

# WE ARE VOLUNTEERING.

# WE ARE NEWHAM.



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# 1. FOREWORD

If our hopes of building a better and safer world are to become more than wishful thinking, we will need the engagement of volunteers more than ever.” — Kofi Annan

This quote reflects how the entire country has responded to what has been a challenging year for us all. It is no surprise that Newham residents have responded with compassion and care. Volunteers in Newham, as elsewhere, have played a vital role in the response to this crisis and it is with this achievement in mind that we have developed a volunteering strategy with our local voluntary, community and faith sectors.

The last 12 months, emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, has exposed the challenges facing some of the borough’s most vulnerable residents and the disproportionate impact upon our black and minority ethnic (BAME) populations.

However, the pandemic has also highlighted our valuable community partners in the voluntary sector. Our Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector have led volunteering efforts through co-production, coordination and collaboration in the most challenging times. The council, more than ever, appreciates the value that the sector brings to our communities. We will build on the legacy of the relationships created and sustained in these current times and beyond.

‘Help Newham’, the initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic could not have been achieved without the coordinated efforts of the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector, the council and the borough’s hundreds of valuable volunteers and Mutual Aiders who all got involved to help and support.

As part of the response to the impact of lockdown, and with 2021 being designated the year of the Young Person in Newham, our Youth Empowerment Service developed a volunteering programme for young people aged 14+. This allowed them to support the relief effort in the #HelpNewham food distribution hubs. Young people across the borough took part in being involved in a youth takeover day at one of the hubs.



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In 2019, Newham ranked as the 12th most deprived borough out of 317 authorities. Newham has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the UK with 72% of residents from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups and a range of over 100 languages spoken. Our volunteers come from a vast and diverse community; each volunteer bringing a unique quality to their work.

The volunteering strategy will help to consolidate our collective efforts and build upon the amazing work already being done. Through these efforts we will help foster equality and diversity, all vital for a cohesive and integrated society.

Our new social integration strategy, published last year, will be the driver to build a more cohesive, united and fairer borough. The development of the volunteering strategy, is set within the heart of the social integration strategy. The strategy will recognise the contribution and benefits of volunteering and its impact on community cohesion.

The strategy will support the organisations that engage with volunteers, outlining the tools and resources that will be developed to support, recognise and encourage all types of volunteering activity.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Volunteering is the giving of time, energy and resources to individuals or organisations in the spirit of benefitting others.

Volunteering has always been part of everyday life in Newham. The contribution of volunteers during the Covid-19 pandemic has been significant, but it's important to recognise that this huge effort was facilitated and supported by a solid foundation of existing volunteering activity.

The volunteering strategy for Newham sets out an action plan to collaboratively develop and deliver volunteering opportunities across the borough - contributing to the positive development and outcomes felt by volunteers, communities, beneficiaries and organisations.

It's a broad ranging strategy aimed at all potential partners and volunteers.

Throughout the Covid pandemic we have seen existing partners grow volunteering levels and new partners and new volunteers step up to the plate. Newham Public Health has, for example, recruited almost 500 Covid Champions, and has diversified the offer into creating a programme for Young Covid Champions. Community food hubs have recruited more volunteers to increase their distribution, with faith groups also stepping into providing access to hot meals and essential supplies to those in need.

Across communities, neighbours and friends have come together to ensure that our most vulnerable residents were provided with the essentials and this includes over 3,500 mutual aiders who quite literally rose to meet the extreme need and uncertainty that characterised the first lockdown period in 2020. Universities in the borough have provided online volunteering opportunities for their students and helped staff and student volunteers to pivot into Covid related volunteering roles. A massive network of befriending services largely rooted in the Voluntary,



### We celebrated some of our iconic volunteers at National Volunteering Week in the summer of 2020!

Community and Faith Sector but also in the Council's Help Newham Befriending Project – has largely been driven by volunteers.

Measuring the actual levels of volunteering in the borough is not easy and this may be partly due to the fact that many people who volunteer don't necessarily identify with the term or consider themselves volunteers. This strategy therefore recognises and encourages all types of volunteering activity and acknowledges and celebrates the roles of people including Mutual Aiders and informal volunteering - such as when good turns are given by friends and neighbours.

# 3. THE NEWHAM CONTEXT FOR VOLUNTEERING

The last 12 months has seen an unprecedented set of events emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Covid-19 exposed the vulnerabilities of our most vulnerable residents within our borough and there has been a disproportionate impact upon our black and minority ethnic (BAME) populations.

The Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector has responded exceptionally well and the council appreciates the value

that the sector brings to our communities and the range of our collaborative partnerships.

Help Newham, the initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic could not have been achieved without the coordinated efforts of the sector, the council and the borough's hundreds of valuable volunteers and Mutual Aiders who all got involved to help and support.

Volunteers have played a significant role in the Voluntary Community and Faith Sector response to the pandemic – the delivery of these activities captures the 14 week period from the start of lockdown to the end of June 2020.<sup>1</sup>



The Public Health Team co-produced a range of infographics with the Covid-19 Health Champions to facilitate information sharing throughout the borough during the pandemic

**BECOME A CHAMPION**  
Help stop the spread of COVID-19

**Do you want to help your community?**  
Anyone living or working in Newham can get involved.

**Become a COVID-19 Health Champion**  
Join our network of local people to help during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Get live updates on COVID-19**  
Receive the latest information and government guidelines on how to stay safe and healthy.

**Spread the word**  
Share this information with your family, friends, work colleagues and the wider community.

**Help us to stop the virus**  
Keeping our communities well informed will help minimise the risk of the virus spreading.

✉ CovidHealthChampions@newham.gov.uk ☎ 020 3373 2777  
🌐 [www.newham.gov.uk/CovidHealthChampions](http://www.newham.gov.uk/CovidHealthChampions)

**TEST AND TRACE**  
Help stop the spread of COVID-19

**1. Stay home if you have symptoms**  
Stay home for 10 days if you have symptoms; stay home for 14 days if someone you live with has symptoms.

**HIGH TEMPERATURE OR NEW CONTINUOUS COUGH OR LOSS OF TASTE OR SMELL**

**2. Immediately arrange a test**  
<https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or call 119.

**3. If you test positive**  
NHS Test and Trace or our local public health team will contact you to find out:

- People you regularly spend time with
- People you have spent 15 minutes or more with, less than 2 metres apart
- People you have been with in a car/van
- Places you have been

**4. If someone you have been close to tests positive**  
NHS Test and Trace or our local public health team will be in touch. You will need to stay home for 14 days even if you don't have symptoms – no matter what.

**Protect your information**

- Any text or email from NHS Test and Trace will ask you to sign into <https://contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk/>
- All phone calls from NHS England will come from 0300 013 5000.
- All your information as part of NHS Test and Trace is held in confidence under the Data Protection Act 2018.

