



Southwark Volunteering Strategy 2017 – 2020



Introduction

In 2012 Southwark Council worked with Volunteer Centre Southwark and local organisations to create a volunteering strategy for the borough. The purpose of the strategy was to capture and maximize the enthusiasm for volunteering that was generated through the London Olympics and to help increase and raise the profile of good quality volunteering in the borough.

Since then there have been several large societal shifts and both the public and voluntary sectors are operating in a very different environment – but nevertheless volunteering remains an important part of our community fabric. In early 2016 Southwark Council and Community Southwark decided to work on refreshing the Volunteering Strategy to ensure that it is current, relevant and meeting the needs of individuals and organisations in the realm of volunteering. We held a conference in July 2016, which had over 40 attendees from the voluntary and community sector, to explore the current environment for volunteering in the borough and the barriers that stop people taking part.

From the interest raised at this conference we convened a new Volunteering Strategy Group, composed of representatives from across the council and voluntary sector committed to working together to support volunteering in the borough. This document outlines a plan to address areas of need, create better cross-sector collaborative working and to embed a strong culture of volunteering in the borough.

Members of the Volunteering Strategy Group as of January 2017

In October 2016 we held the first meeting bringing together representatives from the council a range of voluntary sector organisations. Attendees of the volunteering strategy group are:

Cllr. Barrie Hargrove, *Southwark Councillor and Cabinet Member for Communities and Safety*

Truly Johnston, *Community Southwark, Director of Social Action*

Lynn Ottaway-Reid, *Southwark Council, Consultation and Involvement officer.*

Ambrose Omoma, *Southwark Council, Consultation and Involvement Officer*

Laura Spooner, *Southwark Council Community Sports*

Karis Morris-Brown, *Black Cultural Archives*

Declan Coyle, *London South Bank University*

Matt Hatt, *Shakespeare's Globe, Assistant Volunteer Manager*

Bridget Coggin, *SouthBank Centre*

Jayne Couchman, *Southwark Works, CEO*

Suley Muhidin, *Southwark Council Community Participation Officer*

Jennie Linnet, *Link Age Southwark, Senior Volunteer Coordinator*

Eltayeb Hassan, *Project Manager, Southwark Refugee Communities Forum*

The context of volunteering in Southwark

Southwark is a historic and vibrant inner city borough. As of 2016 we are the third most densely populated borough in London with a population of 310,600 people. We have a young population (the average age is 34.2 years old) and our communities are comprised of people from a myriad of countries and cultures. 47% of our communities belong to an ethnic minority and we have the largest Black African population in the country.

The Voluntary and Community sector in Southwark is also diverse. At the last count (2015) we had over 1200 registered charities in the borough and a further estimated 3000 – 4000 unregistered community groups. Southwark has a strong history of voluntary sector activity and volunteering, with six organisations in the borough that were set up as settlements over 100 years ago and that are still operating today to meet the needs of local communities. The total income for the sector in 2015 was nearly £2billion, however this income is very unevenly distributed across the sector; the 3.1% of the charities with more than £10m per annum account for a massive 76.9% of the total income, and the largest ten charities account for 46.9% of the total income. This means that there is a very large number of small to medium sized charities with much less resource.

Since 2010 there have been large cuts to the public sector settlement from national government and local authorities have suffered around 40% spending reductions. In the five years of the previous government,

Southwark council was forced to find £156m worth of savings – the 11th highest level of cuts per head of all English councils - and this is set to continue. In 2016/17 Southwark Council revenue spending power was at £291.4m - this is a reduction over 3 years of £61m. The voluntary sector has seen large cuts to funding from the local authority with a reduction of £829k in 2016/17. We are currently exploring new ways of leveraging in funds and opportunities to the voluntary and community sector in the borough through initiatives like Southwark Giving and finance raised through regeneration.

Alongside reduced resources communities are facing high levels of need, particularly for the most vulnerable. Changes to the welfare system have led to a rise in foodbanks as a form of emergency support and we have the 6th highest level of income deprivation amongst over 60s in the UK.

