

# The Incentives & Barriers to Volunteering in Trafford

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## I. Chairman's foreword

The Health & Wellbeing Select Committee would like to thank everyone who contributed to the report for their valuable input and enthusiasm. Their views and experiences have been most appreciated, and we hope we have reflected them successfully in this report and its recommendations<sup>1</sup>.

The benefits of volunteering to volunteers, organisations and the wider society are well-known to many organisations - if not all individuals - in Trafford and an interest has been expressed in raising the numbers of volunteers and volunteering opportunities. This review has focused on the incentives and barriers to volunteering, both from the individuals' and organisations' viewpoint, in order to find practices that can help increase numbers where realistic.

The Committee was impressed with the range of volunteering activities and commitment in Trafford. We established some key factors that could enable the involvement of more people and organisations in volunteering, and to improve their mutual experiences.

- Coordinated initiatives are needed to promote and publicise volunteering, with easy access to information about opportunities across the borough. Residents should simply 'stumble upon' information about volunteering in their day-to-day lives rather than seeking it out.
- Initiatives are needed to promote the (two-way) benefits of volunteering including original approaches to recruitment to convince potential volunteers to give their time.
- Organisations are encouraged to create clear and flexible roles allowing for different needs, interests and time commitments so that everyone enters the volunteering relationship with clear understanding and expectations.

As we complete this report, announcements are being made about new national volunteering initiatives and funds in the *Giving* green paper<sup>2</sup>. The Committee hopes that those involved in volunteering will be able to make successful applications and benefit from these funds to maintain and develop their work in Trafford.

The Committee hopes that its findings and recommendations will be equally accepted by and across the Trafford Partnership in order to effectively promote and enhance volunteering in the borough. This report addresses organisations across all sectors including Trafford Council and other public sector organisations, voluntary sector organisations, the private sector and Trafford Partnership. In particular certain recommendations are addressed for the attention of Trafford Partnership whose Strong Communities group is now concerned with volunteering.

*Councillor Judith Lloyd*      *Councillor Mrs Young*  
*Chairman*                      *Vice-Chairman*

February 2011

### Health & Wellbeing Select Committee 2010/11



Councillor Judith Lloyd    Councillor Mrs Patricia Young    Councillor Dr. Karen Barclay    Councillor Eddie Kelson    Councillor Sophie Taylor    Councillor Mrs Jane Brophy    Councillor Jacki Wilkinson    Councillor Dolores O'Sullivan    Councillor Mrs Brenda Houraghan

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C for contributors to the review.

<sup>2</sup> Giving Green Paper <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/giving-green-paper>

## II. Introduction

An interest in increasing the numbers of volunteers – and volunteering opportunities – is expressed in the Trafford Partnership Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Trafford Compact. The decision was made to undertake a Scrutiny review of volunteering in order to look at the potential for increasing these numbers. Following early input from a range of stakeholders within and outside of Trafford Council, the Health & Wellbeing Select Committee set the focus on the incentives and barriers to volunteering. This refers to both individuals volunteering and organisations involving volunteers.

### Definition of volunteering

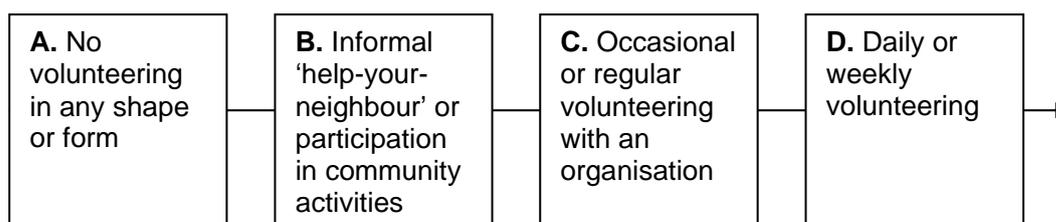
There is no official definition of volunteering in the UK. The Committee agreed to work by the definition given in the national Compact, an official agreement between the statutory and voluntary sectors:

“Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and fundamental to democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, and can take many forms. It is freely undertaken and not for financial gain. The principle of non-payment of volunteers is central to this Code and to the wider sector and society’s understanding of volunteering.

We understand the term volunteering to include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation and campaigning. For the purpose of this Code, **volunteering is defined as an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.**”<sup>3</sup>

The description and juxtaposition of *formal activity through organisations* and *informal community participation* is an important one. Scrutiny councillors were keen for a recognition of the level of informal volunteering occurring in Trafford – helping your neighbour type volunteering. Of course it is difficult to pin down how much of this is going on as it is not formally run through organisations. There are no registers of this sort of activity and these informal volunteers could well be reluctant to be formally registered.

People volunteer in many and varied ways Trafford, all making an important contribution and there is something of a spectrum along which volunteering occurs.



In looking at whether volunteer numbers and opportunities can be increased, the trick may be in seeing how people can be encouraged from A to B or C and whether those in B are interested in moving to C, and so on.

This review aims to represent volunteers across this spectrum however the activities and views of informal volunteers (B) are by their nature less likely to be covered as they are not structured within organisations.

<sup>3</sup> “The Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering” Institute for Volunteering Research 2005

## Nature and diversity of volunteering in Trafford

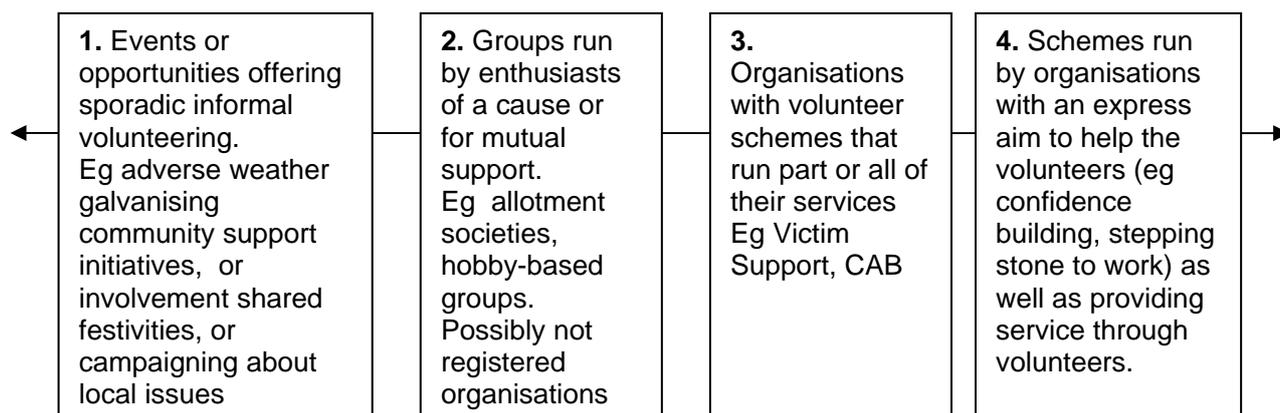
Volunteering roles can be as complex and diverse as paid jobs, possibly more so. In Trafford, as elsewhere, volunteering posts are of a diverse nature both in terms of the roles available and the interest and motivation to take them on. Committee members attending the Trafford Partnership conference in July 2010 heard during workshops that volunteering in Trafford is a disparate sector with a “range of agencies which use volunteers and diverse range of people doing voluntary work.”

Trafford has an active and engaged community of volunteers cutting across all sectors, services and activities. Although significant and growing numbers of volunteering opportunities exist in the statutory sectors, the majority of opportunities are with voluntary and community groups<sup>4</sup>.

The volunteers, and the organisations within which they function, are seen to make a massive contribution to services across sectors. These range across health, social services, mental health, environmental work, culture, leisure, education and beyond. Organisations hosting, or run by, volunteers may be statutory bodies, independent organisations, registered charities or other entities, branches of regional or national organisations, or linked to faith groups among others.

In its online survey<sup>5</sup>, the Committee found that some respondents did not recognise that their organisations involved volunteers or that they were themselves volunteers. For instance, many committee members and trustees do not see themselves as volunteers; people running hobby-based clubs often do not see themselves as volunteering but pursuing an interest because that is their prime motivator rather than it being the act of volunteering.

It may be useful to visualise the structures that can involve volunteering as below.



People involved as volunteers in 1 and 2 commonly do not always recognise themselves as volunteering.

## A note on numbers and geographic spread

Volunteer numbers in any one organisation run from a handful to several dozen; the highest in our research recorded with Trafford Healthcare Trust with over 260 volunteers. Most organisations the Committee liaised with seemed to have a staff member responsible for volunteers, sometimes as their main job or as part of other roles but it is unlikely that the smaller organisations, themselves possibly entirely volunteer-led, would have such structures.

The actual number of people volunteering in Trafford is not known, neither is the number of organisations involving, or not involving, volunteers. This review was not an audit exercise

<sup>4</sup> The Committee found some confusion over the understanding of what a volunteer is and where volunteers might be involved. For instance, some associated all volunteering with the voluntary sector; some even thinking all people involved in the voluntary sector are unpaid volunteers. To clarify this, the voluntary sector is the non-commercial and non-statutory sector; workers may be paid or volunteers.

<sup>5</sup> 172 surveys were completed on the Council website as part of the review's fieldwork.

although there was a level of interest expressed in having an audit.<sup>6</sup> The Committee considered that an audit of volunteering in Trafford would be useful, helping to establish any gaps as well as bringing all organisations involved into a potential support loop and encouraging those not using volunteers to do so.

**Here is a small sample of the volunteering jobs heard about through the online survey, showing the myriad roles and many levels of responsibility of Trafford volunteers.**

Post names include treasurer, general adviser, receptionist, committee member, youth offending mentor, luncheon club organiser, school governor, youth cabinet member, festival steward, charity shop worker, counsellors and many many more.

Respondents to the survey were asked about their roles:

*"Visiting old people who are housebound"*

*"I foster pets for families that are fleeing domestic violence and living in a refuge. The animals are returned home to the family, once they are re-homed".*

*"Paediatric Assessment and Observation Unit volunteer. Assisting with distracting children and young people who are receiving treatment at the unit, or who's relatives are receiving treatment in the main A&E Department."*

*"(I am a) Band Master, Musical Director, Teacher, Secretary, Bookings Secretary"*

*"Local project manager (for environmental organisation)"*

*"Provide emotional support to victims mainly on a face to face basis"*

*"Guide Leader - organising activities and events for young girls aged 10-16"*

*"Community Panel Member for referral orders and mentoring vulnerable children"*

*"Leading a group of volunteers for the Alzheimer Society"*

*"Credit Union helper"*

*"Mentor for Healthy Hips and Hearts exercise"*

**Regularity of volunteering.** About half the respondents volunteered on a weekly basis and around a quarter volunteer every day. The remainder described themselves as volunteering monthly or a few times a year.