**You won't be asked...**  
NHS Test and Trace and our local public health team won't ask:

- for bank details or payments
- for details of any other accounts
- you to set up a password or PIN number
- you to call a premium rate number like those starting in 09 or 087

**For help getting a test, listing your contacts, or self-isolating**  
**020 7473 9711**  
[covidhelp@community-links.org](mailto:covidhelp@community-links.org)

002 (08-20)

Response programmes such as the Covid-19 Health Champions, the vaccine peer supporters, telephone befriending, and the distribution of food, prescription medicines, toiletries, clothes and household items have been a lifeline to our residents, especially those who have been shielding at home or are in extreme need.

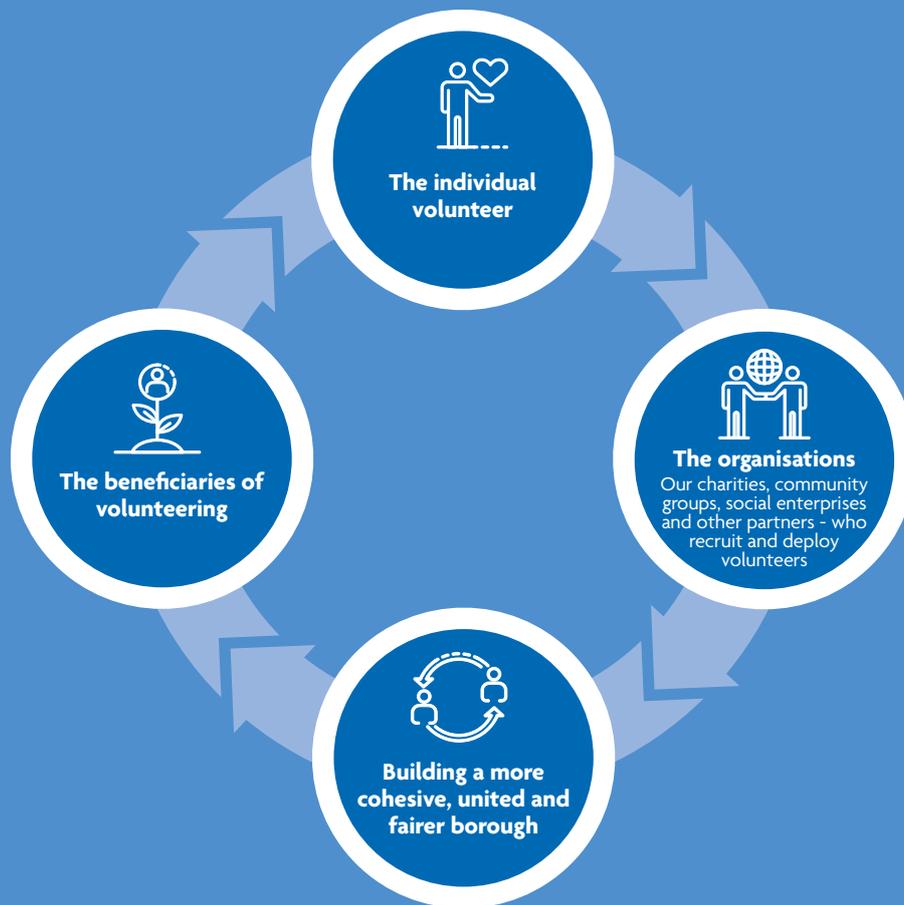


## THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering has a great impact - it brings a host of benefits that are social and personal not only to the individual who gives their time freely by volunteering, but also to the community organisations that they support to deliver so many services.

For the volunteer, the act of volunteering is important for the development of skills, building relationships with a diverse range of people, and gaining a sense of belonging to the community. It increases confidence, mental health and wellbeing by providing a sense of achievement in helping and supporting others. The act of volunteering can also combat isolation and it strengthens links with others by helping to build feelings of social connectedness.

This strategy is therefore rooted in the impact volunteering has on:



## **VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITY IN NEWHAM**

At the moment it's difficult to gauge levels of and the demography of volunteering in Newham.

The national picture tells us that in the year ending March 2020 23% of people aged 16 and over in England took part in formal volunteering at least once a month.<sup>2</sup>

The GLA conducted the Survey of Londoners in 2018/19, an online and paper self-completion survey of adults aged 16 and over in London and found:

- **Formal volunteering:** Twenty-eight per cent of Londoners have participated in formal volunteering in the last 12 months. Young Londoners are the age group most likely to engage in formal volunteering.
- **Informal volunteering:** Around half (52 per cent) of Londoners have participated in informal volunteering, defined as giving unpaid help to a person who is not a family member in the last 12 months.
- **Civic participation:** Twenty-four per cent of Londoners have participated in civic activity in the last 12 months, such as campaigning on behalf of a political party, running or trying to set up a local service or organising a community event. Londoners who are in insecure work have higher rates of civic participation.

- Groups of Londoners less likely to volunteer informally included those not proficient in English (42 per cent), single pensioners (42 per cent), and those with no qualifications (28 per cent).<sup>3</sup>

In the last Newham Survey in 2019, 32% of the 1,112 people surveyed said they had given unpaid help to a group, club or organisation in the last 12 months, this was a 20% increase on figures from the previous year.<sup>4</sup>

Existing volunteering pathways within the borough include:

**activeNewham**

who coordinate a large range of volunteering opportunities in the borough - have reported a significant rise in volunteering levels over the past 3 years:

<b>Year</b>	<b>New Registrations</b>	<b>Confirmed Hours</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Volunteers who joined at least ONE opportunity</b>
April 2018 – March 2019	753	22,429	400	553
April 2019 – March 2020	623	16,729	557	728
April 2020 – March 2021*	1,014	33,140	135	639

\*1 April 2019 – March 2020: PRE/PART-COVID (Note, significant drop of confirmed hours during the latter part of the year due to news of Covid breakout and then news of potential lockdown).

\*2 April 2020 – March 2021: DURING COVID (Note, number of opportunities reduced to concentrate on just Covid projects. Spike in new registrations/confirmed hours as local people/community pulled together on the #HelpNewham agenda. Naturally first time volunteers drop due to lockdown guidance, but also demonstrates the repeat volunteering done to amass the confirmed hours). These figures are accurate as of February 2021.

### Young People, Volunteering and Participation

For the first time ever, 2021 has been designated the year of the Young Person in Newham. As part of the Mayor's ambition to make Newham the best place for children and young people to grow up in and thrive, the initiative aims to give a platform to young people and to open up pathways for them across the borough – building upon existing activities.

There is a range of volunteering taking place across the activities of our uniformed groups in Newham – such as Scouts, Guides and Cadets.

As part of the response to the impact of lockdown, our Youth Empowerment Service developed a volunteering programme for young people aged 14+ to support the relief effort in the #HelpNewham food distribution hubs. Young people from across the youth zones, and young people accessing parts of the participation offer took part in being involved in a youth takeover day of one of the hubs.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE) has supported many young people to successfully navigate adult life through volunteering and participation. 14-24 year olds can participate in the DofE – regardless of ability, gender, background or location. The DofE programme is structured at three progressive levels, which when successfully completed, leads to a Bronze, Silver or Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Through the DofE programme young people have fun, make friends, improve their self-esteem and build confidence. They gain essential skills and attributes for work and life such as resilience, problem solving, team working, communication and drive, enhancing CVs, university and job applications.

