCTH largely reflected our local population.

The single largest ethnic group of volunteers was Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi at 41% (279 of 686 volunteers), up 8% from the previous year (2022-23: 33%).

This is higher the borough's Bangladeshi population (Census 2021: 34.6%). Post-pandemic VCTH has made a notable improvement in attracting more Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi volunteers.

The second largest ethnic group of volunteers at 15% (103 of 686 volunteers) was White British - a small decrease from 17% in 2022-23, and below the borough's White British population (Census 2021: 22.9%). The third largest ethnic group of volunteers defined as White Other, making up just shy of 10% of service users (65 of 686 volunteers).

Black or Black British volunteers (African, Caribbean, Somali, or other Black backgrounds) accounted for 9.2% (63 of 686 volunteers), very similar to 9.4% in 2022-23, and exceeding the borough profile of residents from these communities (Census 2021: 7.3%).



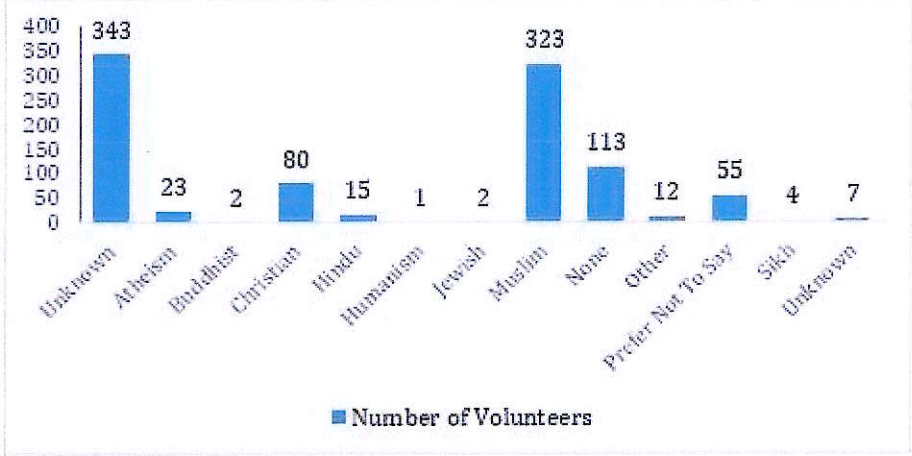
Faith

65% (637 of 980 volunteers) disclosed their faith/religion when registering, up significantly from 51% in 2022-23, suggesting volunteers are increasingly comfortable sharing information about their religion. People of most major faiths, and none, were represented.

The single largest faith group was Muslims at 51% (323 of 637 volunteers), a 6% increase from 45% in 2022-23. This exceeds the local Muslim population recorded in the Census 2021 at 39.9%.

For the second year running, the second largest group of respondents at 18% (113 of 637 volunteers) were of no faith, slightly below the borough's Census figure of 26.6%.

This year 13% (80 of 637 volunteers) told us they were Christians, a 7% decrease from the previous year (2022-23: 20%) and below the percentage of Christian residents in the borough (Census 2021: 22.3%).

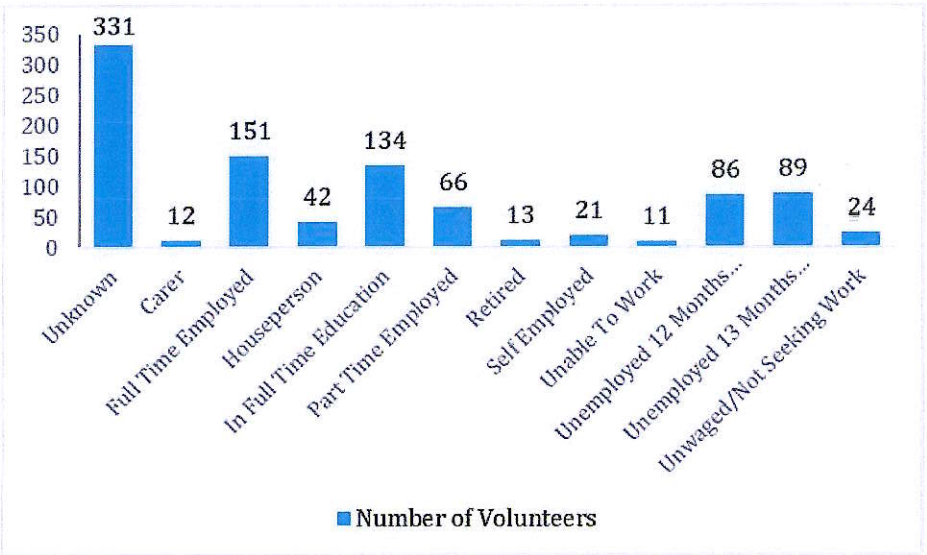


Employment Status

66% (649 of 980 volunteers) disclosed their employment status. The number of volunteers who were employed fell significantly from 47% in 2022-23 to 37% (238 of 649 volunteers). This comprised 23% full-time employed (151 volunteers), 10% part-time employed (66 volunteers) and 3% self-employed (21 volunteers).

VCTH continued to support a growing number of volunteers who were not in work. This was due, in part, to our new Improving Employability Through Volunteering project targeting this cohort. Unemployed people made up 27% of our clients (175 of 649 volunteers) - a sharp uptick from 18% in 2022-23. This included an even split of people who were short-term unemployed for less than 12 months (13%) and longer-term unemployed for more than 13 months (14%).

A further 21% (134 of 649 volunteers) were full-time students, continuing the upward trend from 19% in 2022-23.



Tracking
During the year we received 1,879 unique expressions of interest in the volunteer roles we advertised, compared to 1,173 in 2022-23 – a dramatic increase of 60.2%. Details of each volunteer's interest were passed to Volunteer Managers in host organisations, and volunteers were also provided with contact details for the organisations they wished to support. We relied heavily on Volunteer Involving Organisations to contact prospective volunteers.
Tracking volunteer starters is a time-consuming exercise, and was made more challenging this year by a significantly higher number of clients. We systematically sent follow-up emails to applicants referred to roles to ask if they had started volunteering and to offer our assistance. This year we received confirmation from 67 individuals that they had begun volunteering, but this is only a very partial picture of the likely number of starters. We are increasingly looking to communicate with clients by phone calls, Zoom meeting and texts to increase data about volunteer starters.

2. Good Practice Development
We continued to deliver activities to build the capacity of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) to implement good practice in volunteer management. Since 1 September 2023, this work has been funded by a 3-year grant from City Bridge Foundation.

Volunteer Management Training
We delivered 7 half-day training courses for Volunteer Managers on Zoom. A total of 105 Volunteer Managers attended our training - an average of 15 trainees per course (up from 11.6 per course in 2022-23), demonstrating increasing demand for our free online training. Training topics were:

- Good Practice in Managing Volunteers (held twice)
- Dealing with Difficult Situations with Volunteers (held twice)
- Volunteers and the Law
- Recruiting the Right Volunteers
- Measuring the Difference your Volunteer Programme Makes

Two thirds of the participants (68/105) completed a post-training evaluation survey. Of these 88% (60/68) rated our training as "excellent/extremely useful" or "good/very useful". Further, 75% of respondents told us they had progressed in terms of knowledge (51/68) and 97% of respondents (66/68) committed to making a change within their organisation or taking action as a result of the training.

Peer Learning Sessions for Volunteer Managers
We ran 3 Peer Learning sessions, attended by 35 participants, an average of 11.7 per session (1.7 more per session than in 2022-23). The sessions provided a blend of professional development and learning opportunities for people who manage volunteers. They included guest speakers and much-valued opportunities for peer support. The topics focused on widening participation in volunteering:

- Involving Gen Z Volunteers (aged 18-25)
- Volunteering Among the Global Majority
- Involving Refugees and Asylum Seekers as Volunteers

Bespoke Advice on Volunteer Programmes
Our Training and Best Practice Manager provided one-to-one advice to organisations on all aspects of managing volunteer programmes. A total of 31 organisations were supported with good practice advice over 39 sessions. This represented an increase of 6 organisations accessing the service and a slight decrease of 2 sessions, compared to the previous year.
Twenty one advice recipients completed post-advice surveys, with 100% finding the advice 'extremely useful' or 'very useful'. 95% anticipated implementing improvements to volunteering practices, systems and procedures. 90% of post-advice survey respondents reported increased knowledge, confidence and skills.

Several months after providing advice, we surveyed organisations about the effect of our advice and training, in particular the improvements that they had been able to make. This longer-term impact survey was completed by 11 organisations. 100% had implemented positive changes and 100% improved the quality/level of their volunteering practices, from an average rating of 5.8 out of 10 to 7.8 out of 10. All respondents said they would recommend VCTH's advice service to other voluntary and community sector organisations. Some quotes from our beneficiaries:

"VCTH provides informative and invaluable specialist support for a variety of concerns to do with volunteering - whether that's managing volunteers, your website/marketing or ensuring that you have all the policies in place that they need. I am very grateful for their support and the positive impact they make on both volunteering organisations and volunteers in Tower Hamlets!"
"Your support has been invaluable; I was very new when I started my initial role in the company and your trainings have given me most of my knowledge and understanding of the role that I couldn't get from experience practicing in the role. Thank you!"

Organisations Registered
This year we registered 22 new Volunteer Involving Organisations, 2 more than the previous year.
We carried out a short health-check on each organisation to ensure they could provide a safe and welcoming environment for volunteers before we advertised their volunteer roles. Health check meetings also provided an opportunity to raise awareness of our training and advice services. At 30 September 2024 a total of 557 organisations were registered with VCTH, a net increase of 22 from 2022-23.

3. Developing Volunteering Opportunities
We developed volunteering opportunities in partnership with the not-for-profit organisations registered with us. These included charities, community groups, social enterprises, and public sector bodies. Registered organisations were predominantly based in the borough, while some provided services to Tower Hamlets residents.
We worked hard to ensure that the volunteer roles offered were meaningful, appealing and inclusive, and that volunteers would be supported in a safe environment.

New organisations registered during the year were:

1. Al Jarryah Foundation	12. Love to Swim
2. BlindAid	13. One Million Mentors
3. Build on Belief	14. Samaritans
4. Disability Sports Coach	15. Thai Boxing Fighters Academy
5. Healthy Island Partnership	16. The Diana Award
6. Independent You	17. The Dockland Settlements
7. LBTH Family Hubs	18. The Kids Network
8. LBTH Governor Services	19. The Vegan Society
9. LBTH Idea Stores	20. Travel Hands
10.LBTH Public Realm	21. Vagina Museum
11.London Jaguars Community Association	22. Young Elite Management

We sought to help organisations develop volunteer roles that would enable and enhance their service delivery, while also appealing to a diverse range of potential volunteers. We developed and promoted 313 volunteering roles over the entire year (330 roles in 2022-23) on behalf of 106 organisations. Most roles required multiple volunteers, and some opportunities were advertised more than once. We encouraged organisations to make their volunteer roles more flexible, enabling time-poor volunteers to get involved, and to open up volunteering to as wide a pool as possible. Roles were routinely advertised for 3 months, or until organisations told us they no longer needed volunteers, or asked us to renew their adverts. This process helped us maintain an up-to-date database of current vacancies.
A quote from an organisation whose volunteer roles we advertised:
"We want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your continued support. Your organization has played an essential role in helping us find dedicated volunteers who truly make a difference for our visually impaired community. We value this partnership greatly and look forward to working together in the years to come to further our shared mission".

4. Voice of Volunteering and Communications
Campaigning and Informing
A core function of the Volunteer Centre is to be the local voice of volunteering - increasing awareness of the issues affecting volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations. We campaign for a volunteer-friendly climate, where everyone can participate. We aim to influence local decision-makers and funders about the value of volunteering to our communities, and increase understanding of how volunteering benefits individuals. We advocate for greater recognition of the cost of well-run volunteering programmes, and the importance of effective volunteer management.

We disseminate policy, information and statistics, encourage organisations to think about how changing policy, legislation or populations may affect their volunteer programmes, and urge them to join relevant campaigns. Throughout the year we kept 557 organisations informed (up 22 from 535 in 2022-23).

During 2023-24 VCTH represented volunteering on a number of partnership bodies including:

- Digital Inclusion Working Group
- Fair Food Futures
- Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Steering Group
- Asylum Seekers and Refugees Community Partnership

In August 2024, VCTH helped THCVS develop a statement on behalf of the voluntary and community sector, condemning the racist and Islamophobic violence and rhetoric that took place over the summer. We acknowledged the fear and anxiety caused to volunteers and staff delivering services, especially colleagues from Global Majority communities. We sought to build a broad coalition against extremism and violence, and to celebrate the diversity of volunteers, trustees and staff in Tower Hamlets.

E-bulletins
Our main communication channel with Volunteer Managers was our monthly e-bulletin. This included information on training for workers and volunteers, funding sources, policy developments, campaigns and research, and volunteer manager job adverts.
We distributed our e-bulletin to an average of 607 contacts (a small fall of 3% from the 628 contacts in 2022-23). However, the average open rate for e-bulletins continued to increase and reached 35% in 2023-24, up 7% from the 28% open rate in 2022-23. This data suggests a slightly smaller but significantly more engaged audience.

Website - https://www.vcth.org.uk
We updated our website regularly. Content for Volunteer Managers included information about upcoming training and peer learning sessions, downloadable factsheets, and best practice blogs.
Webpages for volunteers included a step-by-step guide on how to apply for a volunteer role and what to expect, and a link to register on our Improving Employability Through Volunteering programme.
Prospective volunteers could use the website to search for current volunteering roles, register with VCTH and update their profiles. Conscious that some of our audience have limited digital skills, or may not speak English as a first language, we focused on ensuring our website was easy to navigate.

Our website registered 44,282 views in 2023-24 – an 86% increase on the 23,756 views in 2022-23. The number of events (interactions on website pages) soared from 77k in 2022-23 to 119k this year - a 55% increase.

Volunteer Alerts
We maintained a mailing list of people who have registered an interest in volunteering via our website. We updated this regularly to add new registrants and remove unsubscribers, ensuring an engaged audience. By 30 September 2024 this mailing list reached 3,956 individuals, a 17% increase on the 3,392 subscribers the previous year.

We used the mailing list to communicate with volunteers and alert them to new and interesting volunteer roles. During 2023-24 we sent 32 Volunteer Alerts (2022-23: 38 alerts) featuring 130 unique volunteer roles in 78 different organisations (2022-23: 177 roles in 84 organisations). The mailing list was also used to advertise our Minoritised Ethnic Trustees and Improving Employability Through Volunteering programmes.

Volunteers' Week (1-7 June 2024)
National Volunteers' Week is an annual opportunity to thank volunteers and recognise their contributions, as well as to raise the profile of volunteering, encouraging more people to get involved. June 2024 marked the 40th anniversary of Volunteers' Week.
Our Volunteers' Week special e-bulletin for Volunteer Managers was published on 2 June to 603 recipients, with an open rate of 41%, up from 25% in June 2023. It encouraged local Volunteer Managers to reward and celebrate their volunteers.

Our flagship event during Volunteers' Week was the Tower Hamlets Volunteering Fair, held on 3 June 2024. We used our mailing lists to invite charities to hold recruitment stalls and encouraged volunteers looking for their next role to attend.

5. Strategic Development of Volunteering

As the volunteering infrastructure agency for Tower Hamlets, VCTH is recognised as the local volunteering expert in the borough. Strategic partners across Tower Hamlets often look to us for input and guidance on volunteering issues. We seek to represent the interests and concerns of volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations at borough and pan-London levels, and ensure a coherent, joined-up approach.

Co-Operate
VCTH's Chief Executive and the VSCYF Co-ordinator were active members of Co-Operate – a joint strategic body of voluntary sector representatives, senior Council staff and elected Councillors. Co-Operate aims to transform how organisations work together to enhance the lives of local people. Between us, we represented the interests of Volunteer Involving Organisations and organisations providing services to children and young people.

Co-Operate met three times in 2023-24. The main themes for discussion during the year were:

- VCS workforce development – challenges recruiting and retaining sufficient quality staff and volunteers to deliver services to meet needs
- Measuring the impact of the voluntary and community sector
- The latest State of the Sector survey
- Mayor's Community Grants – in particular delays to decision-making and grant awards paperwork, as well as feedback to unsuccessful applicants
- How the Council could lever external funding into the borough to support VCS organisations
- The Mayor's Small Grants programme
- The Tower Hamlets Place campaign
- Development of a new VCS Strategy for 2024 onwards

VCTH participated in the Council's Employability Fair in November 2023 to promote volunteering to residents to help address workforce development challenges. We joined the VCS Strategy Project Team. We also identified the significant underspend on the Small Grants funding stream, and raised our serious concerns about money designated for the sector being lost.

Partnering with Tower Hamlets CVS
Throughout the year we continued to work closely with our main partner, Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS), to share insight and avoid duplication of services. Between us we represented the broadest possible range of local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations at strategic level. The Chief Executives talked regularly to share information, identify common issues of concern, and discuss strategic responses. Our successful 4-year partnership delivering the Infrastructure and Capacity Building programme concluded on 31 October 2023, but we are committed to seeking further funding opportunities to deliver new projects together.

National and Regional Strategic Bodies
We were active members of:

- London Plus

Our Chief Executive attended quarterly Volunteer Centre Network meetings, engaging with staff in other London Volunteer Centres to share challenges and successes of facilitating volunteering in the Capital, and identify opportunities for joint working across the region.

- Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP)

We joined regular online meetings of the VCSEP, facilitated by the British Red Cross. It brought together voluntary and public sector agencies, national and local, to deliver a more co-ordinated response to emergencies. VCSEP meetings enabled members to share insight and learning, make connections before emergencies arise, and build their skills and capability.

- London Communities Emergency Partnership (LCEP)

We continued to engage with the London Communities Emergency Partnership (LCEP), which brings together VCS organisations to respond to crises in the capital.

6. Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF)

VCTH facilitated the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF) for a 16th successive year. The Forum was funded under a contract with Tower Hamlets Council's Children's Services Directorate until 31 March 2025.

The Forum supports and represents around 300 voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations that provide services to children, young people and their families. It acts as a channel for dialogue between these VCS organisations, Tower Hamlets Council and other statutory partners. VCTH employed a part-time Co-ordinator, who liaised with all parties to ensure effective information sharing, communication, and representation, and who advocated for co-production.

The most significant issues affecting VSCYF members in this period were increasing competition to secure funding, and the rising costs of delivering programmes and services affordably. Members also faced challenges in recruiting and retaining staff with the right skills and experience, and supporting their staff to work differently. The COVID pandemic continued to have an impact on children and families. There were new developments from national government, such as Family Hubs, and locally there was a growing trend for LBTH to deliver services in-house, rather than commission them from the voluntary and community sector. There were some gaps in provision for children, young people and families resulting from different priorities. There was also a need to equip organisations to support young people to respond to the issues arising from the Israel/Palestine conflict.

The Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum met 4 times during 2023-24 with an average attendance of 15 organisations per meeting (an increase from 11 organisations in 2022-23). Forum meetings included briefings from senior staff from LBTH Children's Services Directorate. Meetings alternated between online and in person, and covered a variety of subjects, including:

- funding, commissioning and grants
- partnership working
- poverty
- safeguarding and Early Help
- children and young people's mental health
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) provision
- young carers
- supporting young people in times of conflict
- play in Tower Hamlets
- adolescence, youth services and youth justice services
- supporting refugee families in Tower Hamlets
- Tower Hamlets and North East London developments and strategies.

Fourteen new organisations joined the Forum during the year, bringing the total VSCYF membership to 295 organisations – a net increase of 8 from the previous year. The total number of voluntary sector professionals on our database stood at 311 - a net decrease of 30 individuals from 2022-23, reflecting changes in organisations' funding and individuals' circumstances.

We produced quarterly VSCYF e-bulletins. These included; Forum and Tower Hamlets news, funding and training opportunities, and events for children, young people or organisations that support them. In addition we sent regular email updates to members alerting them to urgent issues.

Facilitating voluntary and community sector representation continued to be a key focus of the VSCYF Coordinator's work. Three new voluntary sector representatives were appointed this year and the VSCYF Coordinator met with all five representatives regularly to ensure good representation for all VSCYF members.

The VSCYF Coordinator also delivered practical services for Forum members. She assisted 10 member organisations with funding applications, or helped them decide whether to apply. In addition, she supported 5 organisations with reviewing and developing their safeguarding policies and procedures.

During the year, we delivered 3 small-group training workshops for VSCYF members on:

- Developing Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Identifying Realistic Outcomes and Targets for Funding Applications and Tenders
- Online Safety, What Can We Do?

Average trainee numbers (5 per workshop) were similar to the previous year, with 16 attendees across the year.

7. Consultancy Work

Consultancy work enabled VCTH staff to use their expertise, while helping to diversify our funding base and generate unrestricted reserves. This year, we continued to support Ocean Women's Association with fundraising on a consultancy basis to ensure sufficient funding for their programmes delivered by volunteers. This work was completed in August 2024.

We also commenced a consultancy project for London Museum, working to develop a bespoke training session on Volunteers and the Law for London Museum staff and workers at other smaller museums. The training was delivered in November 2024.

Thank You

To our staff
The trustees wish to extend our gratitude to VCTH staff who have worked with professionalism and dedication. Our people are undoubtedly our greatest asset. Their determination, skills and experience have enabled VCTH to deliver high quality, relevant services for Tower Hamlets communities this year. Our thanks to:

- Catherine Bavage, Chief Executive
- Evelyn Rodrigues, Training & Best Practice Manager
- Alex Nelson, Voluntary Sector Children & Youth Forum Co-ordinator (left March 2025)
- Faiza Sharif, Volunteering Advisor (started May 2024)
- Zahanar Begum, Volunteering Advisor (left November 2024)

To retired trustees
Two trustees have retired since our last Annual Report. Ioana Popovici retired in June 2024, having completed a term of just under 2 years. Sabiha Khanam retired in December 2024 after 4 years as a trustee. We thank them for their commitment and contributions to VCTH's development.

To our funders
We are extremely grateful for the money and confidence that funders and commissioners have invested in Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets. During 2023-24 they were:

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- Local Community Fund - Infrastructure and Capacity Building grant (ended 31 October 2023)
- Mayor's Community Fund – Minoritised Ethnic Trustees (started 1 November 2023)
- Mayor's Community Fund – Improving Employability Through Volunteering (started 1 November 2023)
- Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum contract

City Bridge Foundation
- Enabling Voluntary Sector Organisations in Tower Hamlets to Develop High Quality Inclusive Volunteering (started 1 September 2023)

Poplar HARCA
- Grant towards core services.

Financial review
On 18 October 2023 VCTH trustees ratified a budget for the year commencing 1 October 2023, projecting a small surplus of £1,719. This was the first time in several years that we were able to set a balanced budget at the outset of the year. This was only made possible following receipt of two Mayor's Community Grant award letters on 11 October 2023, providing income for 3 years and 5 months from 1 November 2023.

Net current assets (working capital) held at 30 September 2024 amounted to £64,873 (up from £37,856 at 30 September 2023). The year ending 30 September 2024 proved to be one of VCTH's most successful financial years in recent times.

Reserves policy

At the end of the charity's sixteenth operational year at 30 September 2024, our total reserves had increased by 71% from £37,856 to £64,873. Of these reserves, £55,193 (85%) were unrestricted and £9,680 (15%) were restricted funds.

Trustees are aware of growing redundancy liabilities associated with long-serving staff, and the need to include the cost of consultation and notice periods in the event of redundancies as VCTH's major liability.

Our Reserves Policy was updated on 22 January 2024. It states that trustees will aim to maintain free reserves at a level which covers at least three months' running costs, but does not exceed that level, plus the redundancy obligations the charity would have in the event of a wind up. The trustees agree this level is the most prudent and would enable to charity to continue to operate in the event of an emergency, or a sudden cut to funding. Trustees acknowledge that this level of reserves may be aspirational in a challenging funding environment. They agree that, while VCTH should strive to maintain this level of reserves, this should not be achieved at the detriment of VCTH's core values and long-term viability.

On completion of the annual budget, trustees and the Chief Executive identify the new target range for free reserves. VCTH trustees monitor the level of reserves regularly. The main mechanism for monitoring is the scrutiny of management accounts and cash flows presented quarterly at trustee board meetings, along with an updated redundancy calculator that tracks our redundancy liabilities. This ensures that trustees are aware of any build-up of excess reserves, or of reserves being depleted unexpectedly or rapidly.

Our Reserves Policy is reviewed annually, and whenever there is a significant change in VCTH's liabilities. The next review will happen in June 2025.

At June 2025 the target reserves range is calculated to be between £56,057 and £84,172. The lower figure is 3 months' running costs, based on projected annual expenditure in 2024-25. The higher figure is 3 months' running costs, plus redundancy liability of £28,115 for two staff at 30 September 2025. At 31 March 2025, our unrestricted reserves position stood at £59,981, which was within our reserves target range.

Plans for future periods

On 12 March 2025, the staff and trustee team held an Away Day to undertake strategic planning. To assist with this exercise we considered:

- The national and local volunteering picture, including data from the Community Life Survey 2023-24, and demographics of volunteers registering with VCTH
- Which communities are under-represented among VCTH service users, and how we might remove barriers to volunteering
- Current challenges facing our charity and opportunities we could take up
- New services we could deliver and different ways of working
- A refresh of our Strategic Priorities.

The Board of Trustees finalised the Strategic Priorities for 2025-26 at their Board meeting on 11 June 2025.

1. Diversify income sources to sustain services and increase our financial stability

- Develop a long term funding strategy to replace existing funding as it ends
- Consider piloting new projects with partner organisations
- Identify suitable funding for projects, such as undertaking a quality mark or developing a volunteering strategy for Tower Hamlets.

2. Undertake Board succession planning

- Appoint Vice Chair(s) in summer 2025 and a new Chair by December 2025
- Recruit at least 2 additional trustees
- Involve trustee(s) with experience of working in the voluntary sector and/or volunteer management to re-balance the Board's skillset
- Recruit trustees from Bangladeshi and/or Somali communities to increase community representation.

3. Make volunteering more accessible

- Drive up participation in volunteering at all levels
- Target and involve more people from Global Majority communities, older people Disabled people and men in volunteering
- Support people most impacted by poverty into volunteering
- Take volunteering to potential volunteers by increasing our visibility, developing more community touch points, and delivering more services from local venues.
- Encourage organisations to simplify and accelerate application processes to remove barriers to volunteering.

4. Drive up volunteering conversion rates (moving people from expressing interest to starting in volunteering roles)

- Focus on providing high quality, tailored services that meet needs
- Run focus groups with residents/volunteers (and with Volunteer Involving Organisations) to establish what helps and what creates blocks
- Talk to and learn from other Volunteer Centres with higher conversion rates
- Ensure a strong supply and wide range of appealing volunteer roles.

Structure, governance and management

The organisation is a charitable company, limited by guarantee, incorporated on 4 July 2008, and registered as a charity on 29 December 2008.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company, and is governed under those Articles.

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Karin Maschler	
Leo Zawadzki	
Megan Cowley	
Sabiha Khanam	(Resigned 10 December 2024)
Ioana Popovici	(Resigned 20 June 2024)
Louise Theophile	
Ricardo Lobo	(Appointed 29 August 2024)

Recruitment and appointment of trustees

The process for appointing the charity's trustees is set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. As VCTH is a charitable company, trustees also act as company directors. The minimum number of trustees is three, with no maximum. The Board of Trustees may appoint anyone willing and fit to act as a trustee and director, subject to the provisions of the Articles of Association.

One third of trustees must retire (but may stand for re-election) each year. Trustees are appointed annually, for a maximum of seven consecutive years, at which point they must retire. Trustees who have served seven years may stand for re-election, but only one year after the date of their retirement. Trustees may only hold the same Honorary Officer role for a maximum of five years.

The charity conducts regular skills, experience and diversity audits of trustees. These audits identify gaps in skills, or under-representation of particular groups or communities, and are fundamental to the recruitment process. Vacancies are advertised and potential trustees complete an application form, outlining their relevant skills and experience. Shortlisted applicants meet with a selection panel, comprising the Chair, one other trustee and the Chief Executive. If successful at interview, applicants are invited to observe a Board meeting and meet current trustees. If all parties agree to proceed, the applicant is either co-opted or nominated for election at the next AGM.

None of the trustees has any beneficial interest in the company. All of the trustees are members of the company and guarantee to contribute £1 in the event of a winding up.

Organisational structure

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets was established in July 2008 as an independent charitable company by a team of four committed volunteers, who became its initial 3 trustees and founder Chief Executive. The charity marked its 16th full operational year on 30 September 2024.

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets has a Board of Trustees, which meets at least 6 times a year, and is responsible for the strategic direction and governance of the charity. The charity's Chief Executive attends Board meetings as an advisor, but does not have voting rights. During the year, seven individuals were involved as charity trustees. Two were Tower Hamlets residents, ensuring local community involvement. Karin Maschler and Leo Zawadzki continued in the roles of Chair and Treasurer respectively – positions they have held since August 2021. One trustee retired during the year: Ioana Popovici (June 2024), and Sabiha Khanam has since retired (December 2024). We were delighted to appoint Ricardo Lobo, a graduate of our METs trustee training and matching programme, to our Board of Trustees in August 2024.

Responsibility for operational management was delegated to the Chief Executive, Catherine Bavage, who is responsible for HR, finance, fundraising, and managing service delivery. She ensures that the charity delivers high quality, responsive services to meet the targets and outcomes set out in grants and contracts.

The Board of Trustees has appointed all staff, including key management personnel, on a grade within the National Joint Council (NJC) pay scale for Local Government employees. Where the charity's financial position allows, the Board awards annual pay rises, agreed nationally by the NJC. VCTH implemented the NJC 2024 pay award in December, backdated to April 2024.

Induction and training of trustees

Trustees are issued a role description, outlining their statutory and additional governance responsibilities. On joining the Board, trustees are introduced to other Board members and paid staff, and provided with a comprehensive induction. Trustees are expected to attend 6 Board meetings a year plus an annual Away Day. They must acquaint themselves with VCTH's policies and procedures, strategic plans, budgets, and governing document. Trustees are prompted to take up relevant learning and development opportunities to help them fulfil their role and responsibilities

Risk Management

Our Risk Register identifies risks and their potential impact in 5 areas: governance, operational, financial, environmental/external, and compliance. It describes the steps needed to mitigate risks. The trustees have considered all the major risks to which the charity is exposed and are satisfied that systems or procedures are established to mitigate those risks.

The charity has a suite of policies and procedures that trustees, staff and volunteers must observe. In November 2023, trustees established working groups to refresh a number of policies, and in January 2024 agreed a schedule for this work. During the year, trustees reviewed and approved 7 policies, and this work continues:

- Reserves Policy (22 Jan 2024)
- Chair's Action Policy (22 Jan 2024)
- Trustee Recruitment Procedure (22 Jan 2024)
- Flexible Working Policy (20 Jun 2024)
- Food Safety Procedure (29 Aug 2024)
- Accident and Incident Reporting Procedure (29 Aug 2024)
- Redundancy and Redeployment Policy (23 Oct 2024)

From June 2023 until December 2024 Sabiha Khanam was the trustees' Designated Board Safeguarding Lead. After Sabiha's retirement this role transferred to Ricardo Lobo, who completed comprehensive safeguarding children training with NSPCC.

To ensure that VCTH complies with legislation and implements good employment practice we contract with Bright HR, who provide the trustees and Chief Executive with employment advice. We continued to offer Bright HR's Employee Assistance Programme to the team, giving staff and volunteers access to health and wellbeing support, including web resources, a 24-hour helpline and counselling sessions.

Our staff continued to work primarily from home throughout 2023-24. They were provided with the necessary equipment and paid Working At Home Allowances. Being office-free prioritises our commitment to sustaining services and staffing over fixed accommodation costs, enabling VCTH to make considerable savings on core costs and sustain a more climate-friendly model.

We continued to use the professional services of Adrian Hull as our management accountant, and Creative Payroll Services for managing our payroll.

A charity combined insurance policy was in place with Aviva Insurance Ltd throughout the year covering; employer's liability (£10m), public liability (£5m), products liability (£5m), business interruption, executive risks (including trustee indemnity and directors' liability), professional indemnity, cyber loss recovery, fidelity guarantee, property and business equipment, money and personal accident assault, group personal accident, goods in transit, and legal expenses. We took separate commercial legal expenses insurance through Bright HR to indemnify VCTH against legal costs and compensatory awards associated with employment disputes.

Under VCTH's Conflicts of Interest Policy trustees and staff must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. Between January and April 2024 trustees and staff updated their declaration of interests forms. Declaring conflicts remained a standing agenda item at all Board meetings.

Like many voluntary and community sector organisations, Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets experienced increased demand for services in the wake of the COVID pandemic and with rising poverty. The climate of stiff competition for funding continued, making securing income challenging. Nevertheless, VCTH's income increased by over 36% to £213,517 in 2023-24 (2022-23: £156,641), and we ended the year in surplus. We negotiated funding in advance for all contracts and grants, ensuring positive cash flow throughout the year.

We take our commitment to protecting individuals' personal data seriously. During the year, the Volunteer Centre re-registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. Staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities not to disclose the personal or sensitive data of our service users. We began to review our Data Protection Policy with support from expert corporate volunteers, and this work will conclude in 2025.

VCTH is committed to recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff. A new member of staff, Faiza Sharif, joined the team in May 2024 as a part-time Volunteering Advisor, following a competitive external recruitment exercise. Continued professional development for staff is essential for retention, ensures that skills and knowledge are updated, and reduces our exposure to risk. In 2023-24, all staff took up learning and development opportunities. Staff completed Active Bystander training with Protection Approaches in December 2023.

Statement of Trustees responsibilities

The trustees, who are also the directors of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:
- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Auditor

Kingston Burrowes Audit Ltd were appointed as auditor to the company and a resolution proposing that they be re-appointed will be put at a General Meeting.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each of the trustees has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

The Trustees report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

Karin Maschler

Karin Maschler
Chair of Board of Trustees

11 June 2025

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (the 'charity') for the year ended 30 September 2024 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 30 September 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements* section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of our audit:

- the information given in the Trustees report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the Trustees report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the Trustees report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the Trustees report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of Trustees responsibilities, the trustees, who are also the directors of the charity for the purpose of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

- Enquiry of management, those charged with governance about actual and potential litigation or claims and identification of non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- Reviewing minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.
- Reviewing financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- Auditing the risk of management override of controls, including through testing journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness.
- Performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud.
- Professional scepticism in course of the audit and with audit sampling in material audit areas.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)

TO THE MEMBERS OF VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Kevin Fisher BA FCA CTA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Kingston Burrowes Audit Ltd, Statutory Auditor

308 Ewell Road
Surbiton
Surrey
KT6 7AL
23 June 2025

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Income from:							
Charitable activities	3	62,632	150,885	213,517	75,677	80,964	156,641
Total income		62,632	150,885	213,517	75,677	80,964	156,641
Expenditure on:							
Charitable activities	4	43,376	143,124	186,500	89,179	79,795	168,974
Total expenditure		43,376	143,124	186,500	89,179	79,795	168,974
Net income/(expenditure) and movement in funds		19,256	7,761	27,017	(13,502)	1,169	(12,333)
Reconciliation of funds:							
Fund balances at 1 October 2023		35,937	1,919	37,856	49,439	750	50,189
Fund balances at 30 September 2024		55,193	9,680	64,873	35,937	1,919	37,856

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

	Notes	2024 £	£	2023 £	£
Current assets					
Debtors	10	6,484		6,448	
Cash at bank and in hand		90,077		67,535	
		96,561		73,983	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	(31,688)		(36,127)	
Net current assets			64,873		37,856
The funds of the charity					
Restricted income funds	14		9,680		1,919
Unrestricted funds	15		55,193		35,937
			64,873		37,856

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on 11 June 2025

Leo Zawadzki
Treasurer

Company registration number 6638750 (England and Wales)

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is Norvin House, 45-55 Commercial Street, London, E1 6BD.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the charity's governing document, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)". The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The charity has taken advantage of the provisions in the SORP for charities not to prepare a statement of cash flows.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, [modified to include the revaluation of freehold properties and to include investment properties and certain financial instruments at fair value]. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors or grantors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Endowment funds are subject to specific conditions by donors that the capital must be maintained by the charity.

1.4 Income

Items of income are recognised in the financial statements when all of the following criteria are met:

- The charity has entitlement to the funds;
- any performance conditions have been met or are fully within the control of the charity;
- there is sufficient certainty that receipt of the income is considered probable; and
- the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from performance related grants and contracts is recognised as the charity earns the right to consideration through delivery of the specified services.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

1.5 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount can be measured reliably. Expenditure includes all irrecoverable VAT which is included as part of the relevant cost.

Expenditure on charitable activities comprises those costs associated with the delivery of the various activities and services for the charity's beneficiaries.

Expenditure includes those costs of a direct nature which can be allocated to a specific activity and also includes indirect costs, including governance costs that do not relate to a specific activity but are necessary to support those activities. Support costs are apportioned to each activity on the basis of staff time.

1.6 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.7 Retirement benefits

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

1.8 Debtors and creditors

Debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and which are receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised in expenditure.

1.9 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible assets costing more than £1,500 are capitalised and are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

3 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Income from Charitable activities						
LBTH - Voluntary sector children & youth forum	50,108	-	50,108	45,309	-	45,309
LBTH - COVID 19 Volunteering Hub	-	-	-	25,000	-	25,000
LBTH - Infrastructure and Capacity Building	-	6,250	6,250	-	75,000	75,000
Poplar HARCA, Other Consultancy and training income	12,524	-	12,524	5,368	-	5,368
City Bridge Foundation	-	72,000	72,000	-	5,964	5,964
LBTH - Minoritised Ethnic Trustees	-	36,656	36,656	-	-	-
LBTH - Improving Employability	-	35,979	35,979	-	-	-
	62,632	150,885	213,517	75,677	80,964	156,641

Section 37 Statement: During the period, the grants receivable from LB Tower Hamlets were expended on various projects for the purposes for which they were given.

Of the LB Tower Hamlets income of £145,309 recognised in 2023, £70,309 related to unrestricted funds and £75,000 to restricted funds.

The remainder of the charitable activities income of £11,332 recognised in 2023 related to unrestricted funds of £5,368 and restricted funds of £5,964.

4 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Volunteering services 2024 £	Volunteering services 2023 £
Direct costs		
Staff costs	162,192	145,793
Activity costs	6,461	5,801
Staff and volunteer training and recruitment	941	975
Travel costs	396	295
Volunteer expenses	98	50
	170,088	152,914
Share of support and governance costs (see note 5)		
Support	10,093	10,220
Governance	6,319	5,840
	186,500	168,974
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	43,376	89,179
Restricted funds	143,124	79,795
	186,500	168,974

5 Support costs allocated to activities

	2024 £	2023 £
Office costs	5,481	4,892
IT support	3,202	2,899
Computer and website costs	246	1,270
Other costs	1,164	1,159
Governance costs	6,319	5,840
	16,412	16,060
Analysed between:		
Volunteering services	16,412	16,060

5 Support costs allocated to activities **(Continued)**

Governance costs comprise:	2024 £	2023 £
Audit fees	2,190	1,950
Accountancy	4,095	3,800
AGM/ Annual review	34	90
	6,319	5,840

6 Net movement in funds

	2024 £	2023 £
The net movement in funds is stated after charging/(crediting):		
Fees payable for the audit of the charity's financial statements	2,190	1,950

7 Trustees

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the charity during the year.

Trustee meeting refreshments and training costs amounting to £Nil (2023: £Nil) were paid on behalf of nil (2023 : nil) trustees.

8 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2024 Number	2023 Number
	4	5

Employment costs	2024 £	2023 £
Wages and salaries	146,888	131,981
Social security costs	9,637	7,732
Other pension costs	5,667	6,080
	162,192	145,793

The average number of employees during the period, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents was 3.2 (2023: 3.2).

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000.

8 Employees (Continued)

Remuneration of key management personnel

The remuneration of key management personnel was as follows:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Aggregate compensation	60,125	54,325

Under FRS 102, employee benefits include gross salary, employer's NIC, employer's pension contributions and benefits in kind.

9 Taxation

The charity is exempt from taxation on its activities because all its income is applied for charitable purposes.