**Geographic spread**

There are no definitive figures on the number of volunteers in Trafford and similarly a lack of information on their geographic spread. Although we asked people responding to our survey where they live and organisations provided us with information on where their volunteers reside, the dissimilar nature of this data means that it would probably not be sensible to draw any strong conclusions about numbers across the borough. Some figures are provided in Appendix B.

An audit of volunteering that included numbers, geographic spread, information about who is and isn't volunteering as well as the service areas that are popular or have gaps could be most useful in campaigns and service development.

**Infrastructure support for volunteering in Trafford**

The Committee looked at the organisational infrastructure supporting volunteering in Trafford.

- The **Trafford Volunteer Centre** runs a brokerage service between individuals seeking volunteering positions and organisations looking for volunteers. This also involves uploading posts to the national volunteer database *Do-It.org.uk*. It is accredited by the national body, Volunteering England, which defines the six key functions of a volunteer centre as brokerage, marketing, good practice development, developing opportunities, policy response and campaigning and strategic development. The main focus of Trafford's Volunteer Centre is on brokerage, with lack of funding probably limiting the extent of other work. The review found the Volunteer Centre does not have a very high profile with its existence not known by all potential

<sup>6</sup> It was heard that previous systems of measurement such as the now defunct National Indicator 16 used data collection methods that did not accurately reflect volunteering numbers in Trafford.

customers. Despite this regular praise and gratitude for services was heard during the review from organisations and individuals.

- **Voluntary & Community Action** Trafford (VCAT) offers infrastructure support to the voluntary sector. Regular training courses for volunteers, including trustees, are run at no or low cost. Several information sheets for organisations involving volunteers are available on their website and they currently run the Trafford Volunteer Coordinators' Forum<sup>7</sup>. VCAT's strategic role in the Trafford Partnership includes co-production of documents such as the Trafford Compact and its associated Code of Practice around volunteering as well as being key in Partnership-lead events like the Partnership and Compact conferences.
- **Vinvolved** helps to create volunteering opportunities in Trafford for young people aged 16-25, running a brokerage service for organisations seeking volunteers as well as championing youth-led action through young volunteer advisors. At the time of finalising the report we have heard that funding for this national scheme ceases in March 2011. pending a search for alternative funding, Vinvolved in Trafford are currently introducing a staggered withdrawal of services.<sup>8</sup>

Other structures available to support organisations using volunteers include those within their own organisation, for instance within larger organisations like Trafford Council or those that are branches of national organisations. Here, as well as having defined staff responsible for volunteering, there are likely to be policies and systems in place to support volunteering including recruitment, training and management of the volunteer programme. In these instances organisations will be less in need of the sort of support services the infrastructure organisations offer to help them recruit and run an effective volunteer programme. However it is the nature of the voluntary sector in Trafford that there are unusually few larger organisations operating here so the need for support is greater.

Issues around the **volunteering infrastructure** arose frequently during the review. The Committee felt this extract from the Trafford Compact Code of Practice on Volunteering & Workforce Development written in 2008 remained pertinent.

**"The volunteering infrastructure**

Partners recognise that the volunteering infrastructure in Trafford needs to improve. Currently there is no funded volunteering infrastructure agency in the Borough;

- Trafford Volunteer centre has operated for a number of years on an entirely voluntary basis and on limited resources.
- VCAT is a voluntary sector infrastructure organisation that provides support to agencies that use volunteers, but has limited resources to dedicate to volunteering.

Partners recognise that there is currently insufficient investment in volunteering infrastructure in Trafford. Partners will work together to strengthen the volunteering infrastructure in Trafford. It is unlikely that funds will be identified to support a full time, fully functioning volunteer infrastructure agency in Trafford in the near future. Therefore, partners are committed to working cooperatively to develop a range of targeted volunteering initiatives, looking to recruit and support volunteers from across Trafford into a diverse range of opportunities."

**Summary of recurring themes heard by the Committee**

- The benefits of volunteering are very much a two-way street: volunteers make tremendous contributions to services across Trafford in all sectors and they themselves benefit from their involvement in diverse ways; however experiences of volunteering are not all positive
- Contributions of volunteers should be recognised and celebrated
- Volunteers should not be seen as the cheap or easy option and the necessary resources involved should be acknowledged and in place

<sup>7</sup> The staff member role supporting is currently funded to March 2011

<sup>8</sup> Vinvolved in Trafford have placed over 900 volunteers as at December 2010 so there will be implications arising for other agencies in the event of their function coming to an end.

- There is a desire for a coordinated Partnership approach to volunteering in Trafford with more formalised sharing of information and activities
- All opportunities should be seized to promote and expand volunteering including the Big Society, the European Year of Volunteering in 2011 and the 2012 Olympics
- Economic factors may mean that more people are looking for volunteering opportunities, either to help kick-start a career or because they are between jobs or retired early
- The need for volunteers is expected to increase, for example where there is less funding for paid posts; there are anxieties about paid posts being replaced by volunteers.
- The importance of quality posts and good matching
- An interest in networking and sharing good practice and resources. A strong theme of the recommendations is around some simple but effective practical initiatives to produce and disseminate information.

### **III. Research methods and engagement**

These findings have been gathered by Committee members and staff through meetings with key organisations including the Volunteer Centre, Voluntary & Community Action Trafford, Volunteering Greater Manchester, Trafford Community Leisure Trust and colleagues within the Council with responsibilities for volunteering such as Communities & Wellbeing. In addition, seven organisations were invited to attend a special meeting of the Health & Wellbeing Committee in November 2010; these included The Federation of Jewish Services, Trafford Healthcare Trust, Involved Trafford, Partington Healthy Living Centre, Victim Support, CALL (Cancer Aid Listening Line), and volunteers from the Sale Moor Community Partnership.

The Committee gathered information including experiences, ideas and recommendations through attendance at local events, many with a strong volunteering element such as the Trafford Partnership Conference, the Compact Conference, Trafford Volunteer Coordinators' Forum and the Big Society 'Have your say' meeting. These provided valuable opportunities to network with organisations and individuals involved in volunteering.

An online survey targeted to organisations and individuals was run on the Council website for four weeks, receiving 172 completed surveys:

- 107 from current volunteers
- 39 from people not volunteering
- 24 from organisations using volunteers
- two from organisations describing themselves as not involving volunteers<sup>9</sup>.

Key national reports and research, detailed in the Appendix C, were utilised in the report.

### **IV. Objectives**

The overall objective of the Review was to develop recommendations to increase volunteering in Trafford. To achieve this objective the Committee aimed to:

- Objective 1 Highlight the benefits of volunteering and help promote an understanding of volunteering across the Council and Trafford Partnership.
- Objective 2 Identify what motivates and enables people to volunteer across a range of activities. Establish what factors might act as barriers to people volunteering and how these could be overcome
- Objective 3 Establish what helps organisations to involve volunteers in their work
- Objective 4 Establish how organisations not currently using volunteers can be assisted to do so and to understand the benefits
- Objective 5 Identify areas of good practice in relation to volunteering and consider if they can be applied elsewhere to increase volunteering.

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<sup>9</sup> In fact these two organisations are volunteer-run organisations, one a club for retired people and the other an allotment society.

## V. Findings and recommendations

### 1. **Highlighting the benefits of volunteering and promoting an understanding of volunteering**

#### **Benefits of volunteering**

**That the benefits of volunteering are numerous both to organisations and volunteers was emphasised time and again by all parties.**

*“Volunteers are not the icing on the cake. They are the cake”* Federation of Jewish Services

*“If I didn’t have my volunteering here I’d never get out of the house ... and I’m not kidding.”*  
Volunteer with Partington Healthy Living Centre.

#### **1.1 Benefits to individuals**

The Committee heard of multi-fold benefits to individuals from volunteering:

- Satisfaction from making a contribution
- The social side: connecting with people and feeling part of a wider group and its activities
- Knowing that a service can be offered to people in need that might not otherwise be available
- Gaining new skills
- Getting work experience to help with future employment or as a taster of potential future jobs
- Supporting an actual cause
- Having something meaningful to do, say in between jobs or in retirement

Reading the surveys completed by over one hundred current volunteers was an inspiring and rewarding experience. ‘What do you enjoy most about your volunteering?’ we asked. Answers covered all spectrums across the personal, professional, social and community-oriented.

*“The look of pleasure and ease on people’s faces when I chat to them. A kind word on the way costs nothing.”*

*“Getting results that would benefit Trafford, to be able to say, ‘We did that for Trafford.’”*

*“Enjoy is the wrong word. The fact that my support to victims is appreciated.”*

*“The experience and what I get to achieve out of my roles as a volunteer and the work experience to help with my future career prospects when I graduate from University.”*

*“It is totally different from my paid work and rewarding.”*

*“Feeling useful in retirement.”*

*“Learned new skills, broadened my experience, seen the positive effects of our work, and made new and diverse friends.”*

Grounding in their local community is a benefit to volunteers as well as a factor in retaining them, as Sale Moor Community Partnership told the Committee during their visit. One of the main reasons why volunteers stay with them is feeling welcome and comfortable in an environment with local people that have a good understanding of both personal and general issues that affect the area.

Motives for volunteering are covered later, proving to be a mix of altruistic desires to make a difference and interests in gaining skills and experience. There is of course cross-over between benefits from volunteering and motivations to do so, with many unexpected benefits arising unlinked to initial motivation.