With volunteering being a key component of the DofE Award, the Youth Empowerment Service are working with partners from across the council and Voluntary, Community and Faith sector to establish a Young Person's Volunteering Strategy for Newham.

[www.dofe.org/thelatest/young-people-support-coronavirus-community-relief-effort/](http://www.dofe.org/thelatest/young-people-support-coronavirus-community-relief-effort/)

The numbers of young people volunteering in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

In Newham during the period April 2019 to March 2020 there were

**539** young people volunteered

**2496** hours, worth a social value of

**£10,857.**



A participation model has been developed that allows for young people at a local and pan-Newham level to come together to discuss the issues that most affect them. Social action groups have been established to act on the main priorities that young people identify each year. Working collaboratively, young people will be able to identify solutions that can be taken forward to influence council policy, youth-led Social Action Projects and campaigns.

This film highlights one of these campaigns in action by members of the Youth Empowerment Service  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BEtvG6Vfdg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BEtvG6Vfdg)

## Newham Staff Volunteering and aspirations

There is great value to be realised from Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV), where staff from organisations and businesses are supported to volunteer in their community, and given the opportunity to contribute the act of giving time and support to their community.

Experience from the Covid-19 pandemic response saw some of London Borough of Newham's workforce support the establishment of #HelpNewham, where staff helped in the effort of responding to the call to help put together food parcels at foodbanks and made befriending calls to vulnerable residents who were shielding during the lockdown. This was a crucial lifeline to those who were lonely, isolated and in need of support.

The Help Newham Befriending Service started off in May 2020 with 136 volunteers and ended up with 75 at the end of the Help Newham Phase. The Legacy Befriending Service started off with 62 volunteers and ended up with 53 – out of which 25+ are still active and are now volunteering at Connect Newham.<sup>5</sup>

The council is committed to building upon this approach by introducing a council-wide Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) Programme by 30th June 2021. The programme will encourage more staff to volunteer in their local community. 34.1% of our 4000 staff members live in Newham and the positive impact of staff volunteering will be substantial.

## Newham Businesses

Newham based businesses also have a continued part to play in contributing toward the ongoing volunteering effort in the borough, whether it is through encouraging more of their staff to volunteer locally or building closer links with smaller enterprises or supporting schools.

The Community Wealth Building Strategy recognises that there are 14,000 businesses, dominated by micro sized enterprises employing nine or fewer staff. Over 94% of all businesses in Newham are Small Medium Enterprises. Improved co-ordination of volunteering across the borough will harness volunteering opportunities and encourage greater contribution of corporate social responsibility.

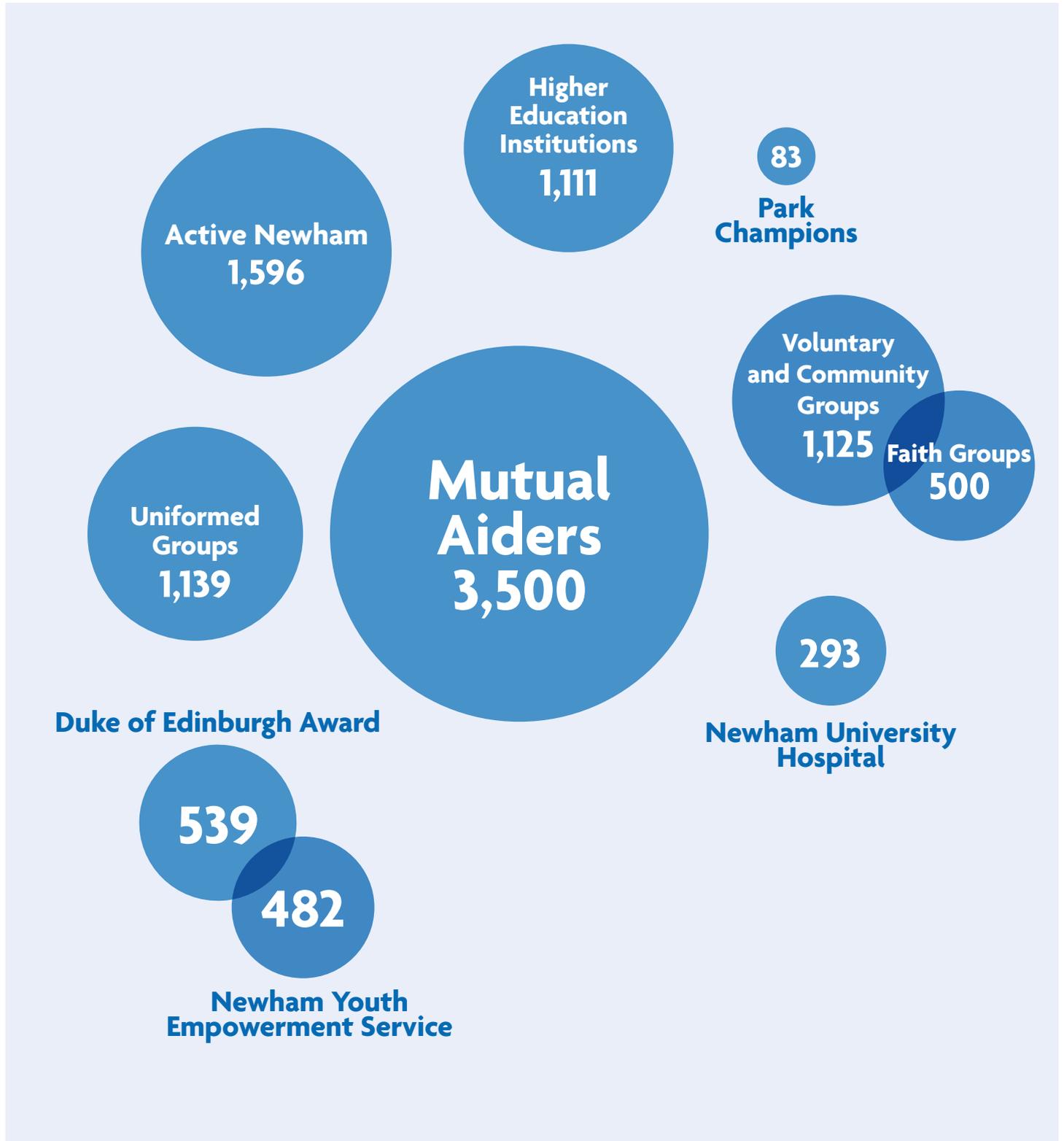
## The Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector

The sector is wide ranging and far reaching. In Newham there are over 260 organisations who have been engaged in completing the VCS survey co-ordinated by Compost London. There is a real mix of organisations – some are relatively small and may be completely driven by volunteers. Others are large organisations with a mix of professional staff and volunteers.

Attempts to estimate how many residents volunteer in Newham is a challenge, as volunteer recruitment and co-ordination can happen at a very local level.

Establishing a Newham Baseline – This is still work in progress and will be compiled by the Newham Volunteering Hub, once established, and updated as soon as is possible. The graphic on the next page is really a snapshot of activity that we are currently aware of.

