

Making a difference Camden's volunteering partnership strategy 2009-2012

Summary



Contents

Foreword	4 - 5
Our Vision	6
Making a difference	7
The Camden picture	8 - 14
Why we need a strategy	15 - 19
What the strategy will achieve	20
How the strategy will achieve this	21 - 24
Delivering the strategy	25
How to find out more	26 - 27

Foreword

In 2007, the Council and its partners launched 'Camden Together', a plan for how we intend to improve the quality of life of current residents and future generations. The role of volunteers and volunteering is a crucial part of delivering these goals.

Volunteers already deliver an impressive range of activities across all aspects of Camden life: in schools and hospitals; in small community projects and large service providing charities; and through cultural and sporting events, as well as campaigning.

Volunteering links our public services with a vibrant voluntary and community sector and Camden's local businesses. This unique partnership is helping to deliver important economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes for everyone.

There is, however, the potential to achieve even more. That is why we are delighted to introduce Camden's volunteering partnership strategy. This is our first ever strategy for volunteering across the borough. It is owned by Camden's local strategic partnership. For the first time, we have set a vision for the future of volunteering in Camden that is both strategic and ambitious. Our recognition of and commitment to volunteering is underlined in these pages, as is that of all the stakeholders of this partnership strategy.

As part of this vision, we are very pleased that the Mayor of Camden, Councillor Ansari, has chosen to support volunteering as his Mayoral theme during 2009-2010. We will be working closely with the Mayor to promote the message:

'everyone has something to offer – volunteer and make a difference'.

Nationally and locally, we are facing some difficult economic circumstances. This strategy highlights how volunteering can be a catalyst to tackle some of the direct social and economic consequences of recession. Volunteering can also help rebuild confidence and skills, increase career and employment options and provide a pathway out of worklessness.

Volunteering can also offer the opportunity to contribute to major events. The 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games are just around the corner. We are committed to delivering an enduring legacy built around the games and we want to make volunteering an important part of that success for Camden and for the capital.

We would like to thank all of the individuals and organisations who have contributed time and knowledge to the development of this strategy through interviews, focus groups and consultation events. We believe we have listened to those views. We recognise that meeting the aims and objectives of this strategy cannot be achieved by one organisation alone and we look forward to working closely with our partners to deliver them.



Councillor Keith Moffitt,
Leader of Camden Council



Councillor Marshall,
Deputy Leader and Executive Member
for Equalities and Community Development

Our vision

Our vision is that by 2012, Camden is a place where volunteering:

- is recognised, encouraged and undertaken by a high proportion of people across diverse backgrounds;
- is supported, rewarding and where everyone feels that they can make a difference;
- brings people together and makes a significant contribution to all aspects of life, resulting in social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits.

Further details about how the strategy will achieve our vision can be found on pages 21-24.



“ I help lead at the Green Gym, which improves local nature reserves and increases wildlife through conservation projects. Because I enjoy helping the young adults group, I have applied for funding to set up a day project for them at a site in Camden. . . ”

Making a difference

It is vital that we recognise and promote the positive impacts of volunteering.

By supporting and developing new and better opportunities, volunteering can contribute to:

- creating pathways for people to return to work, which in turn strengthens our economy;
- the delivery of services such as health, culture and community safety;
- supporting vulnerable groups, particularly those with mental and physical health issues and older people;
- building an enduring 2012 London Olympics legacy through harnessing people's desire to volunteer and be involved;
- investing in the future through valuable volunteering projects in schools and with young people in general, and
- establishing stronger cross-sector and cross service partnerships to deliver integrated and innovative solutions for local people.

“ I recently set up a food project, which gives residents and young adults from a local drop in centre an opportunity to work with the community. Not only is it improving the aesthetics of the garden for the residents, we have also used it to encourage healthy living for staff and to promote community involvement. ”

The Camden picture

There has been a growing body of legislation, guidance and research which has raised awareness, as well as expectations, about the role of volunteering.

There is no legal definition of volunteering, although the compact code of good practice on volunteering uses the following definition, which tends to be the most widely used.