**1.2 Benefits to organisations.** Volunteers are often described as ‘the lifeblood of the voluntary sector’, enabling organisations to offer services that wouldn’t otherwise be provided. Organisations across sectors emphasised the value of their volunteers. *“Volunteers enhance the work of paid staff and offer an additional perspective and dimension to the work that we do”.*

Some organisations emphasised how without volunteers they would not be able to carry out their functions. *“... we cannot afford to pay staff. Volunteers enjoy their role and are there to provide support because they want to be there not because they have to be.” (CALL)*

Organisations recognise the mutual benefits of volunteering: *Supporting our volunteers from our local client group means we are meeting many organisational targets around working with the most in need families. Volunteering can give them skills, confidence and experience, and we can support them to access further training, education or employment. This benefits the child, the family and the community as a whole.” (Sure Start Children’s Centres)*

Volunteers also help to raise organisations’ profile locally and breathe life into them *“Volunteers bring new ideas, skills, energy and enthusiasm to our organisation.” (Vinvolved)*

Financially, the contributions can be striking: *“The volunteer contribution is the equivalent (at the CAB) of over £300,000 per year in unpaid work. This allows us to help far more people, to invest in up-skilling local volunteers, improve the employment prospects of volunteers and contribute to community cohesion.” (Citizens Advice Trafford)*

**1.3 Benefits to society.** Volunteering is said to benefit the wider society both through actual contributions made locally and through increased wellbeing experienced by involvement and connection with the local community. Volunteering can also increase social cohesion and reduce social isolation.

“Social capital describes the links between individuals: links that bind and connect people within and between communities. It provides a source of resilience, a buffer against risks of poor health, through social support which is critical to physical and mental well-being, and through the networks that help people find work, or get through economic and other material difficulties. The extent of people’s participation in their communities and the added control over their lives that this brings has the potential to contribute to their psychosocial well-being and, as a result, to other health outcomes.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Taking ownership of volunteering in Trafford**

The Committee aimed to gain an understanding of how volunteering is understood and promoted in Trafford and found that it would benefit from having its profile raised to make it more attractive to individuals and to organisations, including those not currently involving volunteers.

At the Trafford Partnership conference Committee members heard there was lack of knowledge about volunteering – how much goes on, what it involves, requires and achieves. There was even confusion about whether there are organisations supporting volunteering in Trafford with some talk about Trafford not having a volunteer centre, which it does, albeit not funded locally.

The Select Committee heard that there is no organisation that has ‘ownership’ of volunteering, taking a lead on regularly and actively promoting volunteering in Trafford or leading on joining national initiatives such as the annual National Volunteers’ Week. Organisations mainly undertake their own publicity and promotion work to attract volunteers to their own organisation, rather than there being shared resources and initiatives. The Trafford Volunteer Centre has its main focus on brokerage of volunteers, although they do attend events to promote their work, they probably do not have the resources to produce and disseminate publicity materials around Trafford or to run campaigns promoting volunteering.

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<sup>10</sup> “Fair Society, Healthy Lives” The Marmot Review. Strategic Review of Health Inequalities 2010. With thanks to Partington Healthy Living Centre for providing this quote.

Collaborative attempts to promote volunteering, mainly led by VCAT, have been made through the Trafford Partnership in the form of the **Trafford Compact**, an agreement between the statutory and voluntary sectors.<sup>11</sup> The document describes volunteers as making "...a large and varied contribution to community and individual life through their experience, skills and commitment. Volunteering is important in building community spirit and a sense of responsibility for one another." Further on this agreement and its associated **Volunteering & Workforce Development Code of Practice** is covered later in relation to sharing good practice.

Trafford Council's Communities & Wellbeing Directorate appointed a Volunteer Coordinator in June 2010 to develop volunteering policies and formalise existing volunteering arrangements in their directorate. A possibility was expressed at the March 2010 meeting of Trafford Volunteer Coordinators' meeting that the role might be extended in a second year to "promote volunteering as part of a longer term strategy across Trafford, which would include other council departments and third sector partners... (this work could) be based on the Trafford Compact and especially its code of practice on volunteering." The Committee welcomes the news heard in February 2011 that the post is being extended to March 2012

### **Status of volunteering**

Although nobody actually said they would not volunteer because it is a low status activity, this was a concern expressed to the Committee by organisations. Some disparaging views about volunteering were heard, for instance that unemployed people should be forced to volunteer and collect litter or work in parks. How volunteering is portrayed publicly in Trafford will affect people's interest in getting involved. For instance, the otherwise welcome article on volunteering in Trafford Council's residents' magazine in October 2010 was illustrated with two out of three pictures showing young people litter-collecting. This may not be conducive to encouraging a wide range of people, including professionals, to contribute their time.

The youth brokerage service advised that young people sometimes consider volunteering to be about older women with time on their hands working in charity shops. Notwithstanding the value of these roles and people, this image of volunteering does not reflect the varied nature of posts and the impact of volunteers across Trafford. Scrutiny Councillors attending the Trafford Partnership and Compact conferences in July 2010 heard many delegates ask for Trafford as a borough to recognise, highlight and promote the benefits of volunteering. "*Volunteering is a fantastic way to gain experience, learn new skills, meet new people, help you find employment, work out what path you want or don't want to take. We should promote it as beneficial to the giver and taker.*"

### **Conclusions**

The benefits of volunteering are clearly felt by those involved: volunteers, organisations involving them and service recipients. However those individuals and organisations not (yet) involved would benefit from hearing regular positive messages about these benefits, about how volunteering can be fun and rewarding in a multitude of ways. It may also be beneficial to increase understanding of the very different roles of volunteers, the variety of opportunities and the flexible range of time commitments available. A publicity campaign might ask "Are you missing out?"

During this review, few individuals complained about lack of recognition for what they are doing but all appreciated knowing that they were having a positive impact. Although some organisations hold their own celebratory events with volunteers, most felt there should be more recognition across Trafford for the contributions made by volunteers.

The Select Committee is of the view that smaller organisations often do not have the resources to undertake levels of marketing needed for promotional campaigns or probably the money for training in how to work with the media. No organisation appears to be commissioned or resourced to generate cross-Trafford interest in and understanding of volunteering. However campaigns and items in the press can have a powerful impact. For instance, an article in the Messenger about a lonely pensioner attracted a big response from potential volunteers to the organisation supporting him<sup>12</sup>. Some thought needs to go into how volunteering can be promoted to get the right messages across: raising the status of volunteering, defining the commitment needed by organisations so

<sup>11</sup> The Compact is an agreement between the statutory and voluntary sectors on how to work together; it is a national practice.

<sup>12</sup> Volunteer scheme named after 'one of a kind' Sale pensioner <http://bit.ly/eA2qgs>

their time is used effectively, and demonstrating the benefits of volunteering. This review is an opportunity to start doing this.

During the few months that the Committee undertook this review, with fieldwork occurring between July and November 2010, three large-scale events with a partial focus on volunteering attracted organisations across sectors in Trafford, from the big players to the small organisations. These were the Trafford Partnership Conference, the Compact Conference and a Big Society consultation event. Despite the interest and commitment to volunteering expressed, the Committee is not aware of specific practical initiatives arising from these. To maintain organisations' commitment to develop their own and collaborative initiatives – especially in the context of the Big Society – actions need to be defined, adopted and pursued and this information then needs to be widely communicated.

Despite its commitment to volunteering in the (refreshed) Sustainable Community Strategy in 2010, Trafford Partnership has not yet led on activities to promote volunteering to date although this could well change with the advent of the Stronger Communities thematic partnership in 2011. A coordinated approach is needed across Trafford to promote volunteering and ensure participation in national and international events. This would be most effective from an organisation with influence and access to resources that can either take an active role in marketing and promotion or commission other organisation with tasks.

At a simple practical level, easy access to information, through different channels and across the borough, is essential to raise the profile of volunteering and enable involvement for all concerned.

## **Recommendations to highlight benefits and promote understanding of volunteering**

### **1A Volunteering in Trafford will benefit from a named and resourced body taking an active coordinating and commissioning role around volunteering.**

The Committee further recommends implementing these practical recommendations:

- 1) An annual volunteer fair could combine a celebration of volunteering with information provision. Organisations can set up stalls, offer tasters or speed-dating type matching<sup>13</sup>. Themes could vary annually, say with a focus on young people or those nearing retirement.
- 2) A timetable should be coordinated listing relevant events (in the voluntary, statutory and private sectors) at which a volunteering promotion stall could be run; this could be staffed on a shared rota by members of the Trafford Volunteer Coordinators Forum for example.
- 3) Smaller organisations – the majority of Trafford's voluntary sector - in particular need help with marketing and promotion through cheap or free channels such as a joint publicity leaflet and social media. Free or low cost training in using social media such as Twitter, Facebook, blogging and YouTube would benefit many organisations.
- 4) A short film about volunteering roles and experiences would be a good promotional tool to showcase the range of very different roles that exist in Trafford and inspire more volunteering. Sponsorship should be sought to run this as a volunteer project. As well as being available as a podcast on organisations' websites, a mini DVD this would be a great tool for volunteer ambassadors (referred to later). Trafford's *Let's Go Global* could advise and perhaps lead on this.

### **1B The continued appointment of the Volunteer Coordinator in the Council's Communities & Wellbeing Directorate demonstrates a commitment to developing volunteering in Trafford. It is requested that consideration be given to maintaining this contract, with some emphasis on an outwardly supporting role.**

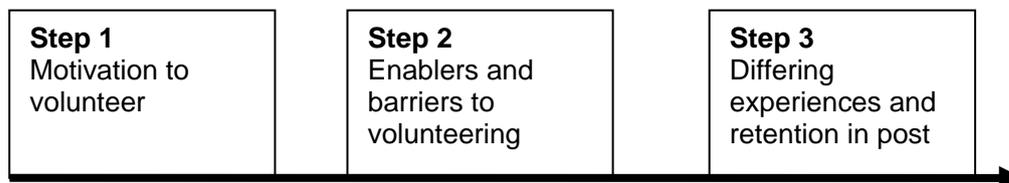
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<sup>13</sup> A practice currently used by Manchester University which has an extensive range of links with organisations hosting volunteers

## 2. What motivates and enables people to volunteer? How can barriers to volunteering be overcome?

With 107 responses from current volunteers to the online survey, volunteers were keen to tell the Committee about their experiences. Scrutiny Councillors also heard extensively from organisations about what helps motivate and retain volunteers. Much useful information was gathered through holding a small workshop at a meeting of the Volunteer Coordinators' Forum.

