



## Community Leadership and Libraries Committee

11 May 2023

<b>Title</b>	<b>Draft Barnet Volunteering Strategy 2023-2026</b>
<b>Report of</b>	Chair of Community, Leadership & Libraries Committee
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	No
<b>Key</b>	No
<b>Enclosures</b>	Appendix 1. 2023-2026 Volunteering Strategy – Building Stronger Communities in Barnet.
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### Summary

This strategy sets out a vision for developing volunteering in Barnet for the next three years. It includes proposals for how we: increase volunteering; recognise the contribution of volunteers and enable people to share their skills where the sector needs them most. It has been written by Volunteering Barnet and coproduced in partnership with over 200 volunteers and voluntary community faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector organisations.

Volunteering Barnet has been the borough's National Council for Voluntary Organisations' (NCVO) accredited volunteer centre since 2015, providing the overarching volunteering support for groups and volunteers. Its online database connects voluntary organisations with over 6000 local people who have registered to volunteer. Its services include hosting support sessions and induction sessions for volunteers, and providing training, tailored support and guidance for organisations.

It is believed that across the UK, a quarter of the population is regularly involved in informal forms of volunteering. In 2020/21 at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is estimated that half the UK population volunteered at least once. During that year, a remarkable 16.3m people volunteered through local groups, club or organisations, highlighting the significance of volunteering to the foundation of society, for both individuals and for the voluntary sector.

In Barnet we saw hundreds of our residents volunteering for the first time during the pandemic, as the community came together to support the most vulnerable. As the borough recovers and returns to normality, we need to retain this community spirit and build on it. There are many benefits to this. Volunteers are not only the lifeblood of our VCFSE sector, but volunteering also provides a range of benefits to individuals. It can increase confidence, wellbeing and employability.

The Community Participation Strategy 2022 commits the council to involving residents more meaningfully in the council's work to improve the borough. The many diverse organisations that make up Barnet's VCFSE sector are essential in enabling this. Not only do they provide vital services to our residents, but they involve large numbers of volunteers giving their time, skills and knowledge for the benefit of our community. As a council we aim to showcase this good work whenever we can and celebrate the contribution volunteers make to our borough.

This is a strategy for everyone in Barnet. It includes priorities for the council, our statutory partners and businesses. Together we can build stronger communities through volunteering.

## Officers Recommendations

1. That members approve the draft Volunteering Strategy 2023-26.

### 1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Volunteering Barnet has been the council's official volunteer service since 2015 and is one of the organisations that make up the Barnet Together Alliance. The service is provided by Groundwork London an organisation with extensive expertise in community participation.
- 1.2 This is Barnet's first ever dedicated strategy for volunteering, and there are several reasons why this is the right time to be producing one. The post-pandemic landscape means there is a renewed interest in volunteering and grassroots community action. Hundreds of our residents volunteered for the first time during Covid, and we also saw new ways of volunteering arise in the face of the crisis. This has not only generated more willingness to volunteer but a more diverse range of ways in which people can do so. We need to maximise the opportunities this presents.
- 1.3 The council's ambitions to involve residents in a collaborative 'listening' borough were set out in the Community Participation Strategy 2022. One of the pathfinder projects in the strategy was to boost grassroots participation and grow our VCFSE from the ground up. Volunteering is one of the principal ways of achieving this. The sector is sustained by its volunteer workforce and its future depends on creating more opportunities for people to give their time in a way that makes the best of their skills and fits around their other commitments.
- 1.4 We are building this strategy on a strong foundation. In 2022, the Volunteering Barnet volunteer survey showed that among our 6000 registered volunteers, 38% are volunteering once a week or more frequently. Volunteers reported that volunteering helps them feel more connected to the local community, leading to a sense of belonging and purpose. There were high levels of satisfaction among respondents, with the majority finding the experience enjoyable and meaningful, with a strong will to

continue. 92% of volunteers surveyed were interested in, or wanted to, continue to volunteer in the future.

- 1.5 The vision statement in the volunteering strategy is: *Together we build stronger communities by embracing and empowering volunteering in Barnet*. Volunteering benefits individuals, organisations and society. It boosts people's self-worth, enables organisations to deliver vital services and strengthens community cohesion. It is a vital tool in addressing inequalities and tackling the challenges facing our residents.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Approval of the draft strategy is required so that the objectives can be delivered.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

- 3.1 The alternative to this strategy would be to do nothing and continue with the current position.
- 3.2 This would risk missing opportunities to deliver genuine community benefits in Barnet. We have a thriving VCFSE sector in Barnet and thousands of residents who regularly volunteer, but there is huge potential to involve more people and achieve greater outcomes.
- 3.3 Without delivering these objectives for volunteering, the council will struggle to achieve its community participation outcomes.

## **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 Following approval, Volunteering Barnet and the council's Strategy and Engagement team will develop an action plan to ensure the objectives in the strategy are delivered over the next three years.
- 4.2 Processes for monitoring and tracking delivery will also be established and managed through the governance structures of the Barnet Together Alliance.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

### **5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 5.1.1 Our Plan for Barnet 2023-26 is the council's new corporate plan. It sets out our objectives for supporting our people, our places and the planet. The Volunteering Strategy supports these themes in some of the following ways:
- 5.1.2 People: The VCFSE sector in Barnet delivers essential services that tackle poverty, inequality and poor health outcomes. Many of these organisations are reliant on volunteering to sustain their business.
- 5.1.3 Places: Volunteering provides many opportunities for residents to participate in their local community.
- 5.1.4 The planet: Barnet is home to over a hundred community environmental groups and teams of volunteer litter pickers work every day to cleanse our parks and open spaces.