“ . . . an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives. ”

The citizenship survey, undertaken by the Department for Communities and Local Government is the main source of information about the numbers of people who volunteer in England. The survey records formal and informal volunteering, as well as regular and irregular volunteering, in a 12 month period. Formal volunteering means through groups, organisations and clubs to benefit other people or the environment, whereas informal volunteering is on an individual basis for family and friends. Regular volunteering is described as at least once a month in the previous 12 month period.

The latest information shows that:

- seventy-three percent of adults in England had undertaken some sort of volunteering, including informal, at least once in the 12 months prior to interview and that informal volunteering at 63% was higher than formal volunteering at 45%;
- overall levels have not changed since 2001, but formal volunteering has risen from 39% to 45% and informal volunteering has fallen from 67% to 63%;

- levels of regular volunteering are lower, with 48% of adults having volunteered at least once a month in the last 12 months and 27% of adults volunteering regularly on a formal basis.

Numbers in Camden

The borough collects information primarily through surveys with borough residents. These include Camden Talks, social capital surveys, and annual residents' surveys. Whilst these surveys have all used slightly differing definitions and ways of recording activity, it is clear that there is a general upward trend in the numbers of people volunteering formally and regularly in Camden.

Most recently, the Camden Talks survey 2008 asked members of the citizens panel the same question used in the national survey to gauge the level of formal, regular volunteering in the borough. Thirty percent of respondents had undertaken formal volunteering once a month in the last 12 months. This compares favourably with a national figure of 27%.

The survey found that the most popular activities included fundraising and being a member of a committee or association.

Source: Camden Talks autumn report 2008

How often over the last 12 months have you given unpaid help?	%
At least once a week	18%
Less than once a week but at least once a month	12%
Less often	15%
I give unpaid help as an individual only and not through group(s), club(s) or organisation(s)	10%
I have not given any unpaid help at all over the last 12 months	41%
Don't know	3%
Not stated	1%

When the numbers of people who volunteer informally – usually on an individual basis rather than through groups – are included, the figures are higher. Almost 50% of respondents say that they had given advice to someone else at least once in the previous 12 months. Activities such as keeping in touch with someone/befriending and transporting or escorting someone also scored highly. However, these figures are lower than national figures.



Local area agreement national indicator 6

This is one of the 198 indicators forming the local authority performance framework, or national indicator set. It has been adopted by Camden local strategic partnership as one of its priority indicators. It aims to measure the levels of volunteering within a local authority area, specifically the proportion of individuals undertaking regular formal volunteering. The place survey was carried out in late 2008 to establish a baseline for this indicator. The results were released in June 2009 and reveal a level of 24.7% for Camden, compared with an England average of 23.2%.

Economic impact

Volunteering makes a significant contribution to a range of social and economic outcomes within the borough. Research carried out in 2007 estimated the monetary value of the time given by volunteers who worked for 49 sample voluntary organisations in the borough. Using the average full-time hourly wage rate for Camden at that time of £18.89 and the part-time rate of £14.28, it approximated a value of £2.84m for just these organisations. It is estimated that there are almost 2,500 third sector organisations in Camden and so the true economic impact in this sector is much higher. The contribution is even more significant when the value of the many volunteers in public services (for instance health or police services) across the borough is taken into account.

Characteristics

The 2007 Camden Talks survey found that the same proportion of men volunteer as women (47%), but older residents (52% of those aged 50 to 64 and 54% of those aged 65+) are slightly more likely to volunteer than younger ones (41% of those aged 16 to 24 and 44% of those aged 24 to 35). There is also a greater number of white British residents volunteering (51%) than those from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background (41%).

It is the middle classes that are most likely to say they volunteer; for example, 39% of owner occupiers have volunteered compared to 23% of social renters and 28% of private renters.

Activities

Volunteers are active across all parts of life in Camden and contribute through an incredibly diverse range of organisations and activities, cutting across the voluntary and community sector, public sector and the local business community.

Volunteering in Camden's voluntary and community sector has traditionally been strong. With the growing role of the sector in recent years as service deliverers, many volunteers have assumed a correspondingly higher profile in delivering services directly as well as more traditional administration, fundraising, trustee and governance work.

