

# Annual Review

April 2011- March 2012

## Background

This report provides an overview of the activities and performance of Volunteer Centre Westminster during the last financial year. The contents are intended to form the basis of the Trustees Report in the 2011-12 Annual Report and Accounts.

As noted in previous reports, facts and figures are not a true measure of our mission which is to transform lives through volunteering, though clearly we have to reach measurable output objectives to justify our funding. More qualitative outcomes of the Centre's work are much better evidenced in the films and case studies on our web-site, and the words of volunteers that we have helped.

## 25<sup>th</sup> Year

Volunteer Centre Westminster (formerly Westminster Volunteer Bureau) was formed in 1986 and celebrated 25 years of serving the community in 2011:

## High Level Outputs – Year 2011/2012

The Volunteer Centre managed to exceed overall performance targets set by Westminster City Council in its Service Level Agreement and also increase performance on key indicators over the previous year.

There was an overall increase in the volume of volunteers registered and placed in the community and also the number of volunteering opportunities that were advertised for local voluntary organisations.

Across all the Centre's projects, a total of 6,294 volunteers registered an interest in volunteering and were in some way supported by the Centre between April 2011 and March 2012. Of these, 1,747 were placed into formal volunteering roles with various voluntary groups and projects around Westminster.

Excluding internet registrations via Do-it.org.com (where the volunteering outcome is not always known), the conversion rate from registered to placed volunteers was 43.3%.



VCW helped to create and advertise 703 new types of volunteering opportunity during the year and had an average of 1,740 volunteering vacancies on our database. 99 new organisations registered opportunities with The Centre.

In addition to this, VCW ran 17 training events for organisations on various topics related to volunteer recruitment and management with 211 attendees, and ran 24 training events for volunteers with 164 attendees. There were over 125 incidents of The Centre providing bespoke volunteer management support and 278 one-to-one discussions with organisations about issues relating to volunteer recruitment and management.

VCW also administered 609 CRB checks during the year on behalf of local organisations

<b>VCW OUTPUTS 2011-12</b>	<b>Q1 Achieved</b>	<b>Q2 Achieved</b>	<b>Q3 Achieved</b>	<b>Q4 Achieved</b>	<b>Annual Total Achieved</b>	<b>Annual Target</b>	<b>% Versus target</b>
Volunteer Brokerage							
Volunteer Registrations (excluding do-it org)	921	1052	995	1099	4067		
<a href="#">Volunteer Registrations - Do-it.org</a>	453	890	487	397	2227		
Total Volunteer Registrations	1374	1942	1482	1496	6294	5000	126%
Volunteer Placements	463	534	378	372	1747	1500	116%
Conversion rate without do-it	50.30%	50.80%	38%	34%	43.27%	30%	144.23%
Conversion rate including do-it	33.70%	27.50%	25.50%	24.87%	27.90%		
CRB Checks	159	132	127	191	609		
No of Employer Partners	15	13	14	16	Av 14.5		
New opportunity types created	185	200	176	142	703		
No of Opportunity types in Vbase	1690	880	1713	3477	Av 1740	750	232%
New organisations registered with VCW	23	24	25	27	99	175	57%
Training courses for organisations	3	4	3	7	17	6	283%
Attendees on organisation Training courses	25	15	16	155	211		
Training courses for volunteers	8	3	7	6	24		
Attendees on Volunteer Training courses	40	38	58	28	164		
Volunteer promotional events	16	11	25	14	66		
Good Practice support	35	20	28	47	130		
1 to 1 support sessions	96	84	52	46	278	37.5	741%

## Areas of Activity 2011-12

VCW was awarded a one year pilot contract from Westminster City Council to run Volunteer Brokerage Services in Westminster during 2011-12. During the year, the Centre successfully tendered for and won the full contract to deliver Volunteer Brokerage Services in Westminster for a further three years (2012-2015)

The Volunteer Centre Westminster also continued to deliver a range of projects funded through new and previously agreed multi-year grant arrangements:

- *Quality Volunteering Organisational Support Project (City Bridge Trust)*
- *Firm Foundations Organisational Development Project (Big Lottery – BASIS)*
- *Volunteering for a Healthier Westminster Project (Dept.of Health / Volunteering England)*
- *Learning Disabilities Volunteering Project (Westminster City Council)*

- *A City Transformed by Sport Project (Westminster City Council)*
- *Westminster City Guides Project (Westminster City Council)*
- *Volemploy Mentoring Programme (Big Lottery – Reaching Communities)*
- *Young Carers Volunteering Project (Lloyds TSB Foundation)*

Additionally, the Centre's two self-funding projects continued to develop throughout the year, and generate sufficient revenue to pay for themselves:

- *Time & Talents for Westminster Employee Volunteering Project*
- *CRB Administration*

## **Funding**

Despite a challenging external funding environment the Volunteer Centre Managed to maintain or renew existing funding and secure new funding during the year. The only project for which funding ceased on 31 March 2012 (Volunteering for a Healthier Westminster), received alternative funding from the NHS in April 2012.

Core funding from the Council was replaced by contract funding to deliver key volunteer brokerage services which were unfunded the previous year.

All other existing projects achieved renewed funding and new funding was secured for:

- *Volunteer Brokerage Contract 2012-15 (WCC)*
- *Volemploy (Big Lottery, Reaching Communities)*
- *Young Carers Volunteering Project (Lloyds TSB Foundation, Portman Foundation)*
- *Learning Disabilities Befriending Project (Big Lottery, Reaching Communities)*
- *Volunteer Befriending Project for Elderly NHS Patients (NHS Westminster)*

During the year, additional funding was secured for The Centre for delivering the following short term volunteering projects

- *Census 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics/ WCC)*
- *London Ambassadors Olympic Volunteer Recruitment and Training (GLA)*
- *Digital TV Outreach (Digital Outreach Limited - Government)*
- *Libraries Volunteering Project (Team London – GLA)*

## **Quality Standards**

In September 2011, VCW achieved the *Investing in Volunteers* UK-wide quality standard for organisations which involve volunteers in their work. The standard is based on the four areas of volunteer management: Planning for volunteer involvement, Recruiting volunteers, Selecting and matching volunteers, Supporting and retaining volunteers.

The Volunteer Centre also renewed its *Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation* demonstrating good practice in the six core functions of a nationally accredited Volunteer Centre

## **Core Activities**

### **Volunteer Brokerage**

One of volunteer Centre Westminster's core functions is to provide a volunteer brokerage service for residents, employees and students in Westminster, including the long term unemployed, those in minority groups and those living in the most deprived areas.

We match both individuals and groups interested in volunteering with appropriate opportunities in the local community. We hold information on a comprehensive range of opportunities and offer potential volunteers support and advice matching their motivation to volunteer with appropriate volunteering opportunities

Volunteer Centre Westminster delivered a pilot project for a Volunteer Brokerage Service for April 2011-March 2012, funded by a contract from Westminster City Council.

One of the achievements during the pilot was to commence extensive outreach work throughout the City of Westminster. This included weekly visits to the Job Centre in Lisson Grove to promote more awareness of volunteering, and regular visits and presentations to Schools, Colleges, Community Centres and Libraries throughout all wards in the borough.

Opening times for the drop-in facility at our shop front premises in Praed Street were extended to five days a week. A new follow-up procedure was also introduced in April 2011. This ensured that every volunteer accessing our volunteer brokerage service received a follow-up by phone or email to check on their volunteering progress. A new standard procedure was also introduced, which was to respond to every volunteer enquiry within 48 working hours to online registration through our website and do-it, the national volunteering website.

The VCW brokerage service was awarded a three year contract for April 2012-March 2015 by Westminster City Council.

Efforts were made throughout the year to improve our service and place as many volunteers as possible into relevant and rewarding roles. On-line volunteer registration through the VCW web-site proved extremely popular for people who were unable to visit the centre. The Centre also expanded and developed initiatives to 'follow-up' referred volunteers more rigorously to find out whether they actually started volunteering at their suggested placement, and offer alternative opportunities if this was not the case.