### **5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

- 5.2.1 The objectives of the strategy are designed to be delivered within the funding envelope of the Volunteering Barnet commission. The proposals are therefore cost-neutral to the council.

### **5.3 Legal and Constitutional References**

5.3.1 Under article 7 of the constitution this committee is responsible for general consultations and engagement policy not linked to projects under the terms of reference of other committees.

### **5.4 Insight**

5.4.1 Volunteering Barnet gather rich data insight from their volunteering systems, some of which is presented in the strategy. The council will Working with communities across Barnet is only possible with a comprehensive understanding of the communities that exist and their assets, resources and skills. Insight, therefore, is central to effective community participation. We will make sure to use existing and emerging insight and data to build this knowledge and inform our work with communities.

### **5.5 Social Value**

5.5.1 Volunteering is one of the most common vehicles for delivering social value, and is often part of an organisation's social value commitments. The strategy includes objectives for developing the council's own staff volunteering scheme and using assets in our own organisation to create social value outcomes for the community.

### **5.6 Risk Management**

5.6.1 Increasing community participation can carry some risks. These will be analysed and identified on an individual basis on projects with mitigation plans put in place.

### **5.7 Equalities and Diversity**

5.7.1 Pursuant to the Equality Act 2010, the council is under a legal obligation to have due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant 'protected characteristic' and those who do not share it; and fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant 'protected characteristic' and persons who do not share it. The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy, and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The council also has regard to the additional protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership even though this does not apply to certain parts of the public-sector equality duty.

5.7.2 The Volunteering Strategy actively advances equalities and diversity by supporting community groups that deliver services to vulnerable and lesser heard communities. The demographic profile of our volunteer workforce is kept under constant review to ensure its diversity reflects our borough's population.

### **5.8 Corporate Parenting**

5.8.1 The council expects partner organisations in the VCFSE and private sectors to agree with our corporate parenting pledge and support our endeavours to raise outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

## 5.9 Consultation and Engagement

5.9.1 The Volunteering Strategy has been written in partnership with volunteers and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs).

5.9.2 Over 200 volunteers, organisations and stakeholders were engaged initially, and collectively produced the vision, values and seven priority areas. Volunteering Barnet then consulted further on the recommendations that emerged from this, to produce a shared high-level action plan to help the Barnet Together Alliance, VCFSE sector, stakeholders and Barnet communities make it happen.

## 5.10 Environmental Impact

5.10.1 There are no direct environmental implications from noting the recommendations.

## 6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 [Community Participation Strategy](#) approved at Community Leadership and Libraries Committee, 31 October 2022.



# Volunteering Strategy 2023 -2026

## Building Stronger Communities in Barnet

### Forewords

We are delighted to publish Barnet's first volunteering strategy. This has been developed during the past year, reflecting on the Borough's experience in the covid pandemic, as well as the continued growth in community participation through volunteering, particularly in environmental and interfaith social action.

This strategy has been produced by Volunteering Barnet in consultation with over 200 volunteers and many VCFSE organisations. It sets out a programme for developing volunteering in Barnet over the next 3 years, including proposals for increasing volunteering; recognising, celebrating and accrediting the contribution of volunteers, and enabling people to share their skills where they are most needed. It is based on a partnership approach - including priorities for the council, our statutory partners and businesses.

At its core is a shared vision that "Together we build stronger communities by embracing and empowering volunteering in Barnet". Volunteering benefits individuals, organisations and society. It boosts people's well-being, confidence and employability, while enabling organisations to deliver vital services, and strengthen community cohesion. It is a vital tool in addressing inequalities and tackling the challenges facing people and communities.

We are building on a strong foundation – volunteering is a key part of local civic life, within and across faiths and communities, in our green spaces and public places. Volunteering Barnet's 2022 survey of 6000 registered volunteers showed that 38% are volunteering once a week or more, and that 92% of volunteers surveyed were interested in continuing volunteering in the future. There are high levels of satisfaction among volunteers who said that their participation helps them to feel more connected to the local community and increases a sense of belonging and purpose.

The Council's Community Participation Strategy commits us to transforming how we empower grassroots community action through effective partnership. Volunteering with so many people across the Borough is also an important space to listen to and learn from local residents. Thank you to everyone involved for your time, skills and knowledge - working together to care for people, our places and the planet.

### **Councillor Sara Conway, Chair of Community Leadership and Libraries Committee**

It's our pleasure to introduce the 2023-2026 Volunteering Strategy – Building Stronger Communities in Barnet.

As the Barnet Together Alliance (BTA), our belief is that a strong and thriving voluntary sector can make a real and lasting impact within the local community, and that partnership working is key to this success. This Volunteering Strategy recognises both the proud history and the diversity of our organisations and volunteers, and the social impact and benefits that volunteers contribute. It recognises the challenges we face as a society. It embraces inclusion, and the need to be flexible to the needs and requirements of both organisations and volunteers alike. It also identifies how as generous leaders we can promote, develop and share best practice and champion volunteering for the benefit of Barnet and all of its diverse communities.