Housing and homelessness

Volunteering opportunities frequently take the form of helping to support and rehabilitate homeless or formerly homeless people who may have complex and overlapping needs. A number of St Mungo's 100 projects are located in Camden and the organisation uses a pool of over 200 volunteers. Volunteers regularly assist in running activities in St Mungo's hostels based on their specialist skills and knowledge that cater to residents' interests. St Mungo's also works with a range of business partners to develop volunteering opportunities and fundraising events.



Volunteering in Camden's public services is equally diverse and widespread. Whilst health care, sports, education, children and young peoples' services have used volunteers extensively for many years, there are increasing opportunities in areas such as policing and cultural activities.

Camden's businesses also have an important role to play. Some employers run formal programmes to support and encourage their staff to volunteer; others free up time for employees to do their own volunteering. Whatever form it takes, employer supported volunteering is on the rise. Volunteering by employees makes a tangible difference – to individuals, the organisations where they volunteer, and to the organisations that employ them.

There is a growing cross-sector theme to volunteering in Camden. This is illustrated by the way that public sector services are being commissioned from more voluntary and community organisations, which means more opportunities for volunteering. Other drivers include skills and training development and the growing desire for responsible business and businesses that make a contribution to their local community. This is often known as corporate social responsibility.

Camden's work to improve the quantity and quality of volunteering is responding to this by promoting and building volunteering partnerships across all three sectors.

“The people and organisations I volunteer with support and encourage me to develop more, offering new opportunities and acknowledging the effort I put in. It is this appreciation that makes me feel valued, challenged and enthusiastic about the volunteering that I do. They have also invested in a lot of training and introduced me to networks within the sector”

Why we need a strategy

Why people volunteer

Research and experience show that people volunteer for lots of different reasons. Often people want to make a contribution. In some cases people are looking to build their self esteem, or perhaps give them the confidence to try out different things, meet new people and have new experiences.

In times of economic hardship, volunteering can also help individuals to develop the skills and experience they need to retrain, seek a new career path, or return to work. Volunteering can lead to valuable references and experience that employers find useful. People out of work can volunteer to find constructive things to do.



Helping other people is also cited as a motivator for volunteering. It can help to contribute to society by giving something back. Sometimes this is where people have been supported through illness or difficult circumstances and want to repay those that supported them.

In other cases it is to get involved with a campaign, a cause or an action that they believe in and to try and make a difference.

Even the smallest actions of neighbourliness and helping out are immensely valuable. Less formal volunteering such as bringing someone's shopping home, helping with form-filling or giving a lift to the doctor's can contribute to community cohesion and neighbourliness. They can also lead to more formal and regular ways of volunteering.



The difference a strategy will make

Volunteering can make significant differences to individuals, organisations, communities and businesses. But the potential exists to make these impacts go wider and deeper for everyone across the borough. This is why we need a volunteering strategy.

Benefits of volunteering

Individual benefits:

- greater understanding of other communities and groups;
- development of greater skills, opportunities and positive experiences;
- personal development, such as self confidence;
- improved well-being and mental and physical health and
- a sense of pride, belonging and achievement.

Benefits to voluntary/community sector groups and public services:

- greater understanding of service users needs;
- ability to enhance and add value to services and activities;
- bigger reach into communities through access to services, empowerment and community participation;
- provision of services which are not funded or only part-funded by the public sector and
- increased flexibility and quality of delivery.

Benefits to business and the private sector:

- motivated and empowered workforce;
- skills and experience development and
- stronger links with community and enhanced corporate social responsibility.

“ I have found volunteering very rewarding, not only as I am giving something back to the community, but because I have had the chance to gain knowledge in areas I wouldn't normally have had the opportunity to experience ”

Benefits to the community:

- stronger community cohesion, reduced crime rates, less tension;
- reduced worklessness and higher participation rates in a range of activities;
- positive activity during periods of unemployment;
- increase in good health, reduced impact on the National Health Service;
- better engagement with communities, better representation of views and opinions at decision-making level and
- disengaged, hard to reach and disempowered people are encouraged back into 'civil' society, contributing to stronger and empowered communities.

'Camden Together', the borough's sustainable community strategy, sets some positive outcomes for Camden. Volunteering can contribute to many of these.

A productive partnership with business and the private sector and increased local business activity:

promoting employer-supported volunteering within the wider corporate social responsibility agenda as a source of volunteers for local projects and organisations; and encouraging more employers to value volunteering experiences in recruitment.