Volunteering takes place in a variety of settings



## THE IMPORTANCE OF COVID NOW AND IN RECOVERY

As we move toward recovery there is more to be done. Volunteering can help promote social integration - it is about the ties that bring people together, a network of public and private relationships and connections that transform a collection of individuals into a functioning community that does more than just co-exist. These relationships and interactions inspire bonds of trust, reciprocity and solidarity and create a sense of collective belonging and living lives connected with others.

The introduction of this strategy will promote and encourage more Newham residents to volunteer and increase the reach to first time volunteers, and also broadening the different types of people who become volunteers.

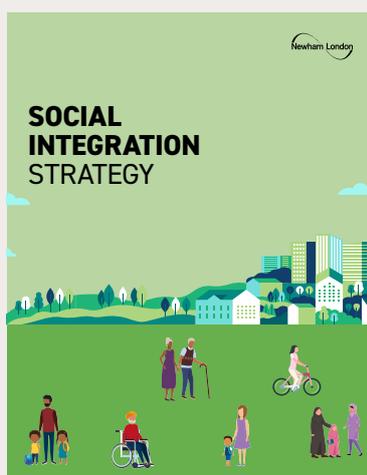
Volunteering features in many of the council's recent strategies and reports including the:

### Social Integration Strategy

[www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/2870/social-integration-strategy](http://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/2870/social-integration-strategy)

Newham's social integration framework adopts the four key principles upon which the London mayor's strategy is based:

- relationships that promote shared experiences, building networks and quality interactions between groups, building understanding and trust
- participation that encourage residents to be active in civil society through volunteering and democratic participation
- equality for residents by overcoming barriers and challenges to work, support with ESOL and other skills
- evidence to measure and evaluate the impact of social integration in Newham.

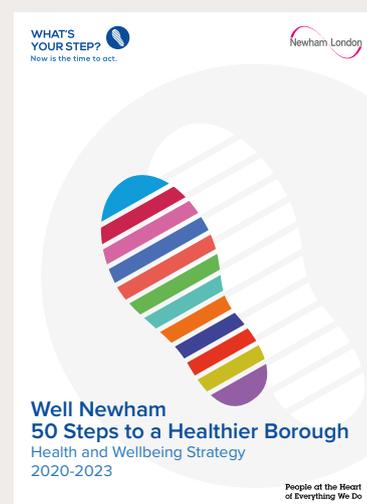


### 50 Steps to a Healthier Newham

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020 – 2023

[www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/2595/50-steps-strategy-document](http://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/2595/50-steps-strategy-document)

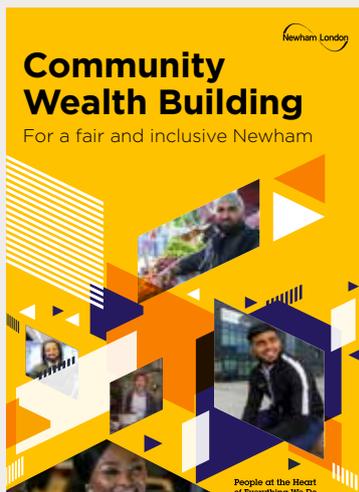
Priority 9 – Supporting a Newham of Communities where people are better connected and supported. Step 38 – Increase levels of Volunteering.



## Community Wealth Building

[www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/536/communitywealthbuilding](http://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/536/communitywealthbuilding)

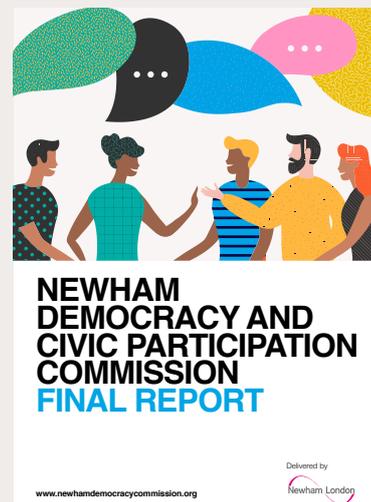
Underpins the principles of economic, social and environmental justice, long-term prosperity, wellbeing and fairness for all Newham residents by unleashing their talent and potential.



## Democracy Commission and Civic Participation Commission

Final Report - [www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1444/democracy-commission-report](http://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1444/democracy-commission-report)

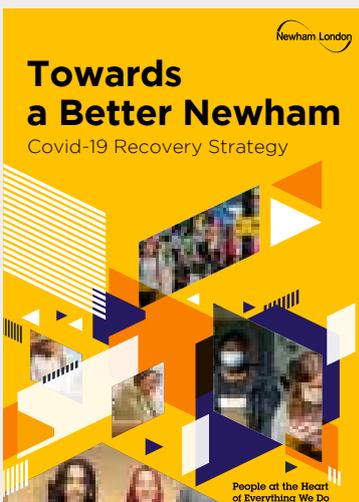
The Commission examined the council's directly elected mayor system of governance and explored ways in which local residents will have opportunities to be more engaged and involved in local decision making and the council's work. In response to the report, the council has set out plans to make it a beacon of participatory democracy in this country.



## Towards a Better Newham – Covid 19 Recovery Strategy

[www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/2540/appendix-1a-towards-a-better-newham-strategy](http://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/2540/appendix-1a-towards-a-better-newham-strategy)

This report places the health and wellbeing of our residents and race equality central to our aspirations of inclusive growth, quality jobs and fairness. This strategy makes Newham the first borough in London to use health, wellbeing and happiness as the measure of our economic success instead of the traditional measures of growth.



# 4. THE JOURNEY TO THE CREATION OF THE STRATEGY – A COLLABORATIVE JOURNEY

The development of a volunteering strategy, set within the heart of the social integration strategy, has been quite a journey!

We have been committed to a co-production approach from the outset. We have been determined to ensure that the action plan resonates with all stakeholders and partner organisations and reaches out to all members of our Newham communities.

The pandemic has also encouraged partners to identify key issues in the borough and work on systems based approaches to find solutions – and this strategy is no exception.

The 'Open Space' meeting - We began the journey with an Open Space meeting in December 2019 where over 30 stakeholders and partners came together at Canning Town Library to co-design the process of writing the action plan.

The Visioning group - A Visioning group of 13 was quickly assembled in January 2020 to create the North Star for the strategy – the mission and vision statements:

## MISSION STATEMENT

To collaboratively develop and deliver volunteering opportunities across Newham that contribute to the positive development and outcomes felt by volunteers, communities, beneficiaries and organisations.

## VISION STATEMENT

To build a volunteering pathway in Newham based on a framework incorporating Awareness, Giving and Rewarding.

### The working Group

Working group meetings of up to 12 attendees were then held in February and March to progress the thinking and the content and then the pandemic arrived, we entered the first national lockdown and the work was suspended.

National volunteering week - We did however stage a range of events – largely online – to celebrate the significant role of volunteers in Newham during the first phase of the pandemic in June.<sup>6</sup>

The working Group reconvened - The working group was reconvened with additional partners on 28 July to check in with the progress to date and to make sure our approach would be relevant to the new 'Covid world' in which we were now operating. We had 20 attendees.