Our vision is that together we will build stronger communities by embracing and empowering volunteering, enabling Barnet to unlock all the opportunities and benefits that volunteering and social action can offer.

### **Volunteering Barnet and The Barnet Together Alliance**

## Volunteers Sidebar:

Over 80% feel volunteering had positively impacted them

66% volunteer because they wanted to help others

52% want to support their local community

Over 75% of surveyed volunteers felt more connected to their community

## Introduction

Volunteering starts at grassroots level; from acts of kindness and social action, to emergency response initiatives and formal volunteering. It is through this breadth of action, collaboration and partnership working that volunteering contributes to civic life, and to active participation in building strong, inclusive, and resilient communities in Barnet.

Barnet is the second largest borough in London, with an increasingly diverse population, and a vibrant and active Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector (VCFSE). The sector is the conduit for responsive, targeted, local activity which enhances well-being. It unlocks citizen contributions through volunteering, and contributes to a strong and thriving sense of place.

Barnet has a strong tradition of volunteering, with its large VCFSE sector powered by community spirited residents. The pandemic however, saw a noticeable change in who was volunteering, how they volunteered and the types of volunteering that were undertaken in Barnet. New approaches emerged. Volunteers were driven to step up and support their neighbours in a way that suited them and that fitted into their everyday lives. Digital volunteering, neighbourhood initiatives, and informal and emergency volunteering grew, and many of the structures, practices and processes that existed in volunteering previously, were questioned. It is time to reflect on the last three years and consider how we can take on board the insight and lessons learnt, to improve and maximise all that volunteering offers in Barnet.

Barnet Council sets out its vision as a listening council within the Community Participation Strategy. It describes how it will put this approach into practice, by harnessing existing assets and relationships, while building new ways to work together with communities. Volunteering is central to enabling Barnet residents to be active participants in their communities and work with to make Barnet a better place to live, work and study.

Barnet's Volunteering Strategy has been developed considering the reflections and learning of volunteers, organisations and partners across all sectors. It sets out the collective vision, values and priorities required to develop, support and recognise volunteering for all, over the next three years. We recognise the challenges and opportunities this will pose, as the impact of the pandemic is still being felt across our communities. Alongside other challenges such as the cost of living, food insecurity, and the integration of new residents joining the borough, are also evident. Through the Strategy actions set out, we will show how we can support, maintain and grow volunteering for both individuals and Voluntary Involving Organisations (VIOs) together.



## Organisations Sidebar:

70% of organisations would like to be a part of a borough volunteer fair

42% of organisations wanted support and training on volunteer retention and reward / recognition of volunteers

Over 90% of organisations needed support with recruitment

## Context of Volunteering

Volunteers are crucial to our borough, its communities, and the economy. It is believed that across the UK, a quarter of the population is regularly involved in informal forms of volunteering. Half the UK population volunteered at least once in 2020/21.

During 2020-21, at the height of the pandemic, a remarkable 16.3m people volunteered through local groups, club or organisations, highlighting the significance of volunteering to the foundation of society, for both individuals and for the voluntary sector. This outpouring of public support during the early stages of the pandemic is a repeating pattern, as we have seen in response to local and national need, with over 150,000 people immediately registering for the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) report “Time Well Spent” (v4), shows that how people volunteer, and how Voluntary Involving Organisations (VIOs) manage volunteers, changed during the Covid-19 pandemic (reference 2). 70% of those surveyed had formally or informally volunteered, choosing roles to suit their lifestyle, priorities and values (reference 1). Opportunities to volunteer remotely, and more diversity among volunteers, are two positive changes the sector witnessed, that must continue into the future. Locality has been at the heart of this national volunteering picture, with 81% of volunteers undertaking roles in their local area (Reference 1). Borough-specific volunteering services such as Volunteering Barnet, part of Barnet Together, with input from local partners, stakeholders and local organisations such as the Jewish Volunteering Network, are therefore vital to enable local residents and organisations to connect with volunteering.

In Barnet, we have seen a similar pattern of volunteering to that seen regionally and nationally, with a shift in settings and in the types and range of volunteering activities undertaken. This includes more digital, home-based and local volunteering, new settings such as the NHS volunteers and active mutual aid groups, in addition to the Barnet emergency response volunteers who came forward. From that, emergency driven activities such as food and medicine deliveries, helping at vaccination centres, and befriending became core volunteering strands, which have continued to be maintained. In Barnet, as in other areas, we also understandably have seen some of our older volunteers step back from formal front line volunteering, but we are now seeing that trend reverse as volunteers return, albeit into settings where they are comfortable.

As a nation and a borough, we are aware of the need to address inequalities across society, including through volunteering. We are aware that inequalities could likely worsen in the face of the cost-of-living challenges we face, which will put additional pressure on individuals’ capacity to volunteer. Those working longer hours to pay bills have less time for volunteering. Simultaneously, charities face rising demand to support people experiencing financial difficulties, and may therefore need more volunteers to help.

