

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS



Report of the Trustees and Accounts For the period from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020

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

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

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

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VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 30 September 2020

The Trustees present their report and audited financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Charity Name: Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets

Charity Registration Number: 1127300

Company Registration Number: 6638750

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

Trustees: Ms Alice Sims, Chair
Ms Karin Maschler, Vice Chair
Mr Patrick McKenna, Treasurer
Ms Alison White
Ms Safia Jama (appointed 1 Oct 2020)
Ms Sabiha Khanam (appointed 1 Oct 2020)
Mr Leo Zawadzki (appointed 27 Apr 2021)
Ms Megan Cowley (appointed 27 Apr 2021)
Mr Stewart Turnbull (retired 5 Nov 2019)
Ms Ana Svab (retired 29 Jan 2020)
Ms Gemma Roye (retired 16 Apr 2020)

Senior Management: Ms Catherine Bavage, Chief Executive

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

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

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Period of Account

The period of account is from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020.

Governing Document

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

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

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

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

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

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

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

Trustee Induction and Training

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

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Risk Management

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

The charity has numerous policies and procedures that trustees, staff and volunteers must observe. During the year trustees updated 3 policies and procedures; Problem Solving Procedure for Volunteers, Trustee Recruitment Procedure, and the Handling Allegations Procedure.

In May 2020, to ensure that we implement best practice as employers, we contracted with Bright HR, who provide the trustees and Chief Executive with employment and HR advice. We also purchased their Employee Assistance Programme, giving our staff and volunteers access to a range of health and wellbeing support, including a helpline, 1:1 counselling sessions and online resources.

On 17 March 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, VCTH took the decision to close its office and ask all staff to work from home for their own and our clients' protection. Staff continued to work from home for the remainder of the year, and were provided with the necessary equipment, including new laptops purchased with a grant from London Plus. Our staff were paid Working At Home Allowances throughout, in line with HMRC guidance.

A comprehensive CaSE Charity insurance policy was arranged with Aviva. Policies were in place throughout the year covering; public/products liability (£5m), employer's liability (£10m), business interruption, trustee liability, professional indemnity, hirer's liability, fidelity, property and business equipment, goods in transit, group personal accident, and legal expenses.

In recognition of our limited reserves, and in keeping with the principles of the Compact, we negotiated advance funding with funders, wherever possible. This arrangement minimised potential cash flow difficulties. Securing adequate funding is always challenging. The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented fundraising challenges, as many more charities sought funds to respond to urgent community needs. At the same time, the need for volunteers and for volunteering infrastructure, such as Volunteer Centres, was never more acute. VCTH was fortunate to receive additional funds to run the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub and to deliver differently for our community. Our income increased by 26% from £184,115 in 2019 to £233,200 in 2020.

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

Only suitably qualified and experienced staff are recruited to work at VCTH. Ongoing professional development for staff, volunteers and trustees is essential for retention, to ensure that skills and knowledge are updated, and to reduce our exposure to risk.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Organisational Structure

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

During the year, seven individuals were involved as charity trustees. Three trustees were Tower Hamlets residents, bringing local knowledge and ownership to our Board. In addition, several trustees worked for local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.

Alice Sims continued as Chair. Patrick McKenna retained the position of Treasurer for a fifth year, providing valuable continuity. Karin Maschler was appointed Vice Chair in March 2020, taking over from Gemma Roye, who retired from the Board. Since the end of the reporting year VCTH has recruited four new trustees to the Board – Safia Jama, Sabiha Khanam, Leo Zawadzki and Megan Cowley.

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

Staff hours fluctuated throughout the year, with several part-time staff increasing to full-time working during the height of the pandemic. At 30 September 2020, the charity employed 6 paid staff - 4.7 full-time equivalents - although one part-time member of staff (0.4 fte) was on parental leave for the whole period.

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

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT

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

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

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

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

Mission

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

Core Functions

Our 5 core functions are:

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

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

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets was established in July 2008 as an independent charitable company by a founding team of four committed volunteers, who became its initial trustee board and Chief Executive. The charity celebrated its twelfth full operational year on 30 September 2020.

The Volunteer Centre holds Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation (VCQA) - the widely recognised quality mark for volunteering infrastructure organisations, assessed and awarded by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). It demonstrates that we are fit-for-purpose and deliver the five core Volunteer Centre services to a consistently high standard. This award is valid until 2022.

1. Volunteer Brokerage

We continued to provide a brokerage service, providing information about volunteering and matching people who live, work or study in Tower Hamlets to volunteering roles.

On 17 March 2020, Tower Hamlets Council asked us to develop and run a Tower Hamlets COVID-19 Volunteering Hub to source local volunteers who could respond to the coronavirus emergency. We worked at pace to set up the Volunteering Hub, and it was launched on 19 March 2020.

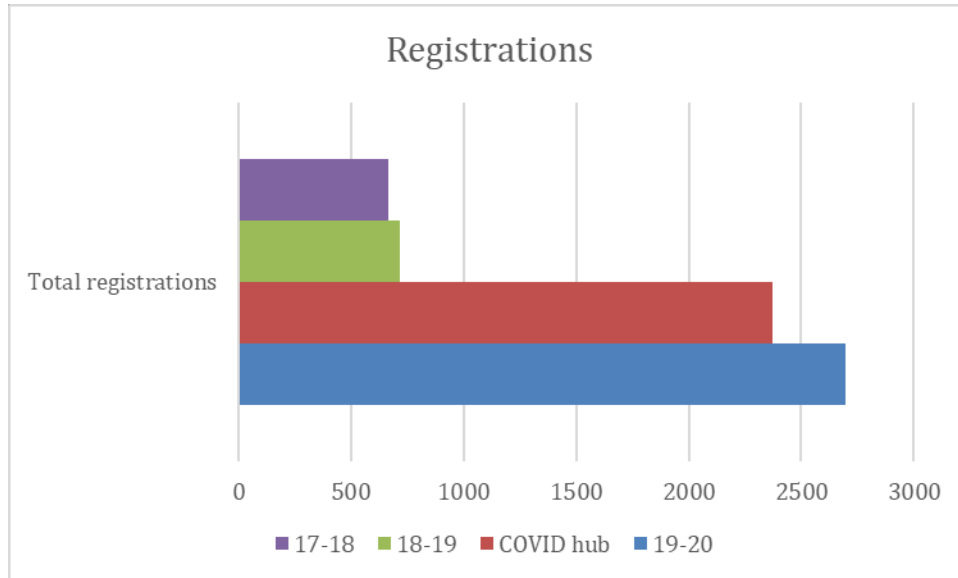
Operating the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub required a different model of working, to ensure that critical volunteer roles were advertised and filled rapidly. By upgrading our MailChimp subscription, we quickly developed a system of sending daily/weekly alerts to registered volunteers to inform them of new roles and encourage applications. With support from Simply Connect, we developed a new reporting query that allowed us to download, and share with organisations, lists of volunteers that had expressed an interest in specific roles. This way we were regularly able to broker volunteers to organisations in under 24 hours.

Volunteer Numbers

The response from local volunteers was phenomenal during the pandemic. Between 19 March 2020 and 30 September 2020, we had 2,373 new registrations, compared to 323 registrations received between 1 October 2019 and 18 March 2020. Across the whole year, we registered an average of 225 volunteers per month, compared to 60 people a month in 2018-2019.

There were a total of 2,696 volunteer registrations between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2020. This compares to 716 registered volunteers in 2018-2019 - a 277% increase.