Volunteers then, form an important part of our community. People giving their time for free has enabled the voluntary and community sector to continue to meet the needs of the communities they serve and search for innovative solutions to societal problems. In 2015-16 there were over 44,000 filled volunteer and trustee positions in the borough. In total volunteers contributed over 5 million hours of their time - if this number was costed at the London living wage their contribution would annually cost over £47million.

Link to Southwark's Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy

In November 2016 Southwark Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group and voluntary sector launched a Voluntary Sector Strategy for the Borough. The report 'Common Purpose Common Cause' outlines a tri-partite approach to increase collaboration and co-production to improve commissioning, working with communities and outcomes for residents. There are several points in the voluntary sector strategy that refer to volunteering. Below are the key sections:

- The strategy seeks to mobilise community action and make the best use of community resources, universal services, community capability and volunteering, local knowledge and spaces
- It recognises that: 'Like the public and private sectors, the VCS spends money locally, contributing to the local economy. It provides paid employment so that people can support themselves (as well as inspire others into employment through social enterprises). The VCS also develops the skills of volunteers as well as service users, contributing to better job prospects, personal wellbeing, and a diverse economy.'
- The strategy highlights that 'Volunteering is what makes the VCS unique. The benefits of volunteering on an individual's wellbeing, their sense of belonging, self-esteem and personal development are well documented but mustn't be ignored. However, financial pressures mean volunteers are often seen as a substitute or cheap alternative to do things that were previously paid for. The message to emerge from our listening events is that volunteering is not free and if the benefits that individuals can bring to communities are to be realised support is needed.'
- And finally, the strategy makes a resolution to: 'enable individuals and groups to be agents of change, ready to shape the course of their own lives. We will achieve this by supporting volunteering and other forms of social action. We will facilitate different ways of supporting more people volunteer (specifically volunteer co-ordination).'

Structures to enact the Volunteering Strategy

- The **Volunteering Strategy Group** will be composed of stakeholders from the Council, the VCS and other external parties who have an interest in volunteering. The group will meet 5 times a year and take actions forward based on the strategy.
- We will develop a **Volunteer Forum**, composed of individuals who volunteer in the borough, to discuss actions with them and hear their experiences of what would make a difference to volunteering in the borough.
- To exercise accountability for the Volunteering Strategy and ensure that it feeds into this wider Voluntary Sector Strategy, we will develop mechanisms to feedback progress on actions from the Volunteering Strategy Group to the **VCS-Council Liaison group**.

Principles to protect

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

- *Volunteering must be voluntary* – It must be a choice freely made by individuals under no duress.
- *Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work* – The contribution of volunteers must add value but not be a substitute for work that should be paid.
- *Volunteering is not free* –Volunteering is time freely given but it is not cost free. For volunteering to be meaningful volunteers need to be well supported and investment in volunteer management is important and valued. Volunteers should not be at a financial loss because of volunteering and out of pocket expenses where possible should be reimbursed.
- *Volunteering is mutually beneficial* – Volunteering must be both a positive experience for the individual and also help to further the aims of the non-profit organisation.