Looking ahead to the next three years, volunteering in Barnet needs to remain flexible and accessible, so that everyone who lives, works and studies in the borough can support their local community in a way that fits their lifestyle and priorities. Support from volunteers will remain vital to the voluntary sector. This strategy

plays a role in setting out the steps we will take together as a borough over the coming years to make this happen.

## The Barnet Together Alliance

As early as 2019, Barnet Council was reviewing its strategic relationship with the local VCFSE, and the ways it supported infrastructure services for the sector. Volunteering and infrastructure were commissioned under two separate contracts held by Volunteering Barnet and Inclusion Barnet respectively. They both came together with a third organisation, Young Barnet Foundation – the infrastructure body for children and young people’s organisations to form a partnership known as Barnet Together.

In this capacity the three organisations provided representation for the borough’s VCFSE. This combined reach and influence proved vital at the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, and Barnet Together helped marshal frontline services and joined council staff in the planning and delivery of the emergency response for the community. This demonstrated what could be achieved in VCFSE infrastructure with greater collaboration and increased funding. The outcome was the establishment of the Barnet Together Alliance in 2022.

Building on the three-way Barnet Together partnership, the alliance includes the council as a fourth partner. This enables the close partnership working forged during the pandemic to continue and develop. In addition, an increased budget to the partner organisations enables them to deliver further for the sector and to grow the reach of their services. Much of the alliance’s first year has been about creating capacity in the partnership and establishing ways of working. This Volunteering Strategy not only sets out a plan for how Volunteering Barnet will deliver in this new era, but a wider vision for volunteering in the borough.

## The Barnet Community Participation Strategy

The local elections of May 2022 brought a change in the political administration of Barnet Council. One of the first strategic documents to be published under the new administration was the Community Participation Strategy. This sets out a vision for Barnet as a ‘listening council’ that works with communities to coproduce improvements to the borough and creates opportunities for residents to participate in the life of their communities. It lists five principles of community participation that the council has adopted:

- We go where people are
- We learn through doing
- We listen
- We are transparent, accessible and open
- We value community power

The strategy also includes four ‘pathfinder’ projects that will be delivered in 2023-24 in order to demonstrate how the principles can be applied and learn from new approaches. One of these pathfinders is to enable increased grassroots community involvement. The objective of this project is to support the growth of the VCFSE from the ground up and enable more people to get involved in civic life. Volunteering is key to this project’s success.

The Community Participation Strategy was followed in March 2023 by Our Plan for Barnet, the council’s new corporate plan. This goes further into defining the vision for Barnet in the next three years with a strong focus on tackling inequality and reducing poverty through community wealth building.

## A snapshot of volunteering in Barnet today

Volunteering Barnet has been the borough's National Council for Voluntary Organisations' (NCVO) accredited volunteer centre since 2015, providing the overarching volunteering support for groups and volunteers. Its online database connects voluntary organisations with over 6000 local people who have registered to volunteer. Its services include hosting support sessions and induction sessions for volunteers, and providing training, tailored support and guidance for organisations. It champions volunteering best practice to the voluntary sector in Barnet, and other VIOs, whilst making sure that volunteers have an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

In Barnet we have seen how volunteering can have significant benefits for the individual as well as for the causes they choose to support. Alongside the wider reciprocal benefits that come with regular volunteering, including improving mental health, and decreasing social isolation, a large proportion of Barnet volunteers are motivated to volunteer to support a cause, help others and make a difference. Barnet Council through its own employee volunteering programme inspires its staff to give time, to support local charities and give back to the community, while in return they build skills and increase wellbeing.

Additionally, over the last three years Barnet has also seen a growth in environmental volunteering and Barnet Together convened a new environmental network, with formal and informal groups inspired to develop projects at a hyper local level from food and growing projects, to local activities tackling sustainability and carbon net zero. More recently with the set-up of the Barnet Together Arts and Culture network, groups and volunteers are coming together to inspire creative and community arts projects and opportunities for all across Barnet.

We also recognise there are still challenges within volunteer recruitment including effective recruitment of charity trustees and school governors. There is need attract to these roles people with diversity of skills, knowledge and experience from all cultures, faiths and communities within Barnet.

In 2022, the Volunteering Barnet volunteer survey showed that 38% of Barnet volunteers are volunteering once a week or more frequently. Volunteers reported that volunteering helps them feel more connected to the local community, leading to a sense of belonging and purpose. There were high levels of satisfaction among respondents, with the majority finding the experience enjoyable and meaningful, with a strong will to continue; 92% of volunteers surveyed were interested in, or wanted to, continue to volunteer in the future. Those who had yet to volunteer, 25% cited changes in availability, and 35% said they were yet to find roles that suited them.

To ensure that as a borough we continue to harness the willingness of all our volunteers and potential volunteers, ensuring a variety of roles and flexibility, accessibility and diversity in volunteering will be a priority. This is key, so that volunteering is as rewarding as we can possibly make it and everyone who wants to volunteer has the opportunity to do so.