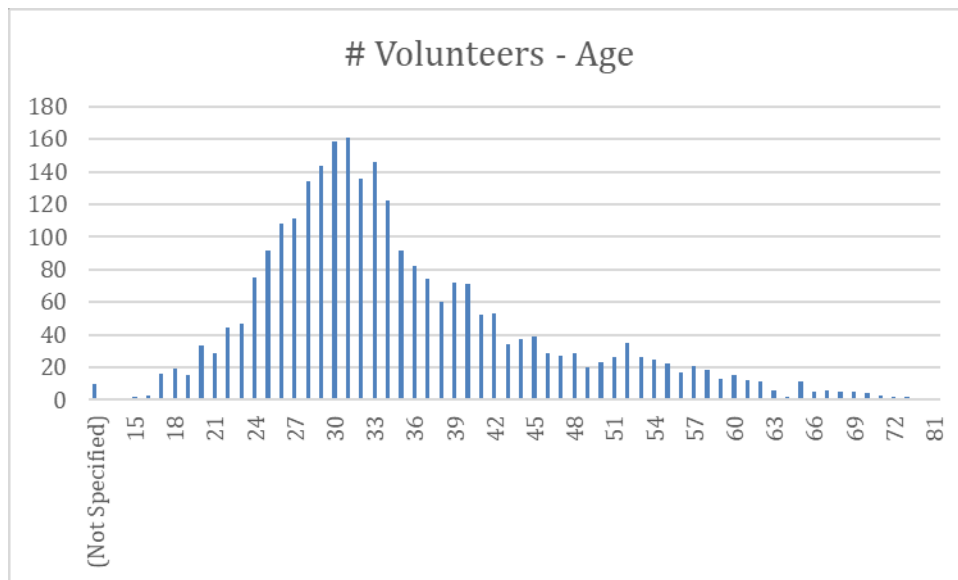
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Client Demographics

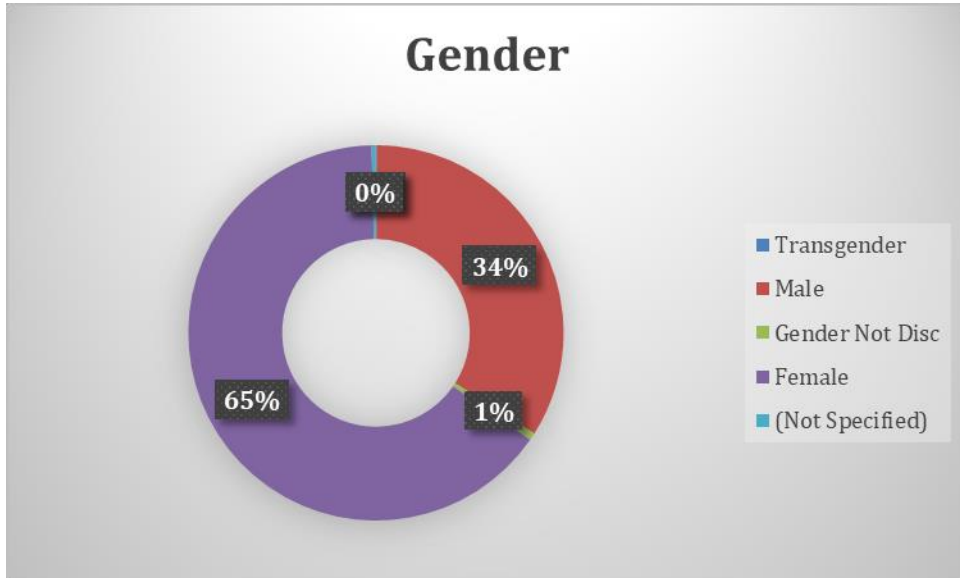
We continued to provide an inclusive brokerage service to a wide range of potential volunteers, reflecting the diverse communities in Tower Hamlets. We requested equalities data at the point of registration, but clients always had the option to withhold some personal information.

In terms of age, the largest groups were 30 year-olds (159 registrations) and 31 year-olds (161). The oldest volunteer who registered was 81 and the youngest was 14. This year almost two thirds (63%) of volunteers were under 35 (4% lower than in 2018-2019).

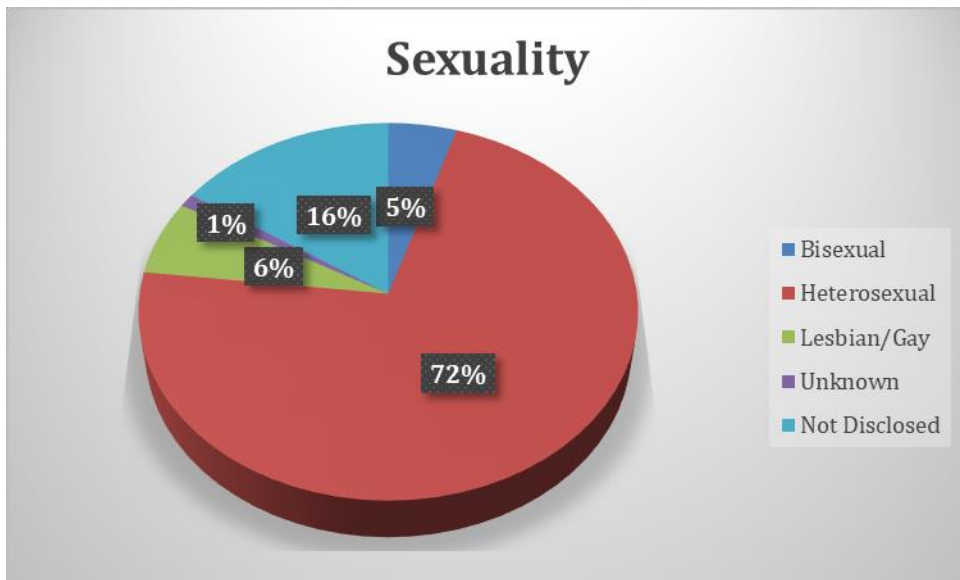


This year 65% of all volunteers that disclosed their gender defined themselves as female (68% in 2018-2019). We saw a small rise in male volunteers, with 34% of registrants identifying as male (32% in 2018-2019), continuing a trend of more men coming forward to volunteer over the last couple of years. Two volunteers identified as transgender. A further 27 volunteers chose not to disclose, or did not specify their gender.

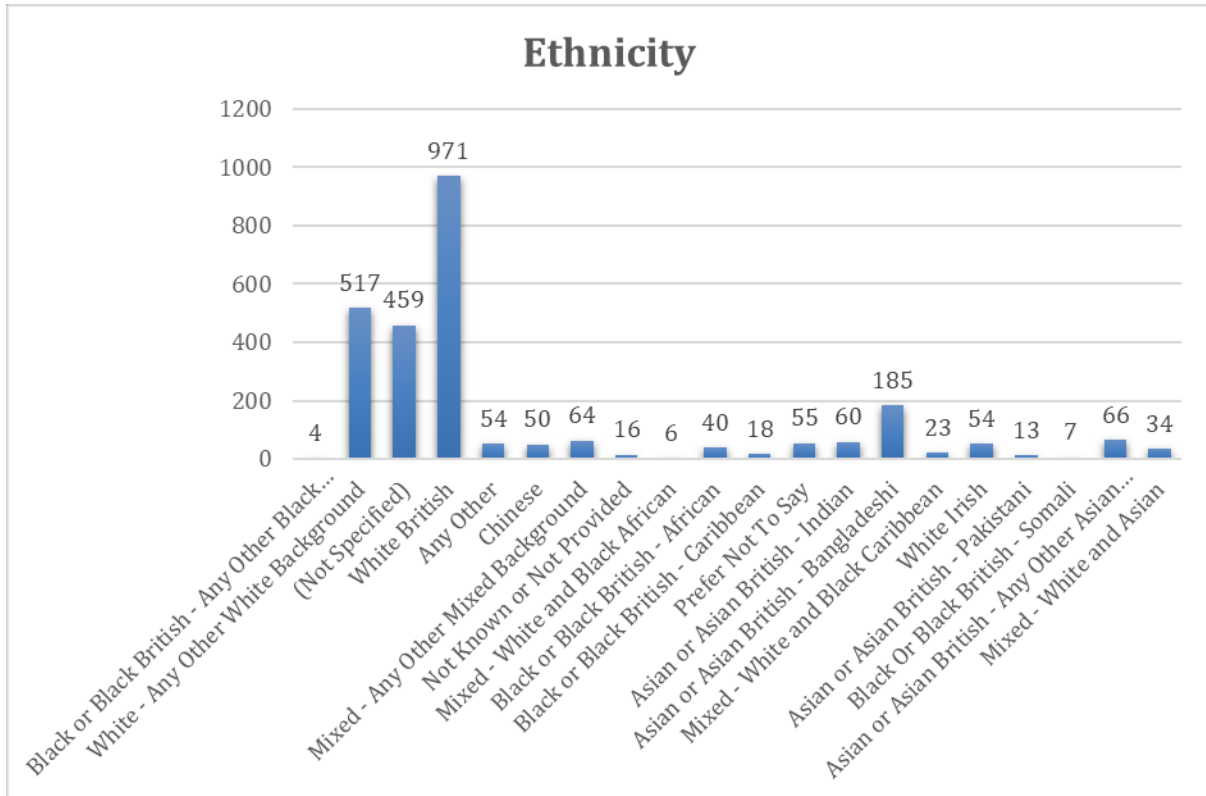
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This year saw a further reduction in number of volunteers defining as “heterosexual” (a 5% drop compared to 2018-2019, which was already 4% lower than 2017-2018). The percentage of volunteers identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual rose significantly to 11%, up 4% from the previous year. A further 17% of volunteers chose not to disclose their sexuality.