This meeting was followed with informal coffee drop in sessions for all working group members to ensure all views and contributions were heard and we could explore issues in greater detail (8 attendees).

The project team - We then assembled a cross sector project team of 6 to write the action plan – a truly collaborative effort!

# 5. TRANSFORMING THE VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE IN NEWHAM

Newham has a clear commitment to supporting volunteers and the organisations that benefit from engaging with them. We recognise that people undertaking volunteering do so for various reasons and with different motivations. The development of a strategy is designed to ensure that the needs of all volunteers are met and that their activities are supported.

This strategy is designed to ensure that we recognise, celebrate, train and signpost all the borough's volunteers with the intention of encouraging, supporting and building their skills. The strategy will support the organisations that engage with volunteers, outlining the tools and resources that will be developed to support them as they prepare their organisations to host volunteers.

The strategy is developed with the vision of creating a borough that:

- understands Newham's volunteering activity
- values our volunteers
- recognises their contribution
- offers training and development opportunities
- provides signposting and employment and training opportunities where appropriate
- provides capacity building for volunteering host organisations

## WHAT TRANSFORMATION WILL THE VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY PROVIDE?

The implementation of the strategies action plan will provide opportunities for transformation across 4 key areas.

### The individual volunteer – developing a clear process to recruit and deploy volunteers in Newham



By providing clear communications of the types of volunteering opportunities available across the borough, volunteer recruitment messaging will be clearer. This clarity will allow potential volunteers to easily and clearly identify the right volunteering opportunity for them, helping to reduce volunteer drop out.

With data backed knowledge of the needs of Newham's volunteers, organisations that have supportive processes for volunteer on boarding, monitoring and signposting at the end of the volunteering opportunity, create better environments for volunteers thereby increasing volunteer retention rates.

The aim is to recognise that volunteering is an important part of the career journey for many, whilst others choose to volunteer to give back, socialise with others and share expertise gained through professional employment or lived experience. Whatever the motivation – we hope that volunteering enhances feelings of wellbeing and connectedness and that this strategy can embrace all volunteer needs.

### Support partner organisations to recruit, train and place volunteers



Organisations will benefit from the development of the Volunteering Hub and its tailored resources and support will ensure that organisations have the tools and enhanced know how to deliver high standard services to all of their volunteers.

The increased awareness of the range of individuals that pursue volunteering activities in the borough will enable host organisations to frame the way they engage with volunteers. This will result in the provision of meaningful experiences for their volunteers and a network of volunteers that are engaged, fulfilled and receiving mutual benefit from being part of their organisations.

### Ensure the impact of volunteering plays a positive role in building a more cohesive, united and fairer borough



Covid-19 has already shown the importance of volunteering across the borough. Not only has it been vital in delivering essential services across the borough, but it also plays an important part in the wellbeing and connectedness we feel as a community.

Supporting and promoting the development of good quality volunteering opportunities with community partners will have a direct impact on wellbeing, social connectedness and belonging as we bring people together around shared causes and ensuring our residents know where to go for help and support.

As well as playing a role in creating a strong sense of community, volunteering also provides opportunities for people to build the social and cultural capital required to access and participate actively in society, to have their voice heard, and share their skills and experiences with others.

Newham has a diverse population and it's also the youngest borough in the country in terms of population profile. It's therefore important that the strategy reaches out to everyone! The strategy therefore contains actions around how we celebrate and recognise volunteers, how we acknowledge the roles of people who wouldn't necessarily think of themselves as volunteers, such as Mutual Aiders and how we don't miss out on the chance to engage underrepresented groups that include, but are not limited to those with disabilities, on low incomes, and in BAME communities.

### Evidence that the beneficiaries of volunteering feel supported and their needs are met



With the introduction of robust evaluation methods, organisations will be able to measure the impact of the volunteering opportunities they offer from the perspective of the volunteer, the host organisation and beneficiaries. Taking first-person accounts from volunteers and beneficiaries and amplifying their voices will ensure that Newham's volunteering offer makes the broadest possible impact.

Utilising data from the evaluations will provide information that can be used to provide improvements to all elements of the volunteering journey.

# 6. CASE STUDIES

## CASE STUDY 1 – SHIRLEY

Born in Newham, Shirley has over 30 years of connections with the local community, as a volunteer, trustee and chair. Having been an obsessive long-term collector of emails, she used this network to connect the voluntary, community and faith sector with the council and the NHS providing a directory and map of the voluntary community aimed at social prescribers.

A retired research scientist, she is a governor of the East London NHS Foundation Trust, which delivers mental and community health services. She is also a public representative with the Newham Clinical Commissioning Group and the council, and has always kept inspired and grounded by her friends in the community.



“When the pandemic struck, being well into the granny range, I was cut off from my usual scuttling between meetings and the community café, where my friends and I tried to lunch each day and join in with some of the activities. But I was lucky, thanks to my huge and diverse email network, to have been kept busy with keeping everyone connected and making so many new virtual friends.

It has always been important to me to be doing something useful, particularly as many of my peers must have been feeling helpless having to rely on others.”

Since March 2020, Shirley has met some amazing people on her laptop and has been involved in some heart-warming stories. She got a real buzz from connecting those working on the front line to the right people to help or advise a client in need.

“I have helped a social prescriber find a gardener for a gentleman who needed help; connected another one to someone who was homeless having lost his job and was sleeping in his car; and one to a lady who needed advice who was shielding – she had no digital devices and couldn’t trust anyone to withdraw cash for her and was getting into debt and was behind in her rent.”

Early on in the pandemic, Shirley received a message from Brother Julian, a Franciscan friar, asking for help on behalf of an elderly Asian lady who needed help with food shopping. Not knowing what to do, Shirley sent out one of her global emails. Within minutes, she received a response from Muhammed, another star volunteer, who replied, “Yes. I’m just about to go shopping, let me help.”

Shirley finishes by saying, “It is our wonderfully diverse community and dedicated voluntary sector that is bringing such love and kindness to our great borough – and we all have a part to play.”

### CASE STUDY 2 – KASEEM

Kaseem is a 26-year-old computing student with learning difficulties. Before the pandemic, he was in full time education studying at Newham College. His classes were discontinued and was therefore unable to complete his studies. As a result, he had a lot of time to spare. He is currently unemployed and in search of a job in the ICT industry. He is hoping that through volunteering, he will be able to get into his desired field.

“Initially I volunteered because I was at home doing nothing. A friend suggested that I look into volunteering so I signed up to become a Newham volunteer. I thought if I volunteered, I could get some experience in different areas, it would help my CV look good and it would help build my confidence. I wanted to challenge myself and see how far I could push myself. I am glad I did what I did as I feel I am a new person now – am more social, more confident and I am able to talk to people with ease.”