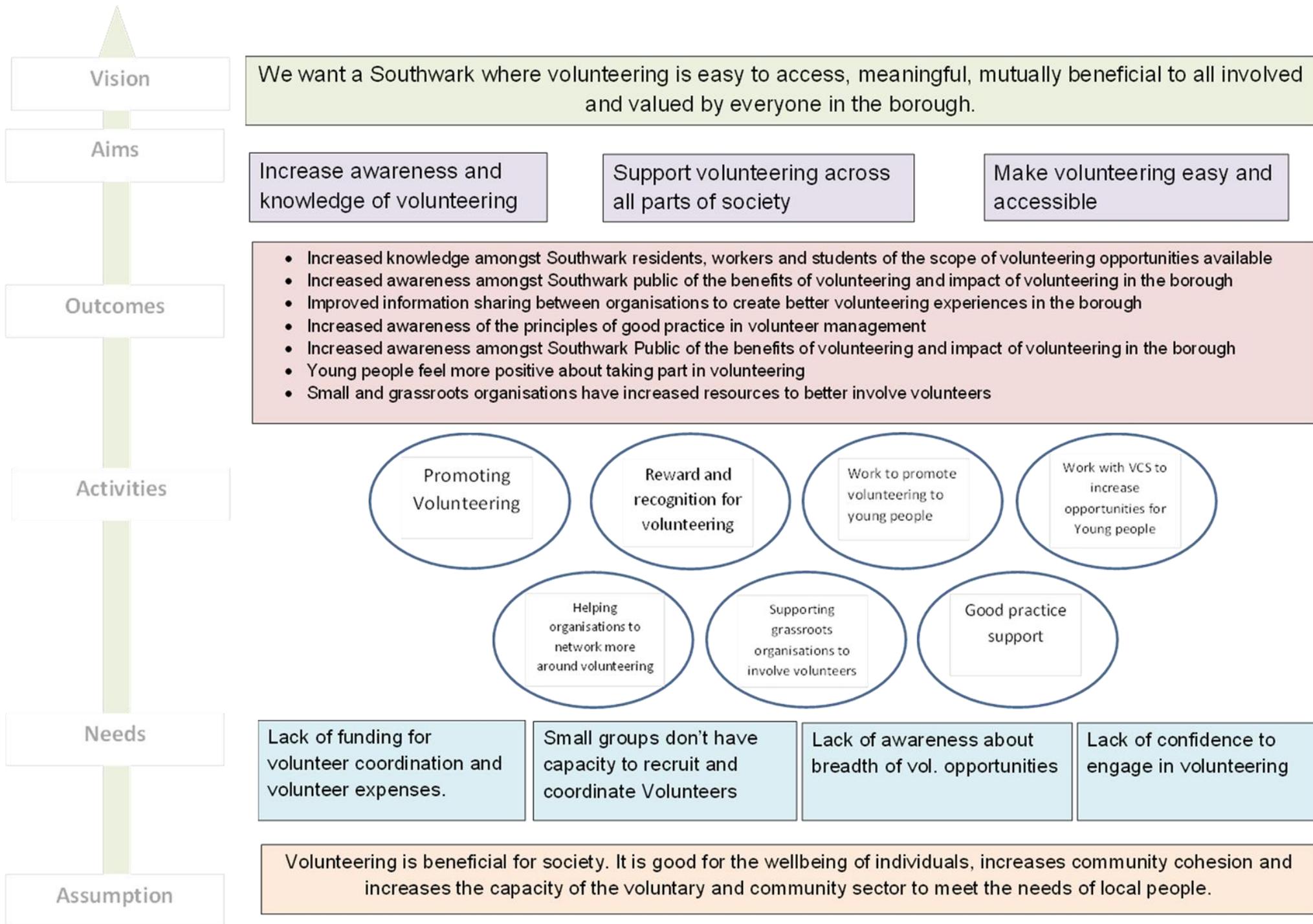
Vision

We want a Southwark where volunteering is easy to access, meaningful, mutually beneficial to all involved and valued by everyone in the borough.

Increase awareness and knowledge of volunteering: We want to raise the profile of volunteering, encourage people to spread through word of mouth the benefits of volunteering, and celebrate volunteering in the borough.

Support volunteering across all parts of society: Volunteering can have a great impact on wellbeing and can help bring people together from different parts of society. We want to ensure that volunteering is open to all and that grassroots groups are able to involve volunteers in a meaningful and mutually beneficial way. Each year we will reassess this section of the strategy to focus on a different group within our communities. In the first two years we will focus on increasing volunteering amongst young people and in year three we will focus on Older People.

Make volunteering easy and accessible: People who want to give their time should be able to easily find an opportunity and access volunteering and also move between different organisations.