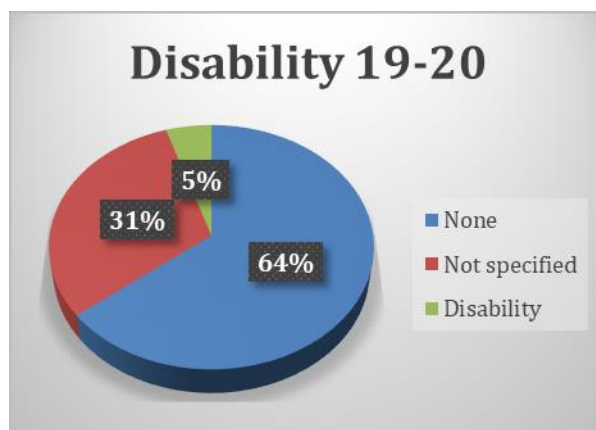
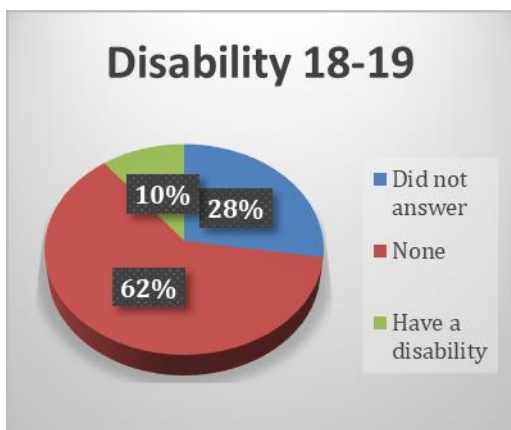
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The huge increase in registrations during the pandemic considerably altered our volunteer demographics in terms of ethnicity.

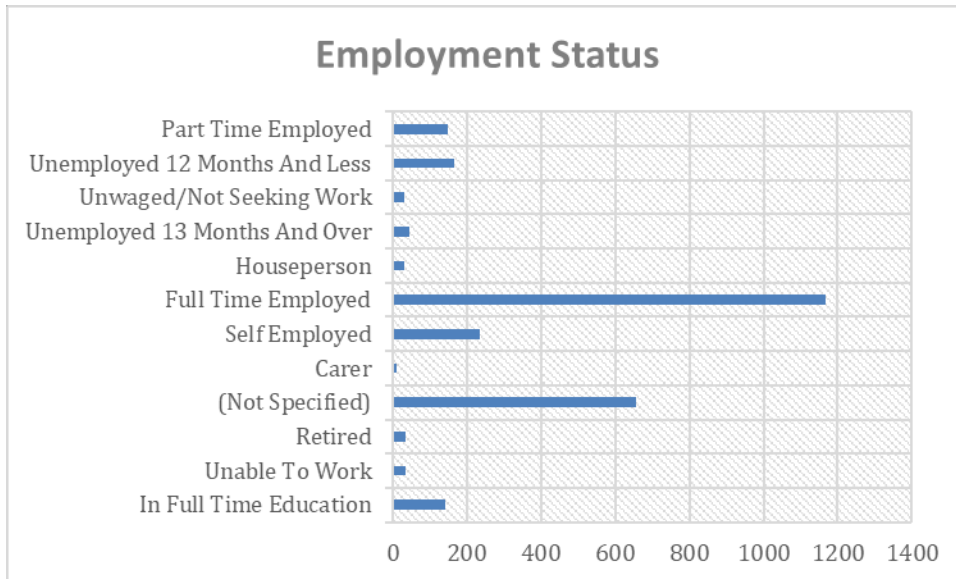
Of all registrants that disclosed their ethnicity, the largest group was “White British” at 36% (up 8% on 2018-2019). The next largest ethnic groups were “White–Any Other Background” at 19% (up 6%), and “Asian/Asian British–Bangladeshi” at 7% (down 23% from the previous year).

23% of all volunteers were from BAME communities, a large drop compared to 54% in the previous year. However, it is worth noting that almost 20% (530 volunteers) chose to withhold data about their ethnicity this year. It is likely that some, but not all, of these volunteers were from BAME communities.

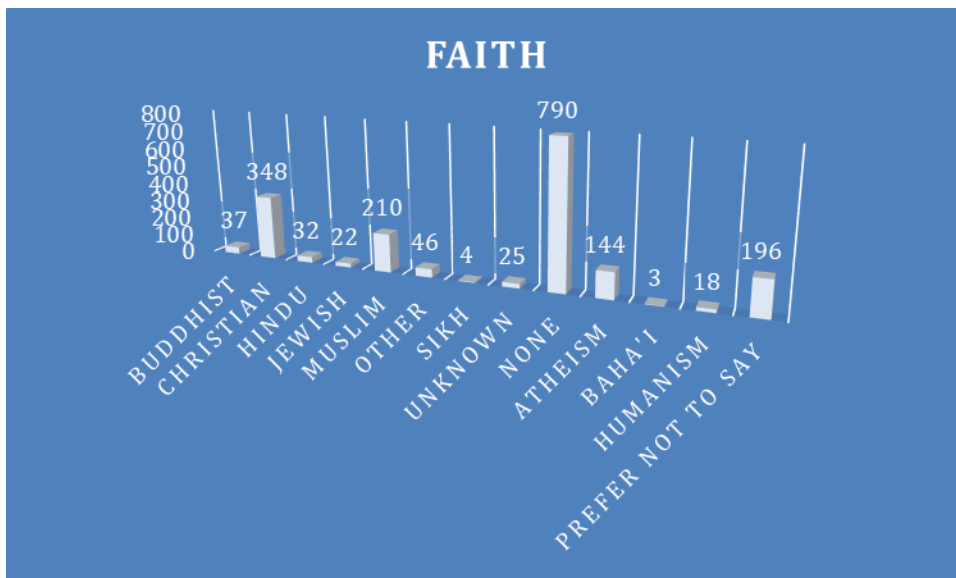


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This year the number of volunteers that disclosed a disability dropped to 5% from 10% in 2018-2019. Of all volunteers that stated they had a disability, 31% selected “mental health”, 26% selected “other medical condition (asthma, diabetes, etc)”, and 22% selected “something else”.



We also saw a dramatic shift in volunteers’ employment status this year. A total of 58% of volunteers were employed – 43.5% full-time, 5.5% part-time, and 9% self-employed. The significant increase in employed people volunteering likely reflects large numbers of residents who were furloughed, or working flexibly from home during the pandemic. Just 8% of all volunteers were unemployed, short-term or longer-term, compared to 23% in 2018-2019.



Volunteers from all religions and none used our brokerage service. Of the 1,875 people who disclosed data about their faiths (30% of registrants skipped this question), volunteers of no faith were by far the largest group, followed by Christians, Muslims and Atheists. In the previous year, the largest faith group was Muslim, followed by None, Christian and Atheist.

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Contacts and Tracking

This year we delivered 54 one-to-one brokerage support sessions, providing bespoke support to those volunteers who needed it. These sessions were suspended on 17 March 2020, when we pivoted to delivering the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub online and were no longer able to see clients face-to-face. The reduction in one-to-one brokerage sessions in the early part of the year may also reflect more volunteers choosing to use digital services.

With the launch of the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub we started working on different metrics. In 2019-2020, we received 6,165 applications for volunteer roles (compared to 1,136 in 2018-2019) - a 443% increase. Details of each application were passed to the relevant Volunteer Managers, and volunteers were also provided with contact details for organisations. This was to facilitate contacts and ensure applications did not go missing or ignored.

During the pandemic we worked at full capacity to broker volunteers as quickly as possible to organisations that needed them. This meant that our capacity to track volunteer placements was limited. During 2020-2021, we will undertake a comprehensive tracking exercise to establish placement rates.

2. Good Practice Development

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

Volunteer Managers' Training

We delivered 6 half-day training courses for Volunteer Managers this year. Between 1 October 2019 and 19 March 2020, four training sessions were delivered in-person. After the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we switched to delivering training online via Zoom, providing 2 training sessions. A total of 69 Volunteer Managers attended our training, an average of 11 per course (an increase of 1 per course on the previous year).

