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# Volunteering in Tower Hamlets

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## Local Perspectives on Volunteering Trends and Issues

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May 2007



## Acknowledgements

The Tower Hamlets Volunteering Research Project was a huge undertaking that needed to take place within a six-month timeframe. The project owes a great debt to all the people who helped make it possible, especially the people who responded to surveys and attended focus groups, as this research would not have been possible without them. Many thanks go out to everyone who was involved in the research. The project is particularly grateful to the following people:

- Volunteers in Tower Hamlets who gave up their time to answer telephone surveys and attend focus groups
- Residents' Panel members who participated in the telephone survey
- Volunteer managers and other Volunteer Involving Organisations' (VIOs) staff who completed the e-survey and attended focus groups
- Volunteers and VIO staff who helped to test the survey and focus group questions
- The research steering committee for their guidance: Catherine Bavage, Sarah Coombes, Angela Ellis Paine and Rebecca Tully
- Staff at VCTH and Community Organisations Forum for their assistance and support; particularly Catherine Bavage, Manager of VCTH, Rebecca Tully for her expertise on VBase, Cynthia Allen for outreach to Millennium Volunteers, Kuheli Mookerjee for usage of the COGS database and Giuseppe Rella for assistance with focus groups
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets for their financial support through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund via Tower Hamlets Partnership, as well as Susan Ritchie from the Consultation and Involvement Team for access to the Residents' Panel and general outreach assistance
- The Institute for Volunteering Research (part of Volunteering England) for their support of the project, particularly Angela Ellis Paine, Assistant Director
- East London Business Alliance (ELBA) for their insights into employee volunteering
- Darren Hornby and the staff at SMSR for their work on the Residents' Panel telephone survey
- Attlee Youth and Community Centre for the use of their lovely rooms for focus groups
- YouthNet (which runs Do It) for providing additional research data about volunteers on their national database, particularly Susana Cunha
- Cyrus Todiwala, head chef and owner of Café Spice Namaste for donating dinner for two as the prize draw for the e-survey
- Cora Peterson for research assistance with the focus groups
- Brian Thomas for sharing information from his research on volunteering in Merton

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose and Aims

The Tower Hamlets Volunteering Research Project was commissioned by Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH) in order to create baseline information related to volunteering locally and to explore the scope and quality of volunteering in the borough. The project was funded by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) via the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund through the Tower Hamlets Partnership. It specifically addresses the Local Area Agreement, Stronger Communities target for increasing volunteering and improving volunteer management (THP, 2006). The specific research goals included:

- mapping baseline levels of formal and informal volunteering in Tower Hamlets of residents who are over sixteen, their demographics and the type and frequency of formal volunteering;
- understanding the motivations and barriers experienced by volunteers in Tower Hamlets;
- understanding volunteer retention levels and barriers to volunteering for volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) in Tower Hamlets;
- understanding conversion rates (the percentage of clients who start volunteering after brokerage) of VCTH individual clients;
- understanding the VCTH client profile (both individuals and VIOs) and
- a limited exploration of the socio-economic impact of volunteering on the community and volunteers in Tower Hamlets.

The research was guided by a small steering committee that included staff from the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR), VCTH and an independent consultant. The project was managed by the independent consultant with oversight from the Manager of VCTH.

While there are two national surveys of volunteering activity in the UK and a vast amount of research on the topic of volunteering, there is very little data available about volunteering in specific areas, particularly in any London boroughs. This research breaks new ground in this regard and hopes to encourage other localities to follow suit in mapping their particular communities.

There are many aspects of volunteering that deserve substantial further research and exploration, such as employee volunteering and civic activism, however these topics were not examined in this body of work due to time and resource constraints.

## 1.2. Background and Context

### 1.2.1. Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (formerly Volunteer Action Tower Hamlets), is the recognised borough-wide volunteering infrastructure body for Tower Hamlets. Established in 1996, VCTH is managed by Community Organisations Forum, a registered charity. VCTH provide the following services:

- ◆ Volunteering brokerage
- ◆ Developing volunteering opportunities
- ◆ Marketing and promotion of volunteering
- ◆ Advice, information and training to VIOs related to best practice in volunteer management
- ◆ Response to national and local policy and campaigning on volunteering issues
- ◆ Strategic Development of volunteering in Tower Hamlets

Additionally, VCTH delivers a number of targeted volunteering programmes. These include a partnership project with LBTH Children's Centres that encourages unemployed parents of under 5s to volunteer, and a Millennium Volunteers (MV) project - a national initiative for 16-24 year-olds funded by V (formerly funded by the Department for Education and Skills). This programme encourages young people to complete 200 hours of volunteering for which they receive an Award of Excellence.