10 Debtors

	2024	2023
Amounts falling due within one year:	£	£
Other debtors	6,404	5,965
Prepayments and accrued income	80	483
	6,484	6,448

11 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Notes	2024	2023
		£	£
Deferred income	12	26,504	31,772
Accruals		5,184	4,355
		31,688	36,127

12 Deferred income

	2024	2023
	£	£
Other deferred income	26,504	31,772

Deferred income is included in the financial statements as follows:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Deferred income is included within:		
Current liabilities	26,504	31,772

Movements in the year:

12 Deferred income (Continued)

Deferred income at 1 October 2023	31,772	23,930
Released from previous periods	(31,772)	(23,930)
Resources deferred in the year	26,504	31,772
Deferred income at 30 September 2024	26,504	31,772

13 Retirement benefit schemes

Defined contribution schemes	2024 £	2023 £
Charge to profit or loss in respect of defined contribution schemes	5,667	6,080

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the charity in an independently administered fund.

14 Restricted funds

The restricted funds of the charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used.

	At 1 October 2023	Incoming resources	Resources expended	At 30 September 2024
	£	£	£	£
LBTH - Infrastructure	142	6,250	(6,392)	-
City Bridge Foundation	1,027	72,000	(68,118)	4,909
London Plus - laptops	750	-	-	750
LBTH - Improving employment	-	35,979	(34,763)	1,216
LBTH - METS	-	36,656	(33,851)	2,805
	1,919	150,885	(143,124)	9,680

Previous year:	At 1 October 2022	Incoming resources	Resources expended	At 30 September 2023
	£	£	£	£
LBTH - Infrastructure	-	75,000	(74,858)	142
City Bridge Foundation	-	5,964	(4,937)	1,027
London Plus - laptops	750	-	-	750
	750	80,964	(79,795)	1,919

15 Unrestricted funds

The unrestricted funds of the charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants which are not subject to specific conditions by donors and grantors as to how they may be used. These include designated funds which have been set aside out of unrestricted funds by the trustees for specific purposes.

	At 1 October 2023	Incoming resources	Resources expended	At 30 September 2024
	£	£	£	£
General funds	35,937	62,632	(43,376)	55,193

Previous year:	At 1 October 2022	Incoming resources	Resources expended	At 30 September 2023
	£	£	£	£
General funds	49,439	75,677	(89,179)	35,937

16 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2024	Restricted funds 2024	Total 2024
	£	£	£
At 30 September 2024:			
Current assets/(liabilities)	55,193	9,680	64,873
	55,193	9,680	64,873

	Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total 2023
	£	£	£
At 30 September 2023:			
Current assets/(liabilities)	35,937	1,919	37,856
	35,937	1,919	37,856

17 Contingent Assets

Total grant funding awarded as at 30 September 2024 but not yet received and recognised as income due to the recognition criteria not being met amounts to £354,281 (2023 - £503,189).

18 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2023 - none).

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

England & Wales - Charity number 1127300

Accounts

Volunteer Centre
Tower Hamlets

Report of the Trustees and Accounts
For the period from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023

Company no. 6638750 (England & Wales)
Charity no. 1127300

Myrus Smith
Chartered Accountants
Norman House
8 Burnell Road
Sutton
Surrey
SM1 4BW

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

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VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 30 September 2023

The Trustees present their report and audited financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2023.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Charity Name:	Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets
Charity Registration Number:	1127300
Company Registration Number:	6638750
Registered Office:	Norvin House 45-55 Commercial Street London E1 6BD
Trustees:	Karin Maschler, Chair Leo Zawadzki, Treasurer Megan Cowley Safia Jama (retired 6 June 2023) Sabiha Khanam Ioana Popovici Alice Sims (retired 6 June 2023) Louise Theophile Alison White (retired 16 January 2023)
Senior Management:	Catherine Bavage, Chief Executive
Auditors:	Myrus Smith Chartered Accountants Norman House 8 Burnell Road Sutton Surrey SM1 4BW
Bankers:	The Co-operative Bank PLC PO Box 250 Delf House Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Period of Account
The period of account is from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2023.

Governing Document
The organisation is a charitable company, limited by guarantee, incorporated on 4 July 2008, and registered as a charity on 29 December 2008.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company, and is governed under those Articles.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees
The process for appointing the charity's trustees is set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. As VCTH is a charitable company, trustees also act as company directors. The minimum number of trustees is three, with no maximum. The Board of Trustees may appoint anyone willing and fit to act as a trustee and director, subject to the provisions of the Articles of Association.

One third of trustees must retire (but may stand for re-election) each year. Trustees are appointed annually, for a maximum of seven consecutive years, at which point they must retire. Trustees who have served seven years may stand for re-election, but only one year after the date of their retirement. Trustees may only hold the same Honorary Officer role for a maximum of five years.

The charity conducts regular skills, experience and diversity audits of trustees. These audits identify gaps in skills, or under-representation of particular groups or communities, and are fundamental to the recruitment process. Vacancies are advertised widely and potential trustees are invited to complete an application form, outlining their relevant skills and experience. Shortlisted applicants meet with a selection panel, comprising the Chair, one other trustee and the Chief Executive. If successful at interview, applicants are invited to observe a Board meeting and meet current trustees. If all parties agree to proceed, the applicant is either co-opted or nominated for election at the next AGM.

Trustee Induction and Training
Trustees are provided with a role description, outlining their statutory and additional governance responsibilities. On joining the Board, trustees are introduced to other Board members and paid staff, and provided with a comprehensive induction. Trustees are expected to attend regular Board meetings and an annual Away Day. They must acquaint themselves with VCTH's policies and procedures, strategic plans, budgets, and governing document. Trustees are prompted to take up relevant learning and development opportunities to help them fulfil their role and responsibilities.

Risk Management
Our Risk Register identifies risks and their potential impact in 5 areas: governance, operational, financial, environmental/external, and compliance. It describes the steps needed to mitigate risks.

The trustees have considered all the major risks to which the charity is exposed and are satisfied that systems or procedures are established to mitigate those risks. The Risk Register Action Plan, approved in March 2022, helped further mitigate risks during 2022- 23.

The charity has a suite of policies and procedures that trustees, staff and volunteers must observe. During the year, trustees reviewed and updated 3 policies:

- Finance Policy and Procedure (approved 11 Oct 22)
- Conflicts of Interest Policy and Guidance Notes (approved 11 Oct 22)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Procedure (approved 24 April 23)

A working group was established to review VCTH's Health & Safety policies and procedures and to develop a new Working From Home Policy.

In June 2023 the Board appointed a new Designated Board Safeguarding Lead.

To ensure that VCTH complies with legislation and implements good employment practice we maintained our contract with Bright HR, who provide the trustees and Chief Executive with employment advice. We continued to offer Bright HR's Employee Assistance Programme to the team, giving staff and volunteers access to health and wellbeing support, including a 24-hour helpline, and counselling sessions.

Staff continued to work primarily from home throughout 2022-23. They were provided with the necessary equipment and paid Working At Home Allowances. Being office-free prioritises our commitment to sustaining services and staffing over fixed accommodation costs, enabling VCTH to make considerable savings on core costs and sustain a more climate-friendly model.

We continued to use the professional services of Adrian Hull as our management accountant, and Creative Payroll Services for managing payroll.

A charity combined insurance policy was in place throughout the year covering; employer's liability (£10m), public liability (£5m), products liability (£5m), business interruption, executive risks (including trustee indemnity and directors' liability), professional indemnity, cyber loss recovery, fidelity guarantee, property and business equipment, money and personal accident assault, group personal accident, goods in transit, and legal expenses. We took commercial legal expenses insurance through Bright HR to indemnify VCTH against legal costs and compensatory awards associated with employment disputes.

Under VCTH's Conflicts of Interest Policy trustees and staff must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. In January 2023 all trustees and staff updated their declaration of interest forms. Declaring conflicts was a standing agenda item at Board meetings.

The impact of the COVID pandemic, combined with growing poverty caused by the cost of living crisis, created increased demand on services provided by most voluntary and community sector organisations. This led to even more intense competition for funding, making securing income extremely challenging. VCTH's income fell by just over 16% from £187,041 in 2021-22 to £156,641 in 2022-23.

In recognition of our limited reserves, we negotiated funding in advance, wherever possible. This arrangement ensured positive cash flow throughout the year.

We took our commitment to protecting individuals' personal data seriously. During the year, the Volunteer Centre re-registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. Staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities not to disclose the personal or sensitive data of our service users.

VCTH is committed to recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff. Continued professional development for staff is essential for retention, ensures that skills and knowledge are updated, and reduces our exposure to risk. In 2022-23, all staff took up learning and development opportunities. All team members completed training in Emergency First Aid in the Workplace (certification valid for 3 years), adult safeguarding, and recognising and challenging unconscious bias. Other training completed by some colleagues included; presentation skills, emotional intelligence, safeguarding 16-25 year olds, and safeguarding children.

Organisational Structure

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets was established in July 2008 as an independent charitable company by a team of four committed volunteers, who became its initial 3 trustees and founder Chief Executive. The charity marked its 15th full operational year on 30 September 2023.

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets has a Board of Trustees, which meets at least 6 times a year, and is responsible for the strategic direction and governance of the charity. The charity's Chief Executive attends Board meetings as an advisor, but does not have voting rights.

During the year, nine individuals were involved as charity trustees. Four were Tower Hamlets residents, ensuring local community involvement. Karin Maschler and Leo Zawadzki continued in the roles of Chair and Treasurer respectively – positions they have held since August 2021. Three trustees retired during the year: Alison White in January 2023, and Alice Sims and Safia Jama in June 2023.

Responsibility for operational management was delegated to the Chief Executive, Catherine Bavage, who is responsible for HR, finance, fundraising, and managing service delivery. She ensures that the charity delivers high quality, responsive services to meet the targets and outcomes set out in grants and contracts.

The Board of Trustees appoints all staff, including key management personnel, on a grade within the National Joint Council (NJC) pay scale for Local Government employees. Where the charity's financial position allows, the Board awards annual pay rises, agreed nationally by the NJC.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) is the recognised volunteering infrastructure agency in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Our charity's objects are:

- The promotion of any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community of Tower Hamlets, Greater London, in particular the relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability or other social or economic disadvantage.
- The promotion and advancement of voluntary work for charitable purposes for the benefit of the community, predominantly in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, but additionally promotion and advancement of voluntary work sub-regionally, regionally and nationally.

In forming our objectives, the trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard for the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

Mission

Our mission is to provide a comprehensive volunteering infrastructure service to non-profit groups and communities in Tower Hamlets, to increase the quality, quantity and impact of volunteering in the borough.

Core Functions

Our 5 core functions are:

- **Volunteer Brokerage** – ensuring that the general public and all sectors are better informed about and have access to an effective and efficient brokerage service
- **Good Practice Development** – helping organisations to improve or attain positive consistency in their volunteering programmes
- **Developing Volunteering Opportunities** – increasing and improving the quantity, quality, and diversity of volunteering locally
- **Voice of Volunteering** – creating an increased awareness of issues impacting volunteering
- **Strategic Development of Volunteering** – engagement with local networks and decision-makers to create a positive environment in which volunteering is flourishing.

We also manage the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF), bringing together and supporting voluntary and community sector organisations that provide services to children and young people in Tower Hamlets. Most of these organisations involve volunteers in their work.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

1. Volunteer Brokerage

Our brokerage serviced linked potential volunteers to not-for-profit organisations that needed help. We brokered people aged 16+ who lived, worked or studied in Tower Hamlets, providing them with information about suitable volunteering roles and encouraging applications.

For the six months between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023 we received funding from Tower Hamlets Council to run the Tower Hamlets COVID-19 Recovery Volunteer Hub, first launched in March 2019. The Hub sourced local volunteers to respond to the needs of the community, helping support the borough's recovery from the pandemic. This year we referred volunteers to 89 Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations and public sector bodies.

We promoted volunteering via our website and by sending regular Volunteer Alerts to individuals who registered with us and expressed an interest in starting to volunteer.

Between October 2022 and January 2023, our Volunteering Advisors delivered 3 "Introduction to Volunteering" presentations to groups of students at Global Banking School and at University of West Scotland's Tower Hamlets campus. We regularly attended Workpath's Employment Advisors' Forum and gave a presentation to remind professionals of the benefits of volunteering and encourage referrals of unemployed residents. In March we held a stall at the Mayor's International Women's Day event.

Between October and March we collated information about free training opportunities, employability support and job vacancies. This was sent to volunteers via our monthly Employment Support and Training (EST) Alerts, which volunteer could opt to receive.

We continued to receive enquiries from private sector companies interested in employer supported volunteering (ESV). Although we did not have capacity or funding to arrange team volunteering days ourselves, we referred 71 companies to local Volunteer Involving Organisations that offered corporate volunteering opportunities.

Volunteer Numbers

Between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023, a total of 677 new volunteers registered with us – an average of 56.4 per month. This was up 2% from the 664 registrations in 2021-22, with registration numbers similar to pre-pandemic years. The national picture indicates that, post-COVID, fewer people have been coming forward to volunteer. Our data suggests that Tower Hamlets may not have experienced quite as severe a fall in volunteering numbers as some other geographical areas.

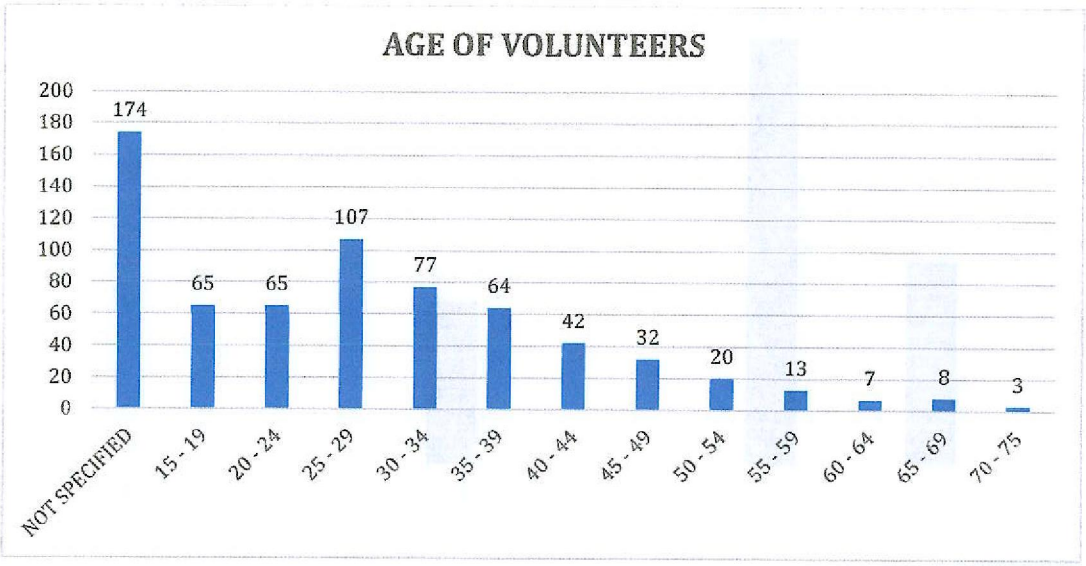
Client Demographics

We aimed to provide an inclusive brokerage service to a wide range of volunteers, reflecting the diverse communities in Tower Hamlets. We requested equalities data from all volunteers at the point of registration, but many chose to withhold information on some or all of their protected characteristics. This resulting data on volunteer demographics is therefore incomplete, but provides a reasonable indication of the people using our services and of shifting patterns.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

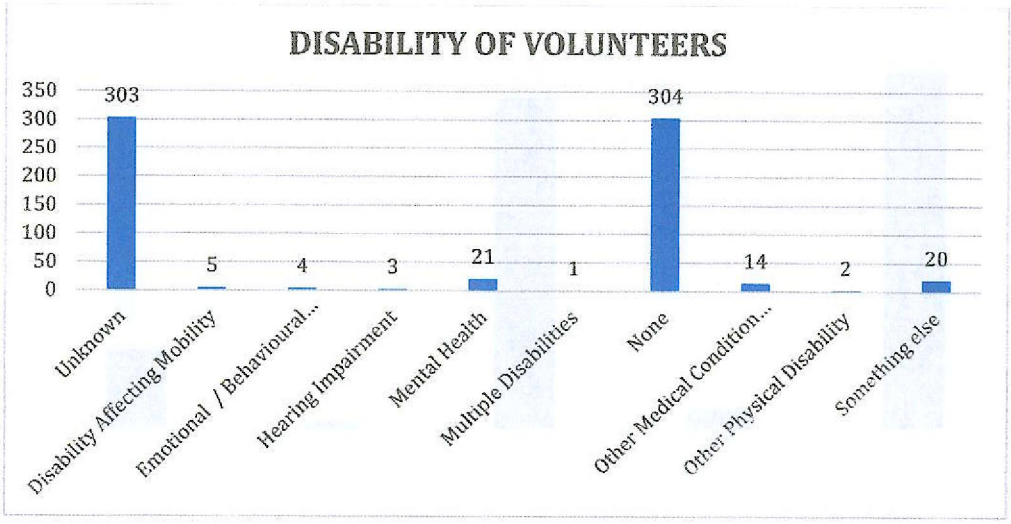
Age

74% (503 of 677 volunteers) provided information on their age. The eldest volunteer who registered was 77 and the youngest was 15. Almost half (49.5%) of the volunteers registering were aged 20-34 (249 of 503 volunteers). According to Census 2021 data, 37.8% of Tower Hamlets residents are aged 20-34, so VCTH performed very well at attracting younger adults to volunteer.



Disability

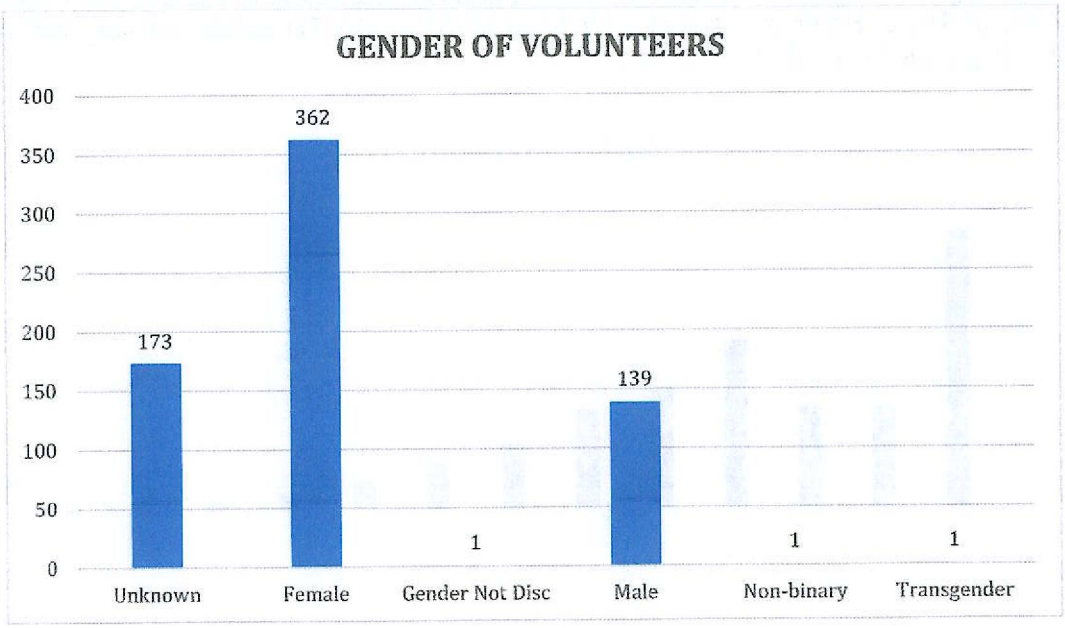
55% (374 of 677 volunteers) disclosed information about disability. Of them, 81% (304 of 374 volunteers) told us that they had no disability, while 19% (70 of 374 volunteers) disclosed they had a disability, up from 16% in 2021-22. The largest group had mental health conditions. At 19%, the number of disabled people accessing brokerage was similar to the borough profile (Census 2021: 20.1% of Tower Hamlets residents have a long-term health condition or disability that limits day-to-day activities).



VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

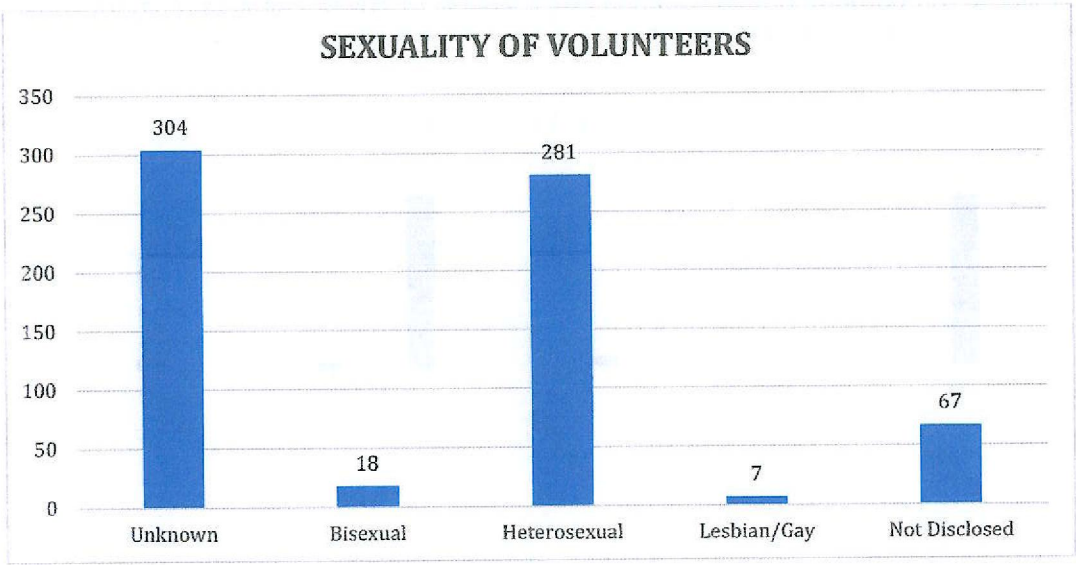
Gender

74% (503 of 677 volunteers) disclosed their gender. Of these, 72% (362 of 503) defined as female (2021-22: 68%) and 28% (139 of 503) identified as male, a fall from 32% in 2021-22. Two volunteers identified as non-binary or as trans. According to the Census 2021, the borough's residents are 50.2% male and 49.8% female.



Sexuality

45% (306 of 677 volunteers) disclosed information about their sexuality, down slightly from 47% in 2021-22. Of these respondents, 92% (281 of 306 volunteers) identified as heterosexual. There was a significant fall in volunteers identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual: 8% this year compared to 18% in 2021-22. According to Census 2021 data, 6.48% of the Tower Hamlets population identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual.



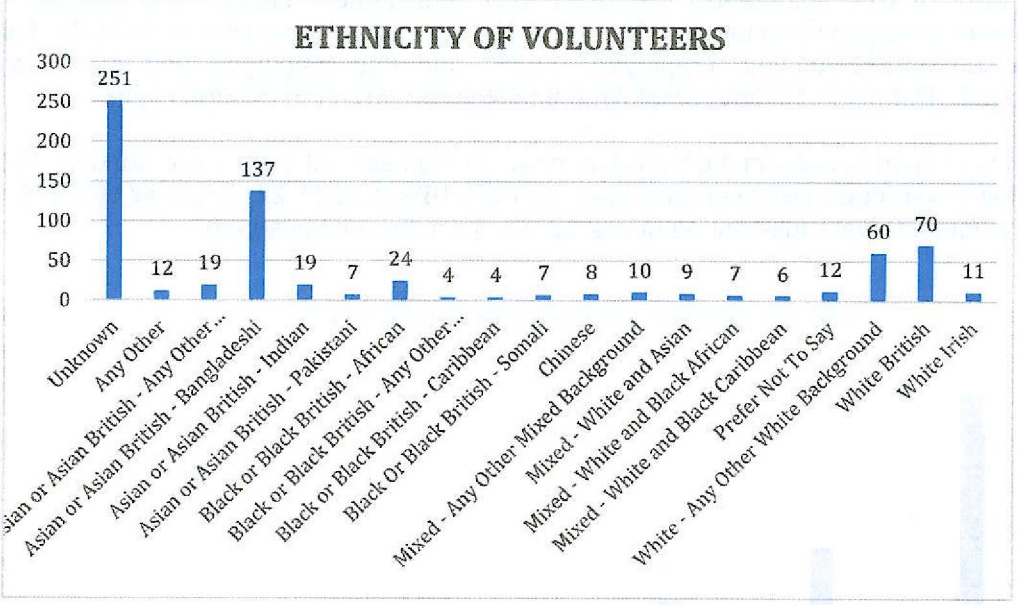
Ethnicity

61% (414 of 677 volunteers) provided data on their ethnicity, exactly the same percentage as in 2021-22. The ethnicities of volunteers registering with VCTH largely reflected the local population.

The single largest ethnic group of volunteers was Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi at 33% (137 of 414 volunteers), up 6.5% from 26.5% in 2021-22. This is broadly in line with the borough's Bangladeshi population (Census 2021: 34.6%). Post-pandemic VCTH has made headway in attracting more Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi volunteers.

The second largest ethnic group of volunteers at 17% (70 of 414 volunteers) was White British – a 7% fall from 24% in 2021-22, and below the borough's White British population (Census 2021: 22.9%).

A further 9.4% (39 of 414 volunteers) defined as Black or Black British African, Caribbean, Somali or Black Other, exceeding the borough profile of 7.3% of residents from these communities.

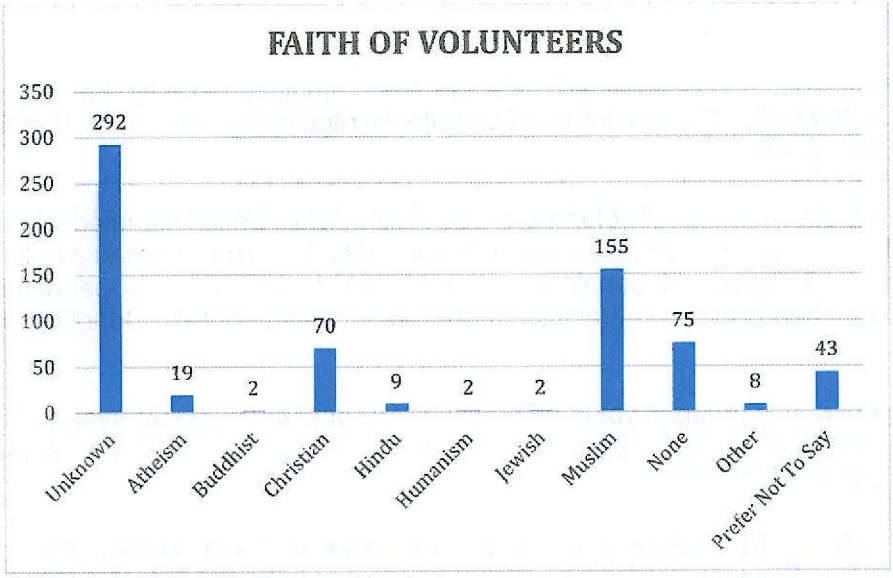


Faith

51% (342 of 677 volunteers) disclosed their faith/religion when registering. People of most major faiths, and none, were represented. The single largest group was Muslims at 45% (155 of 342 volunteers), an 8% rise on the previous year of 37%. This exceeds the Muslim population recorded in the Census 2021 at 39.9%.

For the first time, the second largest group of respondents at 22% - were of no faith (75 of 342 volunteers). Census 2021 data showed people of no faith to be 26.6%.

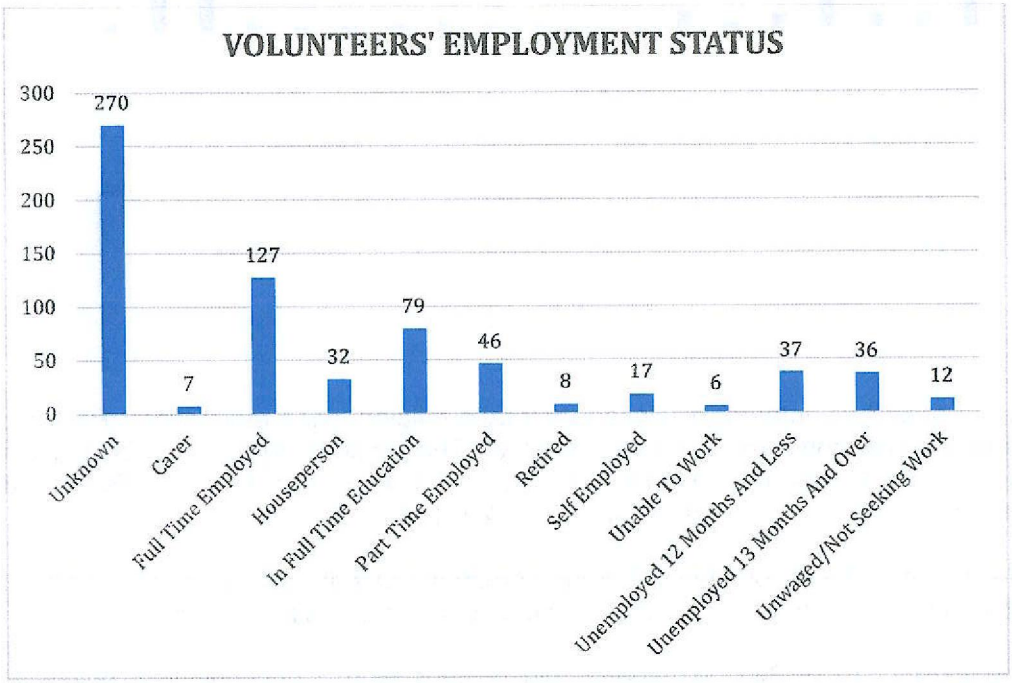
This year 20% (70 of 342 volunteers) told us they were Christians, just below the percentage of Christian residents in the borough (Census 2021: 22.3%).



Employment Status

60% (407 of 677 volunteers) disclosed their employment status. The number of volunteers in employment fell to 47% (190 of 407 volunteers) from 55% in 2021-22. This comprised 31.2% full-time employed, 11.3% part-time employed and 4.2% self-employed. People in full-time employment fell by 10% from the previous year.

VCTH continued to support a growing number of volunteers who were not working. 18% (73 of 407 volunteers) were unemployed, up from 16% in 2021-22. A further 19% (79 of 407 volunteers) were full-time students, up 3% from the previous year.



Tracking
During the year we received 1,173 unique expressions of interest in the volunteer roles we advertised. Details of each volunteer application were passed to the relevant Volunteer Managers in host organisations, and volunteers were also provided with contact details for the organisations they wished to support.

Tracking volunteer starters is a challenging and time-consuming exercise. We systematically sent follow-up emails to applicants referred to roles to ask if they had started volunteering or to offer assistance. Often we did not hear back. This year we received confirmation from 82 individuals that they had begun volunteering, but this is only a partial picture of the likely number of starters.

2. Good Practice Development

We continued to deliver activities to support and build the capacity of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) to implement good practice in volunteer management. Tower Hamlets Council funded this work via our Local Community Fund Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant.

Volunteer Management Training
We delivered six half-day training courses for Volunteer Managers online on Zoom. A total of 70 Volunteer Managers attended our training - an average of 11.6 trainees per course (up from 10 per course in 2021-22), demonstrating a sustained demand for online training. Training topics were:

- Volunteers and the Law
- Good Practice in Managing Volunteers
- Recruiting the Right Volunteers
- Measuring the Difference your Volunteer Programme Makes
- Developing your Volunteer Policy
- Retaining Volunteers.

84% of the participants (59/70) completed an evaluation survey. Of these 97% (57/59) rated our training as "excellent/extremely useful" or "good/very useful". 83% of respondents told us they had progressed in terms of knowledge (49/59). An impressive 100% of respondents committed to making a change within their organisation or taking an action as a result of the training.

Peer Learning Sessions for Volunteer Managers
We ran four Peer Learning sessions, attended by 40 participants, an average of 10 per session (1 more per session than the previous year). The sessions provided a blend of professional development and learning opportunities for people who manage volunteers. They included guest speakers and much-valued opportunities for peer support. The topics were:

- Involving Volunteers with Mental Health Issues
- Working with Emotions in Volunteering
- The Vision for Volunteering
- Time Well Spent Research 2023: Implications for Your Volunteer Programme.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Bespoke Advice on Volunteer Programmes
Our Training and Best Practice Manager provided one-to-one advice to organisations on all aspects of managing their volunteer programmes. A total of 25 organisations were supported with good practice advice over 41 sessions. This represented a considerable increase of 10 sessions and 7 organisations accessing the service compared to the previous year.

Several months after providing advice, we surveyed organisations about the effect of our advice, in particular the improvements that they had been able to make. Our impact survey was completed by 14 organisations and 15 individuals who received a mix of one-to-one advice, training and peer learning sessions. 100% of respondents had found VCTH's support service useful. Of these, 8 (53%) found it "extremely useful", while 7 (47%) found it very useful. 93% (13/14) of organisations had already implemented improvements or changes to their volunteering programme, policies or practices.

Organisations rated the quality/level of their volunteering practices before and after they received support from VCTH on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). On average organisations started at level 5.8 and increased to 8.4 following VCTH's support. All 15 respondents (100%) would recommend VCTH's advice service to other voluntary and community sector organisations. Some quotes from our beneficiaries:

"Great service and always prompt and responsive. The advice provided was useful, relevant and accessible. It has been a pleasure to work with VCTH and attend the training sessions, which have been invaluable".

"The Volunteer Centre has been extremely valuable for helping our team improve the way we deliver our project and support our staff. Evelyn has always helped to send very thorough information and advice and its always timely. Thank you".

Good Practice Tips and Blogs
In our monthly e-bulletin, we regularly included bite-sized advice on volunteer management issues, either in the form of answering a particular question in our 'Ask Evelyn' column, or as a 'Top Tip'. Topics included:

- Top Tips: Volunteer Induction
- Ask Evelyn: "*What aspects should be considered when writing a funding bid for a project that includes volunteers*"?
- Ask Evelyn: "*We are looking to gather information on the difference our volunteer programme has made. How should we go about this*?
- Top Tips - The Vision for Volunteering.

We published a Best Practice Blog, with 5 entries during the year:
- Minimising the Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on your Volunteer Programme
- Involving Volunteers with Mental Health Issues
- Volunteer Induction Checklist
- Including Volunteering in Funding Bids
- Prove the Difference Your Volunteer Programme Has Made.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Organisations Registered

This year we registered 20 new Volunteer Involving Organisations, 2 fewer than the previous year, but exceeding our annual target of 16 by 25%. Each organisation underwent a short health-check to ensure they could provide a safe and welcoming environment for volunteers before we advertised their volunteer roles, and raise awareness of our training and advice services. At 30 September 2023 a total of 535 organisations were registered with VCTH, a net increase of 18.

3. Developing Volunteering Opportunities

We developed volunteering opportunities in partnership with the not-for-profit organisations registered with us. These included charities, community groups, social enterprises, and public sector bodies. Registered organisations were predominantly based in or provided a service to Tower Hamlets residents.

We worked hard to ensure that the volunteer roles offered were meaningful, appealing and inclusive, and that volunteers would be supported in a safe environment.

New organisations registered this year were:

1. Adult Literacy Trust
2. Art Explora
3. British Heart Foundation
4. Canary Wharf Multifaith Chaplaincy
5. Elop: LGBT Mental Health and Wellbeing
6. Fern Street Family Centre
7. Friends of Aspen Court
8. GFS (Girls Friendly Society)
9. Globe Community Project
10. Heritage Charity London
11. Limehouse Town Hall Consortium Trust
12. Mile End Parkrun
13. NUTU Academy CIC
14. Paracarnival CIC
15. Rejuvenate UK CIC
16. Skaped
17. Teenage Cancer Trust
18. The Literacy Pirates
19. The Zacchaeus Project
20. Transform Justice

We continued to support Tower Hamlets communities in recovering from the pandemic, with funding from LBTH for our COVID Recovery Volunteering Hub. We worked with organisations in the borough that were delivering vital services to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. We aimed to help them develop volunteer roles that would enable and enhance their service delivery, while also appealing to a diverse range of potential volunteers.

We developed and promoted 330 volunteering roles over the entire year (321 roles in 2021-22). Most roles required multiple volunteers, and some were advertised more than once. We encouraged organisations to make their volunteer roles more flexible, enabling time-poor volunteers to get involved, and to open up volunteering to as wide a pool as possible. Roles were routinely advertised for 3 months, or until organisations told us they no longer needed volunteers, or asked us to renew their adverts. This process helped us maintain an accurate database of current vacancies.

4. Voice of Volunteering and Communications

Campaigning and Informing
Another core function of the Volunteer Centre is to be the local voice of volunteering - increasing awareness of the issues affecting volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations. We campaign for a volunteer-friendly climate, where everyone can participate. We aim to influence local decision-makers and funders about the value of volunteering to our communities and increase understanding of how volunteering benefits individuals. We advocate for greater recognition of the cost of well-run volunteering programmes, and the importance of effective volunteer management. We disseminate policy, information and statistics, encourage organisations to think about how changing policy and legislation may affect their volunteer programmes, and urge them to join relevant campaigns. Throughout the year we kept 535 organisations informed (up 18 from 517 in 2021-22).

Ebulletins
Our main communication channel with Volunteer Managers was our monthly ebulletin. These newsletters included information on; training for workers and volunteers, funding for volunteering programmes, policy developments, campaigns and research, and volunteer management job adverts. The ebulletin went out to an average of 628 contacts (a fall of 8% from the 682 contacts in 2021-22). However, the average open rate continued to increase and was 28% in 2022-23, up 6.4% from the 21.6% open rate in 2021-22. This data suggests a slightly smaller but significantly more engaged audience.

Website
We updated our new website – www.vcth.org.uk - regularly. Content for Volunteer Managers included information about upcoming training and peer learning sessions, downloadable factsheets, and a best practice blog. Webpages for volunteers included: a new step-by-step guide on how to apply for a volunteer role and what to expect, as well as case studies. There were links to register with VCTH and view current volunteering roles. Conscious that some of our audience have limited digital skills, we focused on ensuring the website remained easy to navigate.

Our website registered 23,756 page views – an 8.9% decrease on the 25,992 page views in 2021-22. There were 19,995 unique visits. The number of hits to VC Connect, where all our roles are advertised, reached 9,163, which was a very significant 52% increase on the 6,027 hits in the previous year.

This is the last year that Google Analytics can be used to compare data to previous years. A new tracking for GA4 has been installed and will be used to report on data from October 2023 onwards. However statistics will not be as comparable because GA4 tracks different activities compared to traditional Google Analytics.

Social Media – Facebook and Twitter (X)
We used Facebook to engage with local residents to promote our latest volunteer roles. By September 2023 our Facebook account reached 1,400 followers - an 8% increase on the 1,297 followers at the end of September 2022. We published 20 posts in 2022-23 with a total reach of 1.6K and 5.3K impressions.

We used Twitter to engage with other organisations and to communicate with Volunteer Managers. In April 2023, Twitter re-branded as X. Unfortunately X no longer offers analytics on the free plan we use. The number of followers stayed the same as in 2021-22 at 2.3k.

Volunteer Alerts

We maintained a mailing list of people who had registered their interest in volunteering via our website. We updated this regularly to add new registrants and remove unsubscribers, ensuring an engaged audience. By 30 September 2023 the mailing list for the Volunteer Alert reached 3,392 subscribers, a 4% increase on the 3,267 subscribers the previous year.

We used this mailing list to send 38 Volunteer Alerts over the year. Alerts featured 177 volunteer roles in 84 different organisations. Many of these roles were completely new, and some were included because organisations had an urgent need for more volunteers.

Volunteers' Week (1-7 June 2023)

National Volunteers' Week provides an annual opportunity to thank volunteers for their contributions and to raise the profile of volunteering, encouraging more people to get involved.

For Volunteers' Week we sent an alert to 3,343 volunteers with an open rate of 44%. This alert promoted our new "Get Started with Volunteering" presentation.

Our Volunteers' Week special ebulletin for Volunteer Managers was published on 1 June to 618 recipients, with an open rate of 25%. It encouraged local Volunteer Managers to reward and celebrate their volunteers.

On Facebook we posted one volunteer role per day during Volunteers' Week, generating 650 impressions and reaching 284 users. Volunteers' Week was also promoted on X, generating 728 impressions.

5. Strategic Development of Volunteering

As the volunteering infrastructure agency for Tower Hamlets, VCTH is recognised as the local volunteering expert in the borough. Strategic partners across Tower Hamlets often look to us for input and guidance on volunteering issues. We seek to represent the interests and concerns of volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations at borough and pan-London levels, and ensure a coherent, joined-up approach.