There was an increase in the number of new volunteering opportunities advertised, and a new online opportunity registration system was launched in the web-site.

Furthermore, apart from specific project related events, the Centre ran a Volunteering Fair in March 2012.

### **Organisational Support and Volunteering Good Practice Development**

Volunteer Westminster provides support to any voluntary, community or statutory organisations in Westminster that currently involve or wish to involve volunteers in order to help promote a positive

volunteering experience for all those involved. We do this by delivering training and good practice workshops and events, volunteer managers' forums, and 'one to one' support.

During the year there was a marked increase in our organisational support work through the Quality Volunteering, Active Volunteer Management and Firm Foundations Projects ( in partnership with Voluntary Action Westminster).

The Quality volunteering project delivered 8 training courses to a total of 89 participants from organisations and community groups across Westminster as well as conducting 4 Volunteer Manager Forums, 130 incidences of good practice support and over 250 instances of bespoke one to one support for voluntary organisations in Westminster

## Projects

### Time & Talents for Westminster

The objective at the beginning of 2011-12 was to ensure that Time & Talents at least broke even. It actually ended the year with a small deficit, but generally performed well with a reduced staff head-count. During the year, new member organisations including British Land joined and two partners re-joined after lapsing: HMRC & The Home Office (which committed to 3 years of membership). We also ran a review of the service which was conducted by Rob Jackson Consulting, examining the overall strategy & aims of the scheme.

1360 new employee volunteers registered during the year of which 804 were placed, completing a total of 5,224.5 volunteering hours. 125 new employee volunteering opportunities were created, 118 projects brokered and 130 training courses delivered for volunteer involving organisations: 130

Additionally, some very successful events were run, including a partnership event : Opening Doors: innovating ways to support the community from the workplace, workshops for charities: Bing/Microsoft – Charity Starts Online – Online Marketing workshop : Press & Promotion workshop with The Conservatives & Reputation and the launch event for SWAN's new initiative- CrowdfundSW1 Launched at Microsoft HQ

A new academic study by Dr Lee, Massey University, New Zealand, which included 30 in-depth interviews with our community and employer organisations was published and Volunteering England selected Time & Talents to support its European Year of the Volunteer programme. We were commissioned to run two pilot projects – Peer Mentoring and Taskforce volunteering with case studies and toolkits hosted on the Volunteering England website.

Many new ESV case studies were also posted online during the year

### VolEmploy

Volunteer Centre Westminster secured funding from The Big Lottery to deliver a "VolEmploy Mentoring" project in Westminster. This project addresses local issues of unemployment and social isolation/exclusion by improving the employability and life skills of individuals from black and minority ethnic groups and deprived community members in Westminster, providing them access to volunteering , mentoring, training (on job related issues) and development.

The project will engage 500 local residents over five years into a programme that combines voluntary placements in appropriate community role in order to gain skills, confidence and experience, whilst simultaneously offering a linked goal-based individual mentoring and training scheme aimed at helping achieve employment.

During the project period, over 200 volunteer mentors will be recruited, trained and supervised to offer personal support to the programme's users who also will take part in volunteering.

The project commenced in July 2011 and got off to a strong start during the year. 70 mentees were matched to mentors (over the target for the year) and 11 of these subsequently gained paid employment. Additionally three mentoring training sessions were delivered as well as three training sessions for mentees on employability issues.

### **Young Carers Project**

Since November 2011 our Volunteer Centre has been running a project for young carers. The aim of this project is to provide the opportunity to Young Carers, aged between 14 and 25, to share their unique talents and skills and to benefit from volunteering by learning new skills and gaining experience, building confidence, making a difference, having fun, making new friends and meeting new people. The project supports individual young carers in finding suitable volunteering roles and will organise one off volunteering events for groups of young carers.

Following an introduction young carers are assessed through a skills wheel which helps them to set up a personal development plan for their volunteering experience. The project has established links with schools, VIO's and service providers in Westminster. We have been working in close partnership with the Westminster Young Carers Service to raise awareness among young carers about the benefits of volunteering and develop tailored volunteering opportunities.