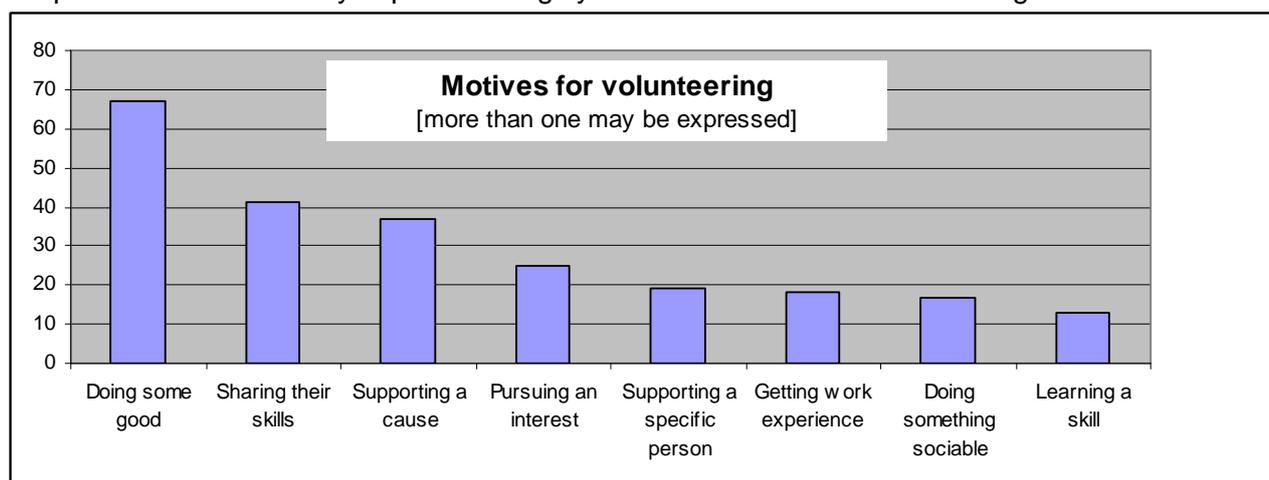
The diagram below shows the pathway of a potential volunteer, analysed below.



### 2.1 Motivation to volunteer

*"Meeting other people in the area, feeling that you have done something useful both for the local community and for the environment"* Survey respondent

Respondents to the survey expressed largely altruistic motives for volunteering.



Doing social good, especially in their own community, was expressed as a motivator. This picture of Trafford fits with the national one, "The most common reason for getting involved in volunteering, identified by 53% of current formal volunteers, was to improve things or help people. Other common reasons were because the cause was important to the volunteer (41%) and because they had spare time on their hands (41%)."<sup>14</sup>

People often became volunteers because they were already involved with the organisation either directly themselves or because they had a family member receiving support from the organisation, sometimes because they were helping to keep a struggling organisation functioning.

Interestingly this does not fit with what most organisations told the Committee were the prime motivators for volunteering: to get work experience and gain skills. In fact they reported big increases during 2010 in requests for volunteer posts for these reasons.

<sup>14</sup> Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving 2007. Prepared for the Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office by the National Centre for Social Research and the Institute for Volunteering Research

### **Doing good**

During the severe cold weather in January 2010 a collaboration between Trafford Council's Communities & Wellbeing Directorate and the Carers' Centre saw the setting up of a 'snow helpline' to provide assistance to those in need in the community. A high number of volunteers and potential volunteers were galvanised for action, showing a keen interest in helping out, particularly among young people. Unfortunately this formidable number of keen and eager volunteers were only needed in small numbers partly because the help available was not widely known. Potential volunteers' details have been retained for future involvement and may well come in useful during winter 2010/11.

Encouragingly, only five of the 39 respondents not currently volunteering felt that nothing could persuade them to do so. The majority were open to volunteering if conditions, personal or external, were right; for instance if they had more time, found flexible opportunities and were confident of clear roles. People said they might volunteer to pursue an interest or support a cause, to get work experience or learn or share skills. When asked what they might be interested in doing, virtually each respondent had a different answer, showing a wide range of interests spanning art, education, legal work and wildlife.

## **2.2 Enablers and barriers to volunteering**

Scrutiny Councillors asked "What enables or prevents people from volunteering?". The main issues here are around time and information. The lack of information includes no or low awareness of volunteering and its benefits, not knowing where to find out about opportunities and organisations, lack of information about roles and their requirement and their suitability for particular volunteer posts.

**2.2.1 Time.** Lack of time was the most frequently mentioned barrier to volunteering as well as what stopped people who had previously volunteered and whose circumstances had changed; for instance getting a paid job or having different family commitments. The Committee's findings reflect the national picture in a 2007 Cabinet Office survey the finding that 41% of those who had stopped volunteering had done so because they did not have enough time. "The most common reason identified among ex-volunteers for stopping volunteering was a lack of time due to changing home or work commitments."<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the government's recent *Giving* green paper notes that "...the average UK citizen spends nearly 17 hours a week watching TV, but only one hour engaged in voluntary work"<sup>16</sup>.

Equally, newly available time is an enabler with a number of people starting to volunteer once retired; many of these had multiple volunteer roles and volunteered most days of the week. However retired people also have busy lives and many wanted flexibility in a volunteer posting.

More than half the survey respondents also had a paid job. Whilst those not volunteering listed lack of time, those who were doing so did not express a strong link between ease of volunteering and flexible employers; many felt their volunteering and paid work are simply not related; others appreciated flexible working in order to attend volunteer training events. Some survey respondents told us they would be interested in volunteering if their employer supported them or ran a work-based scheme.

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<sup>15</sup> Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving 2007. Prepared for the Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office by the National Centre for Social Research and the Institute for Volunteering Research

<sup>16</sup> Giving Green Paper published by the Cabinet Office January 2011

### **Employer-supported volunteering**

The BBC reported a recent survey recommending that volunteering “should be easier”. “Employers should make it easier for staff to take time off to volunteer, the charity TimeBank has said.”<sup>17</sup>

Research for the Cabinet of the Third Sector reported a high interest and good take up of employee volunteering “Three in ten employees worked for an employer that had both a volunteering and a giving scheme... Where an employer-supported volunteering scheme was available, 29% of employees had participated in the last year. Over half of employees would like to see a volunteering or giving scheme established by their employer where they don’t currently exist. The key factors that would facilitate people taking part in these schemes were identified as paid time off, being able to choose the activity and gaining skills from taking part.”<sup>18</sup>

Many larger, socially aware employers around the country run employee volunteering programmes. These take different shapes and forms but have in common that the employer allows staff to volunteer during work time. This might come in the form of employers committing two days annually for each staff member<sup>19</sup> which time is then matched by the employee.

Although researching the level of such activity was not within the remit of this review, schemes heard about included Barclay’s Bank in Altrincham doing a Big Tidy event in January 2011<sup>20</sup>.

In our survey and at the Big Society event, it was recommended that Trafford Council, as a big local employer, could pilot employee volunteering. *“Special events where a focused group of staff can support a few hours each to a good cause would show that staff at Trafford (Council) have a heart and welcome the opportunity to help others (we do it every day but get paid for it).”*

In fact research is currently underway into employee volunteering in Trafford Council’s Human Resources team and in Communities & Wellbeing Directorate.

**2.2.2 Access to information about volunteering.** Lack of information was the second biggest barrier to volunteering. Among those not currently volunteering, there was a low awareness of where they might find information. Some said they might approach an organisation they wished to volunteer for directly, but no-one mentioned any specific Trafford organisation they might approach. Despite the existence of the Trafford Volunteer Centre, the Committee heard a number of people say that Trafford lacks a volunteer centre.

At the Trafford Partnership conference, Committee members heard that there were “too many dead ends in finding out about volunteering”. Pathways to easier access to information were proposed such as using the Council magazine and ensuring information is made available in libraries, supermarkets and other public places as well as having a Trafford-specific website to guide and inform potential volunteers.

Most current volunteers responding to the survey said they found out about their voluntary work either through already being involved with the organisation (25 people) or through family, friends or colleagues (22); others found postings through the internet or even on the Trafford Council intranet

<sup>17</sup> TimeBank survey reported by BBC October 2010 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11561324>

<sup>18</sup> Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving 2007. Prepared for the Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office by the National Centre for Social Research and the Institute for Volunteering Research

<sup>19</sup> Such a scheme is reported in a Herefordshire County Council Scrutiny review of volunteering.

<sup>20</sup> Extract from minutes of Broadheath Partnership November 2010

(15); the media also featured a few times in the form of newspapers and newsletters (11). Other mentions were the library, school, college, via their paid work and through the Volunteer Centre.

This very much reflects the national picture of finding out about volunteering through word of mouth, via family and friends or from prior involvement with an organisation. A national report noted that radio (both national and local), specific volunteering websites and national newspapers were the least common ways of finding out about volunteering (all identified by 1% or less of current volunteers). "In common with the 1997 National Survey of Volunteering, 2% of volunteers had found out about volunteering through visiting a Volunteer Centre or Bureau."<sup>21</sup>

The low numbers finding postings through volunteer centres reported in our survey and the national study is surprising as anecdotally we heard both from organisations that had received volunteers through the Trafford Volunteer Centre and they themselves reported high numbers of enquiries<sup>22</sup> and placements (actual figures are not available). However, according to Lynne Kent from Volunteering Greater Manchester, volunteer centres have an important role in recruiting and placing people who are less likely to volunteer; for instance people from BME backgrounds, older people and people with additional support needs<sup>23</sup>. Indeed Trafford Volunteer Centre obtained funding in 2010 to run a project recruiting and accompanying volunteers, mainly with mental health difficulties, on their first day volunteering. Similarly they take many referrals from job centres and the benefits agencies, with the Trafford Volunteer Centre previously receiving some funding from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) for their brokerage work<sup>24</sup>.

The internet was frequently mentioned including Trafford Council's intranet service which provides not just organisational information but a great opportunity for all staff to promote local events and opportunities. With the number of employees accessing the intranet, this facility for 'self-publishing' should be maintained and promoted. The national Do-It website, where all volunteer postings can be uploaded by organisations or brokerage services, was only mentioned once by our respondents, so it either needs better promotion (by the national body or through local organisations) or perhaps it is not providing the function successfully to individuals. In Trafford the process involves potential volunteers completing an online form that is received by Trafford Volunteer Centre on behalf of organisations seeking volunteers. They reported 2726 enquiries via Do-It.org (and Timebank) in 2009/10. Mixed reviews were heard from organisations who said Do-It is not localised enough and can bring too many enquiries that are not all relevant.