Kaseem registered with Newham’s Volunteers in April 2020 and the first thing he joined was the foodbank at Sandringham School and Stratford Town Hall. This was a very demanding opportunity at the time as it was being delivered during the first lockdown. Although it was busy and hectic, he had such a great time and instantly made new friends, who he remains friends with to this day. He volunteered with the foodbank throughout most of last year and he is still volunteering at St Mark’s Hub. He says, “I am really enjoying it and it makes it much more fun because of the people I am working with. We all look out for each other and always help each other. This is what makes it more worth while. So far it has all been a very positive experience for me.”

He further adds, “Volunteering has helped me a lot. I am much more confident now and have gained a lot of experience. I also got an opportunity to understand more about my local community and I felt I was doing something very rewarding to help my community. Seeing my community in a very vulnerable situation motivates me to come in every day and to volunteer.”

Volunteering is also helping Kaseem to network as he meets staff from different areas. Staff have also supported him in building his CV and getting him help on employment and training. He says, “This has helped me a lot as I have been offered training and attended virtual workshops to help me understand how the programme will work and how they are going to support me.”

Kaseem sums up his experience by saying, “I would recommend volunteering to everyone. I believe people should volunteer because they will get to meet new people and make new friends. They will get the opportunity to gain new skills and build experience to help them with their employment but the most important thing is they will get to see and meet their community and actually see how their community is living and struggling. This will keep them motivated like it did with me and it still does with me. It has opened my eyes and volunteering for me no longer is about gaining skills as it is more about helping others. I am very grateful to have gotten this chance and I hope others will feel the same and will look at volunteering as an opportunity that opens many doors.”

## CASE STUDY 3 – MONA

An Austrian national, Mona has lived in Newham since 2018, after moving to the UK to live with her husband.

She started volunteering with activeNewham in April 2020. “I was in between jobs and wanted to support the community in my free time. I came across activeNewham while walking through the borough and seeing the big banners by the parks. I started volunteering for one day per week but was doing full weeks after the second week.”

“My experience has been great. I felt a way of belonging while volunteering. Everyone was really nice and friendly everywhere I volunteered at. I got to meet so many people from different backgrounds. We were all working towards the same goal which made it a very pleasant experience.”



Volunteering has helped Mona build her confidence and her teamwork skills. It has also helped her learn more about the borough she lives in, but importantly gave her the opportunity to connect with people and make new friends.

“As I am not from the UK, I always struggled to meet people outside of a work environment. Volunteering has been great for networking. Due to the pandemic, I couldn’t see my friends and family, who are mainly in Austria, so volunteering was really helpful in keeping me busy and distracted from missing my family and friends.”

After only a month of volunteering, the manager saw great potential in Mona, offering her the role of Hub Coordinator. From June to November last year, she was working full time coordinating the St Mark’s Super-Hub, Stratford Town Hall Super-Hub and finally the Stratford Community Food Hub (SCFH). She now has a full-time job, however, she still works and manages the SCFH on Friday afternoons and Saturdays.

“Seeing that I make a difference in people’s lives has left me really passionate about this job. I have been working a six day week since November and I am enjoying every minute of it.”

Mona would recommend volunteering to anyone, “It is a great feeling to help others. It is the best thing anyone can do for others, but especially for themselves. You can improve so many of your personal skills alongside having a lot of fun working with others that have the same motivation as you. As life is unpredictable, we can never be sure where life might take us. While today I am helping someone, I may be the one in need for help later on. Volunteering is so crucial, from building communities and providing support.”

### CASE STUDY 4 – CAROL

Born in Newham, Carol is proud to have lived in the borough all her life. “We have such a diverse community within the borough, which has a tolerance and community spirit unique to us.”

From a young age, Carol started attending free music lessons at Newham Academy of Music. This led to her participating in a concert, ‘Newham Goes To Town’, at the Royal Albert Hall, and then on to a degree in music. She now works for a major record label. During the pandemic, Carol felt inspired to give something back by finding a way to support the council and her local community.

Being of Black Caribbean descent, she was especially concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on her community. She attended a Newham Q&A session about the vaccine, during which they mentioned the great work the COVID-19 Health Champions were doing and the plans to pilot a COVID-19 vaccine peer support programme.

While people can turn on the TV or radio and hear a doctor talking about the vaccine, the aim was for local people in the community to speak to their peers. “Sometimes you want to speak to someone that speaks your language, understands or empathises with the challenges you face, and will give you time to listen to your concerns and not judge you,” she says.

Becoming a COVID-19 vaccine peer supporter is an easy process. Delivered over Zoom, volunteers receive two hours of training on the vaccine, with guidance on how to be a good and effective listener. Not only do peer supporters help the local community, they ease the pressure off the professionals who do not have enough time in their day to make these important calls.

“Being a peer is great! We have a WhatsApp group, where anything topical can be discussed. We also have weekly Zoom drop-in sessions where we can discuss any issues and get updates on the vaccination roll out. It can be as little or as much as you want it to be; you are not obliged to do anything you are not comfortable doing”, she says. “Obviously, I am not an expert. If there is anything I am unsure about, our support network, led by Linda and Anne, will find out the answer.”

She adds, “Everyone I have spoken to has been so nice, and appreciative that I have taken the time to call them and listen to their concerns. It’s such a small gesture but means so much, and that is what makes it so rewarding. I have found being a peer supporter has given me a sense of worth and great satisfaction, while enabling me to sharpen different skills not used in my daily working life. Anyone considering becoming a Newham COVID-19 Health Champion or peer supporter, I would highly recommend it!”

Carol adds, ‘As a community, now, more than ever it is essential that we all come together. The vaccine has been rolled out, there is light at the end of the tunnel. We need to get as many people in the borough vaccinated, so we can get through the tunnel and back to some form of normality. Obviously, there are people that will not want the vaccine, and that is their right. Our aim is not to have anyone miss the opportunity because they were unable to air their concerns with someone with a friendly listening ear.

Both my parents have had their vaccination. They get a sense of relief from the fact they are doing all they can to protect themselves from this virus. When my turn comes, I will gladly take the vaccine also, so I can protect myself and those around me.”



## CASE STUDY 5 – OLU

Olu was born in Hackney, adopted to Swanley in Kent for a brief period, then lived in Newham with his Nigerian parents for many years. He went to school in Newham and his son was also born in Newham.

He has now lived in Newham for over 40 years. He has worked as a coach and personal trainer, as well as other ventures.

When the pandemic hit, he pondered as to what he could do to be part of something positive to help combat what was going on in Newham. He felt helpless sitting back and watching whilst others bravely put themselves forward (e.g. NHS, food bank volunteers, etc.).

“I was looking for something that was voluntary, flexible and would allow me to feel comfortable doing it, whilst continuing my other commitments, as best as functionally possible”, he says.

He read about the work the COVID-19 Health Champions were doing, and thought that this might be something he and his son could get involved with.

“When we attended the champions’ meeting, it ticked all the boxes. I found out that I did not need to be an expert to be involved in the positive messaging, but that support and guidance would be provided by experts (via infographics and meetings).”