### **Volunteer Health Befriending Project**

During 2011-12, Volunteering for a Healthier Westminster piloted a 1 year volunteer befriending scheme for older people, aged 75 and over, who live in isolation with long term health conditions and / or disability.

Originally funded to work with just 8 older people and 8 volunteers; the need to increase this amount soon became clear. In total the project made 15 introductions and produced some fantastic outcomes. Those who were previously housebound now shop for themselves or are escorted to health appointments and on trips out to places of interest. Isolation has been reduced, confidence increased and the health and wellbeing of those referred has been improved. A full project evaluation report has been produced. Funding has now been secured from NHS Westminster which will allow VCW to continue this work into the next financial year when the extended pilot will be reviewed in October 2013.

### **Learning Disabilities**

Sixty eight individuals accessed our supported volunteering programme for adults with learning disabilities last year, of these 56 participated in volunteering activities giving a total of approximately 2349 hours of their time to benefit others in their local community. 9 organisations are new to this project and now involving people with learning disabilities as volunteers. In addition our mailing group goes from strength to strength and this year alone, volunteers have participated in at least 29 activities

and helped to mail out literally thousands and thousands of letters, helping local charities to raise funds, disseminate information on health and helped distribute newsletters to members.

To enhance our work with this client group and thanks to the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, VCW is about to establish a volunteer mentoring and befriending scheme for people with learning disabilities living in Westminster; this will run alongside our older people befriending scheme under the banner of Vol4Health & Well Being.

## **A City Transformed through Sport**

Volunteer Centre Westminster works with sports clubs and physical activity providers to increase and improve their capacity to involve volunteers and encourages people to volunteer in the sports sector. During the year this project continued to develop, spurred by continued interest in sports volunteering, partly linked to the Olympics and the project was awarded the official Olympic Legacy kite mark. One of the sports volunteers helped by the project was chosen to be the Olympic torch bearer in Westminster. There has also been an increasing awareness amongst local sports clubs of the benefits of using a wider volunteer-base to deliver their services. During the year 58 people were placed into sport related volunteering roles and 37 new sports volunteering opportunities were identified.

## **City Guides**

Volunteer Centre Westminster, in partnership with Westminster City Council, manages the pioneering City Guides Project, which ensures that trained City Guide Volunteers are an integral part of all relevant events that take place in the City of Westminster. Target groups for City Guides volunteers are students, unemployed, personal best students and council employees. During the year 76 new City Guides volunteers registered on the scheme and 15 events were supported by City Guides.

## **CRB Administration**

Volunteer Centre Westminster conducts CRB checks on behalf of volunteer involving organisations in Westminster for members of staff and volunteers.

During the year, 607 CRB checks were completed and 4 organisations received CRB checker training.

## **London Ambassadors**

Volunteer Centre Westminster (VCW) coordinated the largest recruitment and training centre for London Ambassadors, who will welcome visitors from all over the world during the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games at locations throughout London.

Over 2000 ambassadors attended the recruitment event held in Westminster, held between May-August 2011, which included group facilitation and a one to one session to assess the suitability of all applicants. More than 2000 selected volunteer ambassadors then attended their first day of training in Westminster from January 2012 up to the end of March 2012. The main aim of the day was to provide more information about the Team London Ambassadors programme.

Stephanie Taylor, Sports Volunteering Project Officer at VCW, delivered the majority of the training, backed up a team of sign-in staff and a full time floorwalker every day. Volunteer Centre Westminster was also responsible for the administration of the training that took place in Camden for six weeks.

## Digital T.V. Switchover Help scheme

The existing analogue TV signal was switched off in London in May 2012 and replaced with a new stronger digital signal. Volunteer Centre Westminster was awarded a contract in November 2011 to increase more awareness of the switchover help scheme in Westminster, particularly focusing on people with a disability and isolated people aged 75 or over. This would ensure that those who needed help received it so no one was left behind in the switch over to Digital Television.