**2.2.3 Low profile for volunteering.** At the Trafford Partnership conference, it was recognised that to increase volunteering and make it attractive, it needs to be promoted to potential volunteers and all sector organisations that could involve volunteers. There was a desire to promote the status of volunteering, for example by holding a volunteering awards ceremony. Higher status and recognition of volunteering could encourage people to prioritise more time for getting involved.

Trafford Council could have more involvement in events like Volunteering Week. Sustained marketing and promotion of volunteering and volunteering support organisations is needed across the borough; possibly sponsored to cover costs. The 2012 Olympics will provide a good opportunity for raising the profile of volunteering and good involvement in regional planning events already appears to be occurring through the Volunteer Centre and Trafford Council.

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<sup>21</sup> Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving 2007. Prepared for the Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office by the National Centre for Social Research and the Institute for Volunteering Research

<sup>22</sup> 2726 enquiries via Do-It.org website and TimeBank; 4500 phone calls pertaining to volunteering; 617 one-to-one interviews; Annual Report, Trafford Volunteer Centre 2009/10

<sup>23</sup> Further on this in Volunteering England's Annual Membership Return of Volunteer Centres 2009/10 and by Volunteering Greater Manchester's mapping of volunteer centres regionally.

<sup>24</sup> This national scheme no longer functions although referrals continue to be made.

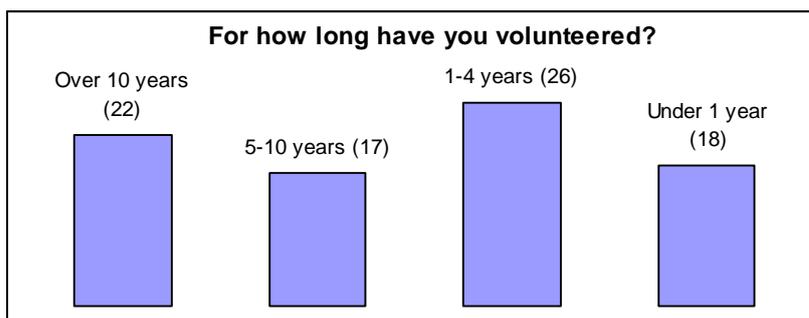
**2.2.4 Financial difficulties or misunderstanding about benefits.** Some survey respondents mentioned finance as a reason for stopping volunteering, presumably having done so during traditional working hours and then needing to earn money. There weren't any mentions of being out of pocket from volunteering, either because expenses are routinely paid or not an issue. A barrier encountered by some organisations was individuals' belief that they could not volunteer whilst in receipt of benefits. Indeed there was inconsistent advice received from Jobcentre staff here. In fact it is allowed so long as they are still available for work if a job arises.

**2.2.5 Worries over responsibilities.** Some worried that too much might be asked of them as volunteers and this stands in particular for roles such as trustees or board members. Like many organisations nationally, Trafford organisations can find it difficult to recruit to management boards, resulting in understaffed boards or the same people being involved in different organisations, thereby reducing public representation opportunities. This may be partly because potential trustees are worried about the risks and liabilities of these positions. The online survey showed that some organisations did not understand that trustees are volunteers. On the other hand, one organisation resourcefully said they intended to target pre-retirement employees as trustees. A short piece of good practice advice from Trafford Community Leisure Trust is in section 5.

**Other barriers** included the need for childcare, lack of transport, disability and off-putting previous experiences. The Committee also heard more than once that individuals can be reluctant to get involved in a project if they think it may not be sustainable and a wariness to invest time, energy and hopes into projects that may not last.

### **2.3 Volunteer experiences and retention in post**

How long do volunteers stay in post and what factors make them stay or leave? In terms of 'length of service', Trafford has a great mix with many new and long-termers. However if the trends are that more people volunteer in order to get work experience and are successful in obtaining work, these figures may change.



**2.3.1 What makes a good posting?** Volunteers and organisations told us what made a good posting and helps retain people in place; this being particularly important where training is provided (the order is not prioritised).

1. Quick replies to enquiry and turn-around for putting in post
2. Clarity of role demands and commitments
3. Easy application for posts
4. Rewarding work utilising their skills
5. Good induction, training and development
6. Good communications across the organisation to all staff and volunteers
7. Being valued
8. Better expenses policies
9. Being given a voice and helped to feel part of the organisation
10. Seeing how the organisation benefits from their work, including the financial benefits
11. Creating quality roles and making appropriate skills-relevant postings, possibly through good brokerage between potential volunteers and organisations
12. Accessible hours and close location of roles
13. Social events for volunteers
14. Help to get jobs after volunteering
15. Accreditation or certificates during placement
16. Incentives and rewards, including for some people the volunteer expenses.

The Committee heard some mentions of accreditation for volunteering. For instance if young people achieve 50 hours volunteering, they gain points counting toward university application<sup>25</sup>. At the Compact conference, the Committee heard mention of qualifications from volunteering, however Trafford College did not know of any courses for volunteering or accreditation for volunteer work. As the picture is not complete here, it might benefit from further investigation.

**2.3.2 What puts volunteers off after recruitment?** Volunteering roles that are not well defined, do not match people's interest or skills or do not use their skills adequately are off-putting. People will leave if they are bored. Volunteering experiences vary greatly and organisations have different levels of experience, expertise and staff available to develop posts and support volunteers.

*"What made you stop volunteering?"* asked our survey *"The burden of complying with the mass of Employment legislation, CRB checks and Health & Safety legislation"*

The over-bureaucratisation of volunteering arose frequently both from an organisational and individual viewpoint. CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks were mentioned several times as well as health & safety and the payment of expenses. At the Council, the Communities and Wellbeing Directorate is currently simplifying its measures to reduce bureaucracy.

## Conclusions

**Motivators and enablers.** Doing something helpful and worthwhile is expressed as a key motivator and the opportunity to gain skills and work experience are important too. Available time, easy access to clear information about opportunities and what they involve and the recognition that they are doing something useful are important in enabling and encouraging volunteering. Trafford can build on what is known to be effective, for instance if volunteers are most often recruited through word of mouth, a programme could be run to train existing volunteers as ambassadors for volunteering.

**Information.** There is room for improvement in creating and disseminating information about volunteering and in the use of public spaces including libraries, supermarket notice boards and so on. Although the internet is increasingly used to seek postings, Trafford residents do not seem to have the access to relevant, tailored information about local opportunities in one place. The national volunteering website Do-It has mixed reviews and volunteering has a low profile on the Council's and other statutory bodies' websites, often hidden away and requiring too many clicks if found at all. Trafford would benefit from an approach of shared responsibility by organisations to promote volunteering and make widespread information about the benefits and availability of volunteering in the borough. *"There is a lack of a joined up approach - organisations do not seem to communicate with each other. Lots is talked about but very little seems to get done"*, was heard at the Trafford Partnership conference.

**Time.** Options for change might include ways to help increase time availability, such as employers offering time off work for volunteering or help made available to cover other responsibilities, for example childcare. As these have resource implications that might be difficult to meet, an alternative look at time might help. As noted earlier, the average person in the UK volunteers for one hour and watches TV for 17 hours a week<sup>26</sup>. A campaign could therefore be formulated to convince people to use some of their leisure time doing something more interesting and rewarding. As spending too much time in front a TV or computer screen increases health risks, supporting information on the positive health effects of not watching hours of TV could increase the impact of this suggestion<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> More information at [http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/ucas\\_tariff/factsheet/asdanvolunteer](http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/ucas_tariff/factsheet/asdanvolunteer)

<sup>26</sup> Giving Green Paper published by the Cabinet Office January 2011

<sup>27</sup> "Couch Potatoes Beware: Too Much Time Spent Watching TV Is Harmful to Heart Health". January 2011 <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/01/110110164736.htm>

The investigations into employer-supported volunteering programmes at Trafford Council by Human Resources and Communities & Wellbeing are welcomed and the Committee hopes research from this report will be of assistance. It is important that volunteer time given is commensurate with the benefits derived from the receiving organisations if a placement is only a few days annually. These could perhaps be constructed as tasters sessions with the hope that more regular involvement would follow outside of the employer's volunteering scheme. Employers can also be supportive by allowing staff time off for training for a volunteer post.

**Good practices that keep volunteers in post.** Groups such as the Trafford Volunteer Coordinators' Forum, coordinated by VCAT, are excellent arenas sharing experiences and discussing strategies around volunteering issues. Such groups should be supported to disseminate information more publicly, for instance through publication on the internet or through libraries.

Volunteers need a range of opportunities to suit their available time and clarity on how much time they will be needed, including for any training. Older people often want flexibility with how often they get involved, for instance not always wanting a weekly commitment. One-off or more sporadic opportunities would probably attract more volunteers however this could create more work for less return from the hosting organisations; bureaucracy for all concerned would need to be scaled to fit. Likewise there is a desire for clarity around what a volunteer post requires skill-wise and what training and development might be offered. Sometimes there is an impressive amount of training on offer from the organisation and people can struggle to fit in it.

### **Recommendations around motivating and enabling people to volunteer**

**2A The enthusiasm and experience of current volunteers could be used to good advantage through devising an ambassadors project** that equips them to promote messages about volunteering and help recruit volunteers. VCAT could possibly add this to other volunteer training courses and issue badges that would be recognised publicly and encourage people to talk about volunteering.

**2B Effective information systems are crucial to promote and enable volunteering.** These are simple practical actions that will help; also elaborated in Appendix A.

1) **A Trafford-specific website** combining general information about organisations with volunteering opportunities and other basic advice on volunteering<sup>28</sup>. This could be hosted by an existing organisation, using volunteers to help gather the content.

2) **A booklet aimed at potential and existing volunteers** could:

- give an idea about the demands and rewards of volunteering
- map out which organisations involve volunteers so that potential volunteers can be directed to them or approach them themselves
- be used by organisations with volunteer waiting lists to sign-post people elsewhere before they lose interest
- be made available in public places such as libraries, job centres, CABs etc so that there is no 'wrong-door' when people make enquiries about volunteering.
- be sponsored to make it cost-neutral to the Trafford Council and partners.

3) The sharing of good practice in volunteer management shown by the Trafford Volunteer Coordinators' Forum can be used to publish a small **handbook to support organisations currently involving volunteers** and encourage new ones to come on board.