Co-Operate

VCTH's Chief Executive and the VSCYF Co-ordinator were active members of Co-Operate – a joint strategic body of voluntary sector representatives, senior Council staff and elected Councillors. Co-Operate aims to transform how organisations work together to enhance the lives of local people. Between us, we represented the interests of Volunteer Involving Organisations and organisations providing services to children and young people.

Co-Operate met twice in 2022-23. In November 2022 the group discussed key issues affecting voluntary sector organisations, as well as how the cost of living crisis was impacting local residents and charities. At the May 2023 meeting we considered the problems caused by delays to procurement of services from the voluntary sector, discussed the Mayor's Community Grants programme, and set out the challenges facing the voluntary sector workforce. VCTH's Chief Executive joined a Task and Finish Group that met over the summer to plan activities that would promote both volunteering and paid employment in the voluntary sector.

Tackling Poverty - HAF Programme
VCTH's Chief Executive remained a member of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme Steering Group, supporting the Council's Tackling Poverty Team. The HAF Programme targets children from low-income households who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. Voluntary sector providers offered sports, arts and cultural activities, along with a free healthy lunch, to ensure that children did not go hungry during the school holidays. We recruited volunteers for these organisations during school holidays.

Supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers
We continued to attend monthly meetings, convened by Tower Hamlets Council, for VCS organisations providing support to asylum seekers and refugees in the borough. These cross-sector partnership meetings enabled professionals to share insights, identify needs and deliver appropriate targeted services. A growing number of asylum seekers were housed in temporary hotel accommodation across the borough, with no right to work or recourse to public funds. VCTH provided information so that asylum seekers and refugees were aware of our brokerage service and their right to volunteer.

Partnering with Tower Hamlets CVS
Throughout the year we continued to work closely with our main partner, Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS), to share insight and avoid duplication of services. Between us we represented the broadest possible range of local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations at strategic level. The Chief Executives met regularly to share information, identify common issues of concern and discuss strategic responses. We delivered our fourth and final year of the Infrastructure and Capacity Building programme in consortium with THCVS, ending on 31 October 2023.

National and Regional Strategic Bodies
We were active members of:

- The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)
  Our Training and Best Practice Manager attended monthly NCVO Volunteering Infrastructure Briefings to keep abreast of policy developments and changes in the volunteering landscape nationally.

- London Plus
  Our Chief Executive attended quarterly London Plus Volunteer Centre Network meetings, engaging with staff in other London Volunteer Centres to share challenges and successes of facilitating volunteering in the Capital, and identify opportunities for joint working across the region.

- Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP)
  Our Chief Executive joined regular online meetings of the VCSEP, facilitated by the British Red Cross. The partnership was developed in response to the Grenfell Tower fire, rural flooding and terror attacks. It brings together voluntary and public sector agencies, some national and many local, across the country to deliver a more co-ordinated response to emergencies. VCSEP meetings enable members to share insight and learning, make connections before emergencies arise, and build their skills and capability.

- London Communities Emergency Partnership (LCEP)
  We also began to engage with the new London Communities Emergency Partnership (LCEP), which brings together VCS organisations to respond to crises in London.

6. Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF)

VCTH facilitated the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF) for a 15th successive year. The Forum was funded under a contract extended by Tower Hamlets Council's Children's Services Directorate for an additional year until March 2024.

The Forum supports and represents voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations that provide services to children, young people and their families. It acts as a conduit between these VCS organisations, Tower Hamlets Council and other statutory partners. VCTH employs a part-time Co-ordinator, who liaises with all parties to ensure effective information sharing, communication and representation.

The Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum met 4 times during 2022-2023 (5 times in 2021-22), with average attendance of 11 organisations per meeting (16 organisations in 2021-22). This year meetings were held alternately on Zoom and in person, and covered a variety of subjects, including:

- funding, commissioning and grants
- partnership working
- poverty
- safeguarding and Early Help
- mental health
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) provision
- holiday hunger
- play in Tower Hamlets
- adolescence, youth services and youth justice services
- supporting refugee families in Tower Hamlets
- Tower Hamlets and North East London developments and strategies

Forum meetings included valuable briefing sessions from senior staff from LBTH Children's Services Directorate.

Eleven new organisations joined the Forum during the year, bringing the total VSCYF membership to 287 organisations – a net increase of 2 from the previous year. The total number of voluntary sector professionals on our database stood at 342 - a net decrease of 27 individuals from 2021-22.

We produced quarterly VSCYF e-bulletins which included; Forum and Tower Hamlets news, advertised funding and training opportunities, and promoted events for children, young people or organisations that support them.

Facilitating voluntary and community sector representation continued to be a key focus of the VSCYF Coordinator's work. Two voluntary sector representatives and the VSCYF Coordinator met regularly to ensure good representation for all VSCYF members.

The VSCYF Coordinator also delivered practical services for Forum members. She assisted 9 member organisations with funding applications, or helped them decide whether to apply. In addition, she supported 8 organisations with reviewing and developing their safeguarding policies and procedures.

During the year, we organised 4 training workshops for VSCYF members on:

- Developing Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Identifying Realistic Outcomes and Targets for Funding Applications and Tenders (delivered twice)
- Online Safety, What Can We Do?

Average trainee numbers (6 per workshop) were up on the previous year, with 26 attendees across the year (a 100% increase on the 13 attendees in 2021-22).

7. Consultancy Work and Income Generation

Consultancy work enabled VCTH staff to use their expertise, while helping diversify our funding base and generating unrestricted reserves. This year, we continued to support Ocean Women's Association on a consultancy basis with identifying potential funders and writing fundraising applications to ensure sufficient funding for their programmes delivered by volunteers. We were commissioned by Spitalfields City Farm to support them with overhauling their volunteer programme and running training for their staff team.

We also received small donations from the public via Paypal.

Thank You

To our staff
The trustees wish to extend our gratitude to the staff team who have worked tirelessly throughout the year. They are undoubtedly our greatest asset. Their determination, skills and experience have enabled VCTH to deliver exceptional services for Tower Hamlets communities. Our thanks go to:

- Catherine Bavage, Chief Executive
- Zahanar Begum, Volunteering Advisor
- Alex Nelson, Voluntary Sector Children & Youth Forum Co-ordinator
- Evelyn Rodrigues, Training & Best Practice Manager
- Krithika Kalpathi Subramanian, Volunteering Advisor (left 26 July 2023)

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

To retired trustees
Three trustees retired during the year. Alison White retired in January 2023 having completed a term of 4 years. Safia Jama retired in June 2023 after completing 3 years as a trustee. We thank them for their contributions and will miss them.

A very special thank you to Alice Sims, who left the Board in June 2023 after 6 years' involvement. During much of her time as a trustee, Alice served as an outstanding Chair, leading our Board and guiding the charity skilfully and with great empathy through some challenging periods.

To our funders
We are extremely grateful for the money and confidence that our funders have invested in Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets. During 2022-23 they were:

- London Borough of Tower Hamlets Local Community Fund - Infrastructure and Capacity Building grant
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets – COVID 19 Volunteering Hub contract
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets – Voluntary Sector Children and Youth contract
- City Bridge Foundation – Enabling Voluntary Sector Organisations in Tower Hamlets to Develop High Quality Inclusive Volunteering grant (starting September 2023).

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

The staff and trustee team came together in December 2022, for a strategic planning Away Day, using this time to review the context in which VCTH is working. We looked at the services we provide and how they are funded, as well as the picture of volunteering locally and nationally.

Using a SWOT approach, we identified three topics for further discussion, including the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, volunteer demographics and under-representation, and potential future funding. We considered services that we would like to maintain or introduce to address unmet needs. Trustees subsequently agreed strategic priorities for January to December 2023.

Trustees have since agreed four strategic priorities for April 2024 to March 2025, following input from staff. They are:

1. **DIVERSIFY INCOME SOURCES TO SUSTAIN SERVICES AND INCREASE OUR FINANCIAL STABILITY**

- Update our Fundraising Strategy, identifying potential funders and a timeline for bids
- Become less dependent on Council grant funding by securing at least one new contract or grant
- Secure an early commitment that the VSCYF project will be re-tendered
- Consider new opportunities, as they arise, to apply for funding that will enable us to run projects targeting particular communities (eg new migrants/asylum seekers, young people).

2. **DRIVE UP PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTEERING AT ALL LEVELS, TARGETING MINORITISED ETHNIC COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE ON LOW INCOMES**

- Deliver the Minoritised Ethnic Trustees (METs) training and matching programme, placing local residents in governance roles
- Increase VCTH's visibility and raise awareness of volunteering via outreach activities (group presentations, Volunteering Fairs, Job Fairs, working with referral agencies)
- Ensure a strong supply and range of volunteer roles that appeal widely
- Support local organisations to become more inclusive and diversify their volunteer cohorts via our peer learning, training, and best practice advice services.

3. **RESPOND TO THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS AND POVERTY**

- Deliver the Improving Employability Through Volunteering programme, supporting unemployed and under-employed residents to volunteer, gaining skills and experience that will increase employability
- Recruit volunteers for local VCS organisations delivering services that address poverty
- Run a campaign for organisations, encouraging them to reimburse volunteer expenses.

4. LOOK AFTER OUR STAFF

- Invest in team and individual training to support continued professional development
- Focus on staff wellbeing and support, providing a range of services and activities, including an Employee Assistance Programme, social events, and team outings
- Develop meaningful opportunities for staff to meet and work together in person, such as monthly get-togethers and lunches and team volunteering.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

On 16 August 2022 VCTH trustees agreed a provisional deficit budget for the year commencing 1 October 2022, projecting a shortfall of -£43,303. This became our fundraising target. By 30 September 2023, the deficit had been reduced to £12,333.

Net current assets (working capital) held at 30 September 2023 amounted to £37,856 (down from £50,189 at 30 September 2022).

Reserves Policy

At the end of the charity's fifteenth operational year at 30 September 2023, our total reserves had decreased by 24.6% from £50,189 to £37,856. Of these reserves, £35,937 (95.6%) was unrestricted and £1,919 was restricted funds.

Trustees are aware of growing redundancy liabilities associated with long-serving staff, and the need to include the cost of consultation and notice periods in the event of redundancies, as VCTH's major liability.

Our Reserves Policy, agreed on 12 October 2021, was in place throughout 2022-23. This states that trustees will aim to maintain free reserves at a level which covers at least three months' running costs, but does not exceed that level plus the redundancy obligations the charity would have in the event of a wind up. The trustees agree this level is the most prudent and would enable to charity to continue to operate in the event of an emergency, or a sudden cut to funding.

Trustees acknowledge that this level of reserves may be aspirational in a challenging funding environment. They agree that, while VCTH should strive to maintain this level of reserves, this should not be achieved at the detriment of VCTH's core values and long-term viability.

On completion of the annual budget, trustees and the Chief Executive will identify the new target range for free reserves. VCTH trustees monitor the level of reserves regularly. The main mechanism for monitoring is the scrutiny of management accounts and cash flows presented quarterly at trustee board meetings, along with an updated redundancy calculator that tracks our redundancy liabilities. This ensures that trustees are aware of any build-up of excess reserves, or of reserves being depleted unexpectedly or rapidly.

Our Reserves Policy will be reviewed annually, and whenever there is a significant change in VCTH's liabilities. It was updated in January 2024 and the next review is due in January 2025.

At June 2024 the target reserves range is calculated to be between £52,754 and £95,900. The lower figure is 3 months' running costs, based on annual expenditure in 2022-23. The higher figure is 3 months' running costs plus redundancy liability of £43,146 for 4 staff. For the year ending 30 September 2023, VCTH made a small deficit of £12,333. Our unrestricted reserves decreased to £35,937. At 31 March 2024, our unrestricted reserves position stood at £46,520, which is £6,234 below the lower end of our reserves target range.

Looking Ahead

Having weathered a challenging financial period in 2022-23, we are pleased to report that three multi-year funding streams have been secured from The London Borough of Tower Hamlets and City Bridge Foundation. This funding provides VCTH with a far greater degree of stability and security until at least September 2026. We will continue to apply for new funding that will enable us to sustain and extend our services.

Trustees' Responsibilities Statement

The trustees (who are also Directors of VCTH for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose, with reasonable accuracy, at any time, the financial position of the charitable company, and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware;
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Auditors

In 2023 the trustees re-appointed Myrus Smith Chartered Accountants as the charitable company's auditors.

This report has been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective January 2019) and in accordance with the special provisions relating to companies subject to the small companies regime within part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 20 June 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Karin Maschler

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Karin Maschler, Chair and Trustee

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 30 September 2023 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 30 September 2023, and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets .../Cont'd

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Report of the Trustees, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report (incorporating the directors' report) for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies' regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets .../Cont'd

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement (set out on page 23), the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The specific procedures for this engagement and the extent to which these are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

- Enquiry of management and those charged with governance about actual and potential litigation or claims and the identification of non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- Reviewing minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.
- Reviewing financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- Auditing the risk of management override of controls, including testing journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.
- Performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud.
- Professional scepticism in course of the audit and with audit sampling in material audit areas.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets .../Cont'd

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements .../Cont'd

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

K.C. Fisher

Kevin Fisher BA FCA CTA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Myrus Smith
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors
Norman House
8 Burnell Road
Sutton, Surrey
SM1 4BW

24 June 2024

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Statement of Financial Activities
(including Income and Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 30 September 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Income from:					
Charitable activities	2	75,677	80,964	156,641	187,041
Total Income		**75,677**	**80,964**	**156,641**	**187,041**
Expenditure on:					
Charitable expenditure	3	89,179	79,795	168,974	182,237
Total Expenditure		**89,179**	**79,795**	**168,974**	**182,237**
Net income/(expenditure)	7	**(13,502)**	**1,169**	**(12,333)**	**4,804**
Transfers between funds	12	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds		**(13,502)**	**1,169**	**(12,333)**	**4,804**
Funds brought forward	12	49,439	750	50,189	45,385
Total funds carried forward	12	**£35,937**	**£1,919**	**£37,856**	**£50,189**

All income and expenditure is derived from continuing activities.

The SOFA includes all gains and losses recognised during the year.

The notes form part of these accounts.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Balance Sheet
As at 30 September 2023

	Notes	2023 £	2022 £
Current assets			
Debtors	9	6,448	2,889
Cash at Bank		67,535	79,349
		73,983	82,238
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	10	(36,127)	(32,049)
Net current assets		**37,856**	**50,189**
Net assets	11	**£37,856**	**£50,189**
Funds:			
Unrestricted funds			
- General fund	12	35,937	49,439
Restricted Funds	12	1,919	750
Total funds	12	**£37,856**	**£50,189**

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to small companies within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the directors and trustees on 20 JUNE 2024 and signed on their behalf:

Karin Maschler
.....

Karin Maschler
Chair and Trustee

The notes form part of these accounts.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2023

1. Accounting policies

General information and basis of preparation
Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets is a private company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is given in the "Reference and Administrative Information" on page 2 of these financial statements.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention. The financial statements are presented in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity.

The significant accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all years presented unless otherwise stated.

Income recognition

Items of income are recognised in the financial statements when all of the following criteria are met:

- The charity has entitlement to the funds;
- any performance conditions have been met or are fully within the control of the charity;
- there is sufficient certainty that receipt of the income is considered probable; and
- the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from performance related grants and contracts is recognised as the charity earns the right to consideration through delivery of the specified services.

Expenditure recognition

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount can be measured reliably. Expenditure includes all irrecoverable VAT which is included as part of the relevant cost.

Expenditure on charitable activities comprises those costs associated with the delivery of the various activities and services for the charity's beneficiaries.

Expenditure includes those costs of a direct nature which can be allocated to a specific activity and also includes indirect costs, including governance costs that do not relate to a specific activity but are necessary to support those activities. Support costs are apportioned to each activity on the basis of staff time.

1. Accounting policies/contd...

Fund accounting

Unrestricted general funds are freely available for use in furtherance of the objects of the charity and which have not been designated for specific purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds set aside by the trustees for particular purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which can only be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor or which have been raised for a particular purpose.

Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible assets costing more than £1,500 are capitalised and are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation.

Leases

Operating lease rentals are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

Pensions

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charity's pension scheme are charged in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year to which they relate. The charity has no liability under these schemes other than for the payment of those contributions.

Debtors and creditors

Debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and which are receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised in expenditure.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2023

2. Income from Charitable activities

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	2023 £	2022 £
LB Tower Hamlets:				
Voluntary Sector Children & Youth Forum (Third Sector Co-ordinator)	45,309	-	45,309	42,492
Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant	-	75,000	75,000	81,000
COVID 19 Volunteering Hub	25,000	-	25,000	50,000
Holiday Activities and Food Programme	-	-	-	500
Total LB Tower Hamlets	**70,309**	**75,000**	**145,309**	**173,992**
City Bridge Foundation	-	5,964	5,964	-
East London Business Alliance (MOPAC)	-	-	-	10,000
Other Consultancy Income	4,900	-	4,900	2,625
Training and Other Income	468	-	468	424
Total	**£75,677**	**£80,964**	**£156,641**	**£187,041**

Section 37 Statement: During the period, the grants receivable from LB Tower Hamlets were expended on various projects for the purposes for which they were given.

Of the LB Tower Hamlets income of £173,992 recognised in 2022, £92,992 related to unrestricted funds and £81,000 to restricted funds.

The remainder of the charitable activities income of £13,049 recognised in 2022 related to unrestricted funds of £13,049 and restricted funds of £NIL.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2023

3. Cost of charitable activities

	Direct Costs	Support Costs	Total 2023	Total 2022
Volunteering services	£152,915	£16,059	£168,974	£182,237

Of the £168,974 (2022 - £182,237) expenditure recognised in 2023, £89,179 (2022 - £98,691) was charged to unrestricted funds and £79,795 (2022 - £83,546) was charged to restricted funds.

4. Analysis of direct costs

	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Wages and salaries	145,794	162,188
Activity costs	5,801	3,990
Staff and volunteer training and recruitment	975	993
Travel costs	295	116
Volunteer expenses	50	4
	£152,915	£167,291

5. Analysis of support costs

	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Office costs	4,892	4,933
IT support	2,899	3,165
Computer and website costs	1,270	667
Other costs	1,158	1,221
Governance costs (note 6)	5,840	4,960
	£16,059	£14,946

6. Governance costs

	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Audit and accountancy fees	1,950	1,680
Accountancy fees	3,800	3,250
AGM/Annual review	90	-
Trustee meetings and training	-	30
	£5,840	£4,960

7. Net income/(expenditure)

The net income/(expenditure) for the year is stated after charging:

	2023	2022
Auditors' remuneration – Audit	£1,950	£1,950
Operating lease rentals	£Nil	£Nil

8. Staff costs

	2023	2022
	£	£
Wages and salaries	131,981	147,711
Social Security costs	7,733	8,845
Pension Costs	6,080	5,632
	£145,794	**£162,188**

No employee received total employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) of more than £60,000 in either year.

The total employee benefits received by Key Management amounted to £54,325 (2022: £55,107). Under FRS 102, employee benefits include gross salary, employer's NIC, employer's pension contributions and benefits in kind.

The average number of employees during the period, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents was 3.2 (2022: 3.7). The average monthly number of employees was 5 (2022: 5.5).

9. Debtors

Due within one year	2023	2022
	£	£
Prepayments	484	389
Other Debtors	5,964	2,500
	£6,448	**£2,889**

10. Creditors:

Amounts falling due within one year:	**2023** **£**	**2022** **£**
Deferred income	31,772	23,930
Accruals	4,355	8,119
	£36,127	**£32,049**

All of the £23,930 deferred income brought forward from 30 September 2022 was released to income in the year ended 30 September 2023. Deferred income relates to funding received but for which the performance conditions will be met in the next accounting period.

11. Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted **£**	**Restricted** **£**	**Total** **£**
Current assets	72,064	1,919	73,983
Current liabilities	(36,127)	-	(36,127)
At 30 September 2023	**£35,937**	**£1,919**	**£37,856**

Comparative information for the analysis of net assets between funds is as follows:

	Unrestricted **£**	**Restricted** **£**	**Total** **£**
Current assets	81,488	750	82,238
Current liabilities	(32,049)	-	(32,049)
At 30 September 2022	**£49,439**	**£750**	**£50,189**

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2023

12. Movement in funds

Restricted Funds	At 1 Oct 2022 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers between funds £	At 30 Sept 2023 £
LBTH - Infrastructure	-	75,000	(74,858)	-	142
City Bridge Foundation	-	5,964	(4,937)	-	1,027
London Plus – laptops	750	-	-	-	750
Total restricted funds	**750**	**80,964**	**(79,795)**	**-**	**1,919**
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	49,439	75,677	(89,179)	-	35,937
Total unrestricted funds	**49,439**	**75,677**	**(89,179)**	**-**	**35,937**
Total funds	**£50,189**	**£156,641**	**£(168,974)**	**£Nil**	**£37,856**

A description of each restricted fund is given in the Trustees Annual Report, where relevant .

12. Movement in funds.../cont'd

Comparative information for the net movement in funds is as follows:

Restricted Funds	At 1 Oct 2021 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers between funds £	At 30 Sept 2022 £
LBTH - Infrastructure	-	81,000	(82,046)	1,046	-
Cornerstone	1,500	-	(1,500)	-	-
London Plus – laptops	750	-	-	-	750
Total restricted funds	**2,250**	**81,000**	**(83,546)**	**1,046**	**750**
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	43,135	106,041	(98,691)	(1,046)	49,439
Total unrestricted funds	**43,135**	**106,041**	**(98,691)**	**-**	**49,439**
Total funds	**£45,385**	**£187,041**	**£(182,237)**	**£Nil**	**£50,189**

13. Taxation

As a registered charity, Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets is not liable to tax on its charitable activities.

14. Related Party Transactions

Trustee meeting refreshments and training costs amounting to £Nil (2022: £30) were paid on behalf of nil (2022 : 6) trustees.

The trustees received no remuneration in 2023 or 2022.

There were no other related party transactions in 2023 or 2022.

15. Contingent Assets

Total grant funding awarded as at 30 September 2023 but not yet received and recognised as income due to the recognition criteria not being met amounts to £503,189.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

England & Wales - Charity number 1127300

Accounts

Volunteer Centre
Tower Hamlets

Report of the Trustees and Accounts
For the period from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022

Company no. 6638750 (England & Wales)
Charity no. 1127300

Myrus Smith
Chartered Accountants
Norman House
8 Burnell Road
Sutton
Surrey
SM1 4BW

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

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VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 30 September 2022

The Trustees present their report and audited financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2022.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Charity Name: Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets

Charity Registration Number: 1127300

Company Registration Number: 6638750

Registered Office:
Norvin House
45-55 Commercial Street
London
E1 6BD

Trustees:
Karin Maschler, Chair
Leo Zawadzki, Treasurer
Megan Cowley
Safia Jama (retired 6 June 2023)
Sabiha Khanam
Patrick McKenna (retired 12 Oct 2021)
Ioana Popovici (appointed 16 August 2022)
Alice Sims (retired 6 June 2023)
Louise Theophile (appointed 16 August 2022)
Alison White (retired 16 January 2023)

Senior Management: Catherine Bavage, Chief Executive

Auditors:
Myrus Smith Chartered Accountants
Norman House
8 Burnell Road
Sutton
Surrey
SM1 4BW

Bankers:
The Co-operative Bank PLC
PO Box 250
Delf House
Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Period of Account
The period of account is from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022.

Governing Document
The organisation is a charitable company, limited by guarantee, incorporated on 4 July 2008, and registered as a charity on 29 December 2008.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company, and is governed under those Articles.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees
The process for appointing the charity's trustees is set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. As VCTH is a charitable company, trustees also act as company directors. The minimum number of trustees is three, with no maximum. The Board of Trustees may appoint anyone willing and fit to act as a trustee and director, subject to the provisions of the Articles of Association.

One third of trustees must retire (but may stand for re-election) each year. Trustees are appointed annually, for a maximum of seven consecutive years, at which point they must retire. Trustees who have served seven years may stand for re-election, but only one year after the date of their retirement. Trustees may only hold the same Honorary Officer role for a maximum of five years.

The charity conducts regular skills, experience and diversity audits of trustees. These audits identify gaps in skills, or under-representation of particular groups or communities, and are fundamental to the recruitment process. Vacancies are advertised widely and potential trustees are invited to complete an application form, outlining their relevant skills and experience. Shortlisted applicants meet with a selection panel, comprising the Chair, one other trustee and the Chief Executive. If successful at interview, applicants are invited to observe a Board meeting and meet current trustees. If all parties agree to proceed, the applicant is either co-opted or nominated for election at the next AGM.

Trustee Induction and Training
Trustees are provided with a role description, outlining their statutory and additional governance responsibilities. On joining the Board, trustees are introduced to other Board members and paid staff, and provided with a comprehensive induction. Trustees are expected to attend regular Board meetings and an annual Away Day. They must acquaint themselves with VCTH's policies and procedures, strategic plans, budgets, and governing document. Trustees are prompted to take up relevant learning and development opportunities to help them fulfil their role and responsibilities.

Risk Management
Our Risk Register identifies risks and their potential impact in 5 areas: governance, operational, financial, environmental/external, and compliance. It describes the steps needed to mitigate risks. The trustees have considered all the major risks to which the

charity is exposed and are satisfied that systems or procedures are established to mitigate those risks.

Trustees carried out a thorough review of our Risk Register in January and 2022, using updated "*Charities and Risk Management*" guidance from the Charity Commission. An Action Plan to further mitigate risks was approved in March 2022, and many of the actions were implemented within the year.

The charity has a suite of policies and procedures that trustees, staff and volunteers must observe. During the year, trustees reviewed and updated 3 policies:

- Reserves Policy (approved 12 Oct 21)
- Finance Policy and Procedure (approved 11 Oct 22)
- Conflicts of Interest Policy and Guidance Notes (approved 11 Oct 22)

Trustees prioritised the following policies for review in 2022-2023; Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Health & Safety (including Fire Safety) and Working From Home.

To ensure that VCTH complies with legislation and implements good employment practice we maintained our contract with Bright HR, who provide the trustees and Chief Executive with employment advice. We continued to offer Bright HR's Employee Assistance Programme to the team, giving staff and volunteers access to health and wellbeing support, including a 24-hour helpline, and counselling sessions.

Staff continued to work from home throughout 2021-2022. They were provided with the necessary equipment and paid Working At Home Allowances, in line with HMRC guidance. The decision to be office-free for the foreseeable future prioritises our commitment to sustaining services and staffing over fixed accommodation costs. It will enable VCTH to make savings on core costs in 2023 and adopt a more climate-friendly model.

We continued to use the professional services of Adrian Hull as our management accountant, and Creative Payroll Services for managing payroll.

A charity combined insurance policy was in place throughout the year covering; employer's liability (£10m), public liability (£5m), products liability (£5m), business interruption, executive risks (including trustee indemnity and directors' liability), professional indemnity, cyber loss recovery, fidelity guarantee, property and business equipment, money and personal accident assault, group personal accident, goods in transit, and legal expenses. We took commercial legal expenses insurance through Bright HR to indemnify VCTH against legal costs and compensatory awards associated with employment disputes.

Under VCTH's Conflicts of Interest Policy trustees and staff must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. Between January and March 2022 all trustees and staff updated their declarations and declaring conflicts was a standing agenda item at Board meetings.

The ongoing COVID pandemic created increased demand for services from the voluntary and community sector and this, in turn, led to growing competition for funding, making fundraising more challenging. VCTH's income fell by 3% from £193,267 in 2020-2021 to £187,041 in 2021-2022. In recognition of our limited reserves, we negotiated funding in advance, wherever possible. This arrangement ensured positive cash flow throughout the year.

We took our commitment to protecting individuals' personal data seriously. During the year, the Volunteer Centre re-registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. Staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities not to disclose the personal or sensitive data of our service users.

VCTH is committed to recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff. Continued professional development for staff is essential for retention, ensures that skills and knowledge are updated, and reduces our exposure to risk. In 2021-2022, staff took up learning and development opportunities in; child protection, writing charitable fundraising applications, roles and duties of trustees, delivering virtual training, tips for MS Teams. One staff member undertook a comprehensive Train the Trainer course, gaining certification from the Learning and Performance Institute.

Organisational Structure

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets has a Board of Trustees, which meets at least 6 times a year, and is responsible for the strategic direction and governance of the charity. The charity's Chief Executive attends Board meetings as an advisor, but does not have voting rights.

During the year, ten individuals were involved as charity trustees. Four trustees were Tower Hamlets residents, ensuring community legitimacy and local knowledge on our Board. Three trustees worked for local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, and others worked in the private sector.

Karin Maschler continued in the role of Chair – a position she has held since August 2021. Leo Zawadzki continued as Treasurer, a role he took on in August 2021.

On 16 August 2022 VCTH appointed two new trustees; Ioana Popovici and Louise Theophile. Both had participated in our Trustee Training and Matching Programme (known as The METs Programme). As well as bringing legal and HR experience that strengthen the Board's skills, they are both Tower Hamlets residents from BAME communities.

Responsibility for operational management was delegated to the Chief Executive, Catherine Bavage. The Chief Executive is responsible for HR, finance, fundraising, and managing service delivery. She ensures that the charity delivers high quality, responsive services to meet the targets and outcomes set out in grants and contracts.

The Board of Trustees appoints all staff, including key management personnel, on a grade within the National Joint Council (NJC) pay scale for Local Government employees. Where the charity's financial position allows, the Board awards annual pay rises, agreed nationally by the NJC. In January 2023, with inflation running at over 10%,

the Board awarded staff the NJC pay rise, backdated to 1 April 2022. On this occasion the pay award was a flat rate of £2,355 for full-time grades, applied pro rata. This represented increases of between 4.76% for the highest paid and 8.3% for the lowest earner, with an average pay rise of 6.1%.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) is the recognised volunteering infrastructure agency in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Our charity's objects are:

- The promotion of any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community of Tower Hamlets, Greater London, in particular the relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability or other social or economic disadvantage.

- The promotion and advancement of voluntary work for charitable purposes for the benefit of the community, predominantly in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, but additionally promotion and advancement of voluntary work sub-regionally, regionally and nationally.

In forming our objectives, the trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard for the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

Mission

Our mission is to provide a comprehensive volunteering infrastructure service to non-profit groups and communities in Tower Hamlets, to increase the quality, quantity and impact of volunteering in the borough.

Core Functions

Our 5 core functions are:

- **Brokerage** – ensuring that the general public and all sectors are better informed about and have access to an effective and efficient brokerage service
- **Good Practice Development** – helping organisations to improve or attain positive consistency in their volunteering programmes
- **Developing Volunteering Opportunities** – increasing and improving the quantity, quality, and diversity of volunteering locally
- **Voice of Volunteering** – creating an increased awareness of issues impacting volunteering
- **Strategic Development of Volunteering** – engagement with local networks and decision-makers to create a positive environment in which volunteering is flourishing.

We also manage the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF), supporting voluntary and community sector organisations that provide services to children and young people in Tower Hamlets. Most of these organisations involve volunteers in their work.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets was established in July 2008 as an independent charitable company by a team of four committed volunteers, who became its initial trustee board and founder Chief Executive. The charity marked its 14th full operational year on 30 September 2022.

VCTH holds Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation (VCQA) - the widely recognised quality mark for volunteering infrastructure organisations, assessed and awarded by the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA). It demonstrates that we are fit-for-purpose and deliver the five core Volunteer Centre functions to a consistently high standard. Our award is valid until July 2023.

1. Volunteer Brokerage

Volunteering brokerage is linking potential volunteers to not-for-profit organisations that need their help. We continued to provide a brokerage service for people aged 15+ who lived, worked or studied in Tower Hamlets, providing information about volunteering roles and encouraging applications.

Throughout 2021–2022 we continued to run the Tower Hamlets COVID-19 Recovery Volunteer Hub, first launched in March 2019, and funded by Tower Hamlets Council. The Hub sourced local volunteers to respond to the needs of the community, helping support the borough's recovery from the pandemic. This year we referred volunteers to 112 VCS organisations and public sector bodies (2020-2021: 81 organisations).

We delivered 15 online presentations to a total of 327 individuals, reaching a wide range of potential volunteers, (job seekers, ESOL learners, students, new migrants) who were looking to gain skills and experience, and build connections in the local community through volunteering. We compiled and produced information about free training opportunities, employability support and job vacancies in monthly Employment Support and Training (EST) Alerts. Volunteers could opt into receiving these alerts.

Volunteer Numbers

Between 1 October 2021 and 30 September 2022, a total of 664 new volunteers registered with us – an average of 55 per month. This was considerably fewer (down 37%) than the 1,051 registrations in 2020-2021, with registrations returning to pre-pandemic levels (719 in 2018-2019). The fall in the number of people expressing an interest in volunteering in Tower Hamlets was in line with the national picture.

Client Demographics

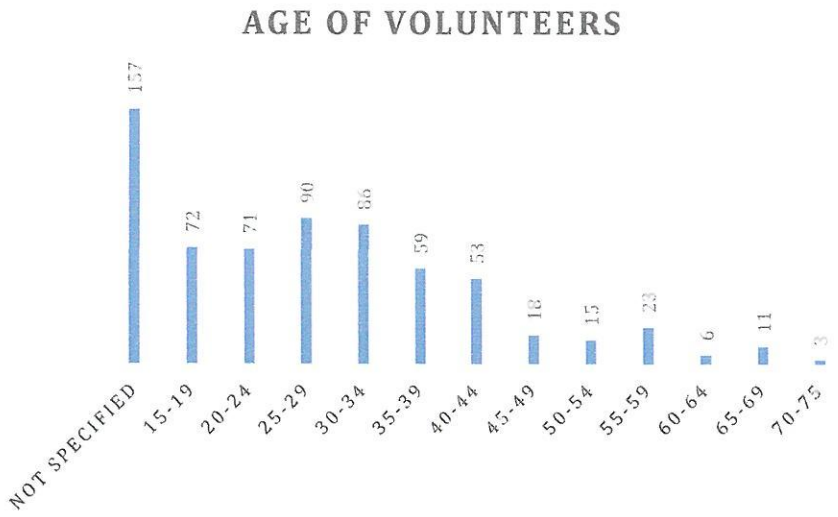
We aimed to provide an inclusive brokerage service to a wide range of volunteers, reflecting the diverse communities in Tower Hamlets. We requested equalities data from all volunteers at the point of registration, but many chose to withhold information

about some or all of their protected characteristics. Volunteers were more inclined to disclose their age and gender (76%) and ethnicity (61%), than their disability (55%), religion (50%) or sexuality (47%). This means that our data on volunteer demographics is incomplete, but what we have provides a good indication of the people using our services and of shifting patterns.

Age

76% (507 of the 664 volunteers) provided information on their age. The oldest volunteer registered during this period was 75 and the youngest was 15. The largest group of registrants who disclosed their age were 20-34 year olds (247 registrations: 49%). The second largest group were 35-49 year olds (130 registrations: 26%).

According to Census 2021 data, 37.8% of Tower Hamlets residents are aged 20-34 and 22.5% of residents are aged 35-49, so VCTH performed very well at attracting working age adults to volunteer, especially 20-34 year olds.



Gender

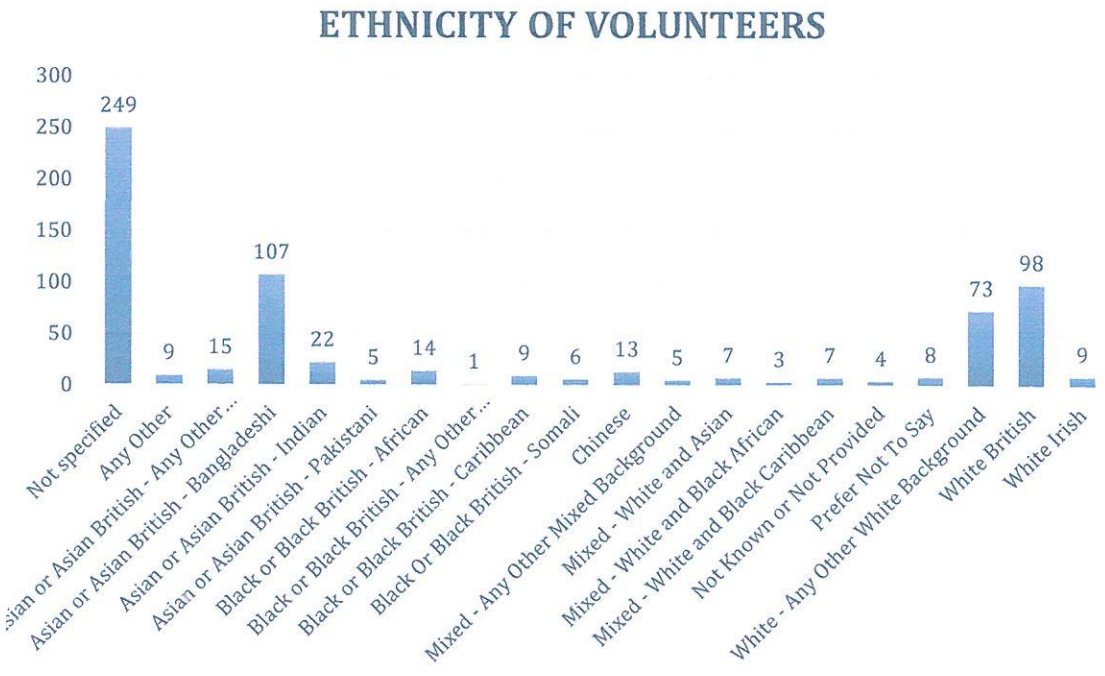
This year 76% (504 of 664 volunteers) disclosed their gender when registering. 68% of them defined as female (66% in 2020-2021) and 32% identified as male (33% in 2020-2021). Two volunteers identified as non-binary.

According to the Census 2021, the borough's residents are 50.2% male and 49.8% female. VCTH therefore reached a much higher percentage of women by comparison to borough demographics. NCVO's "Time Well Spent" research shows that nationally women are more likely to have volunteered formally than men (40% v 35%). VCTH is proud to have attracted a large number of women, many of who were volunteering as a route from economic inactivity to paid employment. However, we are conscious of the need to engage more men in volunteering.



Ethnicity

61% (403 of 664 volunteers) provided data on their ethnicity. Of the 39% who withheld this information, it is likely that many were people from Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic groups. The ethnicities of volunteers registering with VCTH largely reflected the local population.



The single largest ethnic group of volunteers was "Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi" at 26.5%. This is somewhat lower than the borough's Bangladeshi population (Census 2021: 34.6%). However, VCTH has made considerable headway this year in attracting significantly more Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi volunteers (2020-2021: 10%).

he second largest ethnic group of volunteers was "White British" at 24%, closely reflecting the borough's White British population of 22.9%.

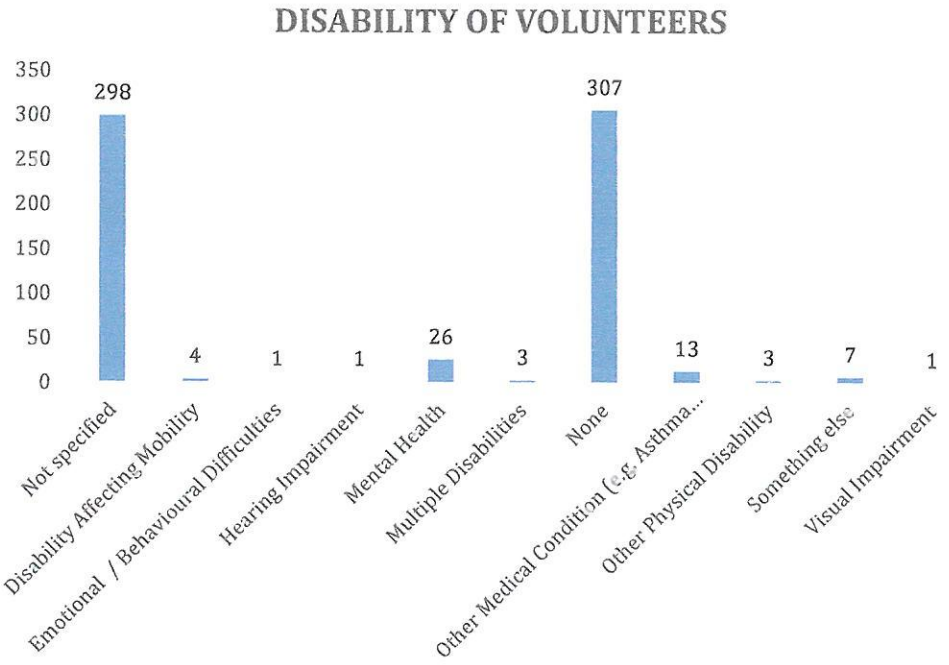
44.6% of all volunteers disclosing their ethnicity were White, compared to 39.4% of the Tower Hamlets population being White. People who defined as White Other made up 18% of volunteers, slightly higher than the 14.6% White Other population in the borough. VCTH performed well at reaching Europeans.