VCTH is recognised by Volunteering England as the only organisation in Tower Hamlets providing a comprehensive volunteering infrastructure service and is a quality accredited, branded member of Volunteering England as well as Greater London Volunteering, the regional body for volunteering.

Since 2000, demand from clients for services has grown considerably each year. In 05-06, VCTH referred 1,087 individuals to volunteering opportunities in over 230 member VIOs. In the following year, those numbers grew to 1,265 individuals referred to 265 member VIOs. VCTH is joined with the local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) for Tower Hamlets, Community Organisations Forum (COF). Being under the CVS umbrella allows VCTH to share premises and core services while maintaining an independent programme. Currently, there are five permanent staff within the VCTH team.

More than a year ago, the local ChangeUp consortium, known as THIN (Tower Hamlets Infrastructure Network), commissioned VCTH to develop the *Tower Hamlets Volunteering Infrastructure Strategy*. This sets out a vision for volunteering in the borough, within a local, regional and national context. This research project is a direct result of that

work. Further to this, VCTH is currently developing a Volunteering Compact Code of Best Practice for Tower Hamlets which will influence how the private and public sectors interact with the voluntary sector with regard to volunteering in the borough.

#### 1.2.2. National Context

Volunteering has changed considerably over the course of the last century in the UK. Linked to these changes have been developments in the voluntary sector itself, shifts of government priorities and the changing demographics of the UK population. As society becomes more mobile and diverse, the definition of volunteering is called into question (Anheier & Salamon, 1999). National policy recently has been keen to embrace volunteering, in fact, government named 2005 the UK Year of the Volunteer. While the government has been encouraging volunteering and pledging to increase its support of volunteering, there are still low levels of resources and capacity for VIOs and volunteer management at local and national levels.

As the voluntary sector moves toward commissioning and increased delivery of public services, there will be consequences for volunteers and volunteer management, especially with respect to increased professionalisation of the sector and monitoring burdens (NCVO, 2006). In a recent speech at the launch of the Commission on the Future of Volunteering, Justin Davis Smith spoke of the need to “continue with the necessary improvements in volunteering management without over-professionalising the voluntary impulse. How to ensure that the spirit of volunteering – of informality and flexibility – is retained in the constant drive for efficiency and effectiveness” (Davis Smith, 2006).

Additionally, the immediate future of volunteering in London will inevitably be impacted by the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and while the extent of this is still unknown, it will certainly bring both challenges and opportunities related to volunteer management to all the Olympic boroughs (this includes Tower Hamlets). For example, VCTH is currently delivering a pilot pre-volunteering programme for the Olympics in partnership with LBTH and Tower Hamlets College to encourage volunteer participation in the Games from under-represented groups and communities. The overall goal of the Games is to engage 70,000 volunteers.

This research sits within a national context and is linked to the national, regional and sub-regional ChangeUp agenda and Compact agreements in place. A national hub of expertise has been established for volunteering. Volunteering England, the national volunteering umbrella group, is the accountable body for the activity of the Volunteering Hub. The Volunteering Hub works to achieve a high quality volunteering infrastructure, coupled with improved volunteer management throughout England.

Many of the hard facts that are known about volunteering in the UK come from either the National Survey on Volunteering (IVR, 1997) or the 2005 Home Office Citizenship Survey. Results from the 2007 National Survey on Volunteering were not available as of the publication date of this report. The Citizenship Survey is conducted every two years and shows that 44% of adults (16+) in England have done some type of formal volunteering in the last 12 months. The figure for informal volunteering is 68%. Of areas in England with the highest density of minority ethnic households, 35% did formal volunteering at least once a year. In the most deprived areas in England, 31% did formal volunteering in the previous year (Home Office, 2005).