## STATS FOR INFO GRAPHICS:

- Over 6500 registered volunteers
- 12500+ hours of Covid19 vaccine support
- 250+ Health Champion Volunteers sharing health messages

- 40+ Friends of parks groups supporting green spaces
- 200+ Organisations supported with volunteering needs
- 110+ volunteer network meetings
- Over 100 groups holding litter picking events
- 16 community food banks supporting over 25000 residents
- Volunteers distributed over 10,000 food parcels during Covid19
- A new online platform to support volunteering

A large proportion of our Barnet volunteers are motivated to volunteer to make a difference in Barnet: to support a cause, help others and help their local community. This is reflected in the immense contribution local people made to the pandemic response and continue to provide today.

Motivations to volunteer:

- 67% Help others
- 45% I have spare time
- 30% For a new experience
- 53% Support my local community
- 21% Meet new people
- 25% Gain & develop skills
- 29% Previous volunteering experience

“I really enjoy volunteering within my community, especially because I see how much it is needed.”

“Working with the children has been so rewarding and they responded well to our sessions “

“I feel I have personally benefitted and grown along with supporting and helping others”

“It felt good to be doing something to actively combat the pandemic and to be supporting the local community”

“I gained so much inspiration and confidence.”

“I felt a sense of achievement”

“There is a wide range of activities on offer, there is no pressure and it is a great way to build self-confidence, meet new people and learn new skills”

“It is such a great opportunity to make a difference to the community and so a lot of people would benefit from doing so.”

“Opportunity to meet new people and use my spare time to good advantage.”

“There is a wide range of activities on offer, there is no pressure and it is a great way to build self-confidence, meet new people and learn new skills”

## How we created the strategy – a collaborative journey

Creating the borough-wide strategy has been a collaborative journey, Volunteering Barnet and the Barnet Together Alliance has consulted with volunteers, organisations, stakeholders and partners. Over a period of

4 months we held a series of events and conversations, surveys and research, alongside one-to-one interviews, identifying the key challenges and priorities, for the next three years. We also explored how we capture all that is special and inspiring about the volunteering movement in Barnet.

We initially engaged over 200 volunteers, organisations and stakeholders who collectively produced the vision, values and seven priority areas. We then consulted further on the recommendations that emerged from this, to produce a shared high-level action plan to help the Barnet Together Alliance, VCFSE sector, stakeholders and Barnet communities make it happen. We will use these actions to periodically track progress and reassess support needed for the sector and volunteering in Barnet.

## Our Vision and Values

The strategic vision for volunteering sets out the long-term aspirations for volunteering and social action in Barnet. The values encapsulate the things people value most about volunteering in Barnet.

### Vision Statement

“Together we build stronger communities by embracing and empowering volunteering in Barnet”



## Volunteering Priorities and Actions

The key volunteering priorities identified in the strategy development, form the basis of the co-created actions we collectively strive to achieve.

## **1. Embracing diversity**

Barnet is proud to have a community made up of many different backgrounds, cultures and faiths. We will increase the number of people committing to volunteering from all communities, attracting more volunteers from diverse neighbourhoods across the borough. Where groups are underrepresented in volunteering, we will tackle the barriers and make volunteering inclusive for all, ensuring opportunities are accessible.

Actions for Volunteering Barnet and the VCFSE Sector:

- Provide Volunteer Involving Originations (VIOs) with examples and the support to enable them have an equality and diversity statement in place
- Volunteering Barnet to deliver training in inclusive volunteering
- Promote Volunteering Barnet's Healthy Volunteering Plan to make positive disability disclosure possible and to discuss any adaptations or reasonable adjustments that should be made
- Create targeted volunteering campaigns and outreach to engage underrepresented groups, including young people
- Offer supported volunteering for people with additional needs – adding training for staff and supporting fundraising for projects
- Promote the benefits of volunteering to asylum seekers, including: opportunities to build connections and improve English; the benefits to future job hunting
- Find more opportunities that don't require English speaking e.g. gardening, class assistant for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Actions for the local authority and partners:

- London borough of Barnet (LBB) to collect demographic data about council staff who volunteer and the makeup of the VCFSE organisations they support and assess this against the borough's protected characteristics to ensure representation
- LBB to crosscheck its own staff volunteering data with that collected by Volunteering Barnet, aligning across datasets to ensure there is a full picture of volunteering
- BOOST to link with Volunteering Barnet regarding their Lamplight system data capture
- Ensure council volunteer roles are accessible to all
- Feed in insight from the Tackling Inequalities initiative, harnessing community assets to improve equity in public health outcomes and, to break down barriers to volunteering

## **2. Raising the profile of volunteering**

We want to encourage a culture where volunteers feel proud and valued; raising awareness of volunteering in the borough and impact of volunteering.

Actions for Volunteering Barnet and the VCFSE Sector:

- Volunteering Barnet to compile a calendar of national campaigns and local events relevant for volunteering, including those we support in Barnet, and share across the sector
- Work together to raise the profile of volunteering through campaigns such as The Big Help Out and other local initiatives
- Promote the volunteers' voice through roles as trustees, in networks and focus groups, and through social action programmes such as health champions and citizens' panels
- Promote measuring impact and communication training, including the use of social media, working in partnership
- Showcase a diverse range of volunteering, formal and informal, through case studies from groups and volunteers to inspire others
- Collectively support high profile campaigns such as Volunteers' Week and Trustees week, considering campaigns and events in partnership e.g. with Jewish Volunteering Network
- Volunteering Barnet to promote a programme of seasonal volunteering opportunities e.g. during the winter, working with partners
- Promote positive volunteering language – not 'just' a volunteer
- Promote funding available to the sector for volunteering and events

Actions for the local authority and partners:

- Use Volunteering Barnet wherever to recruit volunteers for participation opportunities that the council is running
- Work across directorates and service areas to promote volunteering in front line council services such as schools, libraries and community engagement
- Council communications team and the Barnet Together Alliance to work together to promote volunteering campaigns as widely as possible across the year
- Promote community events as volunteering opportunities
- Partners to promote and share data on the positive impact of volunteering in their organisations/businesses

### **3. Volunteering for all**

Volunteering should be accessible, welcoming, and open to all. There is a need for varied and flexible range of volunteering opportunities that align with people's skills, interests and availability.