7.4% of volunteers defined as Black or Black British African, Caribbean, Somali or Black Other. This matches the borough profile of 7.3% of residents from these communities.

Disability

55% (366 of 664 volunteers) disclosed information about disability. Of the volunteers who disclosed information, 84% told us that they did not have any disability. 16% of volunteers disclosed they had a disability, with the largest groups telling us about mental health issues (7%), and chronic medical conditions, such as asthma or diabetes (3.5%).

Census 2021 data shows that 20.1% of Tower Hamlets residents have a long-term health condition or disability that limits their day-to-day activities to some extent. As 16% of registered volunteers reported a disability, this would suggest that VCTH was relatively successful at reaching disabled people.

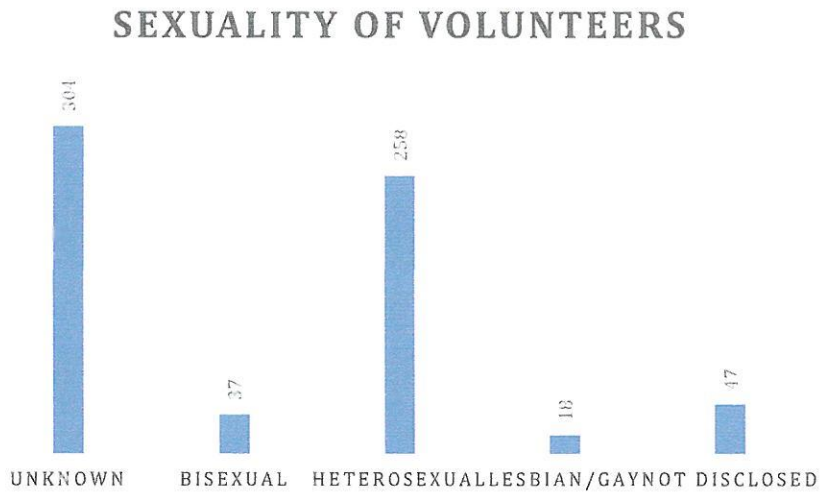


Sexuality

Only 47% (313 of 664 volunteers) disclosed information about their sexuality. Of these, 82% identified as heterosexual.

The annual trend of more volunteers identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual continued, with 18% identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual (13% in 2020-2021).

According to Census 2021 data, 6.48% of the Tower Hamlets population identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual. As 18% of volunteers disclosing their sexuality identified as LGB, VCTH appears to have done extremely well at attracting the borough's LGB population.



Employment Status

59% (393 of 664 volunteers) disclosed their employment status when registering with VCTH.

The number of volunteers who were in employment fell from 63% in 2020-21 to 55% in 2021-22, comprising 41% full-time employed, 9% part-time employed, and 5% self-employed. This drop might be attributed to fewer employed people registering to volunteer once furlough ended, but may also reflect the impact of VCTH promoting volunteering in a more targeted way to economically inactive residents.

45% of volunteers were economically inactive. 16% told us they were unemployed. They were split evenly between those who were workless for less than 12 months, and people who were long-term unemployed (over 13 months). 16% of volunteers were in full-time education – no change from 2020-2021. Of the remaining volunteers 5% were house persons, 4% were unwaged but not seeking work, 2% were retired, and 2% were unable to work.

The Census 2021 labour market data shows that 61.4% of the Tower Hamlets population was economically active and in employment. 34.6% were economically inactive. Tower Hamlets had the second highest unemployment rate of all English local authorities, with 6% of usual residents aged 16 and over unemployed. This suggests that VCTH is doing comparatively well at attracting economically inactive people, including unemployed people and students.

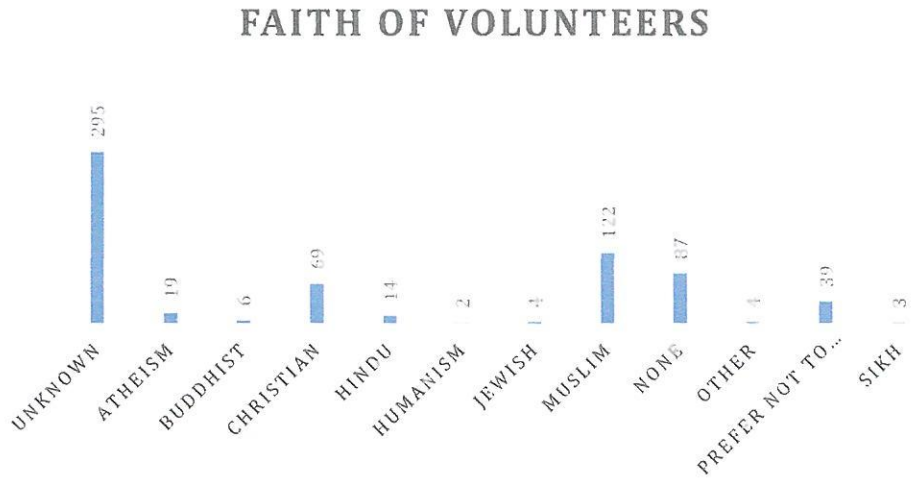


Faith

50% (330 of 664 volunteers) disclosed their faith/religion when registering. People of all major faiths and none were represented.

The single largest faith group was Muslim at 37% (in 2020-2021 the largest group was people of no religion). This is broadly in line with the local Muslim population recorded in the Census 2021 at 39.9%.

The second largest faith group was Christian at 21%, very similar to the percentage of Christian residents in the borough (22.3%). Another notably large group of volunteers were those with no religion (26.3%), almost identical to the Census 2021 data at 26.6%.



Tracking

Throughout 2021-2022 we continued to provide brokerage support online or by telephone, rather than in person. This kept our staff and volunteers safe during the latter part of the pandemic, and reduced VCTH's environmental impact.

We recorded the number of applications made by volunteers for specific volunteer roles. We received 1,245 applications, which is just 45% of the 2,767 applications we received in the previous year during the pandemic. Applications have returned to just above pre-pandemic levels (2018-2019: 1,136 applications).

Details of each application were passed to the relevant Volunteer Managers in host organisations, and volunteers were also provided with contact details for the organisations they wished to support. This was to facilitate contacts and ensure applications were not overlooked.

Tracking volunteer starters is an extremely challenging and time-consuming exercise. We systematically sent follow-up emails to applicants who had been referred to roles to ask if they had started volunteering or needed more help. Often we did not hear back from them. This year we received confirmation from 127 individuals that they had begun volunteering, but this is just a partial picture of starters.

Minority Ethnic Trustees Training and Matching (METs)

Between April and September 2022, with funding from our LBTH Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant, we developed and delivered a trustee training and matching programme for residents from Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic communities. This was a practical programme seeking to address under-representation of minoritised ethnic groups at charity Board level.

In June and July 2022 we ran 2 cohorts of training. Participants attended a series of online sessions to learn about the essentials of charity trusteeship, and developed personal profiles highlighting their skills and lived experiences. Towards the end of the programme we supported trainees to prepare for making applications and attending interviews to become trustees. 25 people started the training and 22 (88%) completed it.

We recruited and vetted 14 charities, either based in or providing services in Tower Hamlets, which were seeking new trustees and wanted to diversify the ethnicity of their Boards. We created profiles for the charities, promoting their work and clarifying the skills and experience they were seeking. In late July 2022 we brought the 14 charities and 20 trainees together at an online matching event. Where trainees and charities felt there was a potential match, they were provided with each other's contact details.

Throughout August and September, the trustee applicants attended interviews and observed Board meetings with their chosen charities. Our target was to match 15 individuals, and we were delighted that 17 of the trainees were offered and accepted trustee positions. Ten of the participating charities were able to recruit new trustees, with some taking on more than one new Board member. The programme was a resounding success, as evidenced by some of the feedback;

"I greatly enjoyed participating in the programme, it was very stimulating, inclusive, and a wonderful matching opportunity. I feel closer to my Tower Hamlets community and also to my ambition to volunteer as a trustee. Thank you".

"The instructors were knowledgeable and helpful. The classes were well organised and structured. I was very impressed with it overall. It's a brilliant initiative".

2. Good Practice Development

We continued to deliver activities to support and build the capacity of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) to implement good practice in volunteer management. Tower Hamlets Council funded this work via a Local Community Fund Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant.

Volunteer Managers' Training

Between 1 October 2021 and 30 September 2022 we delivered six, half-day training courses for Volunteer Managers (same number as in 2020-2021). All six sessions were delivered online on Zoom. A total of 61 Volunteer Managers attended our training, which was an average of 10 per course, a decrease of 7 per course from the previous year, but still exceeding our target, and demonstrating an ongoing appetite for online training. The topics were:

- Recruiting the Right Volunteers
- Measuring the Difference Your Volunteering Programme Makes
- Good Practice in Managing Volunteers
- Dealing with Difficult Situations with Volunteers
- Your Volunteer Policy – is it Fit for Purpose?
- The Cost of Living Crisis: Minimising the Impact on your Volunteer Programme.

Across all the training sessions, 87% of participants (53/61) completed an evaluation survey. 96% of respondents (51/53) rated our training as either excellent/extremely useful or as good/very useful. 89% of respondents (47/53) progressed in terms of knowledge and 98% of respondents (52/53) committed to making a change within their organisation or taking an action as a result of the training.

Peer Learning Sessions for Volunteer Managers

We ran four Peer Learning sessions, attended by 38 participants, an average of 9 per session (7 less per session than the previous year). The sessions provided a blend of professional development and learning opportunities for people who manage volunteers. They included guest speakers and opportunities for peer support. The topics were:

- Virtual Volunteering: Successes and Challenges
- DBS checks: Your Questions Answered
- Adapting your Volunteer Programme for Living with COVID
- Making the Case for Volunteering Within Your Organisation

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Bespoke Advice on Volunteer Programmes

Between 1 October 2021 and 30 September 2022, a total of 18 organisations were supported with good practice advice over 31 sessions. This represented a decrease of 23 sessions and 9 organisations since the previous year.

Several months after providing advice, VCTH surveyed organisations about the improvements made as a result. The impact survey was completed by 10 organisations that received a mix of 1:1 advice, training and peer learning sessions. 100% of respondents found VCTH's support service useful. Of these, 90% (9) found it either extremely useful or very useful, and 10% (1) found it average/fairly useful. 90% of organisations had implemented improvements or changes to their volunteering programme, policies or practices.

Organisations rated the quality/level of their volunteering practices before and after they received support from VCTH on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being the lowest level and 10 being the highest). On average organisations started at level 6 and increased to 8.4 following VCTH's support. All 10 respondents (100%) said they would recommend VCTH's advice service to other voluntary sector groups. Some quotes:

> *"We have been working hard to make our volunteer programme more inclusive and accessible to those who would like to volunteer with us, and thanks to the support of VCTH we have made changes to our recruitment procedure and are continuing to try and make progress in the culture we create in our volunteer programme".*

> *"Advice received was extremely useful. Evelyn always follows up to my queries and cascades knowledge on best practice in volunteering. I like receiving the newsletters and tips about volunteering".*

Good Practice Tips and Blogs

In our monthly e-bulletin, we regularly included bite-sized advice on volunteer management issues, either in the form of answering a particular question - the 'Ask Evelyn' column - or as a 'Top Tip'. Some of these tips were also featured in a blog on our website. This ensured that good practice was accessed as widely as possible.

Factsheets

We produced one new factsheet this year; "Why Include Volunteering on your CV"? This was designed to help volunteers describe the skills and experience gained through volunteering when applying for paid work. During the year it received 45 clicks. A range of other factsheets for Volunteer Managers were available on our website and were downloaded 285 times. New for this year on our website was our best practice blog, where we published 3 entries between February and September.

Organisations Registered

This year we registered 22 new Volunteer Involving Organisations, 4 fewer than the previous year, but still exceeding our annual target of 16. Each organisation underwent a short health-check to ensure they could provide a safe and welcoming environment for volunteers before we advertised their roles. At 30 September 2022 a total of 517 organisations were registered with VCTH.

3. Developing Volunteering Opportunities

We developed volunteering opportunities in partnership with not-for-profit organisations registered with us, including charities, community groups, social enterprises, and public sector bodies. These organisations were usually based in or providing services to residents in Tower Hamlets.

We worked hard to ensure that the volunteer roles offered were meaningful, appealing and inclusive, and that volunteers would be supported in a safe environment.

New organisations registered this year were:

1. East London Cares
2. Exam Star Learner CIC
3. Little Village
4. Read Easy UK
5. The London Gardens Trust
6. Cody Dock (Gasworks Dock Partnership)
7. Explore Relationships
8. Isle of Dogs Sea Cadets
9. London Cycling Campaign
10. REFEO (Refugee Education for Equal Employment Opportunities)
11. Reset UK
12. Tower Hamlets Volunteer Police Cadets
13. Care4Calais
14. More Life Home CIC
15. Our Time
16. The Heritage & Arts Centre Bow (Epainos Ministries)
17. Your Voice in Health & Social Care (YVHSC - Healthwatch)
18. Beyond Sight Loss
19. Climate Ed
20. Lower Regents Coalition (working with Regent's Canal Heritage)
21. St Anne's Church Limehouse
22. The Access Project

Throughout the year a significant focus of our work was supporting the community to recover from the pandemic. We continued to work with organisations in the borough that were delivering vital services to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. We systematically contacted organisations registered with us to ask about their volunteer requirements and helped them develop diverse, appealing opportunities for volunteers.

We developed and promoted 321 volunteering roles over the entire year (307 roles in 2020-2021). Of these, 268 were entirely new unique roles – a dramatic increase on the 54 roles developed in 2020-2021. Most roles required multiple volunteers and some were advertised more than once. We encouraged organisations to make their volunteer roles more flexible, enabling time-poor volunteers to get involved.

The pandemic meant that some organisations were not ready to recruit volunteers for traditional roles, but many began re-opening their services, and we supported them to develop new volunteering opportunities. We advertised a mix of remote and in-person roles, ensuring they were in line with the COVID-19 government guidelines. Roles were advertised for up to 3 months, or until organisations told us they no longer needed volunteers, or asked us to renew their adverts. This process helped us maintain an accurate database of current vacancies.

We also saw a continued demand for critical roles responding to urgent needs in our community, such as Vaccination Site volunteers for the booster programme, volunteers to prepare, pack and delivery food supplies, Energy Champions addressing fuel poverty caused by the energy crisis, and roles supporting refugees and asylum seekers who had newly arrived in the borough.

4. Voice of Volunteering

Campaigning and Informing

Another core function of the Volunteer Centre is to be the local voice of volunteering - increasing awareness of the issues affecting volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations. We campaign for a volunteer-friendly climate, where everyone can participate. We aim to influence local decision-makers and funders about the value of volunteering to our communities and increase understanding of how volunteering benefits individuals. We advocate for greater recognition of the cost of well-run volunteering programmes, and the importance of effective volunteer management. We disseminate policy, information and statistics, encourage organisations to think about how changing policy and legislation may affect their volunteer programmes, and urge them to join relevant campaigns. Throughout the year we kept 517 organisations informed (up 22 from 495 in 2021).

E-bulletins

VCTH produced monthly e-bulletins for Volunteer Managers. These included information on; training for workers and volunteers, funding for volunteering programmes, policy developments, campaigns and research, and volunteer management job adverts. E-bulletins regularly included a "Top Tip", promoting an area of good practice. Our e-bulletin was sent to an average of 682 contacts each month (no change to the previous year). However, the opening rate increased, reaching 21.6% (19.5% in 2021).

Some of the topical issues covered included; the Community Life Survey, national Trustees' Week, the Tower Hamlets Civic Awards, International Women's Day, the Festival of Communities and the Volunteer Expo Live, preparing for Volunteers' Week, the value of youth volunteering in the NHS, NCVO's "Time Well Spent – Volunteering during the Pandemic" and the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

Website

After months of development, the new VCTH website was launched in February 2022 - https://www.vcth.org.uk/. The website has a fresh new look and is simpler to navigate, with information about volunteer roles given greater prominence. Content was updated regularly to reflect new activities and services.

Statistics for October 2021 to September 2022 span both the old and new websites so don't necessarily match. The website had 2,166 page views per month, compared to 3,125 in 2021. This fall is probably related to a drop in tracking as a result of increased privacy settings on mobile phones and desktops. A cookie banner on our new website also gave users choice whether they wished to be tracked or not, resulting in a decrease in tracking.

The average time on page increased to 1 minute 48 seconds (1:20 in 2021). This is a positive change, as it suggests visitors are finding content more engaging.

There was a noticeable increase in clicks from the website to Simply Connect, where volunteer vacancies are displayed. We registered 6,027 clicks, a 28% increase compared to the 4,696 clicks in 2020-2021.

Digital Channels – Facebook and Twitter

We used our Facebook page to engage with local residents to promote our latest volunteer roles, posting 25 times across the year. In 2021-2022 the number of followers on VCTH's Facebook page reached 1,297 – a 10% increase on the 1,177 likes in the previous year. Having this many followers is significant, as Facebook Insights get more accurate on pages exceeding 1,000 likes.

We used Twitter to engage with other organisations and to communicate with Volunteer Managers. By the end of September 2021 we had 2,330 followers on Twitter – little change from the previous year.

We maintained a mailing list of people who had registered an interest in volunteering via the Volunteering Hub on our website. We updated this regularly to add new registrants and remove unsubscribers, ensuring a more-engaged audience. We used this list to send 50 Volunteer Alerts, profiling new roles, as well as those where there was an urgent need for more volunteers. By 30 September 2022, our mailing list included 3,267 contacts (up slightly from 3,244 contacts in 2021). A sizeable 40% of the subscribers on the mailing list are highly engaged and often open and click the emails we send.

Volunteers' Week (1-7 June 2022)

The national Volunteers' Week theme for 2022 was 'A Time to Say Thanks'. It provided an opportunity for organisations to run activities that showcased and celebrated their volunteers and the contribution volunteering makes to communities.

This year Volunteers' Week coincided with a multitude of other events; The Queen's Platinum Jubilee bank holiday weekend, The Big Lunch, Thank You Day, and the school half-term holiday in Tower Hamlets. To navigate this busy time, we encouraged organisations to weave Volunteers' Week activities into their other celebratory events, or hold volunteer celebrations later in June.

Although almost all government COVID restrictions had been lifted by June, cases were high in London, so we recommended organising online, outdoor or socially distanced activities, and all VCTH activities took place online.

Our Volunteers' Week special was emailed to Volunteer Managers, asking them to download branded resources and find out more about events taking place locally. It was emailed to 678 contacts, with an opening rate of 19.2%. Throughout the Week we were particularly active on Facebook, posting daily links to highlighted volunteer roles.

On Twitter we published a thank you message to local organisations and Volunteer Managers that generated 70 impressions.

5. Strategic Development of Volunteering

As the volunteering infrastructure agency for Tower Hamlets, VCTH is recognised as the local volunteering expert in the borough, and we are often consulted on volunteering matters by local decision-makers and stakeholders. Strategic partners across Tower Hamlets look to us for input and guidance on volunteering issues. We seek to represent the interests and concerns of volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations at borough and pan-London levels, and ensure a coherent, joined-up approach.

Sourcing volunteers for Tower Hamlets Council

Tower Hamlets Council continued to fund VCTH to run the COVID-19 Recovery Volunteer Hub for the borough. As well as the Hub recruiting volunteers for VCS organisations, we sourced volunteers to support multiple Council services, including; Residents' Panel Members (Communications), Digital Media Co-ordinators (Parents Advice Centre), Exhibition Invigilators (Arts, Parks and Events), VCS Food Hub Volunteers (Tackling Poverty), High Street Clean Up Volunteers (Public Realm), Youth Justice Panel Members (Youth Offending), and Food Box Distributors (for schools).

LBTH Public Health

We continued to work closely with colleagues at LBTH Public Health, building the relationships developed at the height of the pandemic. Our Chief Executive participated in quarterly Health Protection Board meetings and fortnightly Safe Individuals Bronze Group meetings, advising where volunteers might add value and support the delivery of public health services for residents. In spring 2022 we helped recruit Community Vaccine Champions for Public Health. These volunteers played an important role in helping residents better understand the COVID-19 vaccination, and address the low take-up of vaccinations in Tower Hamlets.

In October 2021, VCTH was invited to LBTH's "Marking the Pandemic" event in Victoria Park, where the enormous contributions of volunteers were acknowledged, and local organisations were thanked. In May 2022, we participated in a Post Pandemic Workshop where, along with Public Health colleagues, we reflected on the two years of pandemic and helped capture the lessons learned, identifying gaps and improvements that could be made. We gave our perspective on how volunteers might be mobilised in any future response to a new pandemic or resurgence of COVID, so this could be included in the borough's refreshed Pandemic Plan.

Co-Operate and the VCS Strategy

VCTH's Chief Executive and the VSCYF Co-ordinator were active members of Co-Operate – a joint strategic body of voluntary sector representatives and senior Council staff which meets twice a year. Co-Operate aims to transform how organisations work together to enhance the lives of local people. Between us, we represented the interests of Volunteer Involving Organisations and organisations providing services to children and young people.

VCTH staff participated in strategic-level Task and Finish Groups to progress actions in the VCS Strategy, including groups on volunteering, external funding and consultation & engagement. The Volunteering Task and Finish Group facilitated better understanding and closer co-operation between major volunteering providers, including East London Business Alliance, Queen Mary University, LBTH, New City College and Barts NHS Trust. In 2021-2022, our collective focus was how to involve more residents from Black Asian and Minoritised Ethnic communities in leadership roles as magistrates, school governors and charity trustees.

Tackling Poverty - HAF Programme

VCTH's Chief Executive was a member of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme Steering Group, supporting the Council's Tackling Poverty Team. The HAF Programme targeted children from low-income households who were eligible for free school meals. Voluntary sector providers offered sports, arts and cultural activities, along with a free healthy lunch, to ensure that children did not go hungry during the school holidays. We recruited volunteers for these organisations during Easter and Christmas holidays, as well as providing input into how volunteers could support the emerging food pantries across the borough.

Supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Between October 2021 and February 2022, we attended monthly Council-led Afghan Resettlement Co-ordination meetings. These meetings aimed to generate a cross-sector partnership approach to providing support to people evacuated from Afghanistan under the ACRS and ARAP schemes, many of who were provided with temporary accommodation in hotels. We subsequently recruited volunteers to help cook, pack and deliver hot meals to Afghan refugees and asylum seekers, and to meet and greet families accessing services at the London Muslim Centre.

Shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the UK's Homes for Ukraine scheme was established. In March the Council convened a scoping meeting to consider how voluntary sector organisations could support Ukrainian refugees. VCTH attended Ukraine Joint Partnership meetings throughout the spring and summer. We worked with the Homes for Ukrainians Team to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees could access VCTH's services if they wished to volunteer.

Partnering with Tower Hamlets CVS

Throughout the year we worked closely with our main partner, Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS), ensuring that we avoided duplication of services. Between us we represented the broadest possible range of local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations at strategic level. The THCVS and VCTH Chief Executives met regularly to share information and identify common issues of concern.

We delivered the third year of our Infrastructure and Capacity Building programme in partnership with THCVS. VCTH was also part of a consortium of equalities-led organisations, which received Cornerstone Fund money to develop an Equalities Impact Assessment project for the borough.

National and Regional Strategic Bodies

We remained a member of two strategic volunteering bodies - London Plus, and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). Our Training and Best Practice Manager attended monthly NCVO Volunteering Infrastructure Briefings to keep abreast of policy developments and changes in the volunteering landscape nationally.

In October 2021 we attended NCVO's National Volunteering Forum; "Voluntary Action during the Pandemic: Lessons for the Future". Our Chief Executive attended quarterly London Plus Volunteer Centre Network meetings, engaging with staff in other London Volunteer Centres to share challenges and successes of facilitating volunteering in the Capital, and identify opportunities for joint working across the region.

In summer 2022 the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP), led by the British Red Cross, invited Volunteer Centres to come together to consider the role that volunteers can play in responding to emergencies such as natural disasters. This is an emerging area of work, and we hope that funding may follow for Volunteer Centres to recruit, train and support local, culturally appropriate volunteers who can be deployed to respond to emergencies at borough-level.

6. Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF)

VCTH facilitated the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF) for a 14th successive year. The Forum was funded under a contract awarded by Tower Hamlets Council's Children's Services and Culture Directorate for 2 years until March 2023.

The Forum is a conduit between voluntary and community sector organisations that provide services to children, young people and their families, and Tower Hamlets Council and other statutory partners. VCTH employs a part-time Co-ordinator, who liaises with all parties to ensure effective information sharing and communication.

The Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum met 5 times during 2021-2022 (once more than in 2020-2021), with average attendance of 16 organisations per meeting. All meetings were held on Zoom, and covered a variety of subjects, including:

- funding, commissioning and grants
- partnership working
- poverty
- safeguarding and Early Help
- mental health
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) provision
- holiday hunger
- working with schools
- play in Tower Hamlets
- adolescence, youth services and youth justice services
- supporting refugee families in Tower Hamlets
- Tower Hamlets and North East London developments and strategies

Forum meetings included valuable briefing sessions from senior staff from LBTH Children's Services and Culture Directorate.

12 new organisations joined the Forum during the year, bringing the total VSCYF membership to 285 organisations – a net increase of 6 from the previous year. The total number of voluntary sector professionals on our database stood at 369 – a net decrease of 16 individuals on 2020-2021.

We produced quarterly VSCYF e-bulletins, covering Forum and Tower Hamlets news, funding and training opportunities, and events for children, young people or organisations that support them.

Facilitating voluntary sector representation continued to be a key focus of the VSCYF Coordinator's work. Two voluntary sector representatives and the Chair met regularly to ensure good representation for all VSCYF members.

The VSCYF Co-ordinator also delivered practical services for Forum members. She assisted 8 member organisations with funding applications, or helped them decide whether to apply. In addition, she supported 5 organisations with reviewing and developing their safeguarding policies and procedures.

During the year, we organised 3 training workshops for VSCYF members on;

- Developing Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Identifying Realistic Outcomes and Targets for Funding Applications and Tenders
- Online Safety, What Can We Do?

Average trainee numbers (4 per workshop) were similar to those in the previous year. A total of 13 unique trainees attended from 11 different organisations.

7. Consultancy Work, Income Generation and Other Projects

Consultancy work and short-term projects enabled VCTH staff to use their expertise, while helping diversify our funding base and generate unrestricted reserves.

Ocean Women's Association

This year, we continued to support Ocean Women's Association on a consultancy basis with identifying potential funders and writing fundraising applications to ensure sufficient funding for their programmes delivered by volunteers. We were also commissioned by Spitalfields City Farm to support them from October 2022 with overhauling their volunteer programme.

Everyone's Business

Between 1 October 21 and 31 March 2022 we continued to work with East London Business Alliance (ELBA) to support a network of grassroots organisations working to prevent or respond to Serious Youth Violence. The project - Everyone's Business - was funded through the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's (MOPAC) Violence Reduction Unit. It aimed to explore the impact of business support, provided by corporate volunteers, on strengthening small organisations' capacity to support children and young people at risk of serious youth violence across 4 East London boroughs – Tower Hamlets, Newham, Waltham Forest, and Barking & Dagenham.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Our VSCYF Coordinator convened 9 grassroots organisations working in Tower Hamlets in the field of serious youth violence, to form the Tower Hamlets Everyone's Business Network. We facilitated 3 network meetings between October 2021 and March 2022, which focused on making connections within Tower Hamlets, including with the police. Colleagues from the Police's Youth Engagement Team attended one of the meetings.

Training sessions were arranged for Everyone's Business members, including Writing Outcomes for Funding Applications. Members took up opportunities for 1:1 mentoring support from corporate volunteers, and for fundraising support from Directory of Social Change.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

Working in partnership with LBTH's Tackling Poverty Team, we delivered an Introduction to Volunteer Management training session in June 2022 for 7 organisations funded through the HAF programme. The training provided an overview of good practice in managing volunteers (developing meaningful volunteer roles, identifying and mitigating risks, safeguarding, induction and training, supporting and supervising volunteers, reward and recognition).

Other Income

To support local organisations during the pandemic we continued to provide training and peer learning sessions completely free-of-charge. However, we charged small fees for organisations based outside Tower Hamlets, and levied non-attendance fees for places booked but not taken up.

We continued to receive small but welcome donations from the public via the Paypal button on our website.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Thank You

To our staff

The trustees wish to extend our sincere thanks to the staff team. The Tower Hamlets community was disproportionately impacted by the COVID pandemic, and we recognise that this created significant pressure and demands on the team. We are proud of their resilience and relentless determination to meet additional needs. Their skills, experience and flexibility have ensured that volunteering was at the heart of helping our community recover from the pandemic. Our thanks go to:

- Catherine Bavage, Chief Executive
- Zahanar Begum, Administrator & Brokerage Advisor
- Alex Nelson, Voluntary Sector Children & Youth Forum Co-ordinator
- Evelyn Rodrigues, Training & Best Practice Manager
- Krithika Kalpathi Subramanian, Volunteering Advisor

A special thank you is extended to Peppe Rella, who left VCTH in February 2022 after 14 years. Peppe was our Marketing and Communications Officer and was one of VCTH's first members of staff. We are pleased to have retained his services as a freelancer in 2022-2023.

To retired trustees

A special thank you to Alison White, who retired from VCTH's Board of Trustees in January 2022 after 3 years' service. When Alison joined us, she was a Tower Hamlets resident, working for a local Housing Provider. Alison is a passionate advocate for volunteering and how it transforms lives, having been volunteered throughout her own life, predominantly in the advice sector. We will miss her diligence, thoughtfulness and calm presence on our Board.

To our funders

We are extremely grateful for the money and confidence that our funders have invested in Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets. During 2021-2022 they were:

- London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- East London Business Alliance (MOPAC Violence Reduction Unit)
- City Bridge Trust (Cornerstone Fund)

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

The staff and trustee team came together in December 2022, for a strategic planning Away Day, using this time to review the context in which VCTH is working. We looked at the services we provide and how they are funded, as well as the picture of volunteering locally and nationally.

Using a SWOT approach, we identified three hot topics for further discussion, including the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, volunteer demographics and under-representation, and potential future funding. We considered services that we would like to maintain or introduce to address unmet needs. The day culminated in us refreshing our Strategic Priorities for 2023:

1. **Prioritise fundraising and diversify income sources to ensure VCTH's financial stability and sustainability.**
- Agree a new Funding Strategy, identifying potential funders and a timeline for bids
- Secure continuation funding for the VSCYF project via a contract extension through tendering
- Submit bids to replace funding for our Infrastructure and Volunteer Hub work
- Secure at least one source of non-council funding to diversify income streams.

2. **Target Tower Hamlets communities, identified as under-represented as service users, to encourage and drive up participation in volunteering.**
- Focus more outreach and engagement activities, such as presentations, stalls, and job fairs, towards the Bangladeshi community and young people (age 16+).

3. **Monitor, evaluate and adapt our services to ensure they are accessible to, and inclusive of, the diverse communities we serve.**
- Encourage more volunteers to disclose their personal data, when registering with VCTH, so that we have a clearer picture of service users
- Support organisations to involve diverse volunteers via our Peer Learning, training and best practice advice
- Work with a broad range of referral agencies serving minoritised/marginalised communities.

4. **Respond to the cost-of-living crisis.**
- Support local Warm Hubs and projects that tackle food and fuel poverty by recruiting volunteers for them
- Run a campaign for organisations, encouraging them to reimburse volunteer expenses and helping them identify sources of funding for volunteer expenses.

5. **Build relationships with key stakeholders and increase our visibility.**
- Work with a range of key organisations and decision-makers to build the case for supporting local volunteering
- Continue to work in close partnership with Tower Hamlet CVS to deliver infrastructure and capacity building services
- Increase our profile by being more present/visible in the community (eg Family Hubs, Residents' Hubs, and local events).

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

In 2023-2024 we intend to:

- Retain our office-free working model, channelling more funding into service provision, and minimising our organisation's environmental impact.

- Maintain regular team get togethers and engage with more in-person activities – meetings, peer learning, presentations and attendance at events – while continuing effective online delivery.

- Update our Strategic Plan.

- Submit a range of funding applications to ensure sufficient long-term income is secured for 2023-2024, and beyond, that will sustain services and diversify our funding mix to minimise risk.

- Offer volunteering solutions to the most pressing issues in our community, such as responding to poverty made worse by the ongoing cost-of-living emergency, and the refugee crisis.

- Engage with the wider volunteering sector and statutory bodies on the role that volunteers can play in emergency responses.

- Continue to review the demographics of volunteers registering with VCTH and develop strategies and programmes for increasing participation among under-represented communities.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

VCTH started the year with a budget that projected a deficit of £19,285. We exceeded our in-year fundraising target and ended the year with a small surplus of £4,804.

Net current assets (working capital) held at 30 September 2022 amounted to £50,189 (up from £45,385 at 30 September 2021).

Reserves Policy

At the end of the charity's fourteenth operational year at 30 September 2022, our total reserves had increased by 10.6% from £45,385 to £50,189. Of these reserves, £49,439 (98.5%) was unrestricted and £750 was restricted funds.

In the previous year trustees had established a sub-group of the Board, led by the Treasurer, to review our Reserves Policy. The group conducted comprehensive research on approaches to reserves in similar-sized charities, as well as reviewing best practice guidance from the Charity Commission and NCVO.

The sub-group identified growing redundancy liabilities associated with long-serving staff, and the need to include the cost of consultation and notice periods in the event of redundancies, as VCTH's major liability. It proposed that our approach to reserves should change.

A new Reserves Policy was agreed at a Board meeting on 12 October 2021. This states that trustees will aim to maintain free reserves at a level which covers at least three months' running costs, but does not exceed that level plus the redundancy obligations the charity would have in the event of a wind up. The trustees agree this level is the most prudent and would enable to charity to continue to operate in the event of an emergency, or a sudden cut to funding. Trustees acknowledge that this level of reserves may be aspirational in a challenging funding environment. They agreed that while VCTH should strive to maintain this level of reserves, this should not be achieved at the detriment of VCTH's core values and long-term viability.

On completion of the annual budget, trustees and the Chief Executive will identify the target range for free reserves. VCTH trustees will monitor the level of reserves regularly. The main mechanism for monitoring will be scrutiny of management accounts and cash flows presented quarterly at trustee board meetings, along with an updated redundancy calculator that tracks our redundancy liabilities. This will ensure that trustees are aware of any build-up of excess reserves, or of reserves being depleted unexpectedly or rapidly. The Reserves Policy will be reviewed bi-annually (every 2 years), and whenever there is a significant change in VCTH's liabilities. The next review is due in October 2023.

VCTH's target reserves range, as of June 2023, is between £43,949 and £81,343. The lower target is based on 3 months' running costs, as per our 2022-2023 budget. The higher target includes 3 months' running costs, plus total redundancy costs for 5 staff at 30 September 2023 (calculated at £37,394). At 1 April 2023, VCTH had reserves of £49,993, within our target reserves range.

Looking Ahead

Trustees recognise the significant financial challenges facing the charity in 2023 and have already taken steps to minimise expenditure and make cost savings. Two of our funding streams are due to end between March and October 2023. Three large multi-year funding applications have already been submitted, totalling £501,458 over the next 3.5 years, along with a further small funding application for a 4-month project in late 2023 worth just under £10,000. Decisions on all of these applications are expected in July and August 2023. The timing of these decisions presents a challenge. However trustees have reasonable confidence that most of these applications will be successful. Trustees are mindful of their obligations to ensure that VCTH remains solvent. They are meeting more regularly, keeping a watchful eye on the funding situation, and scenario planning. They will consider all options, including making cuts to staffing, should this become necessary.

Trustees' Responsibilities Statement

The trustees (who are also Directors of VCTH for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose, with reasonable accuracy, at any time, the financial position of the charitable company, and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware;
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Auditors

In 2022 the trustees re-appointed Myrus Smith Chartered Accountants as the charitable company's auditors.

This report has been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective January 2019) and in accordance with the special provisions relating to companies subject to the small companies regime within part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 20 June 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Karin Maschler

.....

Karin Maschler, Chair and Trustee

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 30 September 2022 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 30 September 2021, and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the charitable company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets .../Cont'd

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Report of the Trustees, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report (incorporating the directors' report) for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies' regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets .../Cont'd

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement (set out on page 28), the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Stephen Jones FCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Myrus Smith
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors
Norman House
8 Burnell Road
Sutton, Surrey
SM1 4BW

20 June 2023

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Statement of Financial Activities
(including Income and Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 30 September 2022

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Income from:					
Charitable activities	2	106,041	81,000	187,041	193,267
Total Income		**106,041**	**81,000**	**187,041**	**193,267**
Expenditure on:					
Charitable expenditure	3	98,691	83,546	182,237	210,010
Total Expenditure		**98,691**	**83,546**	**182,237**	**210,010**
Net income/(expenditure)	7	**7,350**	**(2,546)**	**4,804**	**(16,743)**
Transfers between funds	12	(1,046)	1,046	-	-
Net movement in funds		**6,304**	**(1,500)**	**4,804**	**(16,743)**
Funds brought forward	12	43,135	2,250	45,385	62,128
Total funds carried forward	12	**£49,439**	**£750**	**£50,189**	**£45,385**

All income and expenditure is derived from continuing activities.

The SOFA includes all gains and losses recognised during the year.

The notes form part of these accounts.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Balance Sheet
As at 30 September 2022

	Notes	2022 £	2021 £
Current assets			
Debtors	9	2,889	19,591
Cash at Bank		79,349	53,549
		82,238	73,140
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	10	(32,049)	(27,755)
Net current assets		**50,189**	**45,385**
Net assets	11	**£50,189**	**£45,385**
Funds:			
Unrestricted funds			
- General fund	12	49,439	43,135
Restricted Funds	12	750	2,250
Total funds	12	**£50,189**	**£45,385**

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to small companies within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the directors and trustees on 20 June 2023 and signed on their behalf:

.....

Leo Zawadzki
Treasurer and Trustee

The notes form part of these accounts.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2022

1. Accounting policies

General information and basis of preparation
Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets is a private company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is given in the "Reference and Administrative Information" on page 2 of these financial statements.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention. The financial statements are presented in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity.

The significant accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all years presented unless otherwise stated.

Income recognition

Items of income are recognised in the financial statements when all of the following criteria are met:

- The charity has entitlement to the funds;
- any performance conditions have been met or are fully within the control of the charity;
- there is sufficient certainty that receipt of the income is considered probable; and
- the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from performance related grants and contracts is recognised as the charity earns the right to consideration through delivery of the specified services.

Expenditure recognition

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount can be measured reliably. Expenditure includes all irrecoverable VAT which is included as part of the relevant cost.

Expenditure on charitable activities comprises those costs associated with the delivery of the various activities and services for the charity's beneficiaries.

Expenditure includes those costs of a direct nature which can be allocated to a specific activity and also includes indirect costs, including governance costs that do not relate to a specific activity but are necessary to support those activities. Support costs are apportioned to each activity on the basis of staff time.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2022

1. **Accounting policies**/contd...

Fund accounting

Unrestricted general funds are freely available for use in furtherance of the objects of the charity and which have not been designated for specific purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds set aside by the trustees for particular purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which can only be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor or which have been raised for a particular purpose.

Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible assets costing more than £1,500 are capitalised and are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation.

Leases

Operating lease rentals are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

Pensions

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charity's pension scheme are charged in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year to which they relate. The charity has no liability under these schemes other than for the payment of those contributions.

Debtors and creditors

Debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and which are receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised in expenditure.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2022

2. Income from Charitable activities

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	2022 £	2021 £
LB Tower Hamlets:				
Voluntary Sector Children & Youth Forum (Third Sector Co-ordinator)	42,492	-	42,492	41,240
Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant	-	81,000	81,000	63,000
COVID 19 Volunteering Hub	50,000	-	50,000	49,520
Holiday Activities and Food Programme	500	-	500	1,000
Total LB Tower Hamlets	**92,992**	**81,000**	**173,992**	**154,760**
London Plus (Greater London Volunteering)	-	-	-	750
City Bridge Trust Cornerstone Fund	-	-	-	3,000
East London Business Alliance (MOPAC)	10,000	-	10,000	22,000
Tower Hamlets GP Care Group	-	-	-	6,000
Other Consultancy Income	2,625	-	2,625	118
Training and Other Income	424	-	424	6,639
Total	**£106,041**	**£81,000**	**£187,041**	**£193,267**

Section 37 Statement: During the period, the grants receivable from LB Tower Hamlets were expended on various projects for the purposes for which they were given.