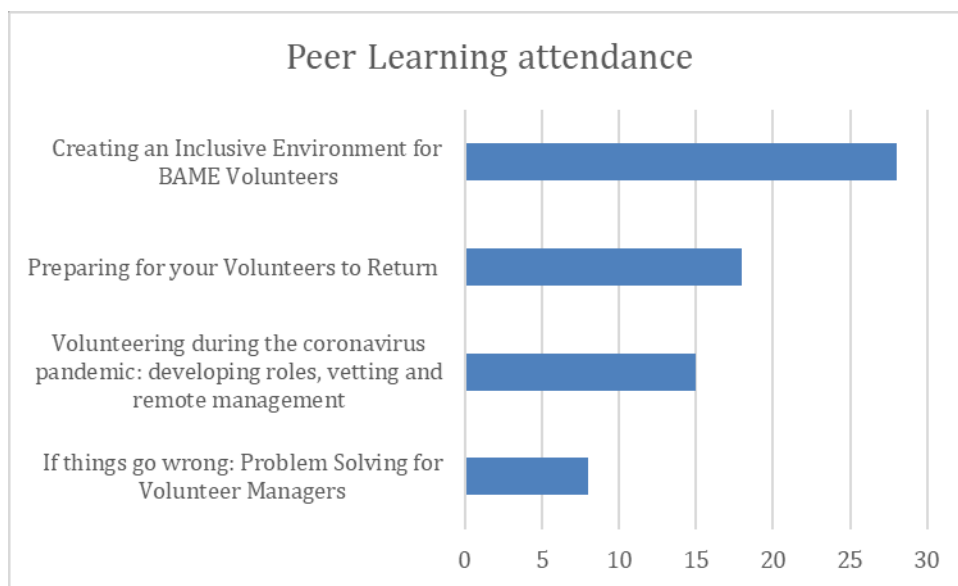


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78% of trainees completed evaluation forms. 97% of participants rated our training as “extremely useful” or “very useful”, with 3% rating it as “fairly useful”. 93% of trainees reported an increase in their knowledge or confidence in the subject area as a result of attending the training (an increase of 5% on 2018-2019).

Peer Learning Sessions for Volunteer Managers

We ran 4 free Peer Learning sessions, which proved extremely popular. A total of 69 participants attended - an average of 17 per session (6 more per session than the previous year). The sessions provided a blend of professional development and learning opportunities for people who manage volunteers. They included guest speakers and opportunities for peer support. During the early stages of the pandemic, these sessions provided a vital resource for Volunteer Managers to come together to share ideas and concerns and boost morale.



Bespoke Advice on Volunteer Programmes

We delivered 49 free one-to-one advice sessions to 26 organisations (9 fewer than last year). A post-advice questionnaire was completed 14 times by 12 organisations (2 organisations completed the survey twice, having received advice in two different quarters).

- An impressive 100% of respondents reported having progressed in levels of knowledge, confidence and skills.
- 92% anticipated being able to implement improvements to their organisation’s volunteering practices, systems and procedures. The remaining 1 organisation was ‘not sure’ and requested further support from VCTH.

“We always really appreciate the support and 1-1 advice provided by VCTH. It is a relief to know that they are at the other end of an email or phone whenever we have a concern or issue to resolve”.

We have strongly benefitted from the continued support of the VCTH team to improve our services involving volunteers, creating further inclusion and diversity and delivering training for us to continually improve our practices.

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Advice was provided on a wide range of topics including: reviewing volunteer policies and procedures; recruiting volunteers; describing volunteer roles more clearly and in a way that would appeal to potential volunteers; providing sample templates (eg Volunteer Policy, Volunteer Agreement, application form, volunteer database); improving diversity and inclusion, and developing in-house training for staff on managing and supervising volunteers.

Factsheets

We researched and developed factsheets to provide an accessible resource for busy Volunteer Managers. Factsheets were e-mailed directly to registered organisations, and were subsequently made available to download, free-of-charge, from our website. This year we produced 2 new factsheets: '*Safeguarding and Volunteer DBS Checks during the Coronavirus Pandemic*' and '*Which Coronavirus Roles Require a DBS Check?*' Our Factsheets were accessed a total of 4,323 times during the year, up 228% on the previous year (1,319), showing a significant demand for this service.

Factsheets which remained available on website	Downloads 1/10/19 – 30/09/20
Saying No to Volunteers	27
Recruiting Male Volunteers	12
Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers Aged 50+	23
Creating an Inclusive Environment for LGBT+ Volunteers	7
Data Protection, GDPR and Volunteers	47
Volunteer Expenses and Rewards	20
Volunteering in Tower Hamlets – Key Trends	7
Supporting Volunteers Towards Employment	1
Virtual & Online Induction/Training for Volunteers	18
Volunteer Retention	29
Volunteer Induction	29
Training Volunteers	29
Involving Young Volunteers	10
Promoting Volunteering Opportunities	12
Insurance for Volunteers	25
Involving Volunteers who have Limited Time	9

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New factsheets created and emailed between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2020	Opened when emailed and total opens/downloads
Safeguarding and Volunteer DBS Checks During the Coronavirus Pandemic	177 opened when emailed Total opens 1,521
Which Coronavirus Roles Require a DBS Check?	12 opened when emailed Total opens 2,497

Good Practice Tips

In our monthly e-bulletin, we included bite-sized advice on a variety of volunteer management issues, either in the form of answering a particular question (our 'Ask Evelyn' column) or a 'Top Tip'.

1. Ask Evelyn: Saying no to volunteers
2. Ask Evelyn: Selling your volunteer programme to funders and potential volunteers
3. Top Tip: Ways to say thank you to volunteers for their work over the year
4. Ask Evelyn: *"Our organisation is taking on new volunteers to help in the current COVID-19 crisis, supporting vulnerable and self-isolating people in the local community. Do we need to do DBS checks for new volunteers? Also how do we check their ID, as we won't be meeting them in person?"*
5. Ask Evelyn: *"Do I have to take up references for every volunteer before they start volunteering? We do have a policy to take references, but it can be time-consuming and often we don't hear back from the referees".*
6. Top Tip: How to encourage people who initially enquire about volunteering to actually progress their application and start volunteering
7. Ask Evelyn: *"I was wondering whether there is a risk assessment template for volunteers who have had things flagged on their DBS check?"*
8. Ask Evelyn: *"In these changed times, we need to do everything from a distance and avoid face-to-face contact. How do we maintain good practice in volunteer management?"*
9. Top Tip: Authorisation letters for volunteers when out and about during the 'stay at home' order
10. Top Tip: How to encourage volunteers to maintain social distancing
11. Ask Evelyn: *"At the height of COVID-19 we found that lots of people wanted to volunteer. However, in recent weeks, there has been reduced interest. What can we do to attract volunteers?"*
12. Ask Evelyn: *"As shielding was paused on 1 August, what good practice should I follow when bringing back volunteers who were shielding?"*

3. Developing Volunteering Opportunities

An integral part of developing new volunteering opportunities is registering the Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) that offer them. We only register not-for-profit organisations such as charities, community groups, social enterprises and public sector bodies. They are usually based in, or provide services in, the borough of Tower Hamlets. We conduct a health check with each new organisation, via an in-depth telephone meeting, to ensure that the volunteer roles they offer are meaningful, appealing and as safe as possible.

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This year we registered 30 new VIOs (6 more than the previous year). This brought the total number of organisations registered with VCTH to 469 at 30 September 2020 - a net increase of 29 organisations in a year.

During the first half of the year (October 2019 – March 2020) it was business as usual, whereas during the second half of the year (April – September 2020) our work was very much driven by our response to the pandemic.

We immediately worked at pace with organisations in the borough that were delivering vital services to some of the most vulnerable members of the community. We systematically contacted organisations registered with us to ask about their essential volunteer requirements and help them develop diverse, appealing opportunities for volunteers. We developed and promoted 450 volunteering roles over the entire year. Of these, 211 were new roles, a significant increase of 151% on the previous year's 84 new roles.

We advertised volunteer roles for an initial period of up to 3 months, or until organisations told us they no longer needed volunteers. We routinely alerted Volunteer Managers once the required number of volunteers were referred, and invited them to renew adverts for a further 3 months, or to de-activate adverts. This process enabled us to maintain an accurate database of volunteering roles, giving us confidence that roles published on Volunteer Connect were current vacancies.

Although many traditional volunteering roles were put on hold by organisations due to the pandemic, we saw an uptick in critical roles responding to urgent needs in our community. We advertised both remote and face-to-face roles, ensuring they were in line with the COVID-19 government guidelines. Examples of roles advertised during this period include; food delivery volunteers, food preparation and packers, park rangers, telephone befrienders shopping volunteers, Sylheti-speaking support volunteers, youth mentors, High Street volunteers, and community contact tracers. We also saw an increase in demand for skilled volunteering roles such as social media curators, digital champions, IT systems analysts, film production volunteers (home-based), and online speakers.