A stronger economy through increasing access to skills, education, training and jobs:

working with local employers to recognise the value of volunteering for the skills development of existing employees who volunteer; working with local schools and colleges; promoting volunteering as a pathway from worklessness.

A strengthened sense of community: building social capital and fostering social cohesion through exemplar schemes that rely on volunteers such as good neighbour projects, self-help schemes and time banking initiatives that encourage volunteering from excluded and under-represented parts of the community.

Stronger connections between people and place: supporting volunteering that improves local facilities or environments through volunteer-led activities, or small-scale regeneration and environmental projects; strengthening links between schools and their local communities through volunteering for extended schools activities and events.

Public service delivery: identifying and promoting effective models for involving volunteers in service delivery, such as the added value that volunteers bring to key health and children's services, amongst others, through their involvement in service design and delivery.

Respect and responsibility: reducing fear of crime and building respect through initiatives that use volunteer help, including volunteering as special constables, in the safer neighbourhood panels, and mentoring schemes.

Increased cultural and leisure opportunities: fostering higher rates of sports participation and increased cultural volunteering, including 2012 opportunities through promoting dedicated sports volunteering programmes.

Camden as a leading authority: promoting Camden's leadership role through developing a volunteering strategy and implementation plan that highlights good practice and informs the development and delivery of local and national policy.

What the strategy will achieve

Camden's local strategic partnership recognises the need for a strategy which highlights and celebrates the full value that volunteering brings. The strategy builds on the positive activity already happening and enables the wider potential of volunteering to be realised for the benefit of all.

Volunteering needs to be defined widely and inclusively so that there is room for flexibility, innovation and growth. This applies equally across the voluntary and community sector - where volunteering has traditionally been strongest - but increasingly throughout the public sector and also with local employers through employee volunteering and partnerships.

The strategy will build on the good work that is already happening, but it also means challenging perceptions and stereotypes about who volunteers and about where they volunteer. For instance, volunteering can include activities where volunteers have much more control over how they can give their time and apply their skills. This should open up possibilities for people to volunteer from all backgrounds, even those who have not previously been involved. Camden wants to see volunteering that builds social capital, confidence and develops skills in ways that reflect the enormous diversity of the borough.

There is often misunderstanding about what volunteering means. Camden does not see volunteering as people who give their time of their own free will and where there is no element of compulsion. Camden does not see volunteering as something that replaces paid employment. Volunteering can add value to the work of organisations and increase the choice and quality of the services they offer.



...through volunteering I have been able to find something I am truly passionate about and I am now using the experience as a leverage to work towards a career in this sector.



How the strategy will achieve this

The strategy has identified three key objectives that will underpin the delivery of the outcomes.

Overarching objectives

- Objective 1:** Broadening and deepening the pool of volunteers and volunteering opportunities in Camden
- Objective 2:** Improving the quality of volunteering experiences in Camden
- Objective 3:** Equipping Camden Council to support, encourage and promote volunteering



Objective 1: Broadening and deepening the pool of volunteers and volunteering opportunities in Camden

1.1 Defining volunteering

Developing and promoting a better understanding of volunteering starts with adopting an agreed definition. We need to be clear that there is a place for everyone who wants to volunteer in Camden.

1.2 Raising the profile

Camden and its partners will seek to raise the profile of volunteering and highlight the benefits that volunteering can make to all aspects of Camden life and work.

1.3 Creating and marketing volunteering opportunities

Volunteering opportunities in Camden have never been better publicised through local organisations such as the Volunteer Centre Camden and through the national do-it.org.uk website. Nevertheless, there is a need to create a wider range of good quality volunteering opportunities and market them more comprehensively.

1.4 Focusing on economic opportunities

The links between volunteering and economic development are becoming increasingly important. The strategy will aim to reinforce these links.

1.5 Supporting service specific volunteering

Commitments throughout the strategy will help to deliver improved volunteering opportunities and a higher level of volunteering across all service areas. Nevertheless, there is a need for specific actions geared to enhancing the impact of volunteering in some focused areas.