This would contain good practice and tips in recruitment, matching, retention and other practices that assist speedy and effective placements, minimise bureaucracy and optimise everyone's experience. Much information is already available from this review, through

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<sup>28</sup> This is not a suggestion to put individual current volunteering opportunities on a Trafford website. This facility exists with the national body Do-it.org

records of the Volunteer Coordinators' Forum, through members' own policies and paperwork as well as from national support organisations like Volunteering England. The aim here is to gather and distribute useful information so it does not need to be sought out.

- 2C Hold a campaign to promote the benefits of volunteering and raise its status.** A focus could be on whether non-volunteers are missing out or on the positive use of personal time.
- 2D Organisations are encouraged to create more flexible volunteering roles with clarity around time commitments.** Recommendation 2B for a Trafford-specific volunteering website, could include lists of organisations offering one-off or sporadic volunteering opportunities that do not have rigid time requirements.
- 2E Bureaucracy needs reducing where possible or its requirements clearly explained.** If procedures such as CRB checks might delay a volunteer starting a new post, some interim work could be found in the same organisation to maintain their interest.
- 2F Trafford Council and other interested employers could trial employer-support volunteering,** and these programmes should be shaped with the involvement of potential host organisations to ensure their success.
- 2G A small campaign to recruit trustees is recommended** with an associated look at whether Trafford is effectively harnessing the skills of professionals in volunteering posts. The volunteer fair recommended under Objective 1 recommendations could include a trustee stall run by those with expertise such as VCAT or the Trafford Community Leisure Trust.
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### **3. What helps organisations to involve volunteers in their work?**

The Committee heard from organisations about what helps them run effective volunteering programmes; data received about good practices features in section 5.

- Time and resources to put into practice good volunteer management principles such recruitment information, fast response, named people responsible for volunteers, written policies, job descriptions, supervision and other systems
- Clarity about how the organisation will involve volunteers
- If necessary differentiating between volunteers and staff
- Ability to pay volunteer expenses and training
- Managing to keep volunteer turn-over reasonable, especially if much training is given
- Ability to organise and fund events celebrating volunteers' input
- Whilst there was wide recognition of the need for people to volunteer for work experience and much pride in volunteers achieving paid work as a result of volunteering, the time and cost in losing volunteers is also keenly felt
- Opportunities to network and share ideas with other volunteer-hosting organisations
- Employers giving paid staff time off to attend training for a volunteering job

#### **What support do organisations receive from elsewhere to run their volunteer programmes?**

Many organisations across sectors are involved with the Trafford Volunteer Coordinators' Forum run by VCAT. There was a feeling that they might have been the larger (although not necessarily very large) organisations that had time or specialist staff able to join. These quarterly meetings offer an opportunity to share good practice, receive support and participate in short workshops. However the information does not seem to be shared beyond this group, for instance on a local website. Neither does the group seem to be as much of a springboard for shared initiatives and action as could be beneficial to Trafford, probably because those attending have many demands on their time already.

Asked where, outside of their own organisation, they had received support to run a volunteer programme, respondents to the survey mentioned VCAT (nearly half had received help), Trafford Volunteer Centre and V-involved. Others cited either their own wider organisation or regional (GMCVO) or national (Volunteering England) bodies. VCAT in particular sends out regular newsletters, coordinates specialist groups many of which advise of volunteering information and support services and provides volunteer-related training. Some of this is related to a post that may be time-limited.

A Trafford Volunteer Coordinators' Forum<sup>29</sup> meeting suggested the following **actions from statutory sector partners** that would help them (these are paraphrased):

- Continue with the Volunteer Coordinators' Forum and help promote it across sectors
- Better funding, particularly of the Volunteer Centre
- Understand better what we do and therefore the money needed to sustain and develop current and new services
- A way to demonstrate "value for money" through volunteering, using statistics, for example 200 volunteer hours could value £200 if for paid staff
- A better understanding and opinion of what volunteers do and are capable of, including better marketing and promotion of volunteering.
- Statutory sector to lose their jargon

There have also been many requests for the Council and other public organisations to cut down on bureaucracy, seen as a barrier to some volunteering initiatives.

It was noted that some organisations experience a number of volunteers willing to assist whereas other organisations, sometimes with similar aims and objectives, lack the numbers they would like.

## **Conclusions**

Although there is plenty of information around to support organisations in running effective volunteering programmes, for instance on the internet, smaller organisations may not have the time to search for help or go to networking meetings. Written information from meetings of the Volunteer Coordinators' Forum could be circulated in the public domain even to those that cannot attend.

Some agreed standards across Trafford around procedures and training could assist smaller organisations in managing volunteers and potentially offer economies of scale, freeing up resources for other work. For example, there could be shared training in common areas, either by organisations doing similar work or needing similar training such as first aid, equality and diversity, health and safety.

## **Recommendations to help organisations that involve volunteers in their work**

Recommendations under other objectives support this area.

**3A Support for the Trafford Volunteer Coordinators' Forum** to ensure its continued existence and enable activities and actions to take place; for example the coordination and production of the recommended directory of practical guidelines and good practice for organisations.

**3B Assistance in access to the media** would benefit all organisations through training and the production of a guide on working with the media. This would support smaller voluntary sector organisations in other areas of work. Volunteers or mentors from Trafford's press or media players could be asked to provide such training at VCAT.

**3C Volunteer signposting** from one organisation to another if there are no current or upcoming placements; also see recommendation 2B(2).

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<sup>29</sup> June 2010 meeting minutes

#### 4. How can organisations not currently using volunteers be helped to do so?

Despite sending requests out via VCAT's newsletter that reaches over 400 groups, issuing a press release and placing an item on the Council website homepage, the review did not manage to connect with any organisations not using volunteers, or even identify any. We cannot surmise from this that all organisations in Trafford involve volunteers. Two organisations that identified themselves as not involving volunteers in the survey were actually volunteer-run organisations. They saw themselves as not involving volunteers insofar as they do not create specific roles that are promoted as volunteering positions. For instance, an allotment society said it had involved volunteers but the placements hadn't worked out but their organisers are themselves volunteers.

Many of the factors inhibiting organisations from involving volunteers can be established by looking at what organisations using volunteers describe as their challenges, of which the Committee heard many. These are also factors that can prevent existing volunteer programmes from expanding.

##### **Lack of resources**

- The infrastructure necessary to support volunteers and provide meaningful roles varies according to the nature of organisations' work and the needs of the volunteers. Smaller, volunteer-led organisations may be deterred by the level of work needed to operate good practices; for instance having a volunteer policy, creating role descriptions, organising training
- Lack of staff to recruit and supervise volunteers
- Lack of resources to cover costs including expenses, CRB checks, training and materials needed for the posts. Volunteering is not without expenses or the 'cheap option'
- Cuts to voluntary sector organisations' grants were expressed as a factor that would diminish ability to recruit and support increased volunteering at the Big Society "Have your say" event.
- Too much statutory sector bureaucracy, including health and safety rules; CRB checks and the time they take to be returned as well as their costs
- Some geographic areas are less well resourced and need more input to build up organisations that can involve volunteers. For instance Old Trafford and Partington were described at the Big Society meeting as areas with fewer organisations and therefore fewer volunteering opportunities.

##### **Recruitment and retention difficulties**

- Not having the resources or time to promote their volunteering opportunities
- Not being able to find the right people. *"Finding people who are able to fill the roles. Volunteers with the time and skills to get involved (is a challenge)."* *"Not all volunteers are suitable for the job. They can be unreliable regarding time and attendance"*
- Lack of specialist support for recruiting volunteers with disabilities
- Difficulties in attracting people with professional experience rather people 'with time on their hands' or looking for their own work experience
- Easier to recruit than retain volunteers.

##### **Other issues**

- There can be difficulties in organisations realising the benefits of involving young people despite the fact that they may remain involved over a long term
- Concerns for staff morale in view of redundancies and possible replacement by volunteers
- Not got enough placements for all interested (eg the Trafford Healthcare has an 8 month waiting list) but don't always know where to sign-post for other opportunities.
- The need for a resourced brokerage service arose frequently. Some organisations and individuals had not heard of the Trafford Volunteer Centre and others sung its praises *"... the Trafford Volunteer Centre is largely unrecognised for (their) work... and provide practical advice on volunteering. We have had 43 volunteers from there, two of whom have become employees of our organisation... (The Volunteer Centre) is that good at sourcing people and matching them up with organisations"*.

## Conclusions

Committee members heard at the Trafford Partnership conference that a stronger infrastructure for volunteering would help more organisations use volunteers and that this could be provided through Trafford volunteering strategy, resource sharing and a central volunteering point. Some caution may be necessary if encouraging organisations to involve volunteers as they may simply not have the capacity to recruit, train and support volunteers; the same can be said for organisations already involving volunteers increasing their numbers.

Centralised marketing and promotion of the benefits of volunteering organisations across Trafford with regular campaigns, good practice guides and information about training courses would be beneficial to encouraging more organisations to involve volunteers.

Some organisations might not use volunteers because they do not know how they might involve them. Guidelines on involving volunteers, some generic roles that might be found across organisations could be suggested (eg receptionist, social media advisor, treasurer etc) with associated job descriptions. These would fit in the afore-mentioned handbook for organisations.

Like Trafford, Manchester does not currently have a funded volunteer centre, however volunteering is supported and promoted through various organisations, activities and easily accessible small funding streams.<sup>30</sup> Trafford has fewer of those infrastructure organisations so needs to effectively use and share existing organisations' knowledge through on and off-line channels.

## **Recommendations to encourage organisations not currently involving volunteers**

The recommendation for a handbook for organisations will help support newly involved groups using volunteers. It should be careful not to scare off smaller organisations with the potential demands of putting all good practice in place.

- 4A Buddying or mentoring** from more experienced organisations would help those new to using volunteers. As well as sharing good practice, they could give one-to-one support to inform them and raise their confidence and maybe even to take on some practical tasks like helping to find trustees. This could be run as a pilot scheme over a year, perhaps coordinated by Trafford Partnership.
- 4B Further investigations** could be done into organisations not currently involving volunteers: who they are, why they do not involve volunteers and how they might be supported to do so.

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<sup>30</sup> Manchester Central, Emerge Recycling, Experience Volunteering, Manchester Event Volunteers, Manchester Youth Volunteering; both universities have well-developed volunteering schemes. Manchester Council also encourages ward-level community activities by volunteers through easily accessible cash grants and U Decide funding.

## 5. Sharing good practice

Councillors on the Health & Wellbeing Select Committee heard an extensive range of good practices in Trafford during the course of the review, summarised below.