4. Voice of Volunteering

One of the Volunteer Centre's core functions is to be the local voice of volunteering - creating an increased awareness of the issues impacting on volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations. We campaign for a volunteer-friendly climate, where volunteering is a key element of a democratic civil society, and is open to all. We strive to educate and influence key decision-makers and funders about the value of volunteering to communities and the benefits to individuals. We advocate for greater recognition of the costs of well-run volunteering programmes. We disseminate policy information and statistics, encourage organisations to think about how policies affect their volunteer programmes, and urge them to join relevant campaigns.

Campaigning and Informing

Throughout the year, we have kept 469 registered organisations informed and raised awareness of issues affecting them.

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In November 2019 we promoted national Trustees' Week and encouraged local organisations to submit nominations for the Mayor of London's Volunteering Awards.

As the pandemic hit and more of our member organisations began pivoting services to support vulnerable adults and children, safeguarding and vetting became a more prominent concern. Much of our work therefore revolved around raising awareness of changes to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). In March 2020 an "Ask Evelyn" column in our e-bulletin included a risk assessment template for organisations to use when volunteers have had issues flagged on their DBS checks. In April we promoted our new factsheet on "*Safeguarding and Volunteer DBS Checks during the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic*". In May we launched a new factsheet entitled "*COVID-19 Roles and DBS Checks*".

In July 2020, we assisted our registered organisations by giving advice on how to adapt to the COVID restrictions being lifted in the summer.

E-bulletins

VCTH produced monthly e-bulletins for Volunteer Managers. These included information about training, funding for volunteering programmes, policy developments, updates on campaigns, facts and trends, and volunteer management job adverts. Each e-bulletin included a "Top Tip", promoting an area of good practice, or an "Ask Evelyn" column, responding to dilemmas facing Volunteer Managers. We also use e-bulletins to promote our recently released factsheets. News sources regularly included Government departments, NCVO, and academic research. We promoted several awards schemes for volunteers. This year we added a dedicated funding section for small organisations.

Our e-bulletin was emailed to an average of 685 contacts each month, a decrease in our audience of 66 from the previous year. This was largely due to cleansing data to remove out-of-date contacts. Our engagement statistics were virtually identical to last year: we had a 19.6% opening rate, compared to 21% in 2018-2019.

Website

This year our website attracted an average of 4,082 page views per month, compared to 3,475 page views per month in 2018-2019, showing a 17% increase. The average time on page was 1m:21s, higher than the 1m:10s registered in the previous year. In the period between 15 March and 15 April 2020 (the first month of the COVID-19 pandemic) our website attracted 14,782 page views, compared to 3,697 during the same month in 2019.

We maintained links from our website to Volunteer Connect to help visitors browse our current volunteer roles and/or register online. The "search volunteer roles" button was clicked 4,827 times, 23% down compared to 2018-2019, and the "register your interest/login" button received 676 hits, showing a 28% decrease. However, it is worth noting that these decreases were caused by the re-design of our website homepage to direct visitors straight to the new COVID-19 Volunteering Hub sign-up page, which in turn produced 2,625 expressions of interest in the "Coronavirus - COVID-19 Relief Volunteers" role.

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During the pandemic, we added a “Donate” button with a link to VCTH page on PayPal Giving Fund. This generated modest but welcome income of £707 from individual donors.

We developed a number of new volunteering case studies for our website, illustrating some of the roles that local people were carrying out to help their community, and the benefits the individuals felt they had gained by volunteering during the pandemic.

Work began this year on designing a new VCTH website. In November 2019, our Communications & Marketing Officer facilitated a focus group to gather input on the style, functionality and content of a new site. We recruited and inducted a Volunteer Photographer to take photos of volunteers and of Tower Hamlets locations for the new website. Progress on completing the website re-design was delayed in the second half of the year due to the pandemic, but will resume in 2021.

Digital Channels

In 2019-2020 the number of VCTH Facebook followers grew significantly from 683 to 987 - a 45% increase - with the bulk of the growth taking place in March and April 2020. We used our Facebook page to engage with local residents, to promote our latest volunteer roles.

We had 90 new followers on Twitter, reaching a total of 2,271 followers by the end of September 2020 – an increase of 4% on the previous year. We used Twitter to engage with other organisations and Volunteer Managers.

With the launch of the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub, we started sending out regular alerts to a mailing list of potential volunteers. By the end of September 2020, the list had grown to 3,586 contacts. We built this list by adding all of the volunteers on our Volunteer Bank prior to 19 March 2020, then including all volunteers who registered on Simply Connect after 19 March 2020. Volunteers who expressed an interest in COVID-related roles were also added. By 30 September 2020, we had sent out 52 email alerts with COVID volunteering roles, and several dedicated alerts advertising single roles.

Volunteers’ Week (1-7 June 2020)

Volunteers’ Week this year was rather different to previous years. COVID-19 restrictions prohibited gatherings of more than 6 people outdoors, and all indoor events. The usual award ceremonies and celebrations were unable to proceed. Instead, VCTH focused on marking Volunteers’ Week online, and encouraged other organisations to do the same.

During Volunteers’ Week we sent out a branded e-bulletin to registered organisations with a thank you message from the Mayor of Tower Hamlets. We also organised a Volunteers’ Week Peer Learning session on “*Volunteering during the Coronavirus Pandemic*”.

We published posts on Facebook, encouraging more local people to start their volunteering journey during Volunteers’ Week. Both posts linked to different volunteer case studies. Similar content was published on Twitter, where we interacted with the LBTH official Twitter account, posted photos of the Peer Learning session, and a link to BBC London Volunteers’ Week coverage, where volunteering in Tower Hamlets was mentioned.

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5. Strategic Development of Volunteering

As the volunteering infrastructure agency for Tower Hamlets, VCTH is widely recognised as the local volunteering expert in the borough, and we are regularly consulted on volunteering matters by local decision-makers. This year, more than ever, Volunteer Involving Organisations across Tower Hamlets looked to us for guidance, practical support and leadership on volunteering issues.

Working with Tower Hamlets Council

In March 2019, when the COVID-19 emergency began, our position as the established and well-respected strategic volunteering partner in the borough meant that VCTH was the obvious choice for the Council to choose to run the COVID-19 Volunteering Hub. We were invited to join the Council's Silver Community Mobilisation Operational Group to guide local volunteering plans to respond to the pandemic. There was a particular focus on ensuring that food and medication supplies were delivered to the most vulnerable members of our community, and on ensuring robust safeguarding.

Between March and September 2020 we worked in partnership with Tower Hamlets Council to facilitate volunteering. We sourced volunteers for a range of Council services and teams, such as Tackling Poverty, Economic Development, Children & Culture and Strategy, Policy & Performance. We advised Council staff on developing volunteer roles, and assisted with developing volunteer management training and guidance for Council workers.

Working with Public Health

The pandemic provided an opportunity for us to develop new relationships with senior staff at LBTH Public Health. Our Chief Executive participated in a range of regular meetings, including the Outbreak Health Protection Board and Safe Individuals Bronze Group, advising where volunteers might add value and support the delivery of services to residents. We helped recruit COVID-19 Community Champions to disseminate messages to residents, and Community Insight Volunteers to gather research on matters such as vaccine hesitancy, shielding, mental health, and attitudes towards COVID testing.

Co-Operate and the VCS Strategy

VCTH's Chief Executive and the VSCYF Co-ordinator both continued as members of Co-Operate – a joint strategic body made up of not-for-profit sector representatives. Co-Operate aims to transform how we work together to enhance the lives of local people. Between us, we represented the interests of Volunteer Involving Organisations and organisations providing services to children and young people.

Co-Operate met twice during the year, once in person and once online. The main focus of its work was consulting the sector about, and then developing, the new Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy 2020-2024. Through e-bulletins and meetings, VCTH encouraged local groups to have input into this new strategy. The VCS Strategy has a vision of a diverse and thriving VCS, working alongside residents, the council and partner organisations to achieve better outcomes for residents. Volunteering is one of the key elements.

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We attended regular Conference Calls with John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets, alongside other key representatives from voluntary, community and faith sectors, keeping the Mayor abreast of how local volunteers were helping with the health emergency.

Partnering with Tower Hamlets CVS

Throughout 2019-2020 we strengthened our relationship with Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), ensuring that we avoided duplication of services and were representing the broadest possible range of local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations at strategic level. We delivered the first year of the Local Community Fund Infrastructure and Capacity Building programme in partnership.