Actions for Volunteering Barnet and the VCFSE Sector:

- Offer phone calls, face to face, and paper based alternatives to digital access regarding volunteering recruitment where possible
- Volunteering Barnet to explore local venues for face to face volunteer inductions and outreach in partnership
- Volunteering Barnet to help organisations create local and neighbourhood volunteering, and family-friendly opportunities, and roles for young people (14 – 18), unemployed people and ex-offenders
- Working with partners, gather insight on the roles that are available across the borough and review how we are promoting them locally
- Volunteering Barnet to promote streamlined recruitment to keep the process clear and application forms simple

- Support and train organisations to expand the variety of opportunities including skilled, informal, flexible, remote and group volunteering
- Look into what we can offer asylum seekers (as paid work is not an option)
- Offer more social and active roles to help support mental health, improve English language proficiency, and increase access to and knowledge of local services
- Work together to ensure barriers to volunteering removed (The unnecessary use of background/reference checks and age limitations should be addressed.)
- Start a dialogue with Federation of Small Business to explore pilot of a flexible skills volunteering hub for local small and micro businesses

Actions for the local authority and partners:

- Collectively promote neighbourhood volunteering
- Barnet Education Service to explore volunteering pathways
- BOOST to support regarding volunteering for ex-offenders and unemployed people
- Promote community opportunities e.g. for Duke of Edinburgh award placements in libraries
- Use local community hubs to promote volunteering proactively
- Partners to suggest and offer local venues to hold volunteer induction courses

#### **4. Recruitment and Retention**

Support with recruitment is a priority for nine out of ten organisations. We will develop campaigns to drive volunteer recruitment across the borough and at neighbourhood level.

Through active recruitment, we will strive to sustain the levels of volunteering we saw before and during the pandemic, whilst increasing volunteer numbers for targeted and underrepresented groups.

Actions for Volunteering Barnet and the VCFSE Sector:

- Volunteering Barnet to schedule of the recruitment volunteer fair / roadshow working with partners
- To promote a volunteer training programme that is accessible to all, engaging with partners sector including Barnet Together partner, the Jewish Volunteering Network, Age UK, New Citizens Gateway and Barnet Mencap
- Promote Volunteering Barnet 's 'Introduction to Volunteering' training as a first step to inspire new volunteers
- Volunteering Barnet to offer training, support and workshops for their volunteer recruitment volunteering platform, Team Kinetic
- Volunteering Barnet best practice in volunteer management training
- Volunteering Barnet to promote and support groups with the volunteer management charter to support best practice with volunteering involving organisations
- Promote the cross-referral of volunteers to other volunteering involving organisations when volunteers are leaving roles



- Work with organisations to encourage flexibility and adaptability within roles to suit the volunteer
- Have a clearly promoted policy on expenses and include volunteer expenses and training in role descriptions
- Model good communication with volunteers and include them in decision-making where possible
- Promote creation of a handbook for new volunteers – including the organisation’s mission, objectives, responsibilities, and policies

Actions for the local authority and partners:

- Council to promote the benefits of volunteering to staff in the organisation and encourage volunteering outside of work hours, as well as the two hours funded volunteering leave
- The Business Engagement team to engage with Volunteering Barnet where companies are thinking of using volunteering as part of their corporate social responsibility or social value commitment
- The Community Participation team and staff networks to canvass staff on demand for team volunteering activities, and work with Volunteering Barnet to arrange these
- LBB to explore sources of funding that could cover the cost of DBS checks for volunteers
- Support and promote volunteer fairs and roadshows

## **5. Rewarding and recognising volunteers**

A considerable amount of the good work done in the VCFSE sector wouldn't be possible without the time and effort of volunteers. Every volunteer wants to feel valued and see the impact they are having. Not all volunteers will want to be recognised in the same way and the scale and capacity organisations will dictate the type of reward and recognition scheme to adopt.