### **Recruitment practices**

Word-of-mouth through existing volunteers, posters put up locally, items in the press, use of social media, brokerage organisations like the Volunteer Centre and Vinvolved, VCAT, notices in libraries, free advertisements in the Manchester Evening News. Using the local media. Targeting different groups to try to broaden their base. Using supermarket notice-boards.

Putting posting online on the Do-It.org website (via the Volunteer Centre). "Network, network, network". Attending events where volunteering opportunities can be promoted such as university *Freshers Fairs*. Some target their own client group for recruiting volunteers (eg in community centres, churches, clubs) but for others this less appropriate (for instance, dealing with sensitive issues). Places used to recruit include community groups, churches, schools, internet, online adverts. Using current volunteers to help recruit new ones and promote a 'peer-orientated' message such as Vinvolved's Youth Action Team.

### **Recruitment procedures**

Offer taster sessions. The type of role will determine the application process, some will be more formal than others. Act quickly when people make enquiries, don't keep them waiting or they will go elsewhere. Be enthusiastic. If people need CRB checking or long training, find interim positions in the meantime. Have a dedicated person responding to enquiries. Offer projects to match their needs/skills. Close attention paid to matching will help with satisfaction and effective delivery of the role. If not relevant post current exists, try to signpost volunteers elsewhere rather than being a 'closed door'.

### **Creating a positive experience to ensure volunteer satisfaction and retention**

Get the foundations right from the beginning to ensure a well-organised and meaningful experience for their volunteers. Build in flexibility. Maintain momentum – ensure long established volunteers are appreciated. Make the most of personal connection to the organisation. Help volunteers feel part of the organisation. Use established volunteers to mentor or buddy new ones.

Understand what motivates individuals to volunteer and tailor jobs to suit them.

Offer structured support, supervision and training with constructive feedback.

Ensure good communications. Volunteers need to know where to access the information they need; ensure they have somewhere to go if there is a problem – offer a physical presence or support

Be clear about the role and understand and maintain the distinction between employment and volunteering.

Create individual Volunteer Agreements in association with each volunteer so that they determine their own input and everyone understands the boundaries

If a vacancy isn't suitable for a volunteer always try to refer them to another vacancy or organisation.

Offer training in a flexible way so people with work and other commitments can attend.

Activities that empower the role of volunteers "*The volunteers hold a monthly meeting where issues are raised and activities are planned. They are chaired and minuted by the volunteers themselves*" Partington Healthy Living Centre

**Sharing.** There is much enthusiasm for sharing but more of this could be facilitated. Some premise sharing occurs such as Vinvolved in offices with Trafford Volunteer Centre, CALL at MacMillan.

**Recognition and celebration.** Celebrate what volunteers have achieved. Measure how they make a difference and explain this to them and the wider organisation; financial equivalent measuring kits are available and where shown at the Trafford Volunteer Coordinators' Forum. Offer a graduation scheme. Showcase volunteer of the month. Don't take them for granted. Pay expenses to ensure no-one out of pocket. Help people value the social element. Ensuring paid staff in the organisation understand and appreciate the value of volunteers' input.

### **Dedicated staff**

Most organisations either had a volunteer coordinator post, a similar post combined with another role (eg community worker, office manager, fundraiser – diverse roles) or described the responsibility as being shared across the organisation.

### **Trustees as volunteers** – some advice from Trafford Community Leisure Trust

They have targeted specific people because of their skills or the organisation where they work. For example people at Manchester United and Kelloggs' Community Manager. It is noted that these are high level people and the average small voluntary sector organisation may be less likely to have the contacts or confidence needed to do this.

Advice:

- Identify the skills needed and target individuals or organisations to suit those roles
- Be clear about your brief: what you are asking them to do, how much time and what expertise will be involved.
- Create documentation and training to support this: job descriptions, induction, trustee handbook. Use resources available from support organisations; including those that provide generic job descriptions and handbooks (eg ...)
- Clarity about responsibilities includes assuaging any worries about legal responsibilities for the organisation; for instance they are a trust limited by guarantee and have professional indemnity insurance
- Encourage trustees to feel part of a successful organisation and show them they are valued
- Don't overwhelm trustees with information and paperwork

Trafford Leisure Trust also offered one-to-one help for support organisations wanting advice on recruiting trustees. It's noted that regular training courses for trustees are run by VCAT.

However a view frequently heard by the Committee was that volunteering experiences vary greatly and that all organisations using volunteers should be supported to know how to run and develop a volunteer programme.

Some good practice guidelines for volunteering in Trafford are outlined in the Trafford Compact's **Code of Practice on Volunteering and Workforce Development**, a collaborative document written by Trafford Partnership members in 2008. *"The aim of this Code of Practice is to set out the basis for all partners in Trafford to agree a set of good practice principles that will enable more people to become involved in the wide variety of volunteering and community activity that is so vital to our town, and to provide the necessary support for them to do so."* Although not comprehensive enough to be a practical handbook of good practice, it does offer some useful principles and practices around volunteering. Unfortunately, the document does not appear to have been widely circulated (or adopted?) and is not easily found in the public domain, for instance on the internet. The document ends with a joint commitment to draw up an annual action plan but this does not appear to have occurred.

Some of the larger organisations such as Vinolved and Trafford Council have their own volunteering strategies, some of which have been offered for sharing via the Volunteer Coordinators' Forum. However they don't seem to be available anywhere in the public domain such as under 'Volunteering' on the Council website.

## **Conclusions**

It is important to be realistic about following good practices, especially those that involve the sort of bureaucracy that is also a deterrent to volunteers and organisations. Whilst good practices need to be promoted and shared, it can be luxury of time and resources for small or overstretched organisations to implement them all and this should not be a deterrent to those considering involving volunteers. Great ideas like taster sessions, pre-volunteering courses, involving

volunteers with disabilities or special needs, focused recruitment campaigns for less represented groups and so on all need time and money that unfortunately is often not available.

The Volunteer Coordinators' Forum is successful in bringing together staff with remits around volunteering for networking, sharing good practice and short workshops. VCAT is trying to prepare the group to self-run when its coordinator role post ends but whether this will occur or whether resources might be found to sustain it is not known.

Implementing effective information systems such as a handbook for organisations using volunteers and a shared website, as outlined earlier, will serve to promote sharing information and good practice.

Whilst the Committee heard suggestions for a strategy for volunteering for Trafford, the handbook might be of more immediate practical use whilst also containing agreed shared strategic guidelines. Existing documents from other boroughs can be borrowed, and with their agreement, Trafford-ised.

### **Recommendations around sharing good practice in Trafford**

**5A An organisation or group should be tasked and resourced** to ensure information is widely shared, circulated and easily found in public places and on the internet for any Trafford –based organisation that involves or might involve volunteers.

## VI. Conclusions and summary of recommendations

The Committee found a wealth of experience, good practice and valuable information around volunteering in Trafford. Although there are some forums for shared discussion, the occasional inclusion of volunteering in a wider conference and pockets of web-based information, volunteering in Trafford would benefit from more formalised shared initiatives. Information needs to be more widely and effectively communicated to potential and current volunteers as well as to organisations that could start using volunteers. What works well needs to be built on and expanded.

To ensure the continued efforts and enthusiasm of organisations and individuals involved in volunteering, and to bring higher numbers in, investment is needed into the machinery that can support this. Volunteering needs to clearly be in the 'job description' of a resourced organisation or partnership that will facilitate and commission actions and initiatives. Key organisations involved in this review can help shape this (see Appendix C).

Such a coordinated approach, combined with the implementation of promotional initiatives and good information provision should help break down some of the barriers that stop individuals from volunteering or organisations from recruiting volunteers. As much as possible information should be made available in public places and internet sites that people frequent, so that rather than seeking information, they regularly stumble upon it.

### Summary of recommendations

1. Trafford would benefit from a body recognised as actively leading on volunteering, ensuring initiatives are formulated and actions pursued and monitored. This could involve undertaking or commissioning tasks such as those recommended below.
2. If numbers and range of volunteers and volunteering opportunities are to increase, promotional initiatives are needed to raise awareness and to convince people that volunteering is a great use of their time. For example through:
  - an annual fair
  - regularly piggy-backing other events to promote volunteering
  - a promotional film
  - an ambassadors scheme for existing volunteers to assist recruitment
  - campaigns to promote the benefits of volunteering including a trustee-focused campaign
3. Practical initiatives are needed to share, produce and disseminate information including:
  - a volunteering website
  - a booklet about volunteering
  - a practical handbook for organisations involving volunteers to share good practice in recruitment, retention and overall volunteer satisfactionMore detailed suggestions are attached in Appendix A.
4. Training and development would help smaller organisations and those not yet using volunteers to attract and retain volunteers including:
  - media training and support
  - help with marketing and promotion including training in using free social media tools
  - buddying or mentoring from more experienced organisations
5. Other recommendations
  - for Trafford Council and other interested employers to trial employer-support volunteering
  - where possible for organisations involving volunteers to create more time-flexible roles
  - for Trafford Council's Communities & Wellbeing Directorate to consider continued funding for the Volunteer Coordinator post with some emphasis on an outwardly supporting role.
  - an audit of volunteering across Trafford by geo-demographics and by volunteering service areas to help focus campaigns and fill low-involvement gaps.

## VII. Appendix A Information resources

**Good communication and information provision is key to promoting volunteering, making it work and breaking down barriers to involvement.** The process of the review has led to the following suggestions to assist the creation and dissemination of such resources.

**1. A paper and web-based handbook for organisations** involving or considering involving volunteers. This practical handbook could be circulated to all relevant organisations in Trafford, thereby supporting those that do not have staff or time to attend other relevant meetings.

The content can be built from existing information including:

- the Trafford Compact Code of Practice on Volunteering & Workforce Development
- different organisations' Volunteering Strategies
- information sheets on volunteering from VCAT's website
- information gathered during the process of this review, anonymised where needed

Additionally specific contributions on different subjects can be commissioned from a range of organisations in Trafford. For instance a chapter on trustee recruitment and retention might be requested from the Trafford Community Leisure Trust, guidelines on working with young people from Vinvolved, organisational development from VCAT, how to make a good match by the Volunteer Centre and so on. Any resources produced should take into account existing materials both within Trafford and the plentiful documents available from other volunteer support organisations regionally and nationally. The aim being not to write something new but to gather and distribute useful information.