National and Regional Bodies

We remained a member of two strategic volunteering bodies - London Plus, and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). Our Chief Executive attended London Plus Volunteer Centre Network meetings, engaging with staff in other London Volunteer Centres to share challenges and successes of facilitating the volunteering response to the pandemic across the Capital. VCTH staff also attended weekly NCVO webinars to hear from colleagues in Volunteer Centres across the country. These sessions enabled us to keep up-to-date with the latest developments, and to have input into volunteer policy-making within the Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

We continued our relationship with Team London, the Greater London Authority's volunteering department, working with them on Year 3 of The Big Volunteer project, and helping to promote the Mayor of London's Volunteering Awards.

Discretionary Business Rates Grants

In August 2020, VCTH became aware that discretionary business rates grants were available from the Council to VCS organisations based in rateable premises. There was very poor awareness of these grants and the deadline for applications was looming. VCTH had lobbied the Council to open business rates grants to local charities, after the first round of Government Grants had been unavailable to our sector. We obtained a list of organisations that were eligible for grants, but that had not applied. Our staff team contacted 33 VCTH and VSCYF member organisations individually to encourage them to apply. Most had been unaware of the grants, or had misunderstood the eligibility. As a result of our prompt intervention, 24 organisations each secured £5,000 of unrestricted funding, leveraging £120k of income into local Volunteer Involving Organisations.

6. Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF)

VCTH continued to facilitate the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum (VSCYF) for a twelfth year. The Forum acts as a conduit between voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations that provide services to children, young people and their families, and Tower Hamlets Council and other statutory partners. VCTH employs a part-time Co-ordinator, who liaises with all of these parties and ensures sharing of information and effective communication.

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The Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum met 6 times during 2019-2020, with average attendance of 16 organisations per meeting (a higher attendance level than the previous year). Three of the meetings were held on Zoom, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Attendance increased for these meetings, with members appreciating the possibilities for connection at an uncertain time. Forum meetings during this time included sections to support VSCYF members deliver their services, to share concerns and suggestions.

The meetings covered a variety of subjects:

- funding, commissioning and grants, including LBTH's Youth Services commissioning and the Holiday Activity Fund
- partnership working
- safeguarding
- the LBTH Youth Services review
- Stop and Search
- mental health
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) provision
- holiday hunger
- young carers
- early help
- the primary school places review
- social prescribing
- the new Children and Families Strategy
- the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy
- Play in Tower Hamlets.
- the impact of COVID-19 on children, families and organisations.

VSCYF members continued to benefit from the briefing sessions given by senior representatives from LBTH Children's Services and Culture Directorate.

The VSCYF Co-ordinator also organised themed meetings to support organisations to change the way they could deliver their services during the pandemic restrictions, including meetings with education providers to understand how schools were managing, and a training session with Public Health on Protection, Infection, Control.

The VSCYF Coordinator promoted COVID-19 specific funding opportunities for the immediate response to restrictions. Many of these had a swift turnaround and organisations were able to receive funding for food, toys and IT equipment for families. The Co-ordinator also promoted the Tower Hamlets Holiday Hunger Funding and supported 3 organisations to apply for it, all of which were successful. We also supported VCS organisations working with children, young people and families to apply for discretionary grants from LBTH.

We issued quarterly VSCYF e-bulletins, covering Forum and Tower Hamlets news, funding and training opportunities, and events for children, young people or organisations that support them. The database of VSCYF members shows that 10 new organisations joined the Forum during the year, bringing the total membership to 276 organisations – a net increase of 3 from the previous year. The total number of voluntary sector professionals on our database stood at 366 – a net decrease of 11 individuals.

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Facilitating voluntary sector representation continued to be a key focus of the VSCYF Coordinator's work this year. Two voluntary sector representatives and the new Chair (appointed July 2020) met regularly to ensure good representation for all VSCYF members. Between them the VSCYF Co-ordinator and representatives ensured that each steering group/board had at least one voluntary sector representative at every meeting. The VSCYF Co-ordinator is a representative herself, and attended several partnership boards and steering groups.

As well as ensuring strong sector representation, the VSCYF Co-ordinator delivered a number of practical services for Forum members. She assisted 12 member organisations with funding applications, or helped them decide whether to apply (the same number as the previous year). In addition, she supported 7 organisations with their safeguarding policies and procedures (the same number as the previous year).

During the year, we organised 3 training workshops for VSCYF members. Average trainee numbers were similar to those per course in the previous year.

Course title	Date	Trainees
Identifying Realistic Outcomes and Targets for Funding Applications and Tenders	14 November 2019	4
A Space for Talk	21 November 2019	9
Infection Protection Control (delivered by LBTH Public Health)	30 June 2020	35

7. Consultancy Work, Income Generation and Short-term Projects

We undertook several pieces of consultancy work and short-term projects this year. As well as enabling staff to use their expertise and deliver additional services for the community, these projects enabled us to diversify our funding base and generate unrestricted reserves.

Everyone's Business

In June 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we began working with East London Business Alliance (ELBA) to pull together a network of grassroots organisations working to prevent or respond to Serious Youth Violence. The project, called "Everyone's Business", is funded through the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's (MOPAC) Violence Reduction Unit. It aims to explore the impact of business support from corporate volunteers to strengthen small organisations' capacity to support children and young people at risk of serious youth violence across 4 East London boroughs – Tower Hamlets, Newham, Waltham Forest, and Barking & Dagenham.

Our VSCYF Coordinator mapped organisations in Tower Hamlets working in the field of serious youth violence, bringing together 9 grassroots organisations to form the Tower Hamlets Everyone's Business Network. Each member organisation completed a needs assessment to help us plan support, which includes mentoring and training. The Tower Hamlets Everyone's Business Network held its first meeting in September 2020.

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Sodexo – Volunteer to Stop Hunger

Our "Volunteer to Stop Hunger" project, funded by the Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation, aimed to involve more volunteers in addressing food poverty. It began in mid-March 2020, just as the coronavirus pandemic erupted and the first lockdown was implemented. Although the pandemic created multiple challenges, it also provided unexpected opportunities for this new project. Suddenly, large numbers of people on low incomes, including older people, disabled people and those shielding for medical reasons, were forced to self-isolate, whilst urgently needing food, creating a huge demand for volunteers.

We vetted 12 new charities and registered them during the course of the 6-month project, exceeding our target of 10 by 20%. Our target for the project was to develop at least 20 new volunteering roles addressing food poverty, and we developed 33 new roles, 65% higher than target. The roles we advertised included food bank volunteers, food delivery volunteers, kitchen assistants, cooking volunteers, and food bag packers, to name a few.

Over the 6-months, we referred 442 volunteers for 33 roles in various charities and local community groups tackling food poverty, exceeding our target of 50 volunteers by an enormous 784%. This is an incredible achievement considering the pandemic and social distancing restrictions in place at the time.

We were also pleased to offer 11 different volunteering opportunities for Sodexo staff to volunteer over the summer and in September. These were roles in charities across the borough delivering a range of free summer activities for children and young people. Our offer included roles at Tower Hamlets Council's VCS Food Distribution Hub, set up to provide foodbanks and charities with bulk food supplies.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

During July and August 2020, we worked with local charities and schools that were delivering a range of free activities for children and young people, including sports, arts and crafts, and play schemes. All of the projects included a free lunch, and targeted children from low-income households who were eligible for free school meals, to ensure that they did not go hungry during the school summer holidays.

A total of 21 organisations, including schools, were funded by LBTH to deliver the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme. We supported 9 of these organisations, 5 of which were new registrations and 4 that were already registered with VCTH. We developed 11 volunteer roles such as sports coaches, lunchtime hosts, volunteer play workers, and food delivery assistants. A total of 76 volunteers were referred to these 9 organisations.

We developed and delivered 'Holiday Hunger Volunteer Management' training for the funded organisations, many of which were new to managing volunteers. 15 participants from 12 organisations attended the training. The content covered; adapting roles to appeal to volunteers during the pandemic, recruiting and vetting volunteers, managing risks and safeguarding, supporting volunteers and retention, and legal obligations including data protection and complying with COVID-19 guidance.

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London Plus (formerly Greater London Volunteering) – The Big Volunteer

VCTH was part of a consortium of four London Volunteer Centres, led by London Plus, delivering The Big Volunteer for a final year. This 3-year project, funded by Sport England, initially used the Big Half, London's half marathon, as a catalyst to encourage more people to get involved in volunteering at large-scale sports events and in grassroots sports clubs.

In the third and final year of the programme, 13 volunteers registered their interest.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 lockdown, we were forced to cancel volunteer training scheduled for March and April 2020, and mass sporting events were also suspended. These circumstances had a major impact on our ability to deliver this project.