Through the champions network, he was able to be a voice in the community in various ways:

- Keeping people informed of the latest advice and guidance. Spreading the champions’ messages through various social media channels, to help family, friends and the wider community make sense of the latest facts about the virus and the vaccine
- Becoming a vaccine peer supporter, to help support and encourage the vulnerable and BAME people in the community to take up the vaccine
- Assisting his son’s COVID-19 Star Learner Quiz and Star Learner Certificate initiative that was geared to test young people’s knowledge of the virus and vaccine. Through this, the hope is that, the young, will then spread the message to their family and friends.

“The Newham COVID-19 Health Champions allows me and my son to be part of something positive that the council is doing to help its residents combat the virus, take up the vaccination and dispel negative messaging. I really enjoy being a health champion. I like the style of information that I am provided with – it helps me to discuss the messages which are supported with well-crafted infographics.

Being a champion allows you to join as a non-expert, but be provided with expert advice and expert support. It allows you to take part in conversations, which can assist us to then impart that information to the wider community.”



### CASE STUDY 6 – AIDAN

Aidan has worked for Newham Council since 2016 as a Co-Production Manager (Adults). His role involves engaging with a wide range of residents, customers and community organisations on a variety of services.

In April 2020 in response to the pandemic, the council launched its #HelpNewham programme, which set out to help and support the most vulnerable residents in the borough. The service provided food deliveries to residents who were on the NHS 'shielding' list and those identified by Adults & Health services as being vulnerable. This was rolled out alongside a prescription collection and delivery service and a befriending service.

A team of nearly 100 staff volunteered on the #HelpNewham programme, initially contacting over 3,900 residents to identify their particular needs.

Volunteers received a considerable amount of high quality training and support, with one of the requirements that all staff had current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBD) clearance.

Aidan was tasked with co-ordinating staff who could speak a range of community languages. "I always enjoy a challenge and this particular role certainly provided me with one. It was great to speak with colleagues, many of whom I had not spoken to before, and to track down people with very particular language skills. I now know colleagues who speak Farsi (Iran), Swahili (East Africa), Luganda (Uganda), Nepalese, Shona (South Africa) and Ndebele (Zimbabwe)".

Comprising nearly 70 council staff, volunteers were at one point calling over 500 residents on a weekly basis as part of the befriending service. Although initially cautious of scams, once they explained that they were there to offer a free service that, hopefully, would benefit them, people opened up.

"Over the summer, I was in contact with around ten residents, but by November this had dropped to three, to accommodate my normal work routine. I am now down to two residents that I call every two weeks. Even after a year of calling two of my residents, John and Kate, we still have plenty to talk about. Both of them are shielding due to their health and we often talk about health issues. However, having built up a relationship with each of them, we now know each other's interests so our chats are varied.

Some of the calls, particularly in the early part of the pandemic were difficult but we shared our concerns and frustrations and generally ended the calls on a much more positive note. It is important to realise and accept that not all conversations will be easy but when I am able to help someone, no matter what the issue, then that certainly gives me a boost. Knowing I have helped someone gives me tremendous satisfaction. I intend to continue as a volunteer with the new Connect Newham befriending service run by Age UK East London.

Volunteering gives you the opportunity to give something back. It is the chance to develop new skills. For me this was listening. Volunteering allows you to fill in missing gaps in your work experience and can open doors into employment and post-lockdown this extra skill might just get you that job. You might make new friends and you will make a positive impact on their lives."



## CASE STUDY 7 – RACHAEL

Rachael has been with HeadStart Newham since its conception, being a part of one of the first groups to be trained on More Than Mentors.

- HeadStart Newham is a mental health service improving lives for young people and families in Newham. The service is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and delivered in partnership with the council
- Working closely with schools and the community, HeadStart offers young people and their families opportunities to recognise the strengths they already have and develop new skills so they're able to overcome challenges and bounce back from tough circumstances
- Run by HeadStart, Team Social Action is a fun way for kids to give something back to their school or community. With a group of their peers, they will decide on a social action project that can help improve life for people living in the borough. The HeadStart youth practitioners support them to bring their project to life.
- The Team Social Action programme runs over 10-12 weeks in secondary schools and provides the opportunity for young people to meet with a HeadStart youth practitioner to talk about their personal goals and learning
- More Than Mentors (MTM) is a peer mentoring program that gives the opportunity for Year 10s to mentor Year 7s and support them through their transition process
- A HeadStart youth practitioner supports them to learn ways to improve their resilience, build confidence and gain valuable problem solving and goal setting skills.



Rachael says, “I quickly became a prominent member of the HeadStart youth panel, governing all that HeadStart does as an organisation. I was involved in a number of activities including:

- Organising the HeadStart Champions Conference, which involved bringing HeadStart Champions from schools across Newham together to discuss HeadStart’s priority areas. The conference was designed by, and delivered to, young people. I helped design the lesson plans and activities that were being delivered to all the young people in attendance across Newham schools
- Organising a HeadStart residential in Blackpool, an event designed for all the HeadStart teams to come together to develop and deliver a national campaign. This was an impactful event for all the HeadStart areas to work together towards one goal.

One of the main highlights has been my involvement in the Youth Panel. Through this, I’ve been able to develop friendships and have fun while completing projects within the community.”

# CORPORATE CASE STUDY 1 – LONDON ENTERPRISE ADVISOR NETWORK (LEAN) PROGRAMME

The London Enterprise Adviser Network (LEAN) connects schools and colleges with employers and entrepreneurs so that all young Londoners are aware of the career pathways and opportunities available to them.

Enterprise advisers are business volunteers who work in senior roles. They volunteer their time to help bridge the gap between the world of work and education, working with the careers leader and wider senior leaders of the school or college to create opportunities for young people.



The network is co-funded by the **Careers & Enterprise Company** and the Mayor of London. It is delivered by Local London & ELBA (East London), Reed In Partnership (West, Central and South London) and Talentino in special schools and colleges.

- The network has been working with Newham's schools and colleges since 2016
- It currently supports careers leaders in 26 out of 29 eligible schools and colleges in the borough
- 22 schools and colleges are currently matched to a volunteer enterprise adviser
- School and colleges in the network can be matched with up to two enterprise advisers. As a result, there are vacancies for approximately 20 new enterprise advisers in the borough. Anyone interested in the enterprise adviser role can find out more and apply at [www.london.gov.uk/LEAN](http://www.london.gov.uk/LEAN).
- Careers programmes in Newham's schools and colleges have been negatively impacted by the pandemic. They need more engagement from local individuals and businesses to support the delivery of careers activities. There is a particular need for businesses to offer more experiences of the workplace to students in the borough
- Individuals can support careers activities in the borough by signing up to our **Give an Hour** campaign
- Businesses that can support schools or colleges in the borough with their careers programmes should contact [enterpriseadvisers@london.gov.uk](mailto:enterpriseadvisers@london.gov.uk)

For more information, visit [www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/volunteering/enterprise-adviser-network](http://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/volunteering/enterprise-adviser-network)

## CORPORATE CASE STUDY 2 – EAST LONDON BUSINESS ALLIANCE (ELBA)

ELBA brings about positive change in east London and beyond by connecting the public, private and voluntary sectors to create exciting possibilities.