Of the LB Tower Hamlets income of £154,760 recognised in 2021, £91,760 related to unrestricted funds and £63,000 to restricted funds.

The remainder of the charitable activities income of £38,507 recognised in 2021 related to unrestricted funds of £34,757 and restricted funds of £3,750.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2022

3. Cost of charitable activities

	Direct Costs	Support Costs	Total 2022	Total 2021
Volunteering services	£167,291	£14,946	£182,237	£210,010

Of the £182,237 (2021 - £210,010) expenditure recognised in 2022, £98,691 (2021 - £133,759) was charged to unrestricted funds and £83,546 (2021 - £76,251) was charged to restricted funds.

4. Analysis of direct costs

	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Wages and salaries	162,188	177,632
Activity costs	3,990	180
Staff and volunteer training and recruitment	993	444
Travel costs	116	201
Volunteer expenses	4	45
	£167,291	£178,502

5. Analysis of support costs

	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Office costs	4,933	4,579
Premises costs	-	17,826
IT support	3,165	2,261
Computer and website costs	667	555
Other costs	1,221	1,148
Governance costs (note 6)	4,960	5,139
	£14,946	£31,508

6. Governance costs

	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Audit and accountancy fees	1,680	1,722
Accountancy fees	3,250	3,273
AGM/Annual review	-	-
Trustee meetings and training	30	144
	£4,960	£5,139

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2022

7. Net income/(expenditure)

The net income/(expenditure) for the year is stated after charging:

	2022	2021
Auditors' remuneration – Audit	£1,950	£2,220
Operating lease rentals	£Nil	£12,312

8. Staff costs

	2022 £	2021 £
Wages and salaries	147,711	161,387
Social Security costs	8,845	10,948
Pension Costs	5,632	5,297
	£162,188	**£177,632**

No employee received total employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) of more than £60,000 in either year.

The total employee benefits received by Key Management amounted to £55,107 (2021: £52,344). Under FRS 102, employee benefits include gross salary, employer's NIC, employer's pension contributions and benefits in kind.

The average number of employees during the period, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents was 3.7 (2021: 4.2). The average monthly number of employees was 5.5 (2021: 6).

9. Debtors

Due within one year	2022 £	2021 £
Prepayments	389	3,497
Other Debtors	2,500	16,094
	£2,889	**£19,591**

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2022

10. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year:	2022 £	2021 £
Deferred income	23,930	21,305
Accruals	8,119	6,450
	£32,049	**£27,755**

All of the £21,305 deferred income brought forward from 30 September 2021 was released to income in the year ended 30 September 2022. Deferred income relates to funding received but for which the performance conditions will be met in the next accounting period.

11. Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Current assets	81,488	750	82,238
Current liabilities	(32,049)	-	(32,049)
At 30 September 2022	**£49,439**	**£750**	**£50,189**

Comparative information for the analysis of net assets between funds is as follows:

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Current assets	70,890	2,250	73,140
Current liabilities	(27,755)	-	(27,755)
At 30 September 2021	**£43,135**	**£2,250**	**£45,385**

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2022

12. Movement in funds

Restricted Funds	At 1 Oct 2021 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers between funds £	At 30 Sept 2022 £
LBTH - Infrastructure	-	81,000	(82,046)	1,046	-
Cornerstone	1,500	-	(1,500)	-	-
London Plus – laptops	750	-	-	-	750
Total restricted funds	**2,250**	**81,000**	**(83,546)**	**1,046**	**750**
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	43,135	106,041	(98,691)	(1,046)	49,439
Total unrestricted funds	**43,135**	**106,041**	**(98,691)**	**-**	**49,439**
Total funds	**£45,385**	**£187,041**	**£(182,237)**	**£Nil**	**£50,189**

A description of each restricted fund is given in the Trustees Annual Report, where relevant .

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2022

12. Movement in funds.../cont'd

Comparative information for the net movement in funds is as follows:

Restricted Funds	At 1 Oct 2020 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers between funds £	At 30 Sept 2021 £
LBTH - Infrastructure	-	63,000	(63,395)	395	-
Cornerstone	-	3,000	(1,500)	-	1,500
London Plus – laptops	-	750	-	-	750
CBT/LF – Covid 19	1,280	-	(1,365)	85	-
National Lottery – A4A	9,991	-	(9,991)	-	-
Total restricted funds	**11,271**	**66,750**	**(76,251)**	**480**	**2,250**
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	50,857	126,517	(133,759)	(480)	43,135
Total unrestricted funds	**50,857**	**126,517**	**(133,759)**	**(480)**	**43,135**
Total funds	**£62,128**	**£193,267**	**£(210,010)**	**£Nil**	**£45,385**

13. Taxation

As a registered charity, Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets is not liable to tax on its charitable activities.

14. Related Party Transactions

Trustee meeting refreshments and training costs amounting to £30 (2021: £144) were paid on behalf of 6 (2021 : 6) trustees.

The trustees received no remuneration in 2022 or 2021.

There were no other related party transactions in 2022 or 2021.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

England & Wales - Charity number 1127300

Accounts

Volunteer Centre
Tower Hamlets

Report of the Trustees and Accounts
For the period from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021

Company no. 6638750 (England & Wales)
Charity no. 1127300

Myrus Smith
Chartered Accountants
Norman House
8 Burnell Road
Sutton
Surrey
SM1 4BW

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

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VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 30 September 2021

The Trustees present their report and audited financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2021.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Charity Name:	Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets
Charity Registration Number:	1127300
Company Registration Number:	6638750
Registered Office:	Norvin House 45-55 Commercial Street London E1 6BD
Trustees:	Alice Sims, **Chair** until 26 Aug 2021 Karin Maschler, **Chair** from 27 Aug 2021 Patrick McKenna, **Treasurer** until 11 Aug 2021 (retired 12 Oct 2021) Leo Zawadzki, **Treasurer** from 12 Aug 2021 (appointed 11 May 2021) Megan Cowley (appointed 11 May 2021) Safia Jama (appointed 1 Oct 2020) Sabiha Khanam (appointed 1 Oct 2020) Alison White
Senior Management:	Ms Catherine Bavage, Chief Executive
Auditors:	Myrus Smith Chartered Accountants Norman House 8 Burnell Road Sutton Surrey SM1 4BW
Bankers:	The Co-operative Bank PLC PO Box 250 Delf House Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Period of Account
The period of account is from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021.

Governing Document
The organisation is a charitable company, limited by guarantee, incorporated on 4 July 2008, and registered as a charity on 29 December 2008.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company, and is governed under those Articles.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees
The process for appointing the charity's trustees is set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. As VCTH is a charitable company, trustees also act as company directors. The minimum number of trustees is three, with no maximum.

One third of trustees must retire (but may stand for re-election) each year. Trustees are appointed annually, for a maximum of seven consecutive years, at which point they must retire. Trustees who have served seven years are eligible for re-election, but only one year after the date of their retirement. Trustees may only hold the same Honorary Officer role for a maximum of five years.

The Board of Trustees may appoint any person willing and fit to act as a trustee and director, subject to the provisions of the Articles of Association.

The charity conducts regular skills, experience and diversity audits of trustees. These audits identify gaps in skills, or under-representation of particular groups or communities, and are fundamental to the recruitment process. Vacancies are advertised widely and potential trustees are invited to complete an application form, outlining their relevant skills and experience. Shortlisted applicants meet with a selection panel, comprising the Chair of Trustees, one other trustee and the Chief Executive. If successful at interview, applicants are invited to observe a Board meeting and meet other existing trustees. If all parties agree to proceed, the applicant is either co-opted or nominated for election at the next AGM.

Trustee Induction and Training
Trustees are provided with a role description, outlining their statutory and additional governance responsibilities. On joining the Board, trustees are introduced to other Board members and paid staff, and provided with a comprehensive induction. Trustees are expected to attend bi-monthly Board meetings and an annual Away Day. They are asked to acquaint themselves with VCTH's policies and procedures, strategic plans, budgets, and governing document. Trustees are prompted to take up relevant learning and development opportunities to help them fulfil their role and responsibilities to VCTH throughout their term of office.

Risk Management

Our Risk Register identifies risks and their potential impact in 5 areas: governance, operational, financial, environmental/external, and compliance. It describes the steps needed to mitigate risks. The trustees have considered all the major risks to which the charity is exposed and are satisfied that systems or procedures are established to mitigate those risks. Trustees agreed to carry out a comprehensive review of the Risk Register in 2022-2023, and this has since been carried out in early 2022. An Action Plan to further mitigate risks has also been developed and implemented.

The charity has numerous policies and procedures that trustees, staff and volunteers must observe. During the year trustees asked Bright HR, our HR support service, to conduct a review of 16 employment-related policies to ensure legal compliance. As a result, 5 policies and procedures were updated in November 2020: Problem Solving Procedure for Volunteers, Handling Allegations Procedure, Working Hours Policy, Volunteer Policy, and the Redundancy & Redeployment Policy. Trustees began a review of the Reserves Policy, which concluded in October 2021.

To ensure that VCTH implements best practice as employers we maintained our contract with Bright HR, who provide the trustees and Chief Executive with employment advice. We purchased and launched Bright HR's Employee Assistance Programme, giving our staff and volunteers access to a range of health and wellbeing support, including a 24-hour helpline, one-to-one counselling sessions and online resources.

Throughout the year (months 8 to 20 of the COVID pandemic) all staff continued to work from home for their own and our clients' protection. Staff were provided with the necessary equipment and paid Working At Home Allowances, in line with HMRC guidance. In April 2021, trustees decided not to renew the office lease, which was due to expire. This decision prioritises our commitment to sustaining services and staffing over fixed accommodation costs. It will enable the charity to make considerable savings on core costs in 2022, and adopt a more climate-friendly model. We anticipate remaining office-free for the foreseeable future.

We continued to use the professional services of Adrian Hull as our management accountant, and Creative Payroll Services for our payroll needs. In October 2020 we migrated our accounts to an updated version of QuickBooks Online Plus, to provide a better fit with remote working and minimise paper usage and storage.

A comprehensive CaSE Charity insurance policy was in place throughout the year covering; employer's liability (£10m), public liability (£5m), products liability (£5m), business interruption, executive risks including trustee indemnity and directors' liability, professional indemnity, cyber loss recovery, fidelity guarantee, property and business equipment, money and personal accident assault, group personal accident, goods in transit, and legal expenses. This year we also purchased commercial legal expenses insurance through Bright HR to indemnify VCTH against legal costs and compensatory awards associated with employment disputes.

Between 1 November 2020 and 14 June 2021 VCTH made use of the Government's Job Retention Scheme to furlough one member of staff. VCTH supplemented the Job

Retention Scheme allowance of 80% of salary with a further 20% to ensure that our furloughed worker received full pay throughout.

All trustees were encouraged to take up training opportunities to enable them to discharge their governance duties. During 2020-2021, six trustees completed an online "Roles and Duties of Trustees" course with the Foundation for Social Improvement. Robust succession planning was in place, with the outgoing Chair and Treasurer providing thorough, timely handovers and guidance to their incoming successors.

VCTH has a Conflict of Interest Policy. All trustees and staff are required to declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. In January 2021 all trustees updated their declarations. These are kept under review at Board meetings.

In recognition of our limited reserves, we negotiated advance funding with funders, wherever possible. This arrangement ensured positive cash flow throughout the year.

The ongoing pandemic created unprecedented fundraising challenges. Charities fought to secure sufficient funds to respond to the urgent needs in their communities. The demand for volunteers and for support from volunteering infrastructure remained high. Although VCTH was successful in securing new funding, our income fell by 17% from to £233,200 in 2019-2020 to £193,267 in 2020-2021, although this was still higher than our pre-pandemic income of £184,115 in 2018-2019.

We took our commitment to protecting individuals' personal data seriously. During the year, the Volunteer Centre re-registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. Staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities not to disclose the personal or sensitive data of our service users.

Only suitably qualified and experienced staff are recruited to work at VCTH. Ongoing professional development for staff is essential for retention, ensures that skills and knowledge are updated, and reduces our exposure to risk. In 2020-2021, we re-introduced personal training budgets, enabling staff to take up learning and development opportunities in areas such as project management, training facilitation, presentation skills and use of IT software.

Organisational Structure

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets has a Board of Trustees, which meets bi-monthly, and is responsible for the strategic direction and governance of the charity. The charity's Chief Executive attends Board meetings as an advisor, but has no voting rights.

During the year, eight individuals were involved as charity trustees. Two trustees were Tower Hamlets residents, ensuring community involvement and local knowledge within our Board. Four trustees worked for local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, and the other four worked in the private sector.

VCTH appointed four new trustees this year. Safia Jama and Sabiha Khanam joined the Board on 1 October 2020, following a recruitment exercise, which targeted residents and VCS workers, and looked to strengthen and diversify our trustee cohort. We used

ELBA's BoardMatch service to attract trustees with financial skills, and appointed Leo Zawadzki and Megan Cowley to the Board on 27 April 2021.

In August 2021, Alice Sims stood down as Chair, and was succeeded by Karin Maschler, who vacated the role of Vice Chair. After five years as Treasurer, Patrick McKenna retired from the Board in October 2021, and Leo Zawadzki filled this position.

Responsibility for operational management was delegated to the Chief Executive, Catherine Bavage. The Chief Executive is responsible for HR, finance, fundraising, and managing service delivery. She ensures that the charity delivers high quality, responsive services to meet the targets and outcomes set out in grants and contracts.

Staff hours fluctuated throughout the year. Part-time staff who had worked full-time, or who had increased their hours during the height of the pandemic, were able to reduce their hours from November. At 30 September 2021, the charity employed 6 part-time paid staff - 4.2 full-time equivalents. One member of staff was on either parental leave or furlough for the whole year.

The Board of Trustees appoints all staff, including key management personnel, on a grade within the pay scale agreed by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services employees. It awards annual pay rises, set nationally by the NJC, taking into account the charity's financial position. In February 2021 the Board awarded staff the NJC pay rise of 2.75%, backdated to 1 April 2020, and in March 2022 the Board awarded the NJC pay rise of 1.75%, backdated to 1 April 2021.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) is the recognised volunteering infrastructure agency in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Our charity's objects are:

> The promotion of any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community of Tower Hamlets, Greater London, in particular the relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability or other social or economic disadvantage.
>
> The promotion and advancement of voluntary work for charitable purposes for the benefit of the community, predominantly in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, but additionally promotion and advancement of voluntary work sub-regionally, regionally and nationally.

In forming our objectives, the trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard for the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

Mission

Our mission is to provide a comprehensive volunteering infrastructure service to non-profit groups and communities in Tower Hamlets, to increase the quality, quantity and impact of volunteering in the borough.

Core Functions

Our 5 core functions are:

- **Brokerage** – ensuring that the general public and all sectors are better informed about and have access to an effective and efficient brokerage service
- **Good Practice Development** – helping organisations to improve or attain positive consistency in their volunteering programmes
- **Developing Volunteering Opportunities** – increasing and improving the quantity, quality, and diversity of volunteering locally
- **Voice of Volunteering** – creating an increased awareness of issues impacting volunteering
- **Strategic Development of Volunteering** – engagement with local networks and decision-makers to create a positive environment in which volunteering is flourishing.

We also host the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF), supporting voluntary and community sector organisations that provide services to children and young people in Tower Hamlets. Most of these organisations involve volunteers in their work.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets was established in July 2008 as an independent charitable company by a team of four committed volunteers, who became its initial trustee board and founder Chief Executive. The charity marked its thirteenth full operational year on 30 September 2021.

The Volunteer Centre holds Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation (VCQA) - the widely recognised quality mark for volunteering infrastructure organisations, assessed and awarded by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). It demonstrates that we are fit-for-purpose and deliver the five core Volunteer Centre services to a consistently high standard. Ownership of the VCQA quality mark has transferred to NAVCA who have confirmed that our award is valid until July 2023.

1. Volunteer Brokerage

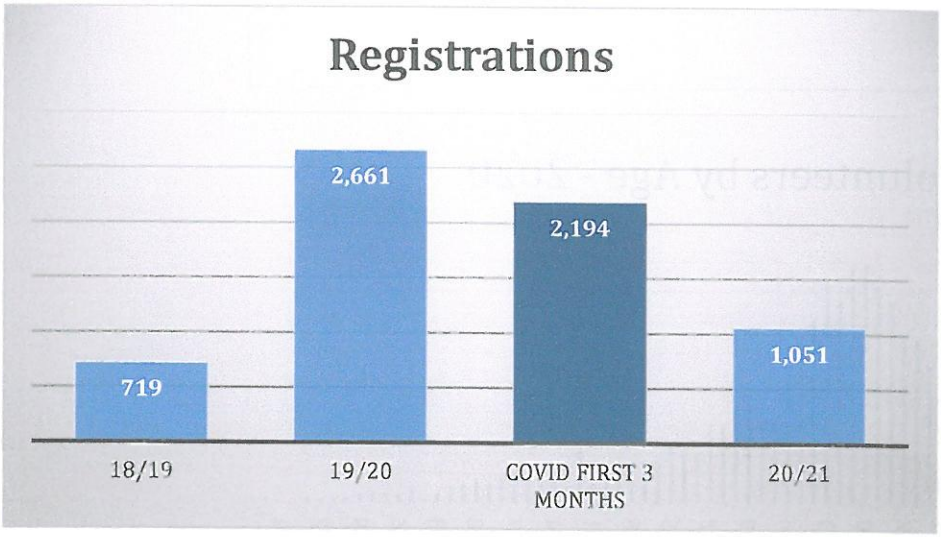
Volunteering brokerage is all about making volunteering happen – linking potential volunteers to not-for-profit organisations that need their help. We continued to provide a brokerage service for people aged 15 and over, providing information about volunteering roles and encouraging applications from people who lived, worked or studied in Tower Hamlets.

Throughout 2020–2021 VCTH continued to run the Tower Hamlets COVID-19 Volunteering Hub, first launched in March 2019, and funded by Tower Hamlets Council. The Hub sourced local volunteers who could respond to the needs in our community created by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. This year we referred volunteers to 81 VCS organisations, as well as public sector bodies

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Volunteer Numbers

Between 1 October 2020 and 30 September 2021, a total of 1,051 new volunteers registered. This was considerably fewer (down 61%) than the unprecedented 2,696 registrations in 2019-2020, which occurred in the emergency phase of the pandemic. However, it is worth noting that the registration numbers in 2020-2021 were 46% higher than those in the pre-pandemic year of 2018-2019, when we registered 719 new volunteers. 1,051 registrations is an average of 88 new volunteers per month.

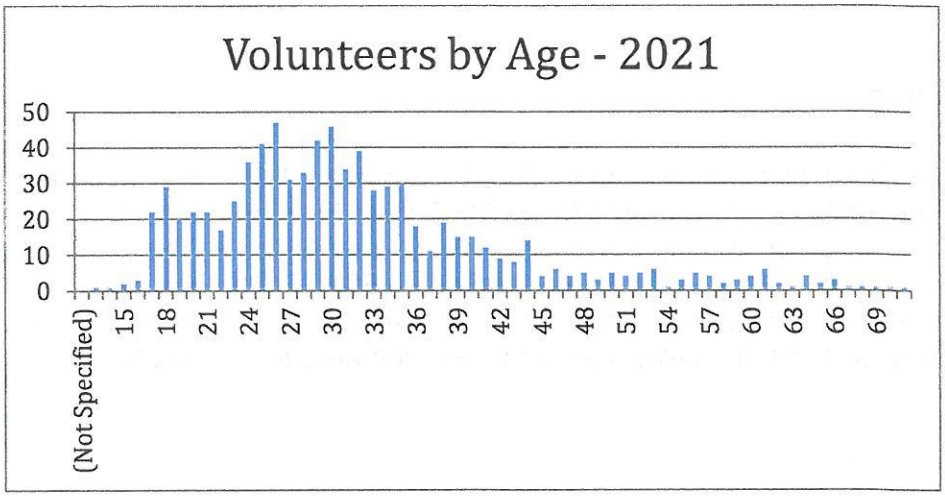


Client Demographics

We aimed to provide an inclusive brokerage service to a wide range of potential volunteers, reflecting the diverse communities in Tower Hamlets. We requested equalities data at the point of registration, but many volunteers elected to withhold some personal information. This means that our data on volunteer demographics is incomplete, but analysis provides a reasonable indication of the people using our services and of shifting patterns.

Age

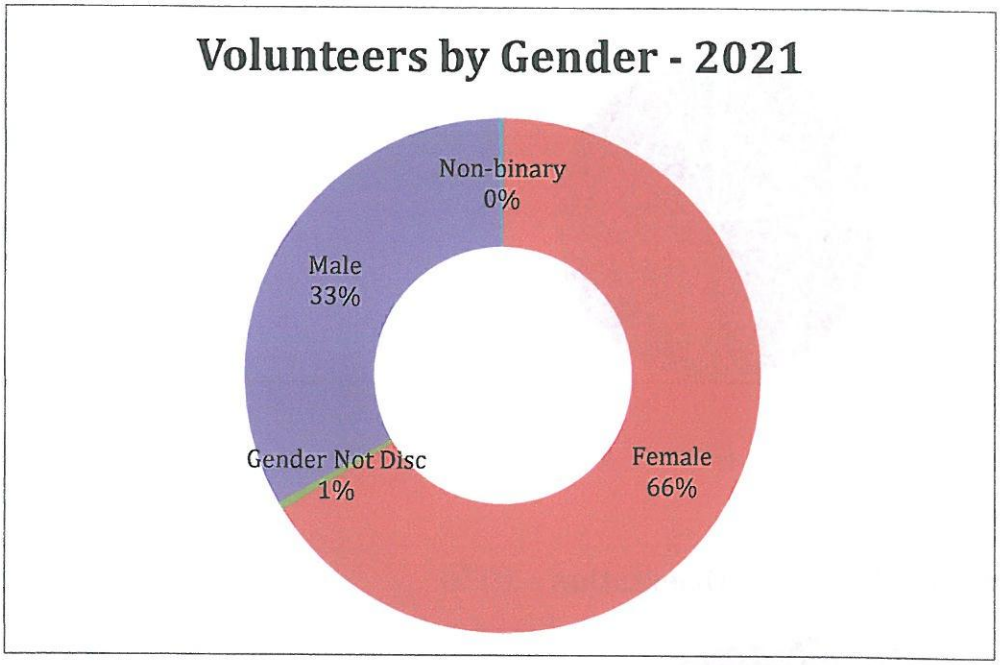
Tower Hamlets has an unusually large younger population, with 46% of residents aged 20 to 39. In terms of volunteer age, the largest groups registering with VCTH were 26 year-olds (47 registrations) and 30 year-olds (46 registrations). In 2019-2020, the largest age groups were 30 and 31 year-olds, so there was a slight downward trend in the age of people registering to volunteer. Two thirds of the volunteers that provided their date of birth in 2020-2021 were 33 or younger. The eldest volunteer that registered was 75, and the youngest 14.

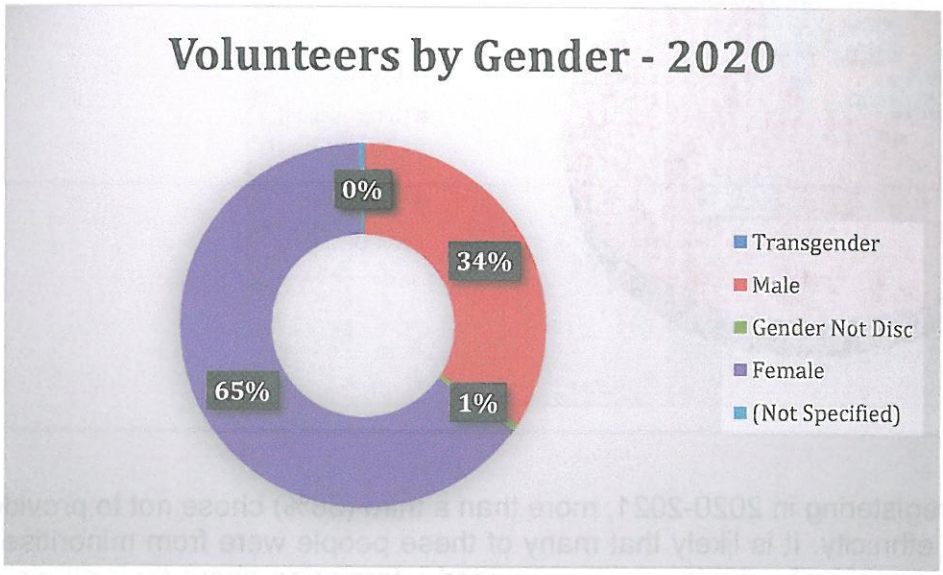




Gender

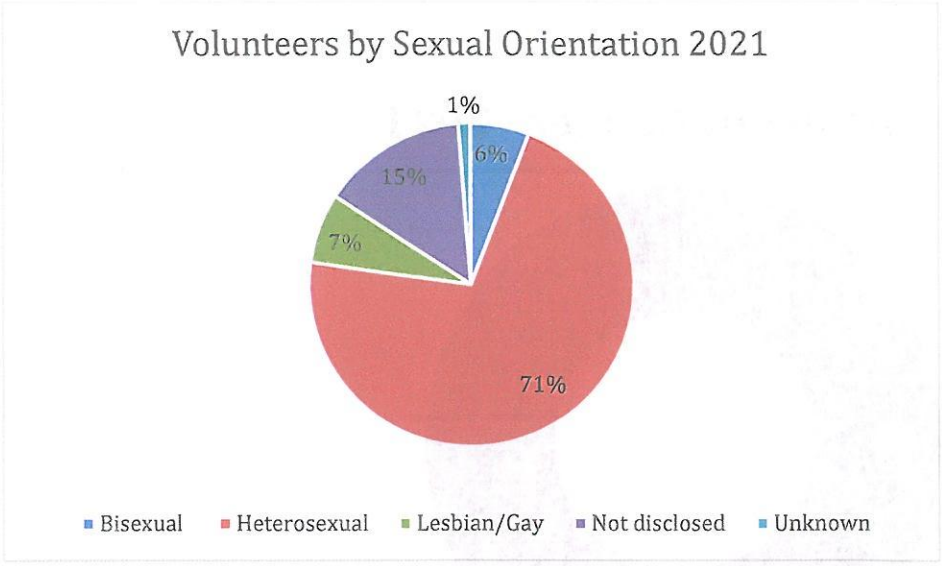
This year, 66% of all volunteers that disclosed their gender defined themselves as female (65% in 2019-2020). Men represented 33% of volunteers registering (34% in 2020-2021) and were therefore considerably under-represented compared to the demographics of Tower Hamlets (ONS estimate 2019: 52% male). As per the previous year, 1% of volunteers chose not to disclose their gender, or defined as non-binary.

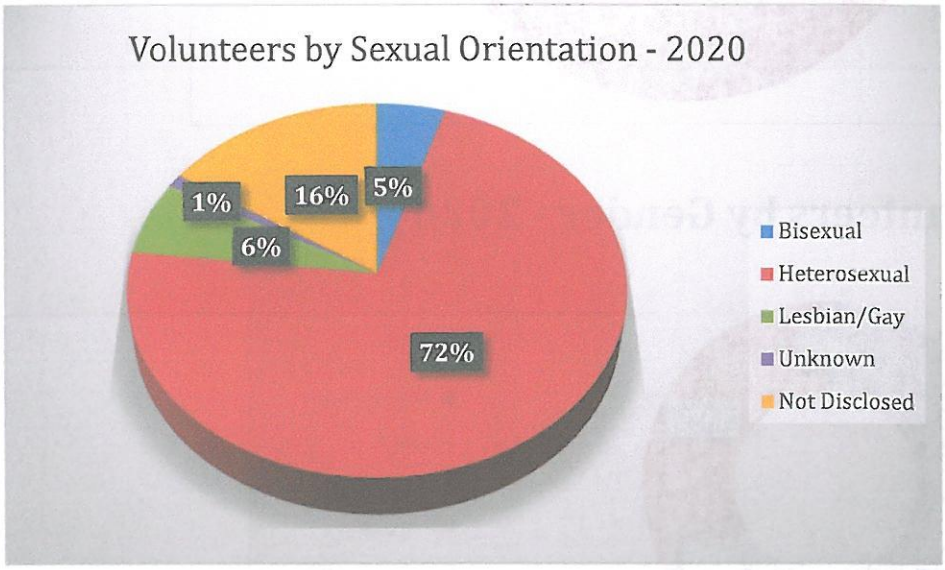




Sexual Orientation

Of the 1,051 volunteer registering, 481 skipped the question about sexual orientation. In terms of volunteers providing data, 83 (15%) chose not to disclose information on their sexuality, while 71% defined as heterosexual. We continued to see a modest, but welcome upward trend in the percentage of volunteers identifying as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual - 13% in 2020-2021 (11% in 2019-2020, and 7% in 2018-2019). The Local Authority's best estimate is that 4.3% of the borough's population defines as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.





Ethnicity

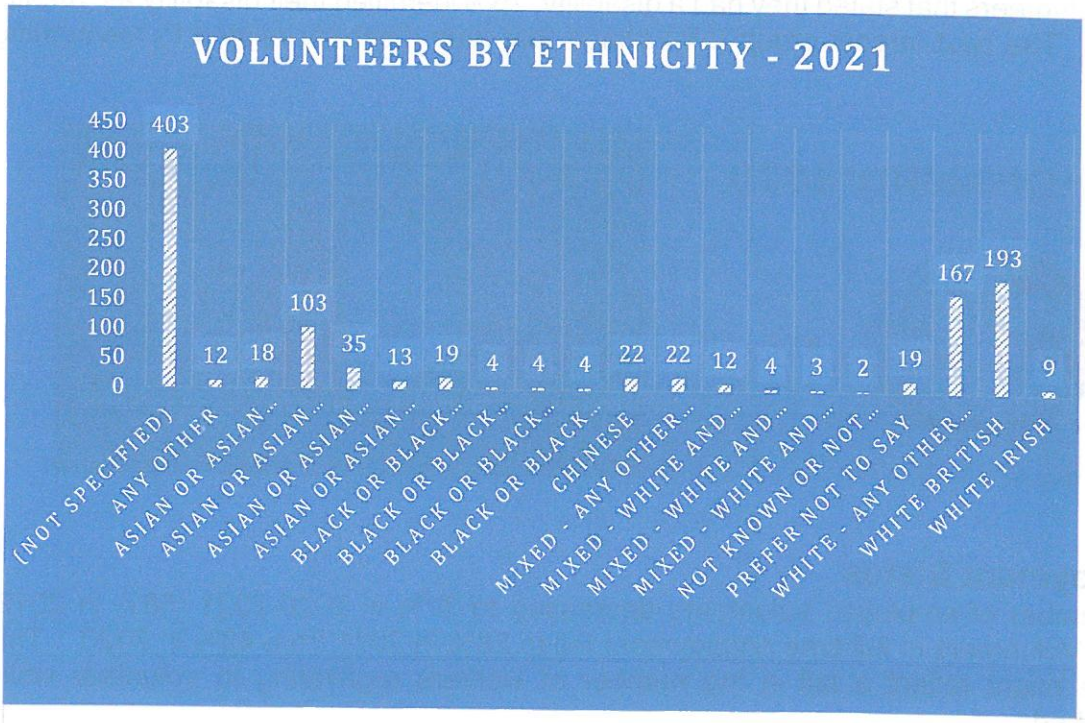
Of all volunteers registering in 2020-2021, more than a third (38%) chose not to provide any data on their ethnicity. It is likely that many of these people were from minoritised ethnic communities. 42% of volunteers who provided information about their ethnicity were from minoritised ethnic communities (other than White British).

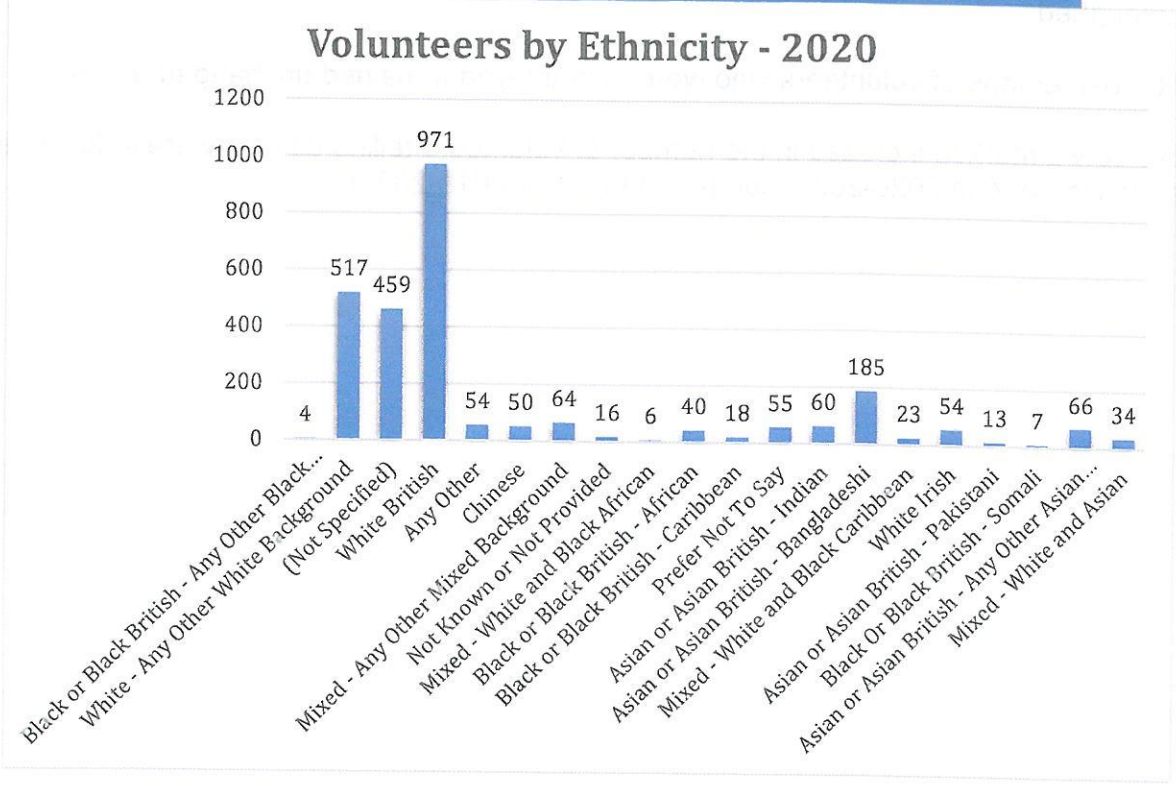
Available Local Authority data suggests that 69% of the population is from a minoritised ethnic community. Around a third of the population (31.2%) is White British and around a third (32%) is Bangladeshi. The White Other population is the next largest group at 12.4%, and the Somali community is estimated to be between 2% and 3% of the population.

The 3 largest ethnic groups of volunteers registering with VCTH were "White British" at 18%, followed by "Other White" at 16.5%, and "Asian /Asian British Bangladeshi" at 10%.

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In the last year, the percentage of White British volunteers halved from 36% in 2019/2020 to 18%, similar to pre-pandemic levels (23% in 2018/19). We saw a 2.5% decline in Other White volunteers (19% in 2019-2020) but this number was still higher than in the pre-pandemic year of 2018-2019 (11%). We began to see an increase in the percentage of Bangladeshi volunteers, up 3% from 2019-2020 (7%), but this was still well below pre-pandemic numbers (25% in 2018-2019).





Disability

This year the number of volunteers that disclosed they had a disability remained unchanged at 5%. This remains lower than in the pre-pandemic year of 2018-2019 (10%). We saw an increase in the number of volunteers prepared to provide information on disability, with the number of people withholding this data reducing from 46% to 31%.

Of all volunteers that stated they had a disability, 25% identified their disability as "mental health". The next largest group (5%) stated that their disability related to "something else".

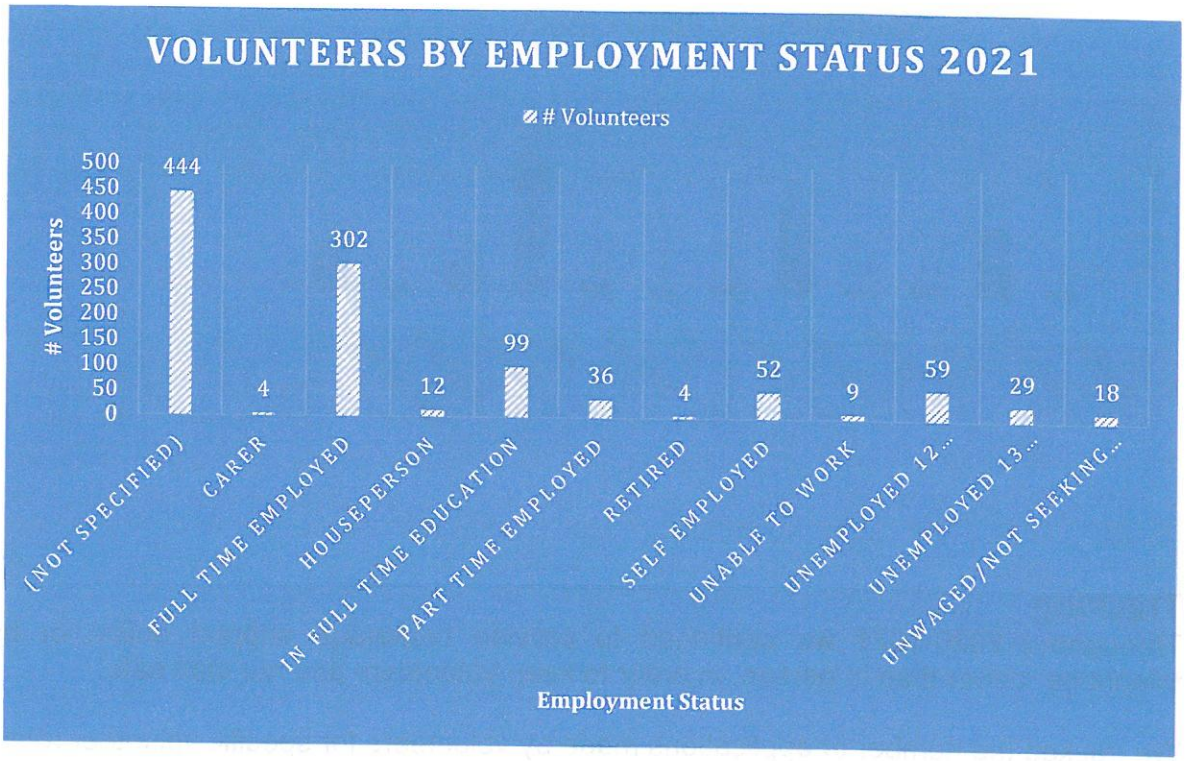


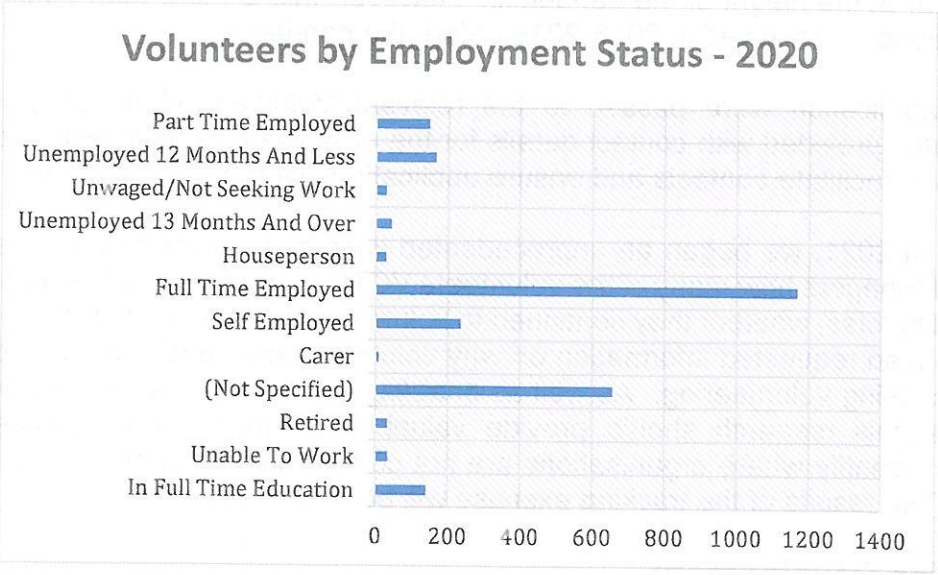
Employment Status

The number of employed volunteers decreased to 37% in 2020-2021 (58% in 2019-2020). Volunteers in full-time employment fell to 28% in 2021 from 43% in 2020. This change might reflect a fall in the number of workers registering to volunteer while furloughed.