We offered the volunteers alternative opportunities across the borough to support local charities and community organisations responding to the pandemic. In September 2020, we also invited them to support the London Marathon pre-event build, in partnership with Team London. This event, originally planned as a mass running event, was open only to elite athletes because of COVID-19. 30% of the 13 Big Volunteer participants undertook further volunteering roles at this event, and with community organisations in the borough.

We provided training and good practice advice to 8 sports organisations on various topics such as good practice in volunteer management, managing risks in volunteer programmes, and preparing for volunteers to return when lockdown restrictions were briefly lifted in summer 2020. We also helped a community grassroots sports and youth organisation to access an LBTH Discretionary Business Rates Grant.

NCVO - Investing in Volunteers (iV)

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. Since September 2014, two members of VCTH have been certified by NCVO as Investing in Volunteers Advisors. During the year we advised 4 organisations on their iV journey: Our Parklife, Limehouse Project, Link Age Southwark and St Christopher's Hospice. Two of these organisations were based in Tower Hamlets (Our Parklife, Limehouse Project), and were offered additional support, such as mock interviews, ahead of their external assessment. We are delighted that all four organisations gained the Investing in Volunteers quality mark.

Museum of London

We were commissioned by the Museum of London to deliver a training session on '*COVID-19: Managing Risks in Your Volunteer Programme*' for members of their network of small museums and arts projects. The training was delivered on 2 September 2020 via Zoom, and was attended by 16 organisations.

Centre 70

Towards the end of the year, we were contracted to provide volunteer management consultancy support to Centre 70, a voluntary sector organisation based in Lambeth that supports adults facing social, mental, financial or other personal difficulties. The

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support will be provided via Zoom and email in 2020-2021 and will include reviewing their volunteer documentation, providing sample templates and practising negotiation and assertiveness skills.

Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV)

Between October and December 2019, we were able to offer Employer Supported Volunteering, organising team volunteering events for private sector companies, helping them to fulfil their corporate social responsibility commitments. We worked in partnership with several local charities including who hosted team volunteering days.

Four companies used our ESV service during the year. DZ Bank staff organised a Christmas Party for a group of elderly and disabled residents living in supported accommodation run by Creative Support. The Executive Team at Aveva Solutions bought and assembled new bedroom furniture for The Sick Children's Trust. Staff from Sodexo spent a morning baking cakes for families staying at Stevenson House in the run-up to Christmas. A team from Applicaster helped with a range of practical tasks and animal care Stepney City Farm.

Team volunteering events were suspended in March 2020, due to the pandemic. Sadly this meant that we delivered significantly fewer ESV events than in the previous year. A total of 36 corporate volunteers participated over 4 events, with an average team size of 9 volunteers. Between them, these employee volunteers contributed a total of 141 hours – the equivalent of 20 working days. Our ESV service generated income of £4,850 (down £5,200 from the previous year). Our ethical approach ensured that a good proportion of this income was passed on to the host charities, which also benefited from the volunteers' time and skills.

Income from Training and Room Hire

Our Local Infrastructure Grant from Tower Hamlets Council enabled us to subsidise fees for our volunteer management training courses, enabling us to charge as little as £30 for organisations based in the borough. Low costs meant our high quality training was affordable for most local voluntary organisations. We also reserved one free place per course for a micro organisation whose annual income was under £50k, further increasing accessibility. Half way through the year our training delivery moved online to Zoom. We took a decision to suspend charging for training as a way of supporting member organisations. Nevertheless, training income from the first 6 months of the year amounted to £1,370.

We continued to rent out our training/meeting room to not-for-profit organisations, as part of our commitment to providing an affordable space to the sector. Unfortunately, due to noisy construction work on an adjacent site, and then the pandemic, our ability to rent our meeting space was severely curtailed, reducing our room hire rental income to just £291 this year.

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Thank You

To our staff

The trustees wish to extend our sincere thanks to the staff team. The COVID-19 pandemic made 2019-2020 an exceptionally challenging year for everyone, both professionally and personally, and our staff demonstrated enormous dedication, flexibility and resilience. Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets was at the very heart of the local volunteer response to the pandemic, ensuring that our community's most vulnerable residents were supported through an unprecedented health emergency. Our thanks to:

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

To our volunteers

VCTH volunteers contribute their energy, time and skills to assist our team. In 2019-2020, we were supported by Robert Young, Volunteer Photographer.

To our funders

We are extremely grateful for the money and confidence that our funders have invested in Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets. During 2019-2020 they were:

- East London Business Alliance (MOPAC Violence Reduction Unit)
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- London Plus (formerly Greater London Volunteering) Restricted funding for the purchase of computer equipment.
- Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation
- City Bridge Trust (London Community Response Fund). Restricted funding for "Delivering Differently" when co-ordinating the local volunteering response to the pandemic.
- National Lottery Community Fund - Awards for All. Restricted funding for "Volunteering in Tower Hamlets" to make our brokerage service more responsive and accessible.

To our corporate supporters

Our thanks are extended to Ashurst LLP and to East End Homes for continuing to provide free venues for our training and peer learning sessions, and for our Staff and Trustee Away Day.

We also wish to thank Xanta Ltd for their corporate donation in support of our work.

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PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

During the pandemic, it was not possible to bring together the staff and trustee teams for our usual strategic planning Away Day. Giving the rapidly changing environment in which we are currently operating, trustees have identified a number of short-term strategic priorities, which will be reviewed throughout 2021:

- 1. Recruit and retain the right people (staff and trustees) to deliver VCTH's mission**
- 2. Prioritise the wellbeing of staff and trustees**
- 3. Effectively deliver VCTH's core functions**
 - *through new projects that are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and through pre-existing funded projects. Projects will be monitored and adapted as needed so that they are accessible to, and represent, the diversity of the community we serve*
- 4. Prioritise fundraising and the financial stability of VCTH**
- 5. Manage the workplace environment**
 - *moving temporarily to an office-free model, including vacating the existing premises, setting up temporary solutions and ensuring satisfactory working from home arrangements for staff*
- 6. Ensure regulatory compliance**

In the year ahead we hope to:

- Refresh our Strategic Plan and develop a new Funding Strategy
- Finalise and launch our new website, making it more accessible and giving it a fresher, more modern feel, with the options to carry out online fundraising and host video clips
- Secure further funding for the Volunteering Hub so that we can continue to lead the local volunteering response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including helping to deliver the vaccination programme in Tower Hamlets
- Continue to deliver projects where volunteering offers solutions to the most pressing issues in our community, such as addressing serious youth violence
- Undertake a comprehensive tracking exercise to establish volunteer placement rates within organisations supported during the pandemic, and better understand our impact.
- Review the demographics of volunteers registering with VCTH and develop strategies for further increasing diversity and inclusion. Consider how the report of the Tower Hamlets Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Inequalities Commission should inform our work, particularly in the areas of community leadership and governance.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

VCTH started the year with a budget that projected a deficit of £40,883, intending to use some unrestricted reserves to cover this, as well as generating additional in-year income. We ended the year with a surplus of £35,672. Net current assets (working capital) held at 30 September 2020 amounted to £62,128.

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Reserves Policy

At the end of the charity's twelfth operational year, our overall reserves increased by 134% from £26,456 in September 2019 to £62,128 in September 2020. Of these reserves, £50,857 were unrestricted and £11,271 were restricted funds.

Trustees last reviewed our Reserves Policy in February 2021, and have committed to review it bi-annually. Our Reserves Policy adopts a risk-based approach. VCTH strives to maintain free reserves at a level which cover liabilities and winding up costs in the event of the charity's closure, and which enable the charity to carry on its day-to-day business in terms of cash flow. The majority of our liabilities relate to statutory redundancy payments to staff.

On completion of a review of risks, trustees and the Chief Executive identify a target range for free reserves. The maximum reserves figure will not normally exceed 3 months' running costs. A target reserves range of £35,787 to £45,000 has been set for the year commencing October 2020. This range will be reviewed in the summer of 2021. Trustees recognise that the upper end of this target range is stretching in the current economic climate. Reserves can only be built by generating earned income, and through contracts, rather than through grant funding. Reserves will be used to provide income to fulfill our charitable objectives.

Trustees' Responsibilities Statement

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

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

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

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

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

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In so far as the trustees are aware:

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

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

Auditors

In 2019-2020, the trustees re-appointed Myrus Smith Chartered Accountants as the charitable company's auditors.

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

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 15 June 2021 and signed on its behalf by:

.....