Actions for Volunteering Barnet and the VCFSE Sector:

- Research reward and recognition initiatives, listening to the voices of volunteers and what currently works well for them
- Explore volunteer accreditation, awards and training, creating a volunteering pathway for Barnet working in partnership with Boost and the Council’s skills partnership group to explore this
- Encourage giving references to volunteers where possible as part of the volunteer through to employment pathway
- Consider the annual awards for the borough considering links with the Council annual civic awards scheme (and Barnet Homes annual awards including for residents and local groups)
- Recognise and celebrate those involved in informal volunteering
- Showcase positive examples of volunteering pathways and volunteering into employment across the sector
- Hold an event to thank volunteers across the borough, collectively celebrating the contribution volunteers make to Barnet and all organisations
- All organisations are encouraged to take part in the annual Volunteers' Week celebrations from 1-7 June

Actions for the local authority and partners:

- Ensure that volunteering is properly promoted as a pathway to employment and a method of gaining employability skills and experience
- Consider implementing a volunteer reward scheme – e.g. a Time Credits scheme, or issuing vouchers that can be redeemed for local health and wellbeing activities, such as leisure centre access
- Partners to share how they reward and recognise local volunteers
- Ensure that volunteering celebrations are promoted at a civic level and attended by senior leaders such as the Mayor
- Borough partners should promote or take part in annual Volunteers' Week celebrations promoting volunteering from 1-7 June
- Promote the process to encourage Royal recognition of volunteers

## **6. Ensuring quality in Volunteer Management**

Quality volunteer management allows organisations to think long-term, building a more strategic and positive relationships with volunteers. When volunteers are managed effectively, organisations build capacity, improve retention rates, and increase the volunteering experience.

Actions for Volunteering Barnet and the VCFSE Sector:

- Promote the use of volunteer policies across the sector
- Deliver a volunteering management training programme in a range of formats accessible for large and small organisations
- Volunteering Barnet to promote the tools needed to quantify volunteer impact
- Volunteering Barnet to promote volunteer coordinator training (separate to volunteer manager training)
- Volunteering Barnet to refresh guidance and support for managing difficult situations across volunteering (system/process/training)
- Promote effective volunteer recruitment and supervision practices from interview, through to induction

Actions for the local authority and partners:

- Promote the development and review of policies for using volunteers as well as staff volunteering
- LBB to promote Volunteering Barnet 's training offer to all parts of the council

## **7. Investing in our volunteers**

Volunteers have the potential to add value to their local communities and through a lifetime of volunteering. We want to ensure volunteers have the right resources, tools and support on their volunteering journey and have safe, meaningful and rewarding experiences.

Actions for Volunteering Barnet and the VCFSE Sector:

- Offer training to all volunteers e.g. introduction to volunteering, mental health, diversity and inclusion

- Promote free or low cost opportunities to volunteers for skills based training e.g. first aid, food hygiene, manual handling – all useful to add to their CV
- Explore what funding might be able to provide for training volunteers
- Celebrate and record when volunteers move onto employment
- Promote the Investing in Volunteers quality accreditation

Actions for the local authority and partners:

- Working in partnership with Volunteering Barnet, create CV development workshops with volunteers
- Support people to recognise their skills and the development gained from the role (skills development pathway)
- Ensure that opportunities and skills gained from volunteering are recognised in council recruitment practices

### ***Volunteering Strategy Development***

*Volunteering Barnet and Barnet Together Alliance partners would like to thank all the volunteers, groups and stakeholders who contributed to the development of the Volunteering Strategy. It will provide a roadmap to develop volunteering in Barnet and we look forward to working together to make it a reality.*

## Case studies

I was recently appointed as a Trustee of a charitable incorporated organisation, so am involved in discussions with their CEO, Chair and other Trustees at their quarterly online board meetings; to review the performance and activities of the last three months. Essentially offering a critical eye, advice or supportive guidance.

At times it can be a difficult task. You're pretty much taking on the call of a modern-day superhero, being able to represent people and an organisation that aid the community is key for personal development and the growth of society.

Giving back to the community feels purposeful, it's an opportunity for growth being able to help others using learned skills.

### **John, Trustee of a local charity**

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I began litter picking during the lockdowns. I was looking for positive ways to give back to the local community that involved making the most of the enriching open spaces and paths we have in the

Finchley area. I still litter pick as I enjoy the community connection, interaction and shared goal when litter picking with local community groups such as the Dollis Brookers and the Finchley Quakers.

When I started litter picking I soon noticed a large number of discarded drinks cans. They seemed to be a treasure trove of beautiful, colourful and sometimes textured metal, that were too lovely to just add to the recycling bin. So I used my various craft and card making skills to create a range of awareness raising items which I share at local eco fairs and workshops. I also got involved in the Finchley Quakers' thought provoking and awareness-raising wall sculpture project, which evolved from the plastics collected through litter picking in the local area.

**Alison, Volunteer Litter Picker and Crafter, Barnet**

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I wanted to do something meaningful and fill up my spare time. I also wanted to contribute to the community with whatever skills and knowledge I possessed.

As I like being around children, I thought the best would be to take up teaching jobs. I feel very happy and useful when I can enrich kids to get better.

I feel very elevated and optimistic when I see the children's positive attitude towards me. They are eager to have sessions with me and that motivates me to contribute better and support them.

I feel very rewarded.

**Nancy, Primary Schools Volunteer, Barnet**

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I like helping and meeting other people and being part of the community. I found the Holiday Activities Volunteer role through Volunteering Barnet as I am registered with them, and given my experience, I signed up!

In the Holiday Activity scheme I had to make sure the children were enjoying learning and playing safely. I helped them to do the activities correctly, and I joined in the activities wherever I could! I liked everything about the experience, especially being with the children. It was a very positive and inclusive; all of us joining in together.