1. Increase awareness and knowledge of volunteering

Outcome	Activities	Outputs	Measures / Timeline	Responsibility
<p>Increased knowledge amongst Southwark residents, workers and students of the scope of volunteering opportunities in the borough.</p>	<p>Promoting volunteering</p>	<p>Coordinate volunteer taster days across the sector</p> <p>Volunteering promotion stalls at public events and fairs.</p> <p>Online promotion of volunteering opportunities through social media / do-it and Community Southwark website.</p>	<p>2 x a year – June and November (TBC)</p> <p>15 x a year</p> <p>5 per quarter</p>	<p>Community Southwark + local groups + LBS</p> <p>Community Southwark + local groups</p> <p>Community Southwark + Local groups</p>

<p>Increased awareness amongst public of the benefits of volunteering and impact of volunteering, both formal and informal, in the borough.</p>	<p>Reward and recognition</p> <p>Championing benefits of volunteering</p>	<p>Southwark Stars Awards</p> <p>Case studies of volunteer contribution and success promoted throughout the borough</p> <p>Articles on the benefits of volunteering in Southwark Life</p> <p>Social media campaign on the benefits of volunteering for volunteers' week</p>	<p>Held once a year (May 2017)</p> <p>10 case studies a year</p> <p>Once a year</p> <p>Twitter / websites / articles FB</p>	<p>Community Southwark + Local Groups + LBS</p> <p>Local groups</p> <p>Community Southwark Coordinate</p> <p>Community Southwark Coordinate</p>
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2. Support Volunteering across all parts of society

Outcome	Activities	Outputs	Measures / Timeline	Responsibility	
Young people feel more positive about taking part in volunteering	Work to increase awareness about volunteering amongst young people	Conduct survey to get a baseline measure of YP volunteering and attitudes	By end of June	Southwark Council, Community Southwark Local groups	
		Promoting volunteering at events	2x a year- By end of year	Community Southwark / Groups	
		Case studies of young volunteers	5 case studies produced by end of year	Suley Muhidin / youth council / local groups	
	Work with Schools	Young volunteer champions	3 young volunteer champions promoting volunteering throughout year. Recruited by August 2017.		Southwark Council / youth council
		Promoting volunteering to young people through social media and other creative means	2x promotion per quarter from June onwards		Suley Muhidin / Southwark council / Community Southwark
		Talks with Careers advisors	1x a year		Southwark Council / Community Southwark
	Work with voluntary sector to increase roles for young people.	Training on involving young volunteers		1x a year by end of the year	Community Southwark
Work with Youth	YP to champion				

	Council	volunteering (see above)	By March 2018	
Small and grassroots organisations have increased resources (be that through skills, funding or collaborative work) to better involve volunteers	Supporting grassroots organisations to involve volunteers	Bespoke training for small groups on volunteer involvement Work with commissioning team to access funding for volunteering Sector mentors and champions through the VMN	2x a year £xxx provided by Southwark council for volunteer coordination in small groups. 3 mentors secured	Community Southwark Southwark Council Local groups
Increased awareness amongst GPs of the benefits of volunteering on wellbeing through social prescribing.	Activities to be identified after September meeting			
Employees in the borough have awareness of volunteering	Promotion of volunteering to employees	Volunteering opportunities promoted through: Involve BIDS Southwark Council	## opportunities promoted through Involve / BIDs ## opportunities promoted through Southwark council	Community Southwark Southwark Council.

3. Make volunteering easy and accessible.

Outcome	Activities	Outputs	Measures / Timeline	Responsibility
Improved information sharing between organisations to create better volunteering experiences in the borough	Helping organisations to network more around volunteering	Volunteer Managers Network Sector specific volunteer management coordination Working with groups of similar organisations to facilitate sharing volunteers easier.	4 x a year Explore throughout the year Introduce to PLGs Explore throughout the year	Community Southwark
Increased awareness of the principles of good practice in Volunteer Management	Good practice support	Revive Southwark Good Practice Charter and Encourage organisations to sign up. Training for volunteer managers	10 organisations to complete health check and sign up by end of the year. 4 training sessions delivered a year	Community Southwark
Improved access for people to volunteering opportunities.	Promoting formal and informal volunteering opportunities	Online promotion of volunteering opportunities through social media / do-it and Community Southwark website. CAN website to highlight and promote opportunities for informal volunteering.		Community Southwark / Southwark Council / Local Groups.