The percentage of volunteers who were unemployed remained unchanged at 8%.

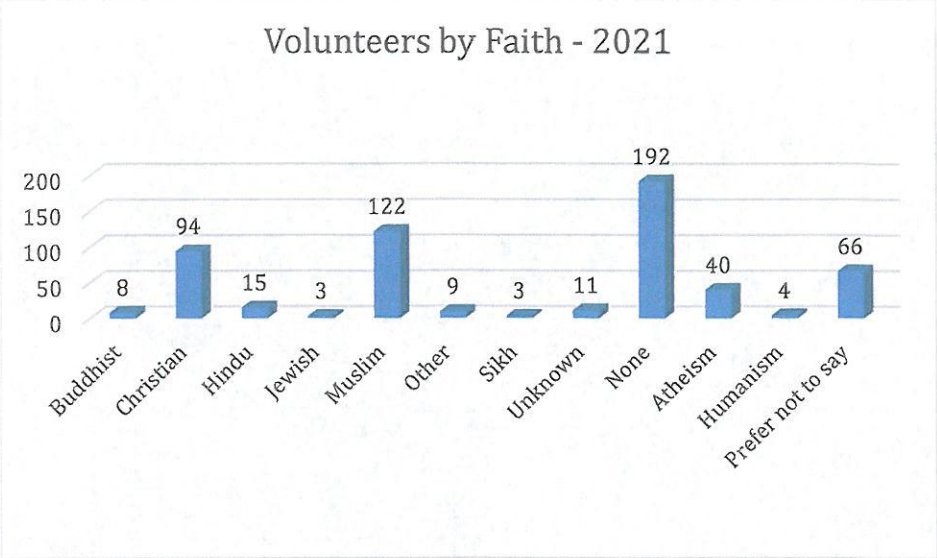
We saw a marked increase in the number of volunteers telling us they were in full-time education (9% in 2020-2021, compared to 5% in 2019-2020).





Faith

Volunteers from all major faiths, and of no religion, used our brokerage service. Of the 567 people who disclosed data about their religion, volunteers of "no faith" were the largest group, followed by Muslims, Christians and those who preferred not to say.



Tracking

Throughout 2020-2021 we continued to provide brokerage support online or by telephone, rather than in person, in order to keep volunteers and our staff safe.

We tracked the number of applications made by volunteers for specific volunteer roles. We received 2,767 applications, which is just 45% of the 6,165 applications we received in the previous year at the height of the pandemic. However, this is more than double the 1,136 applications we received in 2018-2019 before the pandemic.

Details of each application were passed to the relevant Volunteer Manager, and volunteers were also provided with contact details for the organisations they wished to support. This was to facilitate contacts and ensure applications were not overlooked.

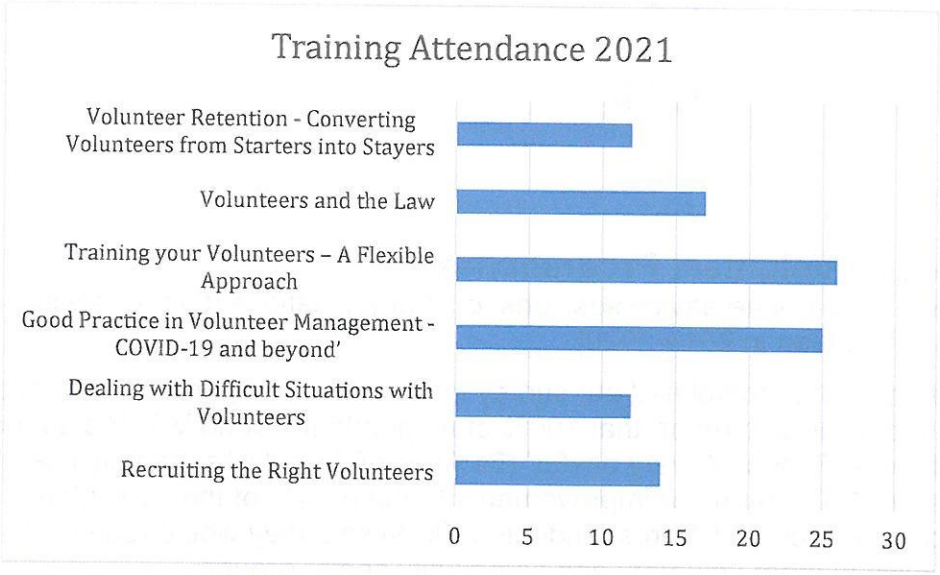
Towards the end of 2021, we began an unprecedented wide scale tracking exercise, asking Volunteer Managers how many of the volunteers VCTH had referred to them had volunteers started in roles, whether they continued to volunteer, and the duration of their volunteering. We also requested information on why volunteers may not have started, and reasons for ceasing volunteering. As well as enabling us to gather better data on volunteer starters, this research should provide valuable information on volunteer attrition rates, and identify where organisations are not contacting volunteers, and the reasons for this. The results of the tracking exercise will be finalised during 2022.

2. Good Practice Development

We continued to deliver activities to support and build the capacity of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) to implement good practice in volunteer management. Tower Hamlets Council funded this work via a Local Community Fund Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant.

Volunteer Managers' Training

Between 1 October 2020 and 30 September 2021 we delivered six, half-day training courses for Volunteer Managers (the same number as in 2019-2020). All six sessions were delivered online on Zoom. A total of 106 Volunteer Managers attended our training, which was an average of 17 per course. This represented a considerable increase of 6 additional trainees per course compared to 2019-2020, demonstrating an ongoing appetite for online training.

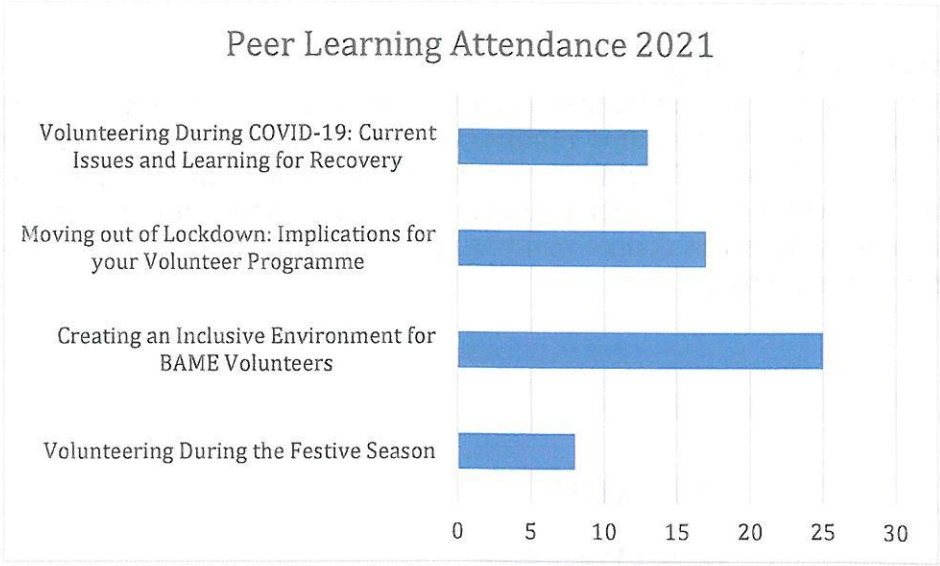


77% of participants completed an evaluation survey. 100% of respondents (up 3%) rated our training as useful, with 38% rating it as 'excellent/extremely useful', 60% as 'good/very useful' and 2% as 'average/fairly useful'.

91% of respondents progressed in terms of knowledge (an increase of 3% compared to the previous year). 97% committed to making a change within their organisation, or taking an action as a result of the training.

Peer Learning Sessions for Volunteer Managers

We ran four Peer Learning sessions, which also proved extremely popular. A total of 63 participants attended - an average of 16 per session (1 less per session than the previous year). The sessions provided a blend of professional development and learning opportunities for people who manage volunteers. They included guest speakers and opportunities for peer support. During the ongoing pandemic, Volunteer Managers valued these sessions as a space to come together and support each other.



Bespoke Advice on Volunteer Programmes

We delivered 54 free, one-to-one advice sessions to 27 organisations (5 more sessions and 1 more organisation than in 2019-2020).

Thirteen organisations (48%) completed our survey to assess the longer-term impact of our advice. We are delighted to report that 100% of respondents found VCTH's advice service useful. Of these, 7 found it "very useful" (54%) and 6 found it "extremely useful" (46%). An impressive 100% reported improvements to the quality of their volunteering practices following our advice. All 13 respondents (100%) said they would recommend VCTH's advice service to other voluntary and community sector groups.

I feel staff at VCTH are extremely professional and knowledgeable

Evelyn and her team are really approachable and always willing to offer support or be a sounding board when we are thinking of implementing something new.

Without the help and support of VCTH, (our organisation) would not have survived during the Pandemic

The support received is on the right level and it is great to get in touch when needed. Thank you for all you do.

Organisations reported improvements in the following areas:

Managing your volunteer programme during the COVID-19 pandemic	69%
Recruiting volunteers (scaling up, more appropriately skilled, more diverse, more local)	54%
Staff feeling more confident/skilled at involving and managing volunteers	46%
Volunteer induction/training	46%
Volunteer support and supervision	46%
Policies and procedures (eg Volunteer Policy, Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure, Code of Conduct)	38%
Managing risks related to volunteers	38%
Dealing with difficult situations with volunteers	38%
Documentation, forms, templates (eg Volunteer Handbook, Volunteer Application Form, Staff Handbook on Managing Volunteers)	31%

Factsheets

We researched and developed factsheets to provide an accessible and reliable resource for busy Volunteer Managers. Factsheets were e-mailed directly to registered organisations, and subsequently made available to download, free-of-charge, from our website. Our Factsheets were accessed a total of 6,545 times during the year, up 51% on the previous year (4,323 downloads), showing a significant demand for this service.

We have not been able to comprehensively track the two most recent factsheets we produced in 2019-2020, as the tracking code for Google Analytics became out-dated. The factsheets titles were "*Safeguarding and Volunteer DBS Checks During the Coronavirus Pandemic*" and "*Which Coronavirus Roles Require a DBS Check?*". Tracking will be resolved when the new VCTH website goes live, with the deployment of Google Tag Manager. In the meantime, we have provided a best estimate of the downloads of these 2 factsheets, using an average based on the months that we were able to track.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Factsheets which remained available on website	Downloads Oct 20–Sep 21	Downloads Oct 19–Sep 20
Saying No to Volunteers	21	27
Recruiting Male Volunteers	9	12
Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers Aged 50+	7	23
Creating an Inclusive Environment for LGBT+ Volunteers	7	7
Data Protection, GDPR and Volunteers	22	47
Volunteer Expenses and Rewards	14	20
Volunteering in Tower Hamlets – Key Trends	11	7
Supporting Volunteers Towards Employment	6	1
Virtual & Online Induction/Training for Volunteers	13	18
Volunteer Retention	15	29
Volunteer Induction	20	29
Training Volunteers	11	29
Involving Young Volunteers	19	10
Promoting Volunteering Opportunities	26	12
Insurance for Volunteers	22	25
Involving Volunteers who have Limited Time	8	9
Safeguarding and Volunteer DBS Checks During the Coronavirus Pandemic	2,290	1,521
Which Coronavirus Roles Require a DBS Check?	4,024	2,497
Total downloads of all factsheets	**6,545**	**4,323**

Good Practice Tips

In our monthly e-bulletin, we occasionally include bite-sized advice on volunteer management issues, either in the form of answering a particular question - the 'Ask Evelyn' column - or as a 'Top Tip'. Some examples of these are:

- October 2020: Top Tip - Making Video Meetings More Inclusive
- August 2021: Ask Evelyn - *Now that most mandatory government restrictions are being lifted, what should we do to keep our volunteers safe?*
- July 2021: Ask Evelyn - *Can we require volunteers to have had both COVID vaccinations before they resume face-to-face volunteering with clients, or come onto our premises? Should we even ask volunteers if they have had the vaccine?*

3. Developing Volunteering Opportunities

An integral part of developing new volunteering opportunities is registering the Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) that offer them. We only register not-for-profit organisations - charities, community groups, social enterprises and public sector bodies. They must be based in, or provide services to residents in the borough of Tower Hamlets. On application, we conduct a health check with each new organisation, via an in-depth telephone meeting, to ensure that the volunteer roles offered are meaningful and appealing, and that volunteers will be supported in a safe environment.

This year we registered 26 new VIOs (4 fewer than the previous year). This brought the total number of organisations registered with VCTH at 30 September 2021 to 495 – a net increase of 26 organisations in 12 months.

New organisations registered with VCTH were:

Arnhem Wharf Primary School	Serious
Bangabandhu Primary School	Solace Women's Aid
Centre 404	St George in the East Church
City of London Police Museum	St Katharine's Trust
Cyril Jackson Primary School	St Matthews Bethnal Green
Eden Care UK (13 Rivers Trust)	St Paul's Way Trust School
English National Ballet	Stepney All Saints School
Eye Heroes	The Feast Youth Project
Free to Be Kids	The Felix Project
Globe Primary School	The UK Sapphire Foundation
Morpeth School	Tower Hamlets GP Care Group CIC
Norton Folgate Almshouse Charities	Trapped in Zone One
Reach Aid Trust	William Davis School

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Throughout the year our work was very much driven by our response to the pandemic, as the second national lockdown was announced in November 2020. We continued to work at pace with organisations in the borough that were delivering vital services to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. We systematically contacted organisations registered with us to ask about their essential volunteer requirements and helped them develop diverse, appealing opportunities for volunteers.

In December 2020, we worked with organisations to develop a range of volunteering opportunities over the festive period such as Christmas Elves who packed hampers, delivery volunteers, Christmas Day drivers and Christmas foodbank volunteers.

As restrictions started to ease in August 2021, we worked with organisations that were re-opening their services to develop new volunteering opportunities. We advertised both remote and in-person roles, ensuring they were in line with the COVID-19 government guidelines.

We developed and promoted 307 volunteering roles over the entire year (compared to 450 roles in 2019-2020). Of these, 54 were entirely new roles. Most roles required multiple volunteers. Many roles were flexible, short-term or one-off, enabling time-poor volunteers to get involved.

We advertised volunteer roles for an initial period of up to 3 months, or until organisations told us they no longer needed volunteers. We alerted Volunteer Managers once the required number of volunteers had been referred, and invited them to renew their adverts for a further 3 months, or de-activate roles. This process enabled us to maintain an accurate database of volunteering roles, giving us confidence that roles published on our website were current vacancies.

We saw a continued trend of recruitment for many traditional volunteering roles being paused by organisations, due to the pandemic. However, we saw a surge in demand for critical roles responding to urgent needs in our community. These included Vaccination Site Marshals to support the vaccination programme in Tower Hamlets, COVID-19 Community Champions to empower and support residents to stay up-to-date with public health information, and roles supporting Afghan refugees newly arrived in the borough.

Examples of roles advertised during the year include; community contact tracer (COVID-19), food preparation, packing and delivery volunteers, cycle ride leaders and route planners, charity shop volunteers, gardening volunteers, Mandarin or Cantonese speaking support volunteers (home-based), ESOL teachers (both face-to-face and home-based), research and administration volunteers, vaccination escort volunteers, and volunteers to meet, greet and feed refugees.

We also saw a sustained increase in demand for skilled volunteering roles such as podcast producer, coding workshop volunteers, online workshop facilitators, graphic designers and art gallery installation volunteers.

4. Voice of Volunteering

One of the Volunteer Centre's core functions is to be the local voice of volunteering - increasing awareness of the issues affecting volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations. We campaign for a volunteer-friendly climate, where volunteering is a key element of a democratic civil society, and everyone can participate. We strive to educate and influence key decision-makers and funders about the value of volunteering to communities and of the benefits to individuals. We advocate for greater recognition of the cost of well-run volunteering programmes, and the importance of effective volunteer management. We disseminate policy, information and statistics, encourage organisations to think about how policies affect their volunteer programmes, and urge them to join relevant campaigns.

E-bulletins

VCTH produced monthly e-bulletins for Volunteer Managers. These included information about training, funding for volunteering programmes, policy developments, updates on campaigns, facts and trends, and volunteer management job adverts. E-bulletins regularly included a "Top Tip", promoting an area of good practice. This year we included a dedicated funding section for small organisations.

Our e-bulletin was emailed monthly to an average of 682 contacts each month, a decrease in our audience of 3 from the previous year. This was due to cleansing data to remove out-of-date contacts. Our engagement statistics were virtually identical to last year: we had a 19.5% opening rate, compared to 19.6% in 2019-2020. This is broadly in line with the average open rate across all industries (21%).

Campaigning and Informing

Throughout the year, we kept 495 registered organisations informed (up from 469 in 2020-2021) and raised awareness of issues affecting them:

- In October 2020 we promoted the Mayor of London's Volunteering Awards and kept organisations informed about how to re-open services safely.
- In November we promoted national Trustees' Week and published the Government's new guidelines on volunteering during the pandemic.
- In December we raised awareness of the Home Office Windrush Compensation Scheme.
- In March 2021 we promoted the government's scheme offering free COVID lateral flow tests for charitable organisations.
- We also sent a detailed submission in response to NCVO's call for evidence on the recommendations of the Kruger Report. In it we voiced our concern regarding the proposal for a national "volunteering passport" and yet another national volunteering portal, neither of which would benefit the vast majority of (smaller) local charities, or poorer, marginalised communities. We rejected the call for a national reserve or "volunteer army" and a proposed change for trustees to be paid for their time.
- In April, we published GPs' and Public Health Leads' advice to support Muslims eligible for vaccination during Ramadan.

- In May we promoted the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS).
- In July we celebrated Women's Inclusive Team (a VCTH registered organisation) receiving the QAVS. We also took part in the Council's "Thank You Day" campaign, releasing a video of our Chief Executive thanking volunteers and the local community for all their work during the pandemic

Website

This year our website attracted 3,125 page views per month, down from 4,082 in 2019-2020. The average time on page was 1:20, similar to 2019-2020. Our new website will provide better, more accurate tracking.

Links from our website to Simply Connect Volunteering helped visitors browse our current volunteer roles and/or register their interest online. The "search volunteer roles" button was clicked 4,222 times, 13% down on 2019-2020, and the "register your interest/login" button received 474 hits, showing a 30% decrease.

In 2021 our Marketing and Communications Officer resumed working on the development and design of a brand new website for VCTH. This was subsequently launched in early February 2022: https://www.vcth.org.uk/

Digital Channels

In 2020-2021, the likes on VCTH's Facebook page reached 1,177 – a 19% increase (190) on the 987 likes in 2019-2020. This marks an important milestone, as Facebook Insights get more accurate on pages exceeding 1,000 likes. We used our Facebook page to engage with local residents to promote our latest volunteer roles.

By the end of September 2021 we had 2,330 followers on Twitter - 59 new net followers. We used Twitter to engage with other organisations and to communicate with Volunteer Managers.

When the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub was launched back in 2019, we began sending out regular alerts to a mailing list of people who had registered their interest with us in volunteering. By the end of September 2021, our mailing list included 3,244 contacts (down from 3,586 contacts in 2020). We built this list by adding all of the volunteers on our Volunteer Bank prior to 19 March 2020, then including every volunteer who registered on Simply Connect after 19 March 2020. The slightly smaller mailing list is a sign of older contacts, who were no longer interested in volunteering, unsubscribing, and new contacts signing up. This is a likely indicator of a fresher, more-engaged audience. A sizeable 40% of the subscribers on the mailing list are highly engaged and often open and click the emails we send. Our mailing list was used to send more than 50 alerts about new volunteer roles available each week, as well as focused alerts promoting Christmas roles, drivers, and Vaccination Site Marshals.

Volunteers' Week (1-7 June 2021)

Volunteers' Week was rather different to previous years. COVID-19 restrictions prohibited gatherings of more than 6 people outdoors, and all indoor events. The usual award ceremonies and celebrations were unable to proceed. Instead, VCTH focused on marking Volunteers' Week online, and encouraged other organisations to do the same.

During Volunteers' Week we sent out a targeted alert to our Volunteer Bank with a thank you message from the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, John Biggs.

Our June e-bulletin for Volunteer Managers included our message encouraging organisations to thank volunteers for the work carried during the pandemic.

Throughout Volunteers' Week we were particularly active on Facebook, publishing a new post daily with a link to a highlighted volunteer role. Our post on 6 June was very popular, reaching organically 3.8k users, 272 clicks and 61 reactions.

On Twitter we published content every day. We started with a thank you message to local organisations and Volunteer Managers that generated 2.8k impressions (the number of people who saw our Tweet). Our daily posts included thank you messages from local organisations to their volunteers. The best performing post, a thank you from VCTH staff and trustees, generated 4.8k impressions and 31 engagement activities (shares and comments).

5. Strategic Development of Volunteering

As the volunteering infrastructure agency for Tower Hamlets, VCTH is widely recognised as the local volunteering expert in the borough, and we are regularly consulted on volunteering matters by local decision-makers. The profile of volunteering was heightened throughout the pandemic. Volunteer Involving Organisations and other partners across Tower Hamlets looked to us for guidance, input and leadership on volunteering issues. We sought to represent their interests and concerns at borough and pan-London levels, and nationally.

Working with Tower Hamlets Council

Tower Hamlets Council continued to fund VCTH to run the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub for the borough. As well as the Hub providing volunteer brokerage services to VCS organisations, we also sourced volunteers for a range of Council services and teams, such as Tackling Poverty, Public Health, Children's Centres, Youth Justice, and several local schools. We guided Council staff, who were often new to volunteer management, on developing volunteer roles, and updated volunteer management training and guidance for Council workers.

We attended regular VCS Conference Calls with John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets, alongside other key representatives from voluntary, community and faith sectors, keeping the Mayor informed about the local volunteer response to the pandemic and recovery.

LBTH Public Health

During the year we cemented relationships with staff at LBTH Public Health. Our Chief Executive participated in regular meetings of the Outbreak Health Protection Board and the Safe Individuals Bronze Group, advising where volunteers might add value and support the delivery of public health services to residents.

We assisted LBTH Public Health to think through and design volunteer involvement and to recruit volunteers for a range of roles including;

- COVID-19 Community Champions, who disseminated messages to residents
- Community Insight Volunteers, who gathered views from residents on vaccine hesitancy, shielding, mental health, and attitudes towards COVID testing
- Vaccination Site Marshals for Council-led pop up clinics.

Co-Operate and the VCS Strategy

VCTH's Chief Executive and the VSCYF Co-ordinator both continued as members of Co-Operate – a joint strategic body of not-for-profit sector representatives. Co-Operate aims to transform how organisations work together to enhance the lives of local people. Between us, we represented the interests of Volunteer Involving Organisations and organisations providing services to children and young people.

In October 2020, VCTH provided a case study on the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub for inclusion in the refreshed Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy 2020-2024. This was accompanied by a quote from the Chief Executive of Women's Inclusive Team, an award-winning local organisation, about what our support meant to them;

"*We want to thank Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets for the invaluable support they have provided in recruiting volunteers for our projects at Women's Inclusive Team. The team provided amazing help and dealt with our last-minute requests efficiently. They went above and beyond to send us really high quality volunteers to support our COVID-19 response. We simply wouldn't have been able to get through the past few months without their help, and we look forward to continuing this fantastic relationship. WIT has grown so much, due to the support of VCTH*".

Our staff joined a number of strategic-level Task and Finish Groups to progress actions in the VCS Strategy including groups on Volunteering, External Funding and Consultation & Engagement. The Volunteering Task and Finish Group facilitated better understanding and closer co-operation between major volunteering providers, including ELBA, Queen Mary University, LBTH, New City College and Barts NHS Trust.

Partnering with Tower Hamlets CVS

Throughout 2020-2021 we strengthened our key relationship with Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS), ensuring that we avoided duplication of services and were representing the broadest possible range of local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations at strategic level. The Chief Executives of both organisations worked very closely together to support the local voluntary and community sector.

We delivered the second year of the Local Community Fund Infrastructure and Capacity Building programme in partnership with THCVS. VCTH also joined a consortium, led by THCVS, which was successful in attracting Cornerstone Fund money to develop an equalities assessment impact project that will hopefully be funded to commence in 2022.

National and Regional Bodies

We remained a member of two strategic volunteering bodies - London Plus, and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). Our Chief Executive attended London Plus Volunteer Centre Network meetings, engaging with staff in other London Volunteer Centres to share challenges and successes of facilitating volunteering in response to the pandemic across the Capital. Our Training and Best Practice Manager attended regular NCVO webinars to keep up-to-date with policy developments and changes in the volunteering landscape nationally.

6. Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF)

VCTH facilitated the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF) for a thirteenth successive year. The Forum is a conduit between voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations that provide services to children, young people and their families, and Tower Hamlets Council and other statutory partners. VCTH employs a part-time Co-ordinator, who liaises with all of these parties to ensure sharing of information and effective communication.

The Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum met 4 times during 2020-2021, with average attendance of 17 organisations per meeting (a slightly higher attendance level than in 2019-2020). All meetings were held on Zoom, due to the ongoing pandemic. Forum meetings during this time included sections to support VSCYF members to deliver their services, to share concerns and suggestions.

The meetings covered a variety of subjects:

- funding, commissioning and grants, including LBTH's Youth Services commissioning and the Holiday Activities and Food Programme
- partnership working
- safeguarding
- mental health
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) provision
- holiday hunger
- social prescribing
- healthy childhood weight
- working with schools
- play in Tower Hamlets
- supporting refugee families in Tower Hamlets
- The impact of COVID-19 on children, families and organisations
- COVID recovery and bouncing back

VSCYF members continued to benefit from the briefing sessions given by senior representatives from LBTH Children's Services and Culture Directorate.

We compiled and issued quarterly VSCYF e-bulletins, covering Forum and Tower Hamlets news, funding and training opportunities, and events for children, young people or organisations that support them.

The database of VSCYF members shows that 7 new organisations joined the Forum during the year, bringing the total membership to 279 organisations – a net increase of 3 from the previous year. The total number of voluntary sector professionals on our database stood at 385 – a net increase of 19 individuals on the previous year.

Facilitating voluntary sector representation continued to be a key focus of the VSCYF Coordinator's work. Two voluntary sector representatives and the Chair met regularly to ensure good representation for all VSCYF members. Between them the VSCYF Co-ordinator and representatives ensured that each statutory sector steering group/board had at least one voluntary sector representative at every meeting. The VSCYF Co-ordinator is a representative herself, and attended several partnership boards and steering groups on behalf of Forum members.

As well as ensuring strong sector representation, the VSCYF Co-ordinator delivered practical services for Forum members. She assisted 6 member organisations with funding applications, or helped them decide whether to apply (6 fewer than in 2019-2020). In addition, she supported 8 organisations with reviewing and developing their safeguarding policies and procedures (one more than in the previous year).

During the year, we organised 4 training workshops for VSCYF members (one more than in 2019-2020). Average trainee numbers (5) were similar to those per course in the previous year, with 21 attendees across the year.

Course title	Date	Trainees
Identifying Realistic Outcomes and Targets for Funding Applications and Tenders	2 December 2020	3
Online Safety, what can we do?	16 December 2020	7
Online Safety, what can we do?	26 March 2021	5
Identifying Realistic Outcomes and Targets for Funding Applications and Tenders	22 and 23 July	6

The Forum is funded under a contract from Tower Hamlets Council's Children's Services and Culture Directorate. In February 2021, VCTH submitted a competitive tender to continue to run the Forum for a further 2 years until March 2023, and our bid was successful.

7. Consultancy Work, Income Generation and Short-term Projects

We undertook several pieces of consultancy work and short-term projects this year. As well as enabling staff to use their expertise and deliver additional services for the community, these projects enabled us to diversify our funding base and generate reserves.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Everyone's Business

We continued to work with East London Business Alliance (ELBA) to support a network of grassroots organisations working to prevent or respond to Serious Youth Violence. The project, called "Everyone's Business", was funded through the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's (MOPAC) Violence Reduction Unit. It aimed to explore the impact of business support, provided by corporate volunteers, on strengthening small organisations' capacity to support children and young people at risk of serious youth violence across 4 East London boroughs – Tower Hamlets, Newham, Waltham Forest, and Barking & Dagenham.

Our VSCYF Coordinator convened 9 grassroots organisations working in Tower Hamlets in the field of serious youth violence, to form the Tower Hamlets Everyone's Business Network. The pilot project was extended into a second year from April 2021, and 5 network meetings were held between November 2020 and October 2021.

Training sessions arranged for Everyone's Business members included safeguarding and trauma-informed practice. Opportunities for 1:1 mentoring support from corporate volunteers were also offered and taken up. Each member organisation completed a refreshed needs assessment to help plan the second year's support, which continued to include mentoring and training to respond to identified needs.

Vaccination Site Marshals - Tower Hamlets GP Care Group

The national COVID vaccination programme began in the winter of 2020. Tower Hamlets GP Care Group delivered the majority of vaccinations in Tower Hamlets. Keen to support our communities being vaccinated, VCTH liaised with the GP Care Group to develop a Vaccination Site Marshal volunteer role, in which volunteers could assist with non-clinical tasks at primary care sites and community-based clinics.

We conducted 5 rounds of recruitment for marshals between January 2020 and September 2021, which received a gratifying response. In 9 months we recruited and referred a total of 215 volunteer marshals. This included a team of volunteers to help at the weekly community clinic at the London Muslim Centre. Since the end of the year, VCTH went on to recruit a further 99 Vaccination Site Marshals, bringing the total number of volunteers recruited for this role to 314.

These volunteers undoubtedly played a significant part in the delivery of vaccinations to local communities, easing the pressure on clinical staff and providing a welcoming and reassuring presence at clinics across the borough. The Tower Hamlets GP Care Group kindly provided a small financial contribution in recognition of the support VCTH provided.

ELBA Christmas Toy Appeal

Each year, East London Business Alliance (ELBA) runs a Toy Appeal, asking employees of ELBA member companies to donate and wrap Christmas gifts for local children living in low income households. However, this year many of these employees, usually based at Canary Wharf, were working from home outside Tower Hamlets. In November 2020, with COVID restrictions in force, ELBA was determined that their Toy Appeal would go ahead. They asked VCTH to help recruit a team of local residents to

volunteer as Christmas Elves in their grotto. VCTH recruited 37 willing helpers and, in the fortnight before Christmas, the volunteers sorted and wrapped presents, and encouraged passers-by to make further donations. This ensured that local children experiencing hardship received Christmas gifts as usual.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

The Holiday Activities Fund (HAF) programme provides targeted support for children from low-income households, who are eligible for free school meals, to ensure that they do not go hungry during the school holidays. For a second year we worked in partnership with the LBTH Tackling Poverty Team to deliver the local HAF programme.

During the first week of the Easter holidays (March 2021) the Council arranged for food boxes to be delivered to schools, who then distributed them to families eligible for Free School Meals. We supported the Council and four schools by developing and recruiting for food distribution and delivery volunteer roles.

During the half term holiday in May 2021, the summer school holidays and Christmas holiday period, we continued to work with the schools and local charities. Volunteers were recruited to help them deliver a range of free activities for children and young people, including sports, arts and crafts, and play schemes, all of which included a free lunch.

We facilitated two "Introduction to Volunteer Management" training sessions in July 2021 for local organisations funded through the HAF programme. A total of 17 participants from 15 organisations attended this training (2 more trainees and 3 more organisations than in 2019-2020). Many trainees were new to managing volunteers. The content covered; developing meaningful volunteer roles and role descriptions, recruiting and vetting volunteers, managing risks and safeguarding, supporting volunteers and retention, and legal obligations, including data protection and complying with COVID-19 guidance.

Centre 70

Towards the end of 2019-2020, we had been contracted to provide volunteer management consultancy support to Centre 70, a voluntary sector organisation based in Lambeth that supports adults facing social, mental, financial or other personal difficulties. The support was provided via Zoom and email in 2020-2021, and included reviewing their volunteer documentation, providing sample templates, and practising negotiation and assertiveness skills.

Income from Training

To support local organisations during the pandemic we continued to suspend charges for all training and peer learning sessions. However, so that training places were not wasted, and to ensure fair access to this service, we charged non-attendance fees.

Thank You

To our staff

The trustees wish to extend our sincere thanks to the staff team. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic created professional and personal challenges for everyone. We are immensely proud of the passion, flexibility, resilience and determination of our staff. These qualities enabled us to provide valuable services to our communities in times need. Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets was at the very heart of the local volunteer response to the pandemic, ensuring that our community's most vulnerable residents were supported through an unprecedented health emergency. Our thanks to:

- Catherine Bavage, Chief Executive
- Zahanar Begum, Administrator & Brokerage Advisor
- Alex Nelson, Voluntary Sector Children & Youth Forum Co-ordinator
- Peppe Rella, Marketing & Communications Officer
- Evelyn Rodrigues, Training & Best Practice Manager
- Krithika Kalpathi Subramanian, Volunteering Advisor

To retired trustees

A special thank you to Patrick McKenna, who retired from VCTH's Board of Trustees on 12 October 2021 after five and a half years' service. Patrick was first introduced to us at a VCTH trustee matching event in October 2015, and became a trustee with us in February 2016. For the majority of his trusteeship, Patrick was our Treasurer. He provided valuable oversight and guidance to trustees on financial issues with unstinting patience, professionalism and good humour.

To our funders

We are extremely grateful for the money and confidence that our funders have invested in Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets. During 2012-2021 they were:

- City Bridge Trust Cornerstone Fund
- East London Business Alliance (MOPAC Violence Reduction Unit)
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- London Plus (formerly Greater London Volunteering)
- Tower Hamlets GP Care Group

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

For a second year, it was not possible to bring the staff and trustee teams together for our usual strategic planning Away Day. Given the rapidly changing environment created by the ongoing COVID pandemic, trustees agreed a number of shorter term strategic priorities, which will be reviewed throughout 2022. For the period 1 January to 30 September 2022 they are:

1. Recruit, develop and retain the right people (staff and trustees) to deliver VCTH's mission and prioritise the well-being of our staff and trustees

2. Effectively deliver VCTH's core functions

3. Monitor, evaluate and adapt projects, as needed, so that they are accessible to and represent the diversity of the community we serve

4. Prioritise fundraising, diversifying funding sources and the financial stability of VCTH

5. Manage the workplace environment

6. Ensure regulatory compliance

In 2021-2022 we intend to:

- Keep our office-free working model under review and continue to consult staff about their working preferences and needs.

- Plan a staff and trustee Away Day and introduce regular in-person team get togethers.

- Update our Strategic Plan and develop a new Funding Strategy to ensure sufficient income is available.

- Secure further funding for the Volunteering Hub so that we can continue to lead the local volunteering response to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and be ready to respond to future outbreaks of any new variants or other emergencies.

- Launch our new website, making it more accessible and giving it a fresher feel.

- Secure funding, develop and commence delivery of a new training and matching programme for people from minoritised ethnic communities interested in becoming charity trustees. This programme will contribute towards the goal of ensuring that more people from minoritised ethnic communities move into governance and leadership roles in the voluntary and community sector.

- Continue to offer volunteering solutions to the most pressing issues in our community, such as responding to the refugee crisis.

- Complete the comprehensive tracking exercise, which began in 2020-2021. By analysing volunteer starter rates, along with feedback from VCTH beneficiary organisations, we will better understand our impact and identify areas for improvement.

- Review the demographics of volunteers registering with VCTH and develop strategies for increasing participation among under-represented communities.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

VCTH started the year with a budget that projected a deficit (in-year fundraising target) of £26,799. By the end of the year, this figure was reduced to a deficit of £16,743, which was covered by unrestricted reserves.

Net current assets (working capital) held at 30 September 2021 amounted to £45,385.

Reserves Policy

At the end of the charity's thirteenth operational year at 30 September 2021, our total reserves had reduced by 27% from £62,128 to £45,385. Of these reserves, £43,885 (95%) were unrestricted and £2,250 were restricted funds.

In early 2021 trustees set a target reserves range of £35,787 to £45,000. This range was calculated using a risk-based approach to cover liabilities and winding up costs in the event of the charity's closure, and which would enable the charity to carry on its day-to-day business in terms of cash flow. The majority of the liabilities relate to statutory redundancy payments to staff. However, trustees committed to reviewing the charity's approach to reserves later in the year to ensure that it was fit-for-purpose.

In summer 2021 trustees established a sub-group of the Board, led by the Treasurer, and it conducted comprehensive research on approaches to reserves in similar-sized charities, as well as reviewing the best practice guidance from the Charity Commission and NCVO. The sub-group identified growing redundancy liabilities associated with long-serving staff, and the need to include the cost of consultation and notice periods in the event of redundancies, as VCTH's major liability. It was agreed that our approach to reserves should change.

A new Reserves Policy was agreed on 11 August 2021. This states that trustees will aim to maintain free reserves at a level which covers at least three months' running costs, but does not exceed that level plus the redundancy obligations the charity would have in the event of a wind up. The trustees agree this level is the most prudent and would enable to charity to continue to operate in the event of an emergency, or a sudden cut to funding. Trustees acknowledge that this level of reserves may be aspirational in a challenging funding environment. They agreed that while VCTH should strive to maintain this level of reserves, this should not be achieved at the detriment of VCTH's core values and long-term viability.

On completion of the annual budget, trustees and the Chief Executive will identify the target range for free reserves. VCTH trustees will monitor the level of reserves regularly. The main mechanism for monitoring will be scrutiny of management accounts and cash flows presented quarterly at trustee board meetings. This will ensure that trustees are aware of any build-up of excess reserves, or of reserves being depleted unexpectedly or rapidly. The Reserves Policy will be reviewed bi-annually (every 2 years), and whenever there is a significant change in VCTH's liabilities.

VCTH's current target reserves range, as of March 2022, is set at between £48,106 and £80,083.

Trustees' Responsibilities Statement

The trustees (who are also Directors of VCTH for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose, with reasonable accuracy, at any time, the financial position of the charitable company, and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware;
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Auditors

In 2020-2021, the trustees re-appointed Myrus Smith Chartered Accountants as the charitable company's auditors.

This report has been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective January 2019) and in accordance with the

special provisions relating to companies subject to the small companies regime within part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 21 June 2022 and signed on its behalf by:

.....Karin Maschler.....

Karin Maschler, Chair and Trustee

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 30 September 2021 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 30 September 2021, and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the charitable company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets .../Cont'd

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Report of the Trustees, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report (incorporating the directors' report) for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies' regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets .../Cont'd

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement (set out on page 33), the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Stephen Jones FCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Myrus Smith
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors
Norman House
8 Burnell Road
Sutton, Surrey
SM1 4BW

21 June 2022

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Statement of Financial Activities
(including Income and Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 30 September 2021

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Income from:					
Charitable activities	2	126,517	66,750	193,267	233,200
Total Income		**126,517**	**66,750**	**193,267**	**233,200**
Expenditure on:					
Charitable expenditure	3	133,759	76,251	210,010	197,528
Total Expenditure		**133,759**	**76,251**	**210,010**	**197,528**
Net income/(expenditure)	7	**(7,242)**	**(9,501)**	**(16,743)**	**35,672**
Transfers between funds	13	(480)	480	-	-
Net movement in funds		**(7,722)**	**(9,021)**	**(16,743)**	**35,672**
Funds brought forward	13	50,857	11,271	62,128	26,456
Total funds carried forward	13	**£43,135**	**£2,250**	**£45,385**	**£62,128**

All income and expenditure is derived from continuing activities.

The SOFA includes all gains and losses recognised during the year.

The notes form part of these accounts.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Balance Sheet
As at 30 September 2021

	Notes	2021 £	2020 £
Current assets			
Debtors	9	19,591	9,747
Cash at Bank		53,549	80,063
		73,140	89,810
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	10	(27,755)	(27,682)
Net current assets		**45,385**	**62,128**
Net assets	11	**£45,385**	**£62,128**
Funds:			
Unrestricted funds			
- General fund	13	43,135	50,857
Restricted Funds	13	2,250	11,271
Total funds		**£45,385**	**£62,128**

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to small companies within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the directors and trustees on 21 June 2022 and signed on their behalf:

.....

Leo Zawadzki
Treasurer and Trustee

The notes form part of these accounts.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2021

1. Accounting policies

General information and basis of preparation
Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets is a private company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is given in the "Reference and Administrative Information" on page 3 of these financial statements.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention. The financial statements are presented in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity.