My experience in 3 words: Rewarding, positive, and enjoyable.

**Joanna, Barnet Holiday Activities Fund Volunteer**

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Volunteering helped me connect with the people on my road: we were very different age groups... I was in school and some were retired. I guess it sounds kind of cliché, but it really helped me develop social skills in a way.

I think it also made people more willing to ask questions because it felt more accessible than emailing the council directly. Having people in the community who will happily take your questions, pass them on and get an answer back relatively quickly is very beneficial. It meant that I was able to get this information to some people who may otherwise struggle with technology or understanding. So I think it really, really helped with connections on a personal level.

I think that doing this volunteering, especially because it was with Barnet Council, really helped me kind of solidify that I did want to go into politics.

### **Daisy, Barnet Health Champion**

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Nazanin came to the UK in July 2022. Within a few months of her arrival, she wanted to find a way of improving her English, whilst doing something positive to help others. She had the remarkable idea of teaching Science classes in English, to young asylum seekers of different cultures and ethnicities. Although not a qualified teacher, Nazanin is educated in Maths and Science and loves working with children.

Every Saturday, five young people aged 11-13 years old join her for up to two hours, for their science lesson, delivered in English. Volunteering her time and skills has helped Nazanin to improve her English, whilst focusing on doing something positive and rewarding.

The children love her classes, and have all become friends, despite coming to the UK from different countries and speaking different languages. One student has even seen their Science grade improve at school by 10 marks! Nazanin says so many migrants coming to the UK have skills that they can share. The trick is to find what you are good at and enjoy doing, and then share that with others. It brings positive results all round.

### **Nazanin, Volunteer Science Tutor for young asylum seekers**

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I work as a Volunteer Officer at Volunteering Barnet, the accredited volunteering centre for Barnet residents. I have the pleasure of supporting so many people to find the right volunteering role and this makes me realise how powerful the act of volunteering is.

We support people from very different backgrounds and with different experiences: people of all ages; Disabled people and people with mental health conditions; students; people looking to (re)start their careers; and people who just need someone to talk to. I spend time over the phone and in person listening to people who tell me about their insecurities and concerns. I have helped to build people's confidence, by encouraging them to take the first step and reminding them that volunteering really is for all. When I think about my job I smile, because thanks to the support of

other charity organisations in Barnet and the amazing Barnet Together team I work with, in so many ways, we are also changing so many people's lives, and that's what I love the most about my job.

### **Alice, Volunteer Officer at Volunteering Barnet, Barnet Together**

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Liliane looked to volunteering as a way to support the diverse communities and residents within Barnet - something she is very passionate about. Motivated to help others in her community, volunteering with Citizens Advice Barnet offered Liliane a chance to support disadvantaged individuals from a range of backgrounds and to make a difference in the borough.

Seeing people changing is rewarding, moving from 1 to the next level, 2, 3, 4...

There are lots of benefits to volunteering! It is an excellent way to up-skill and can be very valuable both personally and professionally. A very, very good experience: rewarding, motivating, positive.

### **Liliane, Citizens Advice Barnet Volunteer**

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Volunteering for the London Autism Group Charity was honestly one of the most welcoming experiences of my life. The organizers made sure that all volunteers felt comfortable and sure of their roles while creating a pleasant environment. For the most part, my volunteer role involved clearing and setting up the hall with tables, chairs and food, and talking to any of the visitors.

Everyone was so sweet and welcoming!

### **Mariyah, London Autism Group, Barnet**

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#### *About us:*

Volunteering Barnet has been inspiring and supporting volunteering since 2015 as the borough's accredited Volunteer Centre. We unite volunteers and organisations to strengthen the community we support and promote all aspects of volunteering. Volunteering Barnet is a proud partner of Barnet Together and the Barnet Together Alliance.

*Barnet Together (BT) is a partnership between Young Barnet Foundation, Volunteering Barnet (Groundwork London) and Inclusion Barnet. Established in 2018, the partnership provides support, training, resources and advice to Barnet's voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector. Each partner brings their own specialisms, knowledge and assets. The Barnet Together Alliance is a wider sector partnership, supported by London borough of Barnet (LBB).*

## Contact us

*If you would like to get involved contact:*

[Enquiry@volunteeringbarnet.org.uk](mailto:Enquiry@volunteeringbarnet.org.uk)

*Volunteering Service supporting groups and individuals*

*William Cooper, London borough of Barnet Council*

*Deputy Head of Strategy - Strategy and Engagement*

*[william.cooper@Barnet.gov.uk](mailto:william.cooper@Barnet.gov.uk)*

## REFERENCES

1. [Volunteering overview - Volunteering | UK Civil Society Almanac 2022](#) <div class="acknowledgement"><h2 class="acknowledgement--text">This page was last reviewed for accuracy on <b>31 October 2022</b></h2></div> <div class="share-text">This page was last reviewed for accuracy on <b>31 October 2022</b></div> | NCVO
2. [At a glance - Time well spent: impact of covid-19 on the volunteer experience | News index](#) <div class="acknowledgement"><h2 class="acknowledgement--text">This page was last reviewed for accuracy on <b>22 July 2022</b></h2></div> <div class="share-text">This page was last reviewed for accuracy on <b>22 July 2022</b></div> | NCVO