### 1.2.3. Tower Hamlets

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) is an East London inner city borough with a population just shy of 200,000. The population is expected to have very high growth in coming years and Tower Hamlets currently has the highest population density in inner London (LBTH, 2007). Tower Hamlets has a population that is younger than average for London, with a high percentage of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people. According to the most recent census figures (ONS, 2001), 19% of the population of the borough is between the ages of 16-25 and the largest minority group is Bangladeshi (33%). LBTH has the greatest percentage of 20-34 year olds of any local authority in the country (LBTH, 2007).

Almost half (49%) of the total population of the borough is BME (see section 3.1 for additional demographic details). The census also reports that 10% of Tower Hamlets residents are of retirement age. Half the population of the Bangladeshi community is under 20 years old, while 60% of the White community is over 30 (LBTH, 2007). The two largest religious groups in the borough are Muslim (36%) and Christian (39%) with most of the remaining population stating no religion. Approximately 17% of residents describe themselves as having a limiting long term illness and only 36% are employed full time. More than a third of the residents (34%) have no qualifications (ONS, 2001). It is the second most deprived district in England overall (ODPM, 2004).

In Tower Hamlets, people volunteer from many different backgrounds and for many different reasons. Volunteers in the borough are from a wide range of cultures and ages; many are multi-lingual and come from groups traditionally seen as disadvantaged or economically inactive, for example people who are perceived as service-users, refugees, asylum-seekers, ex-offenders and people with mental health issues. Some people volunteer for purely altruistic reasons, while others are motivated by a sense of religious or moral obligation and still others volunteer in order to gain something of value such as skills, work experience, social contact or satisfaction. Many people are motivated by a combination of these factors.

Until now there has been no current reliable data available on volunteering activity or impact in Tower Hamlets. Past estimates have been based on the findings of the 2005 Citizenship Survey, a national survey of which volunteering is a part. Previous rates have claimed that between 12-27% of the adult population is engaged in formal volunteering at least once a year in the borough.

The 'Stronger Communities: Community Engagement and Neighbourhood Renewal' strand of the Council's Local Area Agreement (LAA) puts community engagement and participation at the heart of the Community Plan and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. A priority is the need to support and reinforce community participation through volunteering, which is recognised as an important resource for communities in the borough (THP, 2006). Volunteering has been an increasing priority for LBTH over recent years and this trend is likely to continue, especially considering the upcoming Olympic Games and the increase of public service delivery by the voluntary sector.

It is well-established that volunteering builds social capital, contributes to mental and physical well-being, to formal and informal learning, to a stronger sense of community engagement in neighbourhoods and to greater employability (Putnam, 2000).

#### 1.2.4. Definitions

For the purpose of this research, volunteering is specified as *an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives. It is freely undertaken and not for financial gain.* Formal volunteering is specifically defined as *giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment.* Informal volunteering is defined as *giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives.* These definitions are widely accepted and come from the national Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering (2005) and are also used in the Citizenship Survey. Throughout the report the term volunteer refers to adults, defined here as people who are at least sixteen years of age.

Volunteers are the life blood of the voluntary sector. This is true not only because they provide a bank of skilled, caring and committed people but also because the unique aspects of volunteering mirror the values of the voluntary sector itself: altruistic purposes, acting out of free will, providing services for the public benefit rather than financial gain. Naturally, there is a danger here in seeing volunteers as merely cheap labour. Volunteers do not replace paid workers, rather they represent added value as well as bringing a fresh perspective, focus and stamina to groups. It is important to remember that most voluntary and community organisations are predominantly led and governed by volunteers on a management committee or board of trustees. Many of these organisations are started by volunteers and some remain

volunteer-led for their entire lifespan. Volunteers actually drive the sector and as the sector changes and evolves, the nature of volunteering shifts and evolves too. This can be seen currently in the debates over paying trustees, certain 'mandatory' volunteering programmes within educational institutions, paying a volunteer 'allowance' and the general push to 'professionalise' volunteering.

## 2. Methodology

This section details the data collection and analysis methods throughout the research project. The project began in November 2006 and was managed in four distinct phases: planning and desk-based research, data collection, analysis and report writing. The majority of the project was completed within six months. Once the steering group was formed and the research questions and aims were clarified and tested, it became clear that there were several target groups for data collection: Tower Hamlets adult residents (over sixteen years old), VCTH individual volunteers and VIO clients and other VIOs operating in the borough. The goal through these targets was to capture information on potential and current volunteers and potential and current organisations who work with volunteers. The majority of the research is focused on formal volunteering and it should