Understanding the needs of London's communities and how companies can best channel their resource and influence to make an impact, play their part in regeneration and promote social mobility.

Corporate supporters are helped to innovate, collaborate and think differently about how they give back. The results are often diverse and innovative with a hugely positive impact on the community.

An example of this is the befriending calls made to shielding service users at Bonny Downs Community Association by some of ELBA's corporate members. From being apprehensive, to eagerly looking forward to their next call, it is safe to say that ELBA's group befriending calls are doing wonders for older people and volunteers alike.

Feeling isolated and lonely has never been so apparent for many older people and volunteers who are self-isolating. This can have a massive impact on a person's mental health. Having to stay indoors, with cleaning, gardening tasks or working from home being the only distraction, the group's befriending calls have provided a great way to replace the loss of interaction due to the pandemic.

Weekly calls take place in groups of up to six people, with two to three volunteers and two to four befrienders per call. Various topics are discussed such as food, travelling and life after COVID-19; activities are also facilitated such as quizzes, karaoke and poetry. The befriending calls began at the end of April 2020, in the middle of the first lockdown, when the impact of social isolation on loneliness and mental health came to the fore.

Being able to chat for an hour with volunteers gave older people or those who were isolated a weekly 'get away' to look forward to.

At the beginning of the project, some Bonny Downs members would be on calls with members they had never met before. ELBA has witnessed these bonds grow stronger as conversations have evolved from politely asking each other about their hobbies, to a point now where they are laughing about inside jokes and making plans to meet each other for the first time in person when it is safe to do so.

During the befriending calls, volunteers are paired up with older people. Calls have been enriched with group interaction, intergenerational mixing, poetry and singing (yes singing!), riddles and quizzes, prayer, friendship and connection – the response and feedback has been great, inspiring creativity along the way.

"I know it's only for an hour but it really breaks up your day from the monotony."

Alan, service user, Bonny Downs Community Association

To find out more about the programme email [challenge@elba-1.org.uk](mailto:challenge@elba-1.org.uk)



# 7. VOLUNTEERING ACTION PLAN

Priorities	Actions
<b>Governance and implementation</b>	<p>Create a cross sector project team led by activeNewham and the emerging VCS infrastructure organisation to implement the action plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devise a detailed project plan quarter by quarter</li> </ul>
<b>Identify and deploy volunteers in Newham</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, collate and publicise a diverse range of volunteering opportunities for residents</li> <li>• Shape the opportunities to attract residents who have a range of motivations. These opportunities may provide a mix of:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· giving something back and addressing key community issues and needs</li> <li>· feelings of social connectedness</li> <li>· improved wellbeing, happiness and purpose</li> <li>· qualifications and skills that may lead to employment</li> <li>· lifelong learning opportunities</li> <li>· Informal but quality assured</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure these opportunities provide a menu of themes, different types of volunteering, and regular and flexible opportunities</li> <li>• Devise a communications plan that amplifies and raises the profile of volunteering and the different types of available roles – perhaps using a digital platform</li> <li>• Place an emphasis on designing approaches that attract and sustain volunteers from underrepresented groups that include but are not limited to those with disabilities, on low incomes, and in BAME communities</li> <li>• Work with the Youth Empowerment Service to encourage the recruitment of young volunteers enabling them to contribute to their communities and support potential career paths</li> <li>• Identifying and linking young volunteering opportunities into other strategies and approaches including Year of the Young Person (2021), The Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme etc.</li> <li>• Learn and reflect – there have been many instances of good practice in volunteering and community action. We should, for example, build on the methods and approaches that have worked well in the pandemic such as the COVID-19 Health Champions Programme, Young Health Champions, and Street Marshalls to sustain volunteering activity. This may lead to a wider and sustainable Community Health Champions model</li> </ul>

Priorities	Actions
<p><b>Support partner organisations – to recruit, train and place volunteers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and develop a Volunteering Hub for Newham that is committed to achieving the principles of the ‘Investing in Volunteers’ accreditation and becoming members of the National Centre of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)</li> <li>• The role of the Volunteering Hub will be focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Empowering organisations to increase the number and quality of volunteers to strengthen their delivery capacity by providing advice, guidance and training as part of a Volunteering Toolkit</li> <li>· Creating a standardised approach to engaging volunteers e.g. Induction and monitoring processes</li> <li>· Signposting to volunteering opportunities across Newham and developing improved monitoring and evaluation systems. These may include volunteer baseline assessment, goal setting, and reward and recognition</li> <li>· Providing accurate metrics and improved tools to help measure impact, future planning, and informing funding bids</li> <li>· Sharing learning and best practice to drive continuous improvement</li> <li>· Stage training and development events and toolkit for partners</li> <li>· Researching the potential scope of a localised digital platform to support the efficiency of the Volunteering Hub</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure the impact of volunteering plays a positive role in building a more cohesive, united and fairer borough</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a range of celebration, profiling and recognition activities – these may include activities in National Volunteering Week, Tempo Time credits etc.</li> <li>• Broaden these types of activities to acknowledge and celebrate the roles of people who wouldn’t necessarily think of themselves as volunteers such as Mutual Aiders and ‘Natural Everyday Givers’</li> <li>• Undertake evaluation to determine the impact on volunteers regarding their sense of belonging, wellbeing and happiness</li> <li>• Ensure recruitment activities increase the numbers of underrepresented groups in volunteering that include but are not limited to those with disabilities, on low incomes, and in BAME communities</li> <li>• Share the learnings of the recruitment of underrepresented groups and scale approaches to secure greater participation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evidence that the beneficiaries of volunteering feel supported and their needs are met</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an evaluation tool that captures the outcomes felt by beneficiaries and provide a feedback loop for the Volunteering Hub to drive continuous improvement and celebrate success</li> <li>• Publish an annual impact survey highlighting the role of volunteers and the outcomes felt by beneficiaries and the partner organisations working with volunteers</li> <li>• Engage beneficiaries in the celebration, profiling and recognition activities to build a greater sense of social connectedness</li> </ul>

# **8. HOW TO GET INVOLVED**

To get involved, simply visit [www.activenewham.org.uk](http://www.activenewham.org.uk) and register to become a Newham Volunteer. Once registered, you will need to undertake a simple digital induction which will then give you full access to all the available volunteer opportunities.

There are many reasons to volunteer such as giving back to the community, helping others, improving your skills, to make friends and more. It is open to people of all backgrounds and skills and over the years, activeNewham have supported many volunteers in integrating into society, getting access to training/gaining qualifications, access to other services and also supporting people into paid employment.

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Thank you to the Working Group who co-authored the document and included representatives from: University of East London, Birkbeck University and activeNewham.

For more information contact

**Compost London CIC**

Newham's infrastructure information, advice and support service for the voluntary, community and faith sector in Newham. [info@compost.org.uk](mailto:info@compost.org.uk)

**National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)**

Champions voluntary action by providing resources, research and information on volunteering. [www.ncvo.org.uk](http://www.ncvo.org.uk)