The significant accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all years presented unless otherwise stated.

Income recognition

Items of income are recognised in the financial statements when all of the following criteria are met:

- The charity has entitlement to the funds;
- any performance conditions have been met or are fully within the control of the charity;
- there is sufficient certainty that receipt of the income is considered probable; and
- the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from performance related grants and contracts is recognised as the charity earns the right to consideration through delivery of the specified services.

Expenditure recognition

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount can be measured reliably. Expenditure includes all irrecoverable VAT which is included as part of the relevant cost.

Expenditure on charitable activities comprises those costs associated with the delivery of the various activities and services for the charity's beneficiaries.

Expenditure includes those costs of a direct nature which can be allocated to a specific activity and also includes indirect costs, including governance costs that do not relate to a specific activity but are necessary to support those activities. Support costs are apportioned to each activity on the basis of staff time.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2021

1. **Accounting policies**/contd...

Fund accounting

Unrestricted general funds are freely available for use in furtherance of the objects of the charity and which have not been designated for specific purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds set aside by the trustees for particular purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which can only be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor or which have been raised for a particular purpose.

Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible assets costing more than £1,500 are capitalised and are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation.

Leases

Operating lease rentals are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

Pensions

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charity's pension scheme are charged in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year to which they relate. The charity has no liability under these schemes other than for the payment of those contributions.

Debtors and creditors

Debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and which are receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised in expenditure.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2021

2. Income from Charitable activities

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	2021 £	2020 £
LB Tower Hamlets:				
Voluntary Sector Children & Youth Forum (Third Sector Co-ordinator)	41,240	-	41,240	39,989
Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant	-	63,000	63,000	63,000
COVID 19 Volunteering Hub	49,520	-	49,520	46,251
Discretionary SBRR grant	-	-	-	5,000
Holiday Activities and Food Programme	1,000	-	1,000	1,300
Total LB Tower Hamlets	**91,760**	**63,000**	**154,760**	**155,540**
London Plus (Greater London Volunteering)	-	750	750	3,750
City Bridge Trust Cornerstone Fund	-	3,000	3,000	-
City Bridge Trust - London Community Response Fund	-	-	-	24,307
East London Business Alliance (MOPAC)	22,000	-	22,000	8,000
Greater London Volunteering - Big Volunteer	-	-	-	15,240
National Lottery Community Fund - Awards For All	-	-	-	9,991
Tower Hamlets GP Care Group	6,000	-	6,000	-
Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation	-	-	-	5,000
Other Consultancy Income	118	-	118	6,945
Training, Room Hire and Other Income	6,639	-	6,639	4,427
Total	**£126,517**	**£66,750**	**£193,267**	**£233,200**

Section 37 Statement: During the period, the grants receivable from LB Tower Hamlets were expended on various projects for the purposes for which they were given.

Of the LB Tower Hamlets income of £155,540 recognised in 2020, £92,540 related to unrestricted funds and £63,000 to restricted funds.

The remainder of the charitable activities income of £77,660 recognised in 2020 related to unrestricted funds of £39,612 and restricted funds of £38,048.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2021

3. Cost of charitable activities

	Direct Costs	Support Costs	Total 2021	Total 2020
Volunteering services	£178,502	£31,508	£210,010	£197,528

Of the £210,010 (2020 - £197,528) expenditure recognised in 2021, £133,759 (2020 - £107,628) was charged to unrestricted funds and £76,251 (2020 - £89,900) was charged to restricted funds.

4. Analysis of direct costs

	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Wages and salaries	177,632	157,463
Activity costs	180	1,972
Staff and volunteer training and recruitment	444	485
Travel costs	201	294
Volunteer expenses	45	138
	£178,502	£160,352

5. Analysis of support costs

	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Office costs	4,579	6,524
Premises costs	17,826	16,950
IT support	2,261	1,832
Computer and website costs	555	5,428
Other costs	1,148	625
Governance costs (note 7)	5,139	5,817
	£31,508	£37,176

6. Governance costs

	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Audit and accountancy fees	4,995	5,709
AGM/Annual review	-	108
Trustee meetings and training	144	-
	£5,139	£5,817

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2021

7. Net income/(expenditure)

The net income/(expenditure) for the year is stated after charging:

	2021	2020
Auditors' remuneration – Audit	£2,220	£2,478
Operating lease rentals	£12,312	£16,656

8. Staff costs

	2021 £	2020 £
Wages and salaries	161,387	142,180
Social Security costs	10,948	10,129
Pension Costs	5,297	5,154
	£177,632	**£157,463**

No employee received total employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) of more than £60,000 in either year.

The total employee benefits received by Key Management amounted to £52,344 (2020: £49,713). Under FRS 102, employee benefits include gross salary, employer's NIC, employer's pension contributions and benefits in kind.

The average number of employees during the period, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents was 4.2 (2020: 3.5). The average monthly number of employees was 6 (2020: 5.3).

9. Debtors

Due within one year	2021 £	2020 £
Prepayments	3,497	5,685
Other Debtors	16,094	4,062
	£19,591	**£9,747**

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2021

10. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year:

	2021 £	2020 £
Deferred income	21,305	22,054
Accruals	6,450	5,628
	£27,755	**£27,682**

All of the £22,054 deferred income brought forward from 30 September 2020 was released to income in the year ended 30 September 2021. Deferred income relates to funding received but for which the performance conditions will be met in the next accounting period.

11. Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Current assets	70,890	2,250	73,140
Current liabilities	(27,755)	-	(27,755)
At 30 September 2021	**£43,135**	**£2,250**	**£45,385**

Comparative information for the analysis of net assets between funds is as follows:

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Current assets	78,539	11,271	89,810
Current liabilities	(27,682)	-	(27,682)
At 30 September 2020	**£50,857**	**£11,271**	**£62,128**

12. Operating Lease Commitments

At 30 September 2021 the total minimum lease commitments due under non-cancellable operating leases was as follows:

	2021	2020
Within one year	£-	£11,903

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2021

13. Movement in funds

Restricted Funds	At 1 Oct 2020 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers between funds £	At 30 Sept 2021 £
LBTH - Infrastructure	-	63,000	(63,395)	395	-
Cornerstone	-	3,000	(1,500)	-	1,500
London Plus – laptops	-	750	-	-	750
CBT/LF – Covid 19	1,280	-	(1,365)	85	-
National Lottery – A4A	9,991	-	(9,991)	-	-
Total restricted funds	**11,271**	**66,750**	**(76,251)**	**480**	**2,250**
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	50,857	126,517	(133,759)	(480)	43,135
Total unrestricted funds	**50,857**	**126,517**	**(133,759)**	**(480)**	**43,135**
Total funds	**£62,128**	**£193,267**	**£(210,010)**	**£Nil**	**£45,385**

A description of each restricted fund is given in the Trustees Annual Report, where relevant .

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2021

13. Movement in funds.../cont'd

Comparative information for the net movement in funds is as follows:

Restricted Funds	At 1 Oct 2019 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers between funds £	At 30 Sept 2020 £
LBTH - Infrastructure	-	63,000	(63,123)	123	-
London Plus - Laptops	-	3,750	(3,750)	-	-
CBT/LF – Covid 19	-	24,307	(23,027)	-	1,280
National Lottery – A4A	-	9,991	-	-	9,991
Total restricted funds	**-**	**101,048**	**(89,900)**	**123**	**11,271**
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	26,456	132,152	(107,628)	(123)	50,857
Total unrestricted funds	**26,456**	**132,152**	**(107,628)**	**(123)**	**50,857**
Total funds	**£26,456**	**£233,200**	**£(197,528)**	**£Nil**	**£62,128**

14. Taxation

As a registered charity, Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets is not liable to tax on its charitable activities.

15. Related Party Transactions

Refreshments and training costs amounting to £144 (2020: £108) were paid on behalf of 6 (2020 : 6) trustees.

The trustees received no remuneration in 2021 or 2020.

There were no other related party transactions in 2021 or 2020.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

England & Wales - Charity number 1127300

Accounts

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Report of the Trustees and Accounts
For the period from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020

Company no. 6638750 (England & Wales)
Charity no. 1127300

Myrus Smith
Chartered Accountants
Norman House
8 Burnell Road
Sutton
Surrey
SM1 4BW

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

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VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 30 September 2020

The Trustees present their report and audited financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Charity Name: Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets

Charity Registration Number: 1127300

Company Registration Number: 6638750

Registered Office:
Norvin House
45-55 Commercial Street
London
E1 6BD

Trustees:
Ms Alice Sims, Chair
Ms Karin Maschler, Vice Chair
Mr Patrick McKenna, Treasurer
Ms Alison White
Ms Safia Jama (appointed 1 Oct 2020)
Ms Sabiha Khanam (appointed 1 Oct 2020)
Mr Leo Zawadzki (appointed 27 Apr 2021)
Ms Megan Cowley (appointed 27 Apr 2021)
Mr Stewart Turnbull (retired 5 Nov 2019)
Ms Ana Svab (retired 29 Jan 2020)
Ms Gemma Roye (retired 16 Apr 2020)

Senior Management: Ms Catherine Bavage, Chief Executive

Auditors:
Myrus Smith Chartered Accountants
Norman House
8 Burnell Road
Sutton
Surrey
SM1 4BW

Bankers:
The Co-operative Bank PLC
PO Box 250
Delf House
Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Period of Account
The period of account is from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020.

Governing Document
The organisation is a charitable company, limited by guarantee, incorporated on 4 July 2008, and registered as a charity on 29 December 2008.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company, and is governed under those Articles.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees
The process for appointing the charity's trustees is set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. Trustees also act as company directors. The minimum number of trustees is three, with no maximum.

One third of trustees must retire (but may stand for re-election) each year. Trustees are appointed annually, for a maximum of seven consecutive years, at which point they must retire. However, trustees who have served seven terms are eligible for re-election one year after the date of their retirement. Trustees may only hold the same Honorary Officer role for a maximum of five years.

The Board of Trustees may appoint any person willing and fit to act as a trustee and director, subject to the provisions of the Articles of Association.

The charity conducts regular skills, experience and diversity audits of trustees. These audits identify gaps in skills or under-representation of particular groups or communities, and are fundamental to the recruitment process. Vacancies are advertised widely and potential trustees are invited to complete an application form, outlining their relevant skills and experience. Shortlisted applicants meet with a selection panel, comprising the Chair of Trustees, one other trustee and the Chief Executive. If successful at interview, applicants are invited to observe a Board meeting and meet other existing trustees. If all parties agree to proceed, the applicant is either co-opted or nominated for election at the next AGM.

Trustee Induction and Training
Trustees are provided with a role description, outlining their statutory and additional governance responsibilities. On joining the Board, trustees are introduced to other Board members and paid staff, and provided with a comprehensive induction. Trustees are expected to attend an annual Away Day, as well as bi-monthly Board meetings. They are asked to acquaint themselves with VCTH policies and procedures, strategic plans, budgets, and governing document (Memorandum & Articles of Association). Trustees are prompted to take up relevant learning and development opportunities to help them fulfil their role and responsibilities to VCTH throughout their term of office.

Risk Management

Our Risk Register identifies risks and their potential impact in 5 areas: governance, operational, financial, environmental/external, and compliance. It describes the steps needed to mitigate risks. The trustees have considered all the major risks to which the charity is exposed and are satisfied that systems or procedures are established to mitigate those risks.

The charity has numerous policies and procedures that trustees, staff and volunteers must observe. During the year trustees updated 3 policies and procedures; Problem Solving Procedure for Volunteers, Trustee Recruitment Procedure, and the Handling Allegations Procedure.

In May 2020, to ensure that we implement best practice as employers, we contracted with Bright HR, who provide the trustees and Chief Executive with employment and HR advice. We also purchased their Employee Assistance Programme, giving our staff and volunteers access to a range of health and wellbeing support, including a helpline, 1:1 counselling sessions and online resources.

On 17 March 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, VCTH took the decision to close its office and ask all staff to work from home for their own and our clients' protection. Staff continued to work from home for the remainder of the year, and were provided with the necessary equipment, including new laptops purchased with a grant from London Plus. Our staff were paid Working At Home Allowances throughout, in line with HMRC guidance.

A comprehensive CaSE Charity insurance policy was arranged with Aviva. Policies were in place throughout the year covering; public/products liability (£5m), employer's liability (£10m), business interruption, trustee liability, professional indemnity, hirer's liability, fidelity, property and business equipment, goods in transit, group personal accident, and legal expenses.

In recognition of our limited reserves, and in keeping with the principles of the Compact, we negotiated advance funding with funders, wherever possible. This arrangement minimised potential cash flow difficulties. Securing adequate funding is always challenging. The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented fundraising challenges, as many more charities sought funds to respond to urgent community needs. At the same time, the need for volunteers and for volunteering infrastructure, such as Volunteer Centres, was never more acute. VCTH was fortunate to receive additional funds to run the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub and to deliver differently for our community. Our income increased by 26% from £184,115 in 2019 to £233,200 in 2020.

We take our commitment to protecting individuals' personal data seriously. During the year, the Volunteer Centre re-registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. Staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities not to disclose the personal or sensitive data of our service users.

Only suitably qualified and experienced staff are recruited to work at VCTH. Ongoing professional development for staff, volunteers and trustees is essential for retention, to ensure that skills and knowledge are updated, and to reduce our exposure to risk.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Organisational Structure

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets has a Board of Trustees, which meets bi-monthly, and is responsible for the strategic direction and governance of the charity. The charity's Chief Executive attends Board meetings as an advisor, but has no voting rights.

During the year, seven individuals were involved as charity trustees. Three trustees were Tower Hamlets residents, bringing local knowledge and ownership to our Board. In addition, several trustees worked for local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.

Alice Sims continued as Chair. Patrick McKenna retained the position of Treasurer for a fifth year, providing valuable continuity. Karin Maschler was appointed Vice Chair in March 2020, taking over from Gemma Roye, who retired from the Board. Since the end of the reporting year VCTH has recruited four new trustees to the Board – Safia Jama, Sabiha Khanam, Leo Zawadzki and Megan Cowley.

Responsibility for operational issues was delegated to the Chief Executive, Catherine Bavage. The Chief Executive is responsible for HR, finance, fundraising and managing delivery. She ensures that the charity delivers high quality, responsive services to meet targets set out in grants and contracts.

Staff hours fluctuated throughout the year, with several part-time staff increasing to full-time working during the height of the pandemic. At 30 September 2020, the charity employed 6 paid staff - 4.7 full-time equivalents - although one part-time member of staff (0.4 fte) was on parental leave for the whole period.

The Board of Trustees appoints all staff, including key management personnel, on a grade within the pay scale agreed by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services employees. It awards annual pay rises, set nationally by the NJC, taking into account the charity's financial position.

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VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) is the recognised volunteering infrastructure agency in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Our charity's objects are:

> The promotion of any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community of Tower Hamlets, Greater London, in particular the relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability or other social or economic disadvantage.
>
> The promotion and advancement of voluntary work for charitable purposes for the benefit of the community, predominantly in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, but additionally promotion and advancement of voluntary work sub-regionally, regionally and nationally.

In forming our objectives, the trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard for the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

Mission

Our mission is to provide a comprehensive volunteering infrastructure service to non-profit groups and communities in Tower Hamlets, to increase the quality, quantity and impact of volunteering in the borough.

Core Functions

Our 5 core functions are:

- **Brokerage** – ensuring that the general public and all sectors are better informed about and have access to an effective and efficient brokerage service
- **Good Practice Development** – helping organisations to improve or attain positive consistency in their volunteering programmes
- **Developing Volunteering Opportunities** - increasing and improving the quantity, quality, and diversity of volunteering locally
- **Voice of Volunteering** – creating an increased awareness of issues impacting volunteering
- **Strategic Development of Volunteering** - engagement with local networks and decision-makers to create a positive environment in which volunteering is flourishing.

We also host the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF), supporting voluntary and community sector organisations that provide services to children and young people in Tower Hamlets. Most of these organisations involve volunteers in their work.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets was established in July 2008 as an independent charitable company by a founding team of four committed volunteers, who became its initial trustee board and Chief Executive. The charity celebrated its twelfth full operational year on 30 September 2020.

The Volunteer Centre holds Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation (VCQA) - the widely recognised quality mark for volunteering infrastructure organisations, assessed and awarded by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). It demonstrates that we are fit-for-purpose and deliver the five core Volunteer Centre services to a consistently high standard. This award is valid until 2022.

1. Volunteer Brokerage

We continued to provide a brokerage service, providing information about volunteering and matching people who live, work or study in Tower Hamlets to volunteering roles.

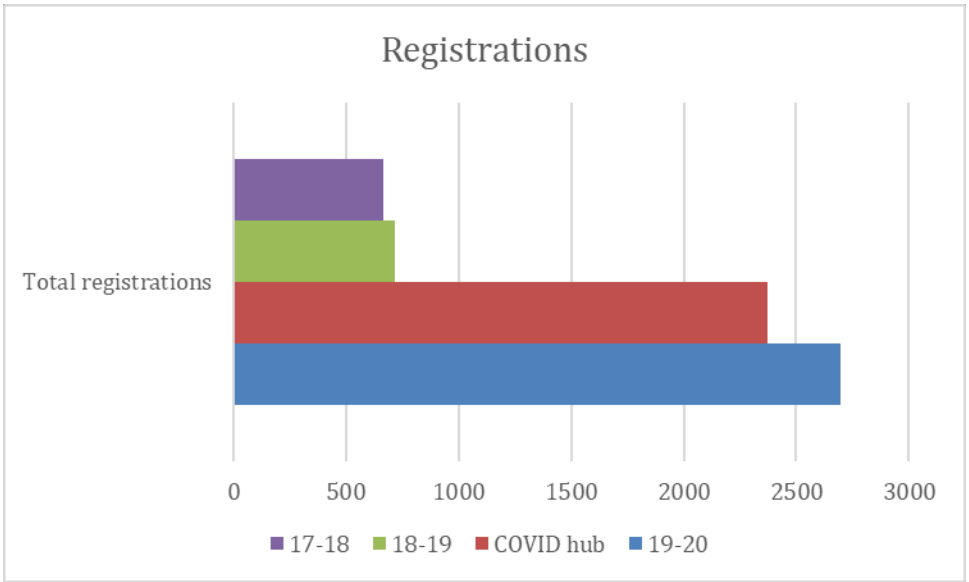
On 17 March 2020, Tower Hamlets Council asked us to develop and run a Tower Hamlets COVID-19 Volunteering Hub to source local volunteers who could respond to the coronavirus emergency. We worked at pace to set up the Volunteering Hub, and it was launched on 19 March 2020.

Operating the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub required a different model of working, to ensure that critical volunteer roles were advertised and filled rapidly. By upgrading our MailChimp subscription, we quickly developed a system of sending daily/weekly alerts to registered volunteers to inform them of new roles and encourage applications. With support from Simply Connect, we developed a new reporting query that allowed us to download, and share with organisations, lists of volunteers that had expressed an interest in specific roles. This way we were regularly able to broker volunteers to organisations in under 24 hours.

Volunteer Numbers

The response from local volunteers was phenomenal during the pandemic. Between 19 March 2020 and 30 September 2020, we had 2,373 new registrations, compared to 323 registrations received between 1 October 2019 and 18 March 2020. Across the whole year, we registered an average of 225 volunteers per month, compared to 60 people a month in 2018-2019.

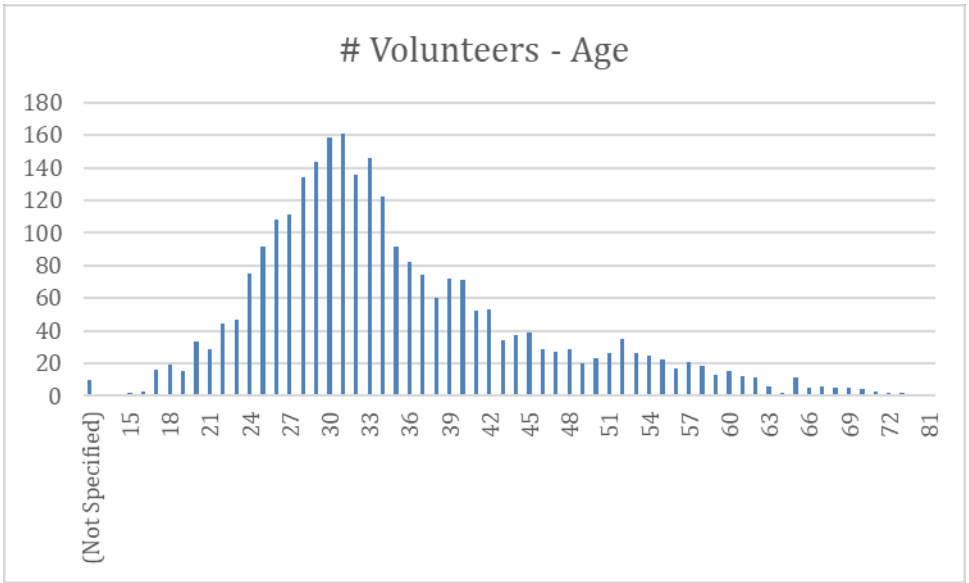
There were a total of 2,696 volunteer registrations between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2020. This compares to 716 registered volunteers in 2018-2019 - a 277% increase.



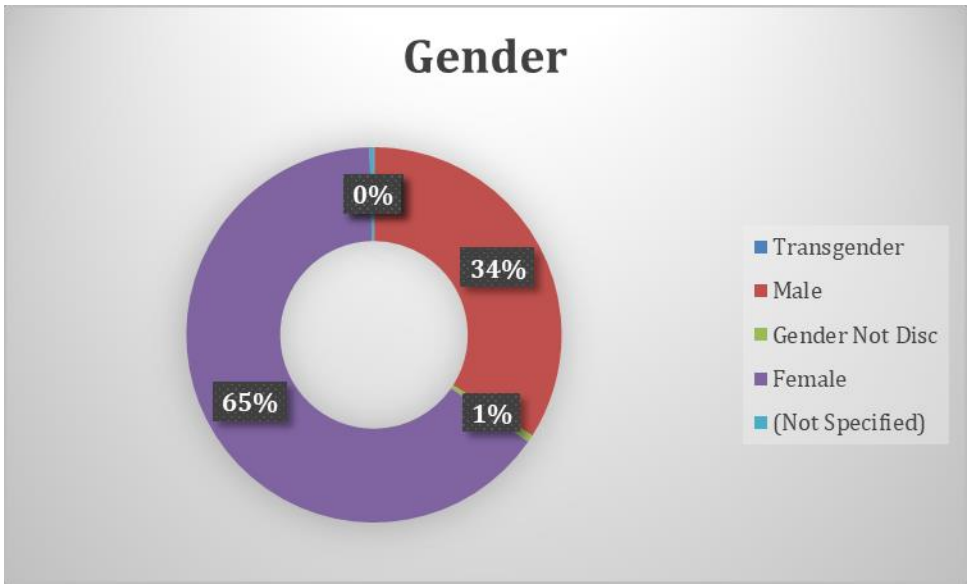
Client Demographics

We continued to provide an inclusive brokerage service to a wide range of potential volunteers, reflecting the diverse communities in Tower Hamlets. We requested equalities data at the point of registration, but clients always had the option to withhold some personal information.

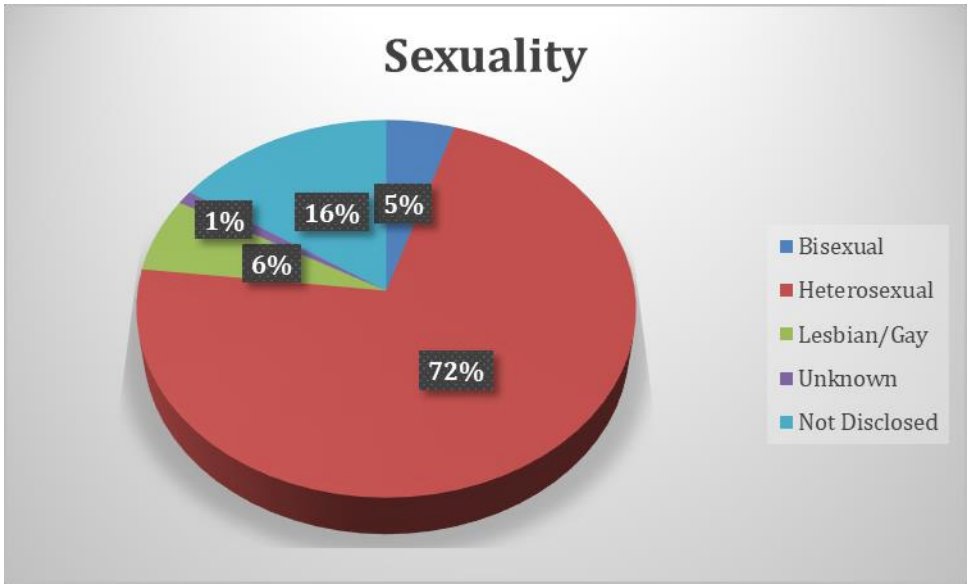
In terms of age, the largest groups were 30 year-olds (159 registrations) and 31 year-olds (161). The oldest volunteer who registered was 81 and the youngest was 14. This year almost two thirds (63%) of volunteers were under 35 (4% lower than in 2018-2019).

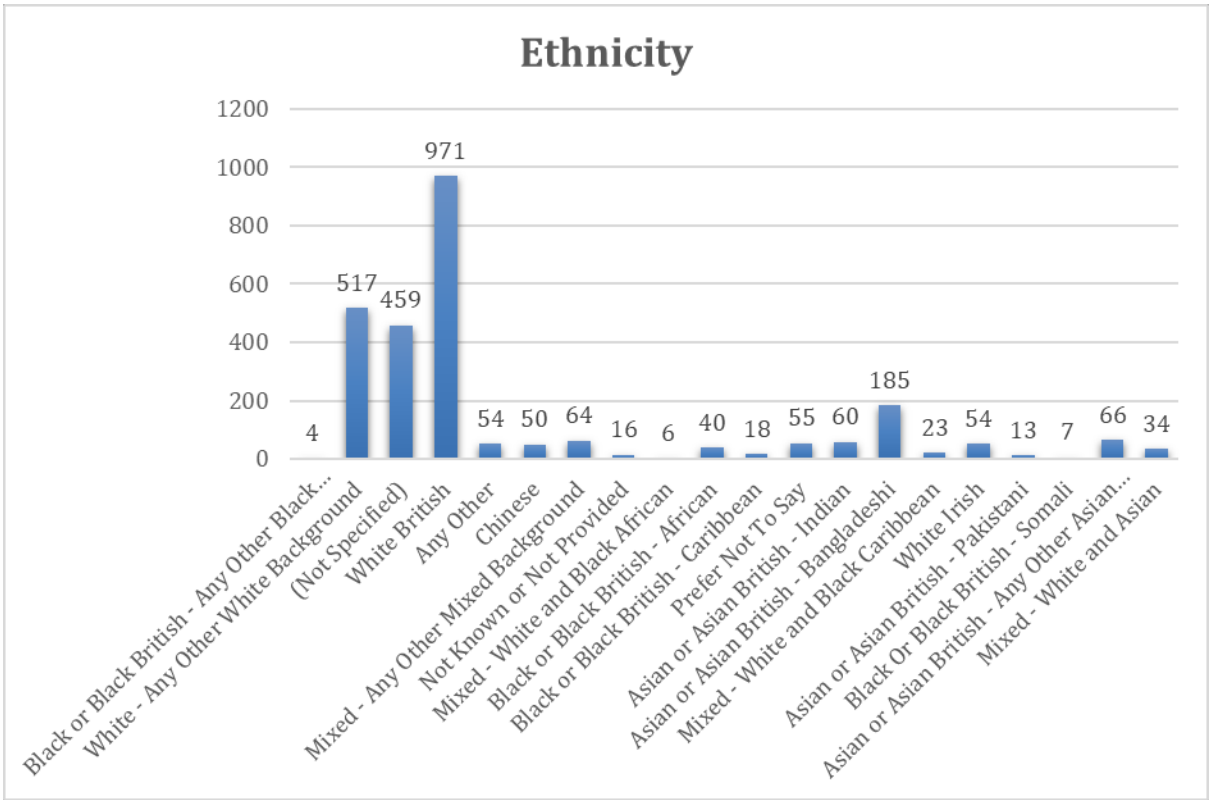


This year 65% of all volunteers that disclosed their gender defined themselves as female (68% in 2018-2019). We saw a small rise in male volunteers, with 34% of registrants identifying as male (32% in 2018-2019), continuing a trend of more men coming forward to volunteer over the last couple of years. Two volunteers identified as transgender. A further 27 volunteers chose not to disclose, or did not specify their gender.



This year saw a further reduction in number of volunteers defining as “heterosexual” (a 5% drop compared to 2018-2019, which was already 4% lower than 2017-2018). The percentage of volunteers identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual rose significantly to 11%, up 4% from the previous year. A further 17% of volunteers chose not to disclose their sexuality.

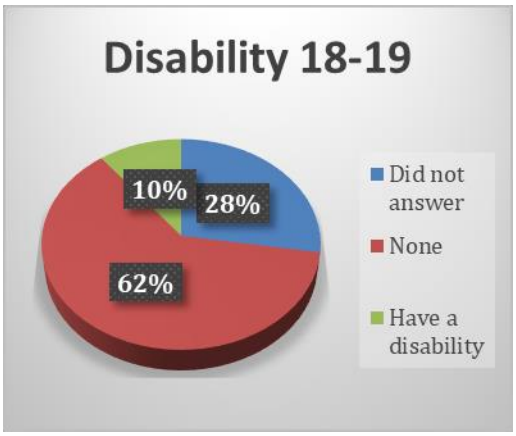


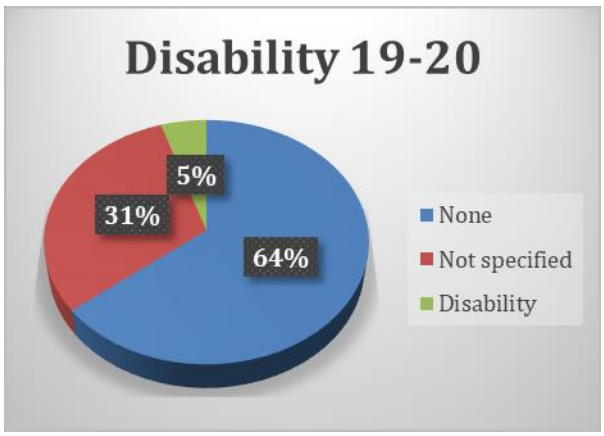


The huge increase in registrations during the pandemic considerably altered our volunteer demographics in terms of ethnicity.

Of all registrants that disclosed their ethnicity, the largest group was “White British” at 36% (up 8% on 2018-2019). The next largest ethnic groups were “White–Any Other Background” at 19% (up 6%), and “Asian/Asian British–Bangladeshi” at 7% (down 23% from the previous year).

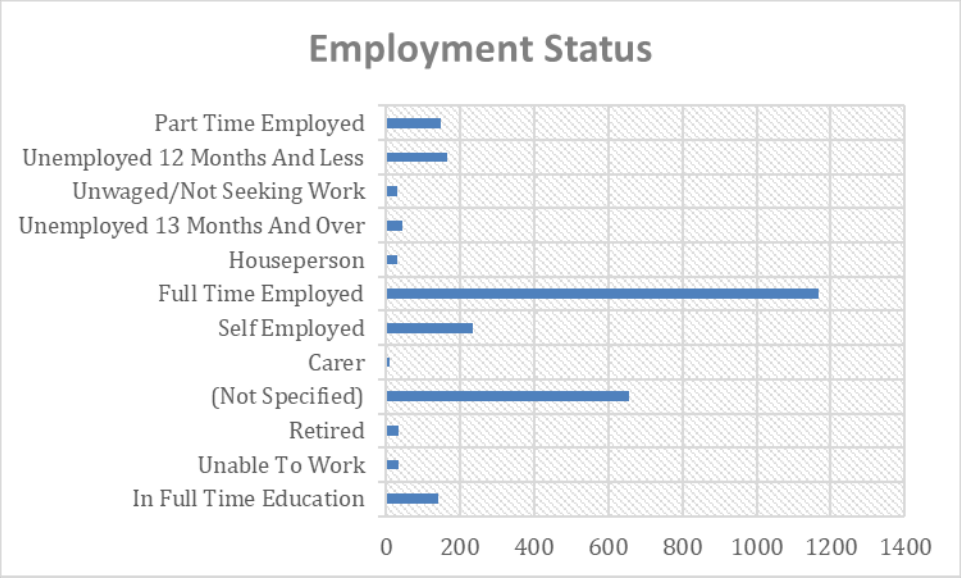
23% of all volunteers were from BAME communities, a large drop compared to 54% in the previous year. However, it is worth noting that almost 20% (530 volunteers) chose to withhold data about their ethnicity this year. It is likely that some, but not all, of these volunteers were from BAME communities.



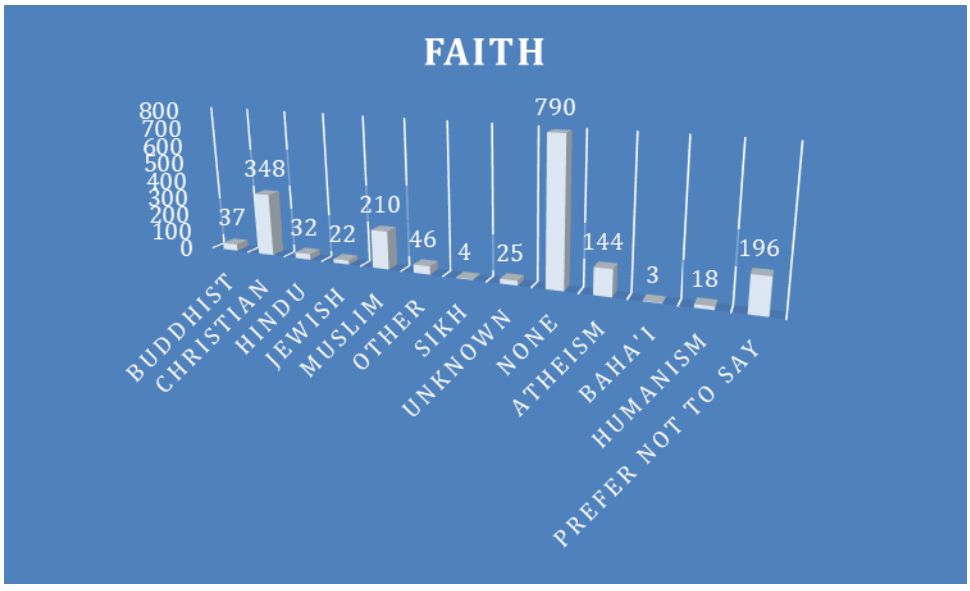


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This year the number of volunteers that disclosed a disability dropped to 5% from 10% in 2018-2019. Of all volunteers that stated they had a disability, 31% selected “mental health”, 26% selected “other medical condition (asthma, diabetes, etc)”, and 22% selected “something else”.



We also saw a dramatic shift in volunteers’ employment status this year. A total of 58% of volunteers were employed – 43.5% full-time, 5.5% part-time, and 9% self-employed. The significant increase in employed people volunteering likely reflects large numbers of residents who were furloughed, or working flexibly from home during the pandemic. Just 8% of all volunteers were unemployed, short-term or longer-term, compared to 23% in 2018-2019.



Volunteers from all religions and none used our brokerage service. Of the 1,875 people who disclosed data about their faiths (30% of registrants skipped this question), volunteers of no faith were by far the largest group, followed by Christians, Muslims and Atheists. In the previous year, the largest faith group was Muslim, followed by None, Christian and Atheist.

Contacts and Tracking

This year we delivered 54 one-to-one brokerage support sessions, providing bespoke support to those volunteers who needed it. These sessions were suspended on 17 March 2020, when we pivoted to delivering the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub online and were no longer able to see clients face-to-face. The reduction in one-to-one brokerage sessions in the early part of the year may also reflect more volunteers choosing to use digital services.

With the launch of the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub we started working on different metrics. In 2019-2020, we received 6,165 applications for volunteer roles (compared to 1,136 in 2018-2019) - a 443% increase. Details of each application were passed to the relevant Volunteer Managers, and volunteers were also provided with contact details for organisations. This was to facilitate contacts and ensure applications did not go missing or ignored.

During the pandemic we worked at full capacity to broker volunteers as quickly as possible to organisations that needed them. This meant that our capacity to track volunteer placements was limited. During 2020-2021, we will undertake a comprehensive tracking exercise to establish placement rates.

2. Good Practice Development

We continued to deliver activities to support and build the capacity of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) to implement good practice in volunteer management. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets funded this work with a Local Community Fund Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant.

Volunteer Managers' Training

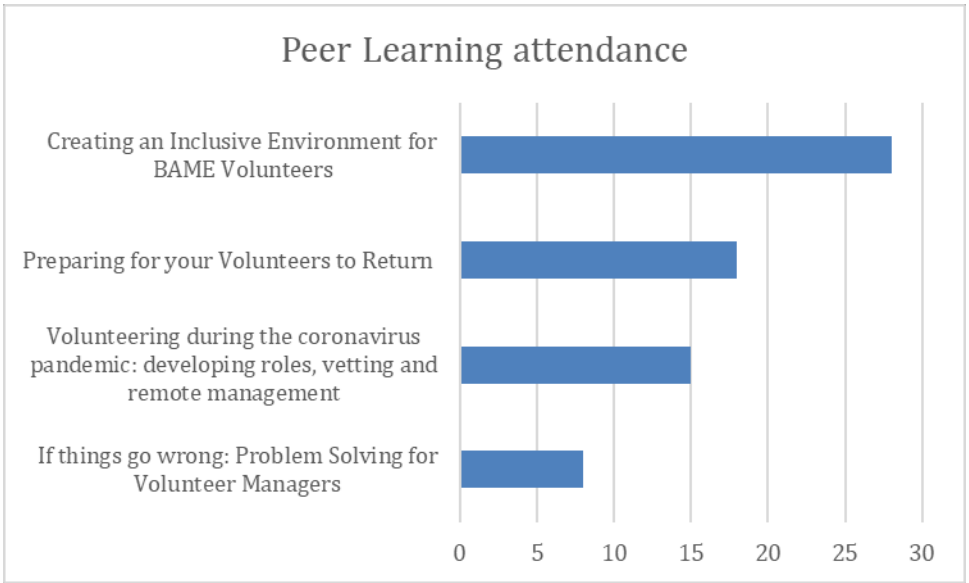
We delivered 6 half-day training courses for Volunteer Managers this year. Between 1 October 2019 and 19 March 2020, four training sessions were delivered in-person. After the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we switched to delivering training online via Zoom, providing 2 training sessions. A total of 69 Volunteer Managers attended our training, an average of 11 per course (an increase of 1 per course on the previous year).



78% of trainees completed evaluation forms. 97% of participants rated our training as "extremely useful" or "very useful", with 3% rating it as "fairly useful". 93% of trainees reported an increase in their knowledge or confidence in the subject area as a result of attending the training (an increase of 5% on 2018-2019).

Peer Learning Sessions for Volunteer Managers

We ran 4 free Peer Learning sessions, which proved extremely popular. A total of 69 participants attended - an average of 17 per session (6 more per session than the previous year). The sessions provided a blend of professional development and learning opportunities for people who manage volunteers. They included guest speakers and opportunities for peer support. During the early stages of the pandemic, these sessions provided a vital resource for Volunteer Managers to come together to share ideas and concerns and boost morale.



Bespoke Advice on Volunteer Programmes

We delivered 49 free one-to-one advice sessions to 26 organisations (9 fewer than last year). A post-advice questionnaire was completed 14 times by 12 organisations (2 organisations completed the survey twice, having received advice in two different quarters).

- An impressive 100% of respondents reported having progressed in levels of knowledge, confidence and skills.
- 92% anticipated being able to implement improvements to their organisation's volunteering practices, systems and procedures. The remaining 1 organisation was 'not sure' and requested further support from VCTH.

"We always really appreciate the support and 1-1 advice provided by VCTH. It is a relief to know that they are at the other end of an email or phone whenever we have a concern or issue to resolve".

We have strongly benefitted from the continued support of the VCTH team to improve our services involving volunteers, creating further inclusion and diversity and delivering training for us to continually improve our practices.

Advice was provided on a wide range of topics including: reviewing volunteer policies and procedures; recruiting volunteers; describing volunteer roles more clearly and in a way that would appeal to potential volunteers; providing sample templates (eg Volunteer Policy, Volunteer Agreement, application form, volunteer database); improving diversity and inclusion, and developing in-house training for staff on managing and supervising volunteers.