1.6 Encouraging under-represented groups

Whilst the range of volunteering activities is incredibly diverse, the characteristics of the volunteers themselves is often less so. The strategy will aim to encourage more and better quality volunteering across a range of under-represented groups in the make-up of Camden's volunteering population.

1.7 Linking the voluntary and community, public and business sectors

Camden has a long and successful track record of pioneering cross-sector partnerships in working to achieve benefits for the borough. The strategy aims to build on this strength to support and develop volunteering.

Objective 2: Improving the quality of volunteering experiences in Camden

2.1 Removing barriers

If people are met with too many obstacles when they take their first steps to volunteer, they may be deterred before they actually volunteer. The strategy will help to remove both real and perceived barriers.

2.2 Better management

The consultation phase of this strategy identified a fundamental need to recognise volunteering related management costs. Involving volunteers does not come for free.

2.3 Supporting Innovation

Camden and partners will continue to support and develop innovation and development which leads to enhanced volunteering opportunities and new mechanisms within the borough.

2.4 Co-ordination of expertise, guidance and good practice

Camden and partners will aim to invigorate the existing good practice and develop new opportunities to share and promote valuable volunteering resources.

Objective 3: Equipping Camden Council to support, encourage and promote volunteering

3.1 Developing Camden's internal volunteering infrastructure

Camden and partners will undertake a range of actions to embed the strategy within the Council, including coordination groups, and communication, as well as more and better quality volunteer hosting opportunities within service areas.

3.2 Developing Camden's volunteering infrastructure

Camden will continue to support volunteer involving organisations and the wider voluntary and community sector through funding programmes as currently planned or underway and will seek to influence national policy that impacts on volunteering.

3.3 Employer supported volunteering

Camden will explore employer supported schemes with other local authorities and will develop proposals that will aim to encourage and support Camden employees to volunteer.

Delivering the strategy

This strategy will be delivered by a wide range of partners across all sectors and across all service areas.

An implementation plan supports the delivery of the objectives and commitments in this strategy.

Both the planned volunteering co-ordination group and the volunteering strategy advisory group, drawn from cross-sector and cross-service stakeholders, will have roles in overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the strategy.

The economic development partnership is the lead forum within Camden's local strategic partnership with responsibility for delivering this strategy.



“ . . . people will often get involved with youngsters but not with older people as it reminds them what might be ahead of them in the future. If people did get more involved with older people's groups they could perhaps help change things in the system, then life will improve not only for the older person but also for the person initiating the change. ”

How to find out more

Please email the Communities and Third Sector team at Camden Council on **volunteering@camden.gov.uk**

Volunteering contacts

If you would like to volunteer in Camden, the following organisations can offer help and advice:

Volunteer Centre Camden (VCC)

Provides information, guidance and support to individuals wishing to undertake voluntary work, and to organisations looking for volunteers.

volunteercentrecamden.org.uk

Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP)

Involves older people aged 50 plus working as volunteers in the community.

csv-rsvp.org.uk

Do-it!

UK-wide volunteering vacancies. **do-it.org.uk**

REACH

Finds part-time, expenses-only opportunities for people who want to offer their managerial or professional career experience for the benefit of nearby voluntary organisations. **reach-online.org.uk**

Community Service Volunteers (CSV)

CSV, based in Camden is the UK's largest volunteering and training organisation. It aims to involve young people aged 16 to 35 in voluntary service in the UK, to enrich the lives of volunteers and those they help and to generate social change. **csv.org.uk**

If you would like more general information about volunteering, the following organisations can offer help and advice:

Voluntary Action Camden (VAC)

An independent, grant-aided voluntary organisation that exists to support, encourage, defend and develop voluntary and community action in the London Borough of Camden. **vac.org.uk**

Greater London Volunteering (GLV)

The regional umbrella organisation for volunteering in London. Members include volunteer centres and volunteer development agencies covering every borough of Greater London. **glv.org.uk**

Volunteering England

The national volunteering development agency for England, committed to supporting, enabling and celebrating volunteering in all its diversity. **volunteering.org.uk**

Office of the Third Sector (OTS)

As part of the Cabinet Office, the OTS leads work across government to support the environment for a thriving third sector, enabling it to campaign for change, deliver public services, promote social enterprise and strengthen communities.

cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/volunteering.aspx

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