Alice Sims, Chair and Trustee

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

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

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 30 September 2020 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 30 September 2020, and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

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

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

Other information

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

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

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

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

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

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

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

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

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

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

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement (set out on pages 29 and 30), the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

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

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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

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

Use of our report

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

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

15 June 2021

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Statement of Financial Activities (including Income and Expenditure Account) for the year ended 30 September 2020

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Income from:					
Charitable activities	2	132,152	101,048	233,200	184,115
		_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Income		132,152	101,048	233,200	184,115
		_____	_____	_____	_____
Expenditure on:					
Charitable expenditure	3	107,628	89,900	197,528	195,277
		_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Expenditure		107,628	89,900	197,528	195,277
		_____	_____	_____	_____
Net income/(expenditure)	7	24,524	11,148	35,672	(11,162)
Transfers between funds	13	(123)	123	-	-
		_____	_____	_____	_____
Net movement in funds		24,401	11,271	35,672	(11,162)
Funds brought forward	13	26,456	-	26,456	37,618
		_____	_____	_____	_____
Total funds carried forward	13	£ 50,857	£ 11,271	£ 62,128	£ 26,456
		_____	_____	_____	_____

All income and expenditure is derived from continuing activities.

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

The notes form part of these accounts.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Balance Sheet As at 30 September 2020

	Notes	2020 £	2019 £
Current assets			
Debtors	9	9,747	9,608
Cash at Bank		80,063	44,069
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		89,810	53,677
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	10	(27,682)	(27,221)
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Net current assets		62,128	26,456
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Net assets	11	£ 62,128	£ 26,456
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Funds:			
Unrestricted funds			
- General fund	13	50,857	26,456
Restricted Funds	13	11,271	-
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Total funds		£ 62,128	£ 26,456
		<hr/>	<hr/>

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

Approved by the directors and trustees on 15 June 2021 and signed on their behalf:

.....
Alice Sims
Chair and Trustee

The notes form part of these accounts.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

1. Accounting policies

General information and basis of preparation

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets is a private company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is given in the "Reference and Administrative Information" on page 3 of these financial statements.

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

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

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

Income recognition

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

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

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

Expenditure recognition

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

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

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

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

1. Accounting policies/contd...

Fund accounting

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

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

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

Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

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

Leases

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

Pensions

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

Debtors and creditors

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

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

2. Income from Charitable activities

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	2020 £	2019 £
LB Tower Hamlets:				
Voluntary Sector Children & Youth Forum (Third Sector Co-ordinator)	39,989	-	39,989	38,320
Mainstream Grant/Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grant	-	63,000	63,000	61,503
COVID 19 Volunteering Hub	46,251	-	46,251	-
Brokerage Residents	-	-	-	24,500
Brokerage Staff	-	-	-	33,333
Discretionary SBRR grant	5,000	-	5,000	-
Holiday Hunger	1,300	-	1,300	-
Other consultancy	-	-	-	600
Total LB Tower Hamlets	92,540	63,000	155,540	158,256
London Plus (Greater London Volunteering)	-	3,750	3,750	4,680
City of London Corporation	-	-	-	3,333
City Bridge Trust - London Community Response Fund	-	24,307	24,307	-
East London Business Alliance (MOPAC)	8,000	-	8,000	-
Greater London Volunteering - Big Volunteer	15,240	-	15,240	-
National Lottery Community Fund - Awards For All	-	9,991	9,991	-
Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation	5,000	-	5,000	-
Other Consultancy Income	6,945	-	6,945	13,766
Training, Room Hire and Other Income	4,427	-	4,427	4,080
Total	£132,152	£101,048	£233,200	£184,115

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

Of the LB Tower Hamlets income of £158,256 recognised in 2019, £96,753 related to unrestricted funds and £61,503 to restricted funds.

The rest of the charitable activities income of £25,859 recognised in 2019 all related to unrestricted funds.

3. Cost of charitable activities

	Direct Costs	Support Costs	Total 2020	Total 2019
Volunteering services	£160,352	£37,176	£197,528	£195,277

Of the £197,528 (2019 - £195,277) expenditure recognised in 2020, £107,628 (2019 - £125,688) was charged to unrestricted funds and £89,900 (2019 - £69,589) was charged to restricted funds.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

4. Analysis of direct costs

	Total 2020	Total 2019
	£	£
Wages and salaries	157,463	153,249
Activity costs	1,972	5,009
Staff and volunteer training and recruitment	485	135
Travel costs	294	981
Volunteer expenses	138	257
	<u>£160,352</u>	<u>£159,631</u>

5. Analysis of support costs

	Total 2020	Total 2019
	£	£
Office costs	6,524	7,268
Premises costs	16,950	19,249
IT support	1,832	1,955
Computer and website costs	5,428	642
Other costs	625	788
Governance costs (note 7)	5,817	5,744
	<u>£37,176</u>	<u>£35,646</u>

6. Governance costs

	Total 2020	Total 2019
	£	£
Audit and accountancy fees	5,709	5,157
AGM/Annual review	108	285
Trustee meetings and training	-	302
	<u>£5,817</u>	<u>£5,744</u>

7. Net income/(expenditure)

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

	2020	2019
Auditors' remuneration – Audit	£2,478	£2,256
Operating lease rentals	£16,656	£19,249
	<u>£19,134</u>	<u>£21,505</u>

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

8. Staff costs	2020	2019
	£	£
Wages and salaries	142,180	137,567
Social Security costs	10,129	10,122
Pension Costs	5,154	5,560
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£ 157,463	£ 153,249
	<hr/>	<hr/>

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

The total employee benefits received by Key Management amounted to £49,713 (2019 : £43,540). Under FRS 102, employee benefits includes gross salary, employer's NIC, employer's pension contributions and benefits in kind.

The average number of employees during the period, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents was 3.5 (2019: 3.5). The average monthly number of employees was 5.3 (2019 : 5).

9. Debtors	2020	2019
Due within one year	£	£
Prepayments	5,685	5,461
Other Debtors	4,062	4,147
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£ 9,747	£ 9,608
	<hr/>	<hr/>

10. Creditors:	2020	2019
Amounts falling due within one year:	£	£
Deferred income	22,054	21,294
Accruals	5,628	5,927
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£ 27,682	£ 27,221
	<hr/>	<hr/>

All of the £21,294 deferred income brought forward from 30 September 2019 was released to income in the year ended 30 September 2020. Deferred income relates to funding received but for which the performance conditions will be met in the next accounting period.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

11. Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Current assets	78,539	11,271	89,810
Current liabilities	(27,682)	-	(27,682)
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
At 30 September 2020	£ 50,857	£ 11,271	£ 62,128
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

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

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Current assets	53,677	-	53,677
Current liabilities	(27,221)	-	(27,221)
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
At 30 September 2019	£ 26,456	£ Nil	£ 26,456
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

12. Operating Lease Commitments

At 30 September 2020 the total minimum lease commitments due under non-cancellable operating leases was as follows:

	2020	2019
Within one year	£11,903	£10,645
	<hr/>	<hr/>

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

13. Movement in funds

	At 1 Oct 2019 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers between funds £	At 30 Sept 2020 £
Restricted Funds					
LBTH - Infrastructure	-	63,000	(63,123)	123	-
London Plus - Laptops	-	3,750	(3,750)	-	-
CBT/LF – Covid 19	-	24,307	(23,027)	-	1,280
National Lottery – A4A	-	9,991	-	-	9,991
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total restricted funds	-	101,048	(89,900)	123	11,271
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	26,456	132,152	(107,628)	(123)	50,857
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total unrestricted funds	26,456	132,152	(107,628)	(123)	50,857
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total funds	£ 26,456	£ 233,200	£ (197,528)	£ Nil	£ 62,128
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A description of each restricted fund is given in the Trustees Annual Report.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE TOWER HAMLETS

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2020

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

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

Restricted Funds	At 1 Oct 2018 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers between funds £	At 30 Sept 2019 £
LBTH - MSG Priority 1	(85)	18,092	(20,638)	2,631	-
LBTH - MSG Priority 2	(286)	43,411	(48,951)	5,826	-
Total restricted funds	(371)	61,503	(69,589)	8,457	-
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	37,989	122,612	(125,688)	(8,457)	26,456
Total unrestricted funds	37,989	122,612	(125,688)	(8,457)	26,456
Total funds	£ 37,618	£ 184,115	£ (195,277)	£ Nil	£ 26,456

14. Taxation

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

15. Related Party Transactions

Refreshments and training costs amounting to £108 (2019: £302) were paid on behalf of 6 (2019 : 7) trustees.

The trustees received no remuneration in 2020 or 2019.

There were no other related party transactions in 2020 or 2019.