Factsheets

We researched and developed factsheets to provide an accessible resource for busy Volunteer Managers. Factsheets were e-mailed directly to registered organisations, and were subsequently made available to download, free-of-charge, from our website. This year we produced 2 new factsheets: '*Safeguarding and Volunteer DBS Checks during the Coronavirus Pandemic*' and '*Which Coronavirus Roles Require a DBS Check?*' Our Factsheets were accessed a total of 4,323 times during the year, up 228% on the previous year (1,319), showing a significant demand for this service.

Factsheets which remained available on website	**Downloads 1/10/19 – 30/09/20**
Saying No to Volunteers	27
Recruiting Male Volunteers	12
Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers Aged 50+	23
Creating an Inclusive Environment for LGBT+ Volunteers	7
Data Protection, GDPR and Volunteers	47
Volunteer Expenses and Rewards	20
Volunteering in Tower Hamlets – Key Trends	7
Supporting Volunteers Towards Employment	1
Virtual & Online Induction/Training for Volunteers	18
Volunteer Retention	29
Volunteer Induction	29
Training Volunteers	29
Involving Young Volunteers	10
Promoting Volunteering Opportunities	12
Insurance for Volunteers	25
Involving Volunteers who have Limited Time	9

New factsheets created and emailed between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2020	Opened when emailed and total opens/downloads
Safeguarding and Volunteer DBS Checks During the Coronavirus Pandemic	177 opened when emailed Total opens 1,521
Which Coronavirus Roles Require a DBS Check?	12 opened when emailed Total opens 2,497

Good Practice Tips

In our monthly e-bulletin, we included bite-sized advice on a variety of volunteer management issues, either in the form of answering a particular question (our 'Ask Evelyn' column) or a 'Top Tip'.

1. Ask Evelyn: Saying no to volunteers
2. Ask Evelyn: Selling your volunteer programme to funders and potential volunteers
3. Top Tip: Ways to say thank you to volunteers for their work over the year
4. Ask Evelyn: "*Our organisation is taking on new volunteers to help in the current COVID-19 crisis, supporting vulnerable and self-isolating people in the local community. Do we need to do DBS checks for new volunteers? Also how do we check their ID, as we won't be meeting them in person?"*
5. Ask Evelyn: "*Do I have to take up references for every volunteer before they start volunteering? We do have a policy to take references, but it can be time-consuming and often we don't hear back from the referees".*
6. Top Tip: How to encourage people who initially enquire about volunteering to actually progress their application and start volunteering
7. Ask Evelyn: "*I was wondering whether there is a risk assessment template for volunteers who have had things flagged on their DBS check?"*
8. Ask Evelyn: "*In these changed times, we need to do everything from a distance and avoid face-to-face contact. How do we maintain good practice in volunteer management?"*
9. Top Tip: Authorisation letters for volunteers when out and about during the 'stay at home' order
10. Top Tip: How to encourage volunteers to maintain social distancing
11. Ask Evelyn: "*At the height of COVID-19 we found that lots of people wanted to volunteer. However, in recent weeks, there has been reduced interest. What can we do to attract volunteers?"*
12. Ask Evelyn: "*As shielding was paused on 1 August, what good practice should I follow when bringing back volunteers who were shielding?".*

3. Developing Volunteering Opportunities

An integral part of developing new volunteering opportunities is registering the Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) that offer them. We only register not-for-profit organisations such as charities, community groups, social enterprises and public sector bodies. They are usually based in, or provide services in, the borough of Tower Hamlets. We conduct a health check with each new organisation, via an in-depth telephone meeting, to ensure that the volunteer roles they offer are meaningful, appealing and as safe as possible.

This year we registered 30 new VIOs (6 more than the previous year). This brought the total number of organisations registered with VCTH to 469 at 30 September 2020 - a net increase of 29 organisations in a year.

During the first half of the year (October 2019 – March 2020) it was business as usual, whereas during the second half of the year (April – September 2020) our work was very much driven by our response to the pandemic.

We immediately worked at pace with organisations in the borough that were delivering vital services to some of the most vulnerable members of the community. We systematically contacted organisations registered with us to ask about their essential volunteer requirements and help them develop diverse, appealing opportunities for volunteers. We developed and promoted 450 volunteering roles over the entire year. Of these, 211 were new roles, a significant increase of 151% on the previous year's 84 new roles.

We advertised volunteer roles for an initial period of up to 3 months, or until organisations told us they no longer needed volunteers. We routinely alerted Volunteer Managers once the required number of volunteers were referred, and invited them to renew adverts for a further 3 months, or to de-activate adverts. This process enabled us to maintain an accurate database of volunteering roles, giving us confidence that roles published on Volunteer Connect were current vacancies.

Although many traditional volunteering roles were put on hold by organisations due to the pandemic, we saw an uptick in critical roles responding to urgent needs in our community. We advertised both remote and face-to-face roles, ensuring they were in line with the COVID-19 government guidelines. Examples of roles advertised during this period include; food delivery volunteers, food preparation and packers, park rangers, telephone befrienders shopping volunteers, Sylheti-speaking support volunteers, youth mentors, High Street volunteers, and community contact tracers. We also saw an increase in demand for skilled volunteering roles such as social media curators, digital champions, IT systems analysts, film production volunteers (home-based), and online speakers.

4. Voice of Volunteering

One of the Volunteer Centre's core functions is to be the local voice of volunteering - creating an increased awareness of the issues impacting on volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations. We campaign for a volunteer-friendly climate, where volunteering is a key element of a democratic civil society, and is open to all. We strive to educate and influence key decision-makers and funders about the value of volunteering to communities and the benefits to individuals. We advocate for greater recognition of the costs of well-run volunteering programmes. We disseminate policy information and statistics, encourage organisations to think about how policies affect their volunteer programmes, and urge them to join relevant campaigns.

Campaigning and Informing

Throughout the year, we have kept 469 registered organisations informed and raised awareness of issues affecting them.

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In November 2019 we promoted national Trustees' Week and encouraged local organisations to submit nominations for the Mayor of London's Volunteering Awards.

As the pandemic hit and more of our member organisations began pivoting services to support vulnerable adults and children, safeguarding and vetting became a more prominent concern. Much of our work therefore revolved around raising awareness of changes to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). In March 2020 an "Ask Evelyn" column in our e-bulletin included a risk assessment template for organisations to use when volunteers have had issues flagged on their DBS checks. In April we promoted our new factsheet on "*Safeguarding and Volunteer DBS Checks during the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic*". In May we launched a new factsheet entitled "*COVID-19 Roles and DBS Checks*".

In July 2020, we assisted our registered organisations by giving advice on how to adapt to the COVID restrictions being lifted in the summer.

E-bulletins

VCTH produced monthly e-bulletins for Volunteer Managers. These included information about training, funding for volunteering programmes, policy developments, updates on campaigns, facts and trends, and volunteer management job adverts. Each e-bulletin included a "Top Tip", promoting an area of good practice, or an "Ask Evelyn" column, responding to dilemmas facing Volunteer Managers. We also use e-bulletins to promote our recently released factsheets. News sources regularly included Government departments, NCVO, and academic research. We promoted several awards schemes for volunteers. This year we added a dedicated funding section for small organisations.

Our e-bulletin was emailed to an average of 685 contacts each month, a decrease in our audience of 66 from the previous year. This was largely due to cleansing data to remove out-of-date contacts. Our engagement statistics were virtually identical to last year: we had a 19.6% opening rate, compared to 21% in 2018-2019.

Website

This year our website attracted an average of 4,082 page views per month, compared to 3,475 page views per month in 2018-2019, showing a 17% increase. The average time on page was 1m:21s, higher than the 1m:10s registered in the previous year. In the period between 15 March and 15 April 2020 (the first month of the COVID-19 pandemic) our website attracted 14,782 page views, compared to 3,697 during the same month in 2019.

We maintained links from our website to Volunteer Connect to help visitors browse our current volunteer roles and/or register online. The "search volunteer roles" button was clicked 4,827 times, 23% down compared to 2018-2019, and the "register your interest/login" button received 676 hits, showing a 28% decrease. However, it is worth noting that these decreases were caused by the re-design of our website homepage to direct visitors straight to the new COVID-19 Volunteering Hub sign-up page, which in turn produced 2,625 expressions of interest in the "Coronavirus - COVID-19 Relief Volunteers" role.

During the pandemic, we added a “Donate” button with a link to VCTH page on PayPal Giving Fund. This generated modest but welcome income of £707 from individual donors.

We developed a number of new volunteering case studies for our website, illustrating some of the roles that local people were carrying out to help their community, and the benefits the individuals felt they had gained by volunteering during the pandemic.

Work began this year on designing a new VCTH website. In November 2019, our Communications & Marketing Officer facilitated a focus group to gather input on the style, functionality and content of a new site. We recruited and inducted a Volunteer Photographer to take photos of volunteers and of Tower Hamlets locations for the new website. Progress on completing the website re-design was delayed in the second half of the year due to the pandemic, but will resume in 2021.

Digital Channels

In 2019-2020 the number of VCTH Facebook followers grew significantly from 683 to 987 - a 45% increase - with the bulk of the growth taking place in March and April 2020. We used our Facebook page to engage with local residents, to promote our latest volunteer roles.

We had 90 new followers on Twitter, reaching a total of 2,271 followers by the end of September 2020 – an increase of 4% on the previous year. We used Twitter to engage with other organisations and Volunteer Managers.

With the launch of the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub, we started sending out regular alerts to a mailing list of potential volunteers. By the end of September 2020, the list had grown to 3,586 contacts. We built this list by adding all of the volunteers on our Volunteer Bank prior to 19 March 2020, then including all volunteers who registered on Simply Connect after 19 March 2020. Volunteers who expressed an interest in COVID-related roles were also added. By 30 September 2020, we had sent out 52 email alerts with COVID volunteering roles, and several dedicated alerts advertising single roles.

Volunteers’ Week (1-7 June 2020)

Volunteers’ Week this year was rather different to previous years. COVID-19 restrictions prohibited gatherings of more than 6 people outdoors, and all indoor events. The usual award ceremonies and celebrations were unable to proceed. Instead, VCTH focused on marking Volunteers’ Week online, and encouraged other organisations to do the same.

During Volunteers’ Week we sent out a branded e-bulletin to registered organisations with a thank you message from the Mayor of Tower Hamlets. We also organised a Volunteers' Week Peer Learning session on “*Volunteering during the Coronavirus Pandemic*”.

We published posts on Facebook, encouraging more local people to start their volunteering journey during Volunteers’ Week. Both posts linked to different volunteer case studies. Similar content was published on Twitter, where we interacted with the LBTH official Twitter account, posted photos of the Peer Learning session, and a link to BBC London Volunteers’ Week coverage, where volunteering in Tower Hamlets was mentioned.

5. Strategic Development of Volunteering

As the volunteering infrastructure agency for Tower Hamlets, VCTH is widely recognised as the local volunteering expert in the borough, and we are regularly consulted on volunteering matters by local decision-makers. This year, more than ever, Volunteer Involving Organisations across Tower Hamlets looked to us for guidance, practical support and leadership on volunteering issues.

Working with Tower Hamlets Council

In March 2019, when the COVID-19 emergency began, our position as the established and well-respected strategic volunteering partner in the borough meant that VCTH was the obvious choice for the Council to choose to run the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub. We were invited to join the Council's Silver Community Mobilisation Operational Group to guide local volunteering plans to respond to the pandemic. There was a particular focus on ensuring that food and medication supplies were delivered to the most vulnerable members of our community, and on ensuring robust safeguarding.

Between March and September 2020 we worked in partnership with Tower Hamlets Council to facilitate volunteering. We sourced volunteers for a range of Council services and teams, such as Tackling Poverty, Economic Development, Children & Culture and Strategy, Policy & Performance. We advised Council staff on developing volunteer roles, and assisted with developing volunteer management training and guidance for Council workers.

Working with Public Health

The pandemic provided an opportunity for us to develop new relationships with senior staff at LBTH Public Health. Our Chief Executive participated in a range of regular meetings, including the Outbreak Health Protection Board and Safe Individuals Bronze Group, advising where volunteers might add value and support the delivery of services to residents. We helped recruit COVID-19 Community Champions to disseminate messages to residents, and Community Insight Volunteers to gather research on matters such as vaccine hesitancy, shielding, mental health, and attitudes towards COVID testing.

Co-Operate and the VCS Strategy

VCTH's Chief Executive and the VSCYF Co-ordinator both continued as members of Co-Operate – a joint strategic body made up of not-for-profit sector representatives. Co-Operate aims to transform how we work together to enhance the lives of local people. Between us, we represented the interests of Volunteer Involving Organisations and organisations providing services to children and young people.

Co-Operate met twice during the year, once in person and once online. The main focus of its work was consulting the sector about, and then developing, the new Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy 2020-2024. Through e-bulletins and meetings, VCTH encouraged local groups to have input into this new strategy. The VCS Strategy has a vision of a diverse and thriving VCS, working alongside residents, the council and partner organisations to achieve better outcomes for residents. Volunteering is one of the key elements.

We attended regular Conference Calls with John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets, alongside other key representatives from voluntary, community and faith sectors, keeping the Mayor abreast of how local volunteers were helping with the health emergency.

Partnering with Tower Hamlets CVS

Throughout 2019-2020 we strengthened our relationship with Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), ensuring that we avoided duplication of services and were representing the broadest possible range of local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations at strategic level. We delivered the first year of the Local Community Fund Infrastructure and Capacity Building programme in partnership.

National and Regional Bodies

We remained a member of two strategic volunteering bodies - London Plus, and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). Our Chief Executive attended London Plus Volunteer Centre Network meetings, engaging with staff in other London Volunteer Centres to share challenges and successes of facilitating the volunteering response to the pandemic across the Capital. VCTH staff also attended weekly NCVO webinars to hear from colleagues in Volunteer Centres across the country. These sessions enabled us to keep up-to-date with the latest developments, and to have input into volunteer policy-making within the Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

We continued our relationship with Team London, the Greater London Authority's volunteering department, working with them on Year 3 of The Big Volunteer project, and helping to promote the Mayor of London's Volunteering Awards.

Discretionary Business Rates Grants

In August 2020, VCTH became aware that discretionary business rates grants were available from the Council to VCS organisations based in rateable premises. There was very poor awareness of these grants and the deadline for applications was looming. VCTH had lobbied the Council to open business rates grants to local charities, after the first round of Government Grants had been unavailable to our sector. We obtained a list of organisations that were eligible for grants, but that had not applied. Our staff team contacted 33 VCTH and VSCYF member organisations individually to encourage them to apply. Most had been unaware of the grants, or had misunderstood the eligibility. As a result of our prompt intervention, 24 organisations each secured £5,000 of unrestricted funding, levering £120k of income into local Volunteer Involving Organisations.

6. Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF)

VCTH continued to facilitate the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF) for a twelfth year. The Forum acts as a conduit between voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations that provide services to children, young people and their families, and Tower Hamlets Council and other statutory partners. VCTH employs a part-time Co-ordinator, who liaises with all of these parties and ensures sharing of information and effective communication.

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The Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum met 6 times during 2019-2020, with average attendance of 16 organisations per meeting (a higher attendance level than the previous year). Three of the meetings were held on Zoom, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Attendance increased for these meetings, with members appreciating the possibilities for connection at an uncertain time. Forum meetings during this time included sections to support VSCYF members deliver their services, to share concerns and suggestions.

The meetings covered a variety of subjects:

- funding, commissioning and grants, including LBTH's Youth Services commissioning and the Holiday Activity Fund
- partnership working
- safeguarding
- the LBTH Youth Services review
- Stop and Search
- mental health
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) provision
- holiday hunger
- young carers
- early help
- the primary school places review
- social prescribing
- the new Children and Families Strategy
- the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy
- Play in Tower Hamlets.
- the impact of COVID-19 on children, families and organisations.

VSCYF members continued to benefit from the briefing sessions given by senior representatives from LBTH Children's Services and Culture Directorate.

The VSCYF Co-ordinator also organised themed meetings to support organisations to change the way they could deliver their services during the pandemic restrictions, including meetings with education providers to understand how schools were managing, and a training session with Public Health on Protection, Infection, Control.

The VSCYF Coordinator promoted COVID-19 specific funding opportunities for the immediate response to restrictions. Many of these had a swift turnaround and organisations were able to receive funding for food, toys and IT equipment for families. The Co-ordinator also promoted the Tower Hamlets Holiday Hunger Funding and supported 3 organisations to apply for it, all of which were successful. We also supported VCS organisations working with children, young people and families to apply for discretionary grants from LBTH.

We issued quarterly VSCYF e-bulletins, covering Forum and Tower Hamlets news, funding and training opportunities, and events for children, young people or organisations that support them. The database of VSCYF members shows that 10 new organisations joined the Forum during the year, bringing the total membership to 276 organisations – a net increase of 3 from the previous year. The total number of voluntary sector professionals on our database stood at 366 – a net decrease of 11 individuals.

Facilitating voluntary sector representation continued to be a key focus of the VSCYF Coordinator's work this year. Two voluntary sector representatives and the new Chair (appointed July 2020) met regularly to ensure good representation for all VSCYF members. Between them the VSCYF Co-ordinator and representatives ensured that each steering group/board had at least one voluntary sector representative at every meeting. The VSCYF Co-ordinator is a representative herself, and attended several partnership boards and steering groups.

As well as ensuring strong sector representation, the VSCYF Co-ordinator delivered a number of practical services for Forum members. She assisted 12 member organisations with funding applications, or helped them decide whether to apply (the same number as the previous year). In addition, she supported 7 organisations with their safeguarding policies and procedures (the same number as the previous year).

During the year, we organised 3 training workshops for VSCYF members. Average trainee numbers were similar to those per course in the previous year.

Course title	Date	Trainees
Identifying Realistic Outcomes and Targets for Funding Applications and Tenders	14 November 2019	4
A Space for Talk	21 November 2019	9
Infection Protection Control (delivered by LBTH Public Health)	30 June 2020	35

7. Consultancy Work, Income Generation and Short-term Projects

We undertook several pieces of consultancy work and short-term projects this year. As well as enabling staff to use their expertise and deliver additional services for the community, these projects enabled us to diversify our funding base and generate unrestricted reserves.

Everyone's Business

In June 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we began working with East London Business Alliance (ELBA) to pull together a network of grassroots organisations working to prevent or respond to Serious Youth Violence. The project, called "Everyone's Business", is funded through the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's (MOPAC) Violence Reduction Unit. It aims to explore the impact of business support from corporate volunteers to strengthen small organisations' capacity to support children and young people at risk of serious youth violence across 4 East London boroughs – Tower Hamlets, Newham, Waltham Forest, and Barking & Dagenham.

Our VSCYF Coordinator mapped organisations in Tower Hamlets working in the field of serious youth violence, bringing together 9 grassroots organisations to form the Tower Hamlets Everyone's Business Network. Each member organisation completed a needs assessment to help us plan support, which includes mentoring and training. The Tower Hamlets Everyone's Business Network held its first meeting in September 2020.

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Sodexo – Volunteer to Stop Hunger

Our "Volunteer to Stop Hunger" project, funded by the Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation, aimed to involve more volunteers in addressing food poverty. It began in mid-March 2020, just as the coronavirus pandemic erupted and the first lockdown was implemented. Although the pandemic created multiple challenges, it also provided unexpected opportunities for this new project. Suddenly, large numbers of people on low incomes, including older people, disabled people and those shielding for medical reasons, were forced to self-isolate, whilst urgently needing food, creating a huge demand for volunteers.

We vetted 12 new charities and registered them during the course of the 6-month project, exceeding our target of 10 by 20%. Our target for the project was to develop at least 20 new volunteering roles addressing food poverty, and we developed 33 new roles, 65% higher than target. The roles we advertised included food bank volunteers, food delivery volunteers, kitchen assistants, cooking volunteers, and food bag packers, to name a few.

Over the 6-months, we referred 442 volunteers for 33 roles in various charities and local community groups tackling food poverty, exceeding our target of 50 volunteers by an enormous 784%. This is an incredible achievement considering the pandemic and social distancing restrictions in place at the time.

We were also pleased to offer 11 different volunteering opportunities for Sodexo staff to volunteer over the summer and in September. These were roles in charities across the borough delivering a range of free summer activities for children and young people. Our offer included roles at Tower Hamlets Council's VCS Food Distribution Hub, set up to provide foodbanks and charities with bulk food supplies.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

During July and August 2020, we worked with local charities and schools that were delivering a range of free activities for children and young people, including sports, arts and crafts, and play schemes. All of the projects included a free lunch, and targeted children from low-income households who were eligible for free school meals, to ensure that they did not go hungry during the school summer holidays.

A total of 21 organisations, including schools, were funded by LBTH to deliver the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme. We supported 9 of these organisations, 5 of which were new registrations and 4 that were already registered with VCTH. We developed 11 volunteer roles such as sports coaches, lunchtime hosts, volunteer play workers, and food delivery assistants. A total of 76 volunteers were referred to these 9 organisations.

We developed and delivered ‘Holiday Hunger Volunteer Management’ training for the funded organisations, many of which were new to managing volunteers. 15 participants from 12 organisations attended the training. The content covered; adapting roles to appeal to volunteers during the pandemic, recruiting and vetting volunteers, managing risks and safeguarding, supporting volunteers and retention, and legal obligations including data protection and complying with COVID-19 guidance.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

London Plus (formerly Greater London Volunteering) – The Big Volunteer

VCTH was part of a consortium of four London Volunteer Centres, led by London Plus, delivering The Big Volunteer for a final year. This 3-year project, funded by Sport England, initially used the Big Half, London's half marathon, as a catalyst to encourage more people to get involved in volunteering at large-scale sports events and in grassroots sports clubs.

In the third and final year of the programme, 13 volunteers registered their interest.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 lockdown, we were forced to cancel volunteer training scheduled for March and April 2020, and mass sporting events were also suspended. These circumstances had a major impact on our ability to deliver this project.

We offered the volunteers alternative opportunities across the borough to support local charities and community organisations responding to the pandemic. In September 2020, we also invited them to support the London Marathon pre-event build, in partnership with Team London. This event, originally planned as a mass running event, was open only to elite athletes because of COVID-19. 30% of the 13 Big Volunteer participants undertook further volunteering roles at this event, and with community organisations in the borough.

We provided training and good practice advice to 8 sports organisations on various topics such as good practice in volunteer management, managing risks in volunteer programmes, and preparing for volunteers to return when lockdown restrictions were briefly lifted in summer 2020. We also helped a community grassroots sports and youth organisation to access an LBTH Discretionary Business Rates Grant.

NCVO - Investing in Volunteers (IiV)

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. Since September 2014, two members of VCTH have been certified by NCVO as Investing in Volunteers Advisors. During the year we advised 4 organisations on their IiV journey: Our Parklife, Limehouse Project, Link Age Southwark and St Christopher's Hospice. Two of these organisations were based in Tower Hamlets (Our Parklife, Limehouse Project), and were offered additional support, such as mock interviews, ahead of their external assessment. We are delighted that all four organisations gained the Investing in Volunteers quality mark.

Museum of London

We were commissioned by the Museum of London to deliver a training session on '*COVID-19: Managing Risks in Your Volunteer Programme*' for members of their network of small museums and arts projects. The training was delivered on 2 September 2020 via Zoom, and was attended by 16 organisations.

Centre 70

Towards the end of the year, we were contracted to provide volunteer management consultancy support to Centre 70, a voluntary sector organisation based in Lambeth that supports adults facing social, mental, financial or other personal difficulties. The

support will be provided via Zoom and email in 2020-2021 and will include reviewing their volunteer documentation, providing sample templates and practising negotiation and assertiveness skills.

Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV)

Between October and December 2019, we were able to offer Employer Supported Volunteering, organising team volunteering events for private sector companies, helping them to fulfil their corporate social responsibility commitments. We worked in partnership with several local charities including who hosted team volunteering days.

Four companies used our ESV service during the year. DZ Bank staff organised a Christmas Party for a group of elderly and disabled residents living in supported accommodation run by Creative Support. The Executive Team at Aveva Solutions bought and assembled new bedroom furniture for The Sick Children's Trust. Staff from Sodexo spent a morning baking cakes for families staying at Stevenson House in the run-up to Christmas. A team from Applicaster helped with a range of practical tasks and animal care Stepney City Farm.

Team volunteering events were suspended in March 2020, due to the pandemic. Sadly this meant that we delivered significantly fewer ESV events than in the previous year. A total of 36 corporate volunteers participated over 4 events, with an average team size of 9 volunteers. Between them, these employee volunteers contributed a total of 141 hours – the equivalent of 20 working days. Our ESV service generated income of £4,850 (down £5,200 from the previous year). Our ethical approach ensured that a good proportion of this income was passed on to the host charities, which also benefited from the volunteers' time and skills.

Income from Training and Room Hire

Our Local Infrastructure Grant from Tower Hamlets Council enabled us to subsidise fees for our volunteer management training courses, enabling us to charge as little as £30 for organisations based in the borough. Low costs meant our high quality training was affordable for most local voluntary organisations. We also reserved one free place per course for a micro organisation whose annual income was under £50k, further increasing accessibility. Half way through the year our training delivery moved online to Zoom. We took a decision to suspend charging for training as a way of supporting member organisations. Nevertheless, training income from the first 6 months of the year amounted to £1,370.

We continued to rent out our training/meeting room to not-for-profit organisations, as part of our commitment to providing an affordable space to the sector. Unfortunately, due to noisy construction work on an adjacent site, and then the pandemic, our ability to rent our meeting space was severely curtailed, reducing our room hire rental income to just £291 this year.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Thank You

To our staff

The trustees wish to extend our sincere thanks to the staff team. The COVID-19 pandemic made 2019-2020 an exceptionally challenging year for everyone, both professionally and personally, and our staff demonstrated enormous dedication, flexibility and resilience. Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets was at the very heart of the local volunteer response to the pandemic, ensuring that our community's most vulnerable residents were supported through an unprecedented health emergency. Our thanks to:

- Catherine Bavage, Chief Executive
- Zahanar Begum, Administrator & Brokerage Advisor
- Alex Nelson, Voluntary Sector Children & Youth Forum Co-ordinator
- Peppe Rella, Marketing & Communications Officer
- Evelyn Rodrigues, Training & Best Practice Manager
- Krithika Kalpathi Subramanian, Volunteering Advisor

To our volunteers

VCTH volunteers contribute their energy, time and skills to assist our team. In 2019-2020, we were supported by Robert Young, Volunteer Photographer.

To our funders

We are extremely grateful for the money and confidence that our funders have invested in Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets. During 2019-2020 they were:

- East London Business Alliance (MOPAC Violence Reduction Unit)
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- London Plus (formerly Greater London Volunteering) Restricted funding for the purchase of computer equipment.
- Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation
- City Bridge Trust (London Community Response Fund). Restricted funding for "Delivering Differently" when co-ordinating the local volunteering response to the pandemic.
- National Lottery Community Fund - Awards for All. Restricted funding for "Volunteering in Tower Hamlets" to make our brokerage service more responsive and accessible.

To our corporate supporters

Our thanks are extended to Ashurst LLP and to East End Homes for continuing to provide free venues for our training and peer learning sessions, and for our Staff and Trustee Away Day.

We also wish to thank Xanta Ltd for their corporate donation in support of our work.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

During the pandemic, it was not possible to bring together the staff and trustee teams for our usual strategic planning Away Day. Giving the rapidly changing environment in which we are currently operating, trustees have identified a number of short-term strategic priorities, which will be reviewed throughout 2021:

1. **Recruit and retain the right people (staff and trustees) to deliver VCTH's mission**
2. **Prioritise the wellbeing of staff and trustees**
3. **Effectively deliver VCTH's core functions**
   - through new projects that are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and through pre-existing funded projects. Projects will be monitored and adapted as needed so that they are accessible to, and represent, the diversity of the community we serve
4. **Prioritise fundraising and the financial stability of VCTH**
5. **Manage the workplace environment**
   - moving temporarily to an office-free model, including vacating the existing premises, setting up temporary solutions and ensuring satisfactory working from home arrangements for staff
6. **Ensure regulatory compliance**

In the year ahead we hope to:

- Refresh our Strategic Plan and develop a new Funding Strategy
- Finalise and launch our new website, making it more accessible and giving it a fresher, more modern feel, with the options to carry out online fundraising and host video clips
- Secure further funding for the Volunteering Hub so that we can continue to lead the local volunteering response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including helping to deliver the vaccination programme in Tower Hamlets
- Continue to deliver projects where volunteering offers solutions to the most pressing issues in our community, such as addressing serious youth violence
- Undertake a comprehensive tracking exercise to establish volunteer placement rates within organisations supported during the pandemic, and better understand our impact.
- Review the demographics of volunteers registering with VCTH and develop strategies for further increasing diversity and inclusion. Consider how the report of the Tower Hamlets Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Inequalities Commission should inform our work, particularly in the areas of community leadership and governance.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

VCTH started the year with a budget that projected a deficit of £40,883, intending to use some unrestricted reserves to cover this, as well as generating additional in-year income. We ended the year with a surplus of £35,672. Net current assets (working capital) held at 30 September 2020 amounted to £62,128.

Reserves Policy

At the end of the charity's twelfth operational year, our overall reserves increased by 134% from £26,456 in September 2019 to £62,128 in September 2020. Of these reserves, £50,857 were unrestricted and £11,271 were restricted funds.

Trustees last reviewed our Reserves Policy in February 2021, and have committed to review it bi-annually. Our Reserves Policy adopts a risk-based approach. VCTH strives to maintain free reserves at a level which cover liabilities and winding up costs in the event of the charity's closure, and which enable the charity to carry on its day-to-day business in terms of cash flow. The majority of our liabilities relate to statutory redundancy payments to staff.

On completion of a review of risks, trustees and the Chief Executive identify a target range for free reserves. The maximum reserves figure will not normally exceed 3 months' running costs. A target reserves range of £35,787 to £45,000 has been set for the year commencing October 2020. This range will be reviewed in the summer of 2021. Trustees recognise that the upper end of this target range is stretching in the current economic climate. Reserves can only be built by generating earned income, and through contracts, rather than through grant funding. Reserves will be used to provide income to fulfill our charitable objectives.

Trustees' Responsibilities Statement

The trustees (who are also Directors of VCTH for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose, with reasonable accuracy, at any time, the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware;
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Auditors

In 2019-2020, the trustees re-appointed Myrus Smith Chartered Accountants as the charitable company's auditors.

This report has been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective January 2019) and in accordance with the special provisions relating to companies subject to the small companies regime within part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 15 June 2021 and signed on its behalf by:

……

Alice Sims, Chair and Trustee

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 30 September 2020 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 30 September 2020, and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the charitable company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets …/Cont'd

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Report of the Trustees, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report (incorporating the directors' report) for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies' regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets …/Cont'd

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement (set out on pages 29 and 30), the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Stephen Jones FCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Myrus Smith
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors
Norman House
8 Burnell Road
Sutton, Surrey
SM1 4BW

15 June 2021

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Statement of Financial Activities
(including Income and Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 30 September 2020

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Income from:					
Charitable activities	**2**	132,152	101,048	233,200	184,115
Total Income		**132,152**	**101,048**	**233,200**	**184,115**
Expenditure on:					
Charitable expenditure	**3**	107,628	89,900	197,528	195,277
Total Expenditure		**107,628**	**89,900**	**197,528**	**195,277**
Net income/(expenditure)	**7**	**24,524**	**11,148**	**35,672**	**(11,162)**
Transfers between funds	**13**	(123)	123	-	-
Net movement in funds		**24,401**	**11,271**	**35,672**	**(11,162)**
Funds brought forward	**13**	26,456	-	26,456	37,618
Total funds carried forward	**13**	**£ 50,857**	**£ 11,271**	**£ 62,128**	**£ 26,456**

All income and expenditure is derived from continuing activities.

The SOFA includes all gains and losses recognised during the year.

The notes form part of these accounts.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Balance Sheet
As at 30 September 2020

	Notes	2020 £	2019 £
Current assets			
Debtors	**9**	9,747	9,608
Cash at Bank		80,063	44,069
		89,810	53,677
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**10**	(27,682)	(27,221)
Net current assets		**62,128**	**26,456**
Net assets	**11**	**£ 62,128**	**£ 26,456**
Funds:			
Unrestricted funds			
- General fund	**13**	50,857	26,456
Restricted Funds	**13**	11,271	-
Total funds		**£ 62,128**	**£ 26,456**

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to small companies within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the directors and trustees on 15 June 2021 and signed on their behalf:

.....
Alice Sims
Chair and Trustee

The notes form part of these accounts.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

1. Accounting policies

General information and basis of preparation
Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets is a private company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is given in the "Reference and Administrative Information" on page 3 of these financial statements.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention. The financial statements are presented in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity.

The significant accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all years presented unless otherwise stated.

Income recognition

Items of income are recognised in the financial statements when all of the following criteria are met:

- The charity has entitlement to the funds;
- any performance conditions have been met or are fully within the control of the charity;
- there is sufficient certainty that receipt of the income is considered probable; and
- the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from performance related grants and contracts is recognised as the charity earns the right to consideration through delivery of the specified services.

Expenditure recognition

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount can be measured reliably. Expenditure includes all irrecoverable VAT which is included as part of the relevant cost.

Expenditure on charitable activities comprises those costs associated with the delivery of the various activities and services for the charity's beneficiaries.

Expenditure includes those costs of a direct nature which can be allocated to a specific activity and also includes indirect costs, including governance costs that do not relate to a specific activity but are necessary to support those activities. Support costs are apportioned to each activity on the basis of staff time.

1. Accounting policies/contd…

Fund accounting

Unrestricted general funds are freely available for use in furtherance of the objects of the charity and which have not been designated for specific purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds set aside by the trustees for particular purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which can only be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor or which have been raised for a particular purpose.

Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible assets costing more than £1,500 are capitalised and are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation.

Leases

Operating lease rentals are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

Pensions

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charity's pension scheme are charged in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year to which they relate. The charity has no liability under these schemes other than for the payment of those contributions.

Debtors and creditors

Debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and which are receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised in expenditure.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

2. Income from Charitable activities

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	2020 £	2019 £
LB Tower Hamlets:				
Voluntary Sector Children & Youth Forum (Third Sector Co-ordinator)	39,989	-	39,989	38,320
Mainstream Grant/Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant	-	63,000	63,000	61,503
COVID 19 Volunteering Hub	46,251	-	46,251	-
Brokerage Residents	-	-	-	24,500
Brokerage Staff	-	-	-	33,333
Discretionary SBRR grant	5,000	-	5,000	-
Holiday Hunger	1,300	-	1,300	-
Other consultancy	-	-	-	600
Total LB Tower Hamlets	**92,540**	**63,000**	**155,540**	**158,256**
London Plus (Greater London Volunteering)	-	3,750	3,750	4,680
City of London Corporation	-	-	-	3,333
City Bridge Trust - London Community Response Fund	-	24,307	24,307	-
East London Business Alliance (MOPAC)	8,000	-	8,000	-
Greater London Volunteering - Big Volunteer	15,240	-	15,240	-
National Lottery Community Fund - Awards For All	-	9,991	9,991	-
Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation	5,000	-	5,000	-
Other Consultancy Income	6,945	-	6,945	13,766
Training, Room Hire and Other Income	4,427	-	4,427	4,080
Total	**£132,152**	**£101,048**	**£233,200**	**£184,115**

Section 37 Statement: During the period, the grants receivable from LB Tower Hamlets were expended on various projects for the purposes for which they were given.

Of the LB Tower Hamlets income of £158,256 recognised in 2019, £96,753 related to unrestricted funds and £61,503 to restricted funds.

The rest of the charitable activities income of £25,859 recognised in 2019 all related to unrestricted funds.

3. Cost of charitable activities

	Direct Costs	Support Costs	Total 2020	Total 2019
Volunteering services	£160,352	£37,176	£197,528	£195,277

Of the £197,528 (2019 - £195,277) expenditure recognised in 2020, £107,628 (2019 - £125,688) was charged to unrestricted funds and £89,900 (2019 - £69,589) was charged to restricted funds.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

4. Analysis of direct costs

	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Wages and salaries	157,463	153,249
Activity costs	1,972	5,009
Staff and volunteer training and recruitment	485	135
Travel costs	294	981
Volunteer expenses	138	257
	£160,352	£159,631

5. Analysis of support costs

	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Office costs	6,524	7,268
Premises costs	16,950	19,249
IT support	1,832	1,955
Computer and website costs	5,428	642
Other costs	625	788
Governance costs (note 7)	5,817	5,744
	£37,176	£35,646

6. Governance costs

	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Audit and accountancy fees	5,709	5,157
AGM/Annual review	108	285
Trustee meetings and training	-	302
	£5,817	£5,744

7. Net income/(expenditure)

The net income/(expenditure) for the year is stated after charging:

	2020	2019
Auditors' remuneration – Audit	£2,478	£2,256
Operating lease rentals	£16,656	£19,249

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

8. Staff costs	2020 £	2019 £
Wages and salaries	142,180	137,567
Social Security costs	10,129	10,122
Pension Costs	5,154	5,560
	£ 157,463	**£ 153,249**

No employee received total employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) of more than £60,000 in either year.

The total employee benefits received by Key Management amounted to £49,713 (2019 : £43,540). Under FRS 102, employee benefits includes gross salary, employer's NIC, employer's pension contributions and benefits in kind.

The average number of employees during the period, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents was 3.5 (2019: 3.5). The average monthly number of employees was 5.3 (2019 : 5).

9. Debtors Due within one year	2020 £	2019 £
Prepayments	5,685	5,461
Other Debtors	4,062	4,147
	£ 9,747	**£ 9,608**

10. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year:	2020 £	2019 £
Deferred income	22,054	21,294
Accruals	5,628	5,927
	£ 27,682	**£ 27,221**

All of the £21,294 deferred income brought forward from 30 September 2019 was released to income in the year ended 30 September 2020. Deferred income relates to funding received but for which the performance conditions will be met in the next accounting period.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

11. Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Current assets	78,539	11,271	89,810
Current liabilities	(27,682)	-	(27,682)
At 30 September 2020	**£ 50,857**	**£ 11,271**	**£ 62,128**

Comparative information for the analysis of net assets between funds is as follows:

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Current assets	53,677	-	53,677
Current liabilities	(27,221)	-	(27,221)
At 30 September 2019	**£ 26,456**	**£ Nil**	**£ 26,456**

12. Operating Lease Commitments

At 30 September 2020 the total minimum lease commitments due under non-cancellable operating leases was as follows:

	2020	2019
Within one year	£11,903	£10,645

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

13. Movement in funds

Restricted Funds	At 1 Oct 2019 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers between funds £	At 30 Sept 2020 £
LBTH - Infrastructure	-	63,000	(63,123)	123	-
London Plus - Laptops	-	3,750	(3,750)	-	-
CBT/LF – Covid 19	-	24,307	(23,027)	-	1,280
National Lottery – A4A	-	9,991	-	-	9,991
Total restricted funds	**-**	**101,048**	**(89,900)**	**123**	**11,271**
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	26,456	132,152	(107,628)	(123)	50,857
Total unrestricted funds	**26,456**	**132,152**	**(107,628)**	**(123)**	**50,857**
Total funds	**£ 26,456**	**£ 233,200**	**£ (197,528)**	**£ Nil**	**£ 62,128**

A description of each restricted fund is given in the Trustees Annual Report.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

13. Movement in funds…/cont'd

Comparative information for the net movement in funds is as follows:

Restricted Funds	At 1 Oct 2018 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers between funds £	At 30 Sept 2019 £
LBTH - MSG Priority 1	(85)	18,092	(20,638)	2,631	-
LBTH - MSG Priority 2	(286)	43,411	(48,951)	5,826	-
Total restricted funds	**(371)**	**61,503**	**(69,589)**	**8,457**	**-**
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	37,989	122,612	(125,688)	(8,457)	26,456
Total unrestricted funds	**37,989**	**122,612**	**(125,688)**	**(8,457)**	**26,456**
Total funds	**£ 37,618**	**£ 184,115**	**£ (195,277)**	**£ Nil**	**£ 26,456**

14. Taxation

As a registered charity, Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets is not liable to tax on its charitable activities.

15. Related Party Transactions

Refreshments and training costs amounting to £108 (2019: £302) were paid on behalf of 6 (2019 : 7) trustees.

The trustees received no remuneration in 2020 or 2019.

There were no other related party transactions in 2020 or 2019.