**2. A booklet for potential volunteers.** Made available in public places as well as by organisations, this booklet would give people an idea of what volunteering could offer them, what they should expect from an organisation hiring them and what they might be expected to commit in return. It would help to promote the image of volunteering. It could list some of the medium and larger organisation to approach directly as well as the generalist local and national support organisations. Again, the content can be compiled from a collaborative gathering of information already used by some Trafford organisations for their own volunteer programmes as well as through internet-based resources.

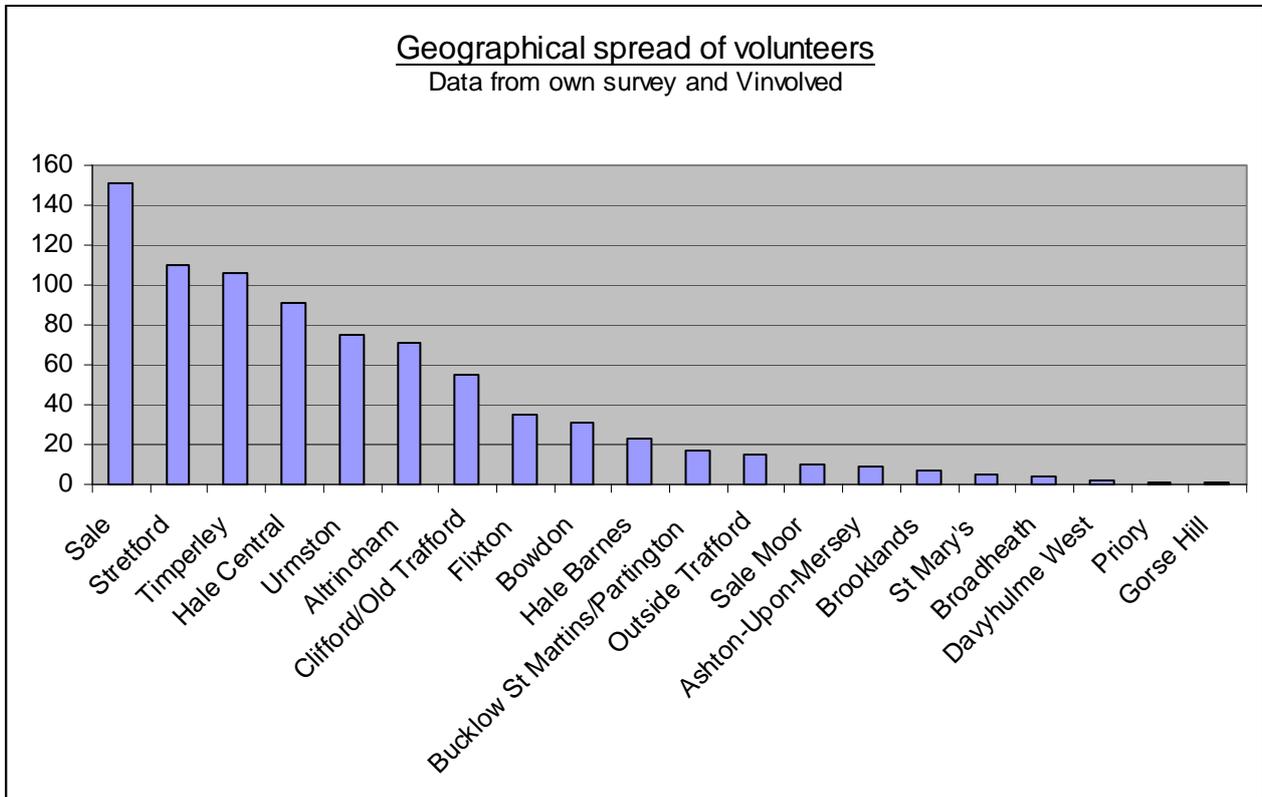
**3. A website.** Many good examples of localised information around volunteering exist on the internet. A Trafford website could be modelled on a combination of such effective sites.

### Suggested channels for dissemination of information

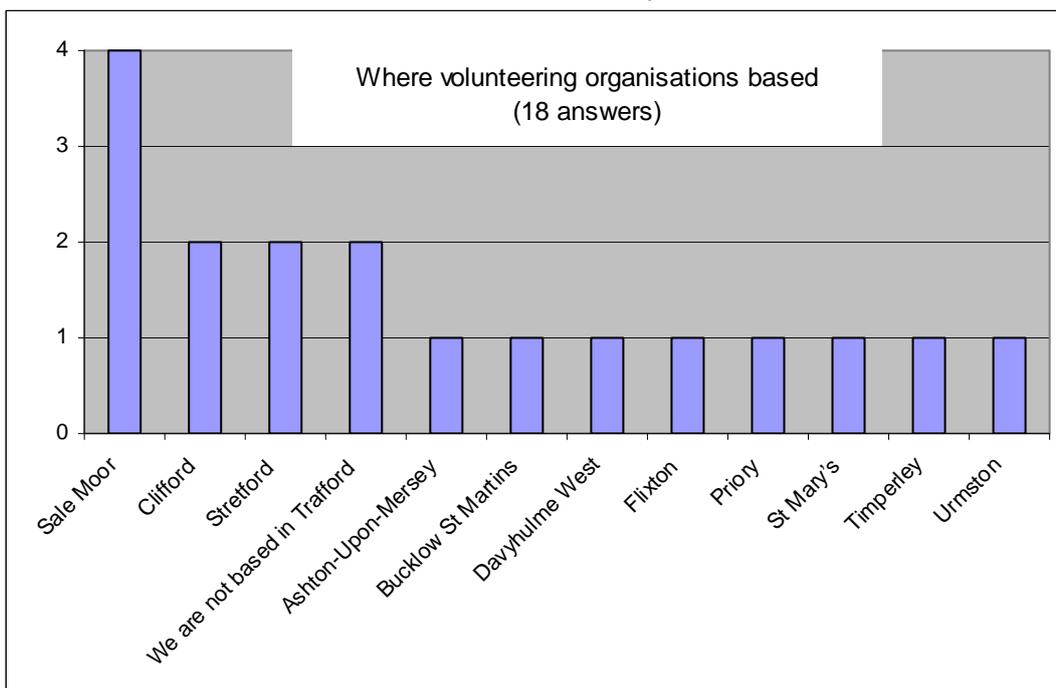
- o **Static information areas:** Libraries, leisure centres, supermarkets, council offices, doctors surgeries and notice-boards at places of worship and elsewhere should offer a generic leaflet or poster on volunteering in Trafford.
- o **Written information: newspaper, leaflets:** Trafford Council's magazine, *Your Trafford* is the only publication reaching all households and should therefore be used to promote volunteering, as it has recently been; additionally it could be used to advertise volunteer jobs, just as Old Trafford Today does.
- o **Online information:** Trafford lacks a central hub of information on volunteering for individuals on the internet. VCAT has a range of useful documents for organisations, but the Volunteer Centre does not have the resources to update its sadly dilapidated website. Trafford Council's website does not offer information on volunteering.
- o **Existing 'live' events** should be used to promote volunteering, just as the police or health promotion services set up a stall at a festival, so could those promoting volunteering use this opportunity to recruit.

## Appendix B                      Geographic spread

Please refer to the information in **II. Introduction** about the lack of information about the geographical spread of volunteers. The chart below combines information from our online survey in which 103 people told us where they live and information provided by Vinvolved data. Some other organisations provided figures in a form that could not be assimilated. The review was not an audit exercise and the figures should not be taken as representative of actual volunteer numbers.



We also asked organisations responding to our survey where they are based but do not feel any conclusions can be drawn from this number of respondents.



## **Appendix C      Stakeholders and evidence sources**

### **1. Events and meetings with organisations**

1. Health & Wellbeing Select Committee meeting June 2010  
Trafford Leisure Trust, CYPS, Culture & Sport, Communities & Wellbeing, Carers' Centre
2. Trafford Partnership Conference, 5 July 2010
3. Trafford Compact Conference, 15 July 2010
4. Trafford Volunteer Centre 27 July 2010
5. Volunteering Greater Manchester, July and September 2010
6. Voluntary & Community Action Trafford (VCAT) March and August 2010
7. Communities & Wellbeing Directorate, various meetings
8. Volunteer Coordinators' Forum, 9 September 2010
9. Health & Wellbeing Select Committee meeting, September 2010  
Input from Communities & Wellbeing Directorate and Carers' Centre (snowline)
10. Big Society "Have Your Say" meeting 23 September 2010
11. Trafford Council Human Resources October 2010, Lisa Hooley
12. Health & Wellbeing Select Committee meeting November 2010  
Special meeting with presentations from Victim Support, Trafford Healthcare Trust, Federation of Jewish Services, Cancer Aid Listening Line, volunteers from Sale Moor Community Partnership, Partington Healthy Living Centre and Vinvolved.
13. Sale Moor Community Partnership December 2010

### **2. Online survey results**

Current volunteers: 107

Not currently volunteering: 39

Organisations not using volunteers: 2

Organisations using volunteers: 24

Total: 172

### **3. Key reports and documents**

1. Volunteering England Annual Return for Volunteer Centres 2008/09: Key Findings
2. Barriers to volunteering. Feedback from EVDC and Volunteer Centre Westminster
3. Volunteer Bureaux and the Promotion and Support of Volunteering in Local Communities in England [http://www.ivr.org.uk/VA+Documents%2fVA1\\_3%2farticle5\\_osborne.pdf](http://www.ivr.org.uk/VA+Documents%2fVA1_3%2farticle5_osborne.pdf)
4. Citizenship Survey 2008-09: Volunteering and Charitable Giving. Communities & Local Government <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1547056.pdf>
5. Snow helpline report; Trafford Council 2010
6. Oldham Volunteering consultation
7. Communities & Wellbeing: Volunteer Policy Draft, Volunteer Handbook, Adult Social Services, Volunteering Action Plan ASS
8. Trafford Compact "An agreement between statutory, voluntary and community sectors to build trust and improve working"
9. Trafford Compact Code of Practice "Volunteering and workforce development"
10. "The Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering" Institute for Volunteering Research 2005
11. Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving 2007. Prepared for the Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office by the National Centre for Social Research and the Institute for Volunteering Research
12. Minutes from the Volunteer Coordinators' Forums
13. Giving green paper. Cabinet Office. January 2011.  
<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/giving-green-paper>