One of the main ways was for our digital outreach volunteers to identify community supporters, who knew isolated or disadvantaged Westminster residents. This was achieved by going to over 220 places within our community to increase more awareness. This included going to cafes, libraries, shops, pubs, pharmacies, health centres, housing associations, and community centres. The team also produced 40 case studies that showed the community impact the project made in the borough.

As a result of the outstanding achievements by the Digital Outreach Volunteers, Volunteer Centre Westminster was the second highest performer out of twenty volunteer centres on successful outcomes. Khairy Eteiwiy, Digital TV outreach volunteer coordinator, was awarded the Help Scheme Team Charter Award. He received a letter from Peter White, Chief Executive of the Help Scheme, a certificate and a £50 John Lewis voucher.

## Staff

During the year the following changes took place:

- Nina Popat left and was replaced by Carol Ferro as Office Manager and pa to the CEO
- Marie Broad and Sam Jennings left the Time & Talents Team
- Esther Lumby moved from Sports and City Guides Projects to Time & Talents
- Nigel Barber was appointed Volunteer Brokerage coordinator
- Yohannes Hagos became Brokerage Team Leader and Volemploy Project Co-ordinator
- Kim Alexander joined as Sports and City Guides Projects Coordinator
- Stephanie Alexander joined as Sports Project Assistant
- Michelle Gardner Ford returned from maternity leave and job shared with Yuriy Tarzhumanov on the Quality Volunteering Project

Regular staff meetings and staff training events took place throughout the year and most staff members took part in the annual Christmas staff volunteer day, preparing lunch and entertaining members at The Croxley Centre for people with learning disabilities in December 2011.

## Volunteers

The Volunteer Centre retained an active pool of its own volunteers during the year, over 18 of which volunteered regularly on 'front desk', volunteer brokerage duties. Others supported the Centre's projects and specialist volunteers were recruited in areas such as IT support, web-site development, business process mapping, marketing and comms. and membership administration.

During the year, efforts were made to ensure volunteers were properly trained and supported. There was a special focus on the continual development of reception volunteers, who are an integral part of our successful brokerage service. This included regular supervision, customer service training course, and mock job interviews and social events. Quite a few of the reception volunteers were also matched to a mentor through the Volemploy mentoring programme and several were successful in moving on to paid work during the year.

The Centre's volunteers were recognized at a certificate-giving awards event on Beauchamp Lodge floating barge during Volunteers Week in June 2011.

## **Web-site**

During the year further development work was done on the Centre's web-site [www.volunteer.co.uk](http://www.volunteer.co.uk) not only to enhance its function as a source of information about the Centre and its services, but also to develop it as an interactive tool for clients to access services such as volunteer registration, opportunity registration, registration for events and membership, and links to opportunities. Furthermore a quarterly e-newsletter promoting the work of the Centre was distributed to voluntary organisations, funders and stakeholders and links to articles on the web-site.

Films, news-stories and case-studies have been made available on the web-site and now provide an enhanced public message about the impact and value of the Centre's work in the community, and highlight how volunteering transforms lives.

## **Other Areas of Activity**

### **Marketing volunteering**

Volunteer Centre Westminster has an on-going brief to stimulate and encourage local interest in volunteering and community activity. This is achieved by promoting and marketing volunteering through local, regional and national events and campaigns

### **Developing volunteering opportunities**

We work in close partnership with statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies as well as community groups and faith groups to develop local volunteering opportunities. We also work with groups which face barriers to volunteering, such as people with learning disabilities and refugees and asylum seekers. We currently maintain a database of over 1,700 volunteering opportunities.

### **Policy response and campaigning**

We identify proposals or legislation that may impact on volunteering and participate in campaigns on issues that affect volunteers or volunteering. We campaign proactively for a more volunteer-literate and volunteer-friendly climate. In this context, the Centre has promoted importance of a solid volunteering infrastructure in Westminster during the year, working closely with the local council on this by actively lobbying both elected members and officials.

### **Strategic development of volunteering**

As the local experts on volunteering we inform strategic thinking and planning at a regional and national level. This year we have been particularly active providing a voice and feedback about issues relating to volunteering and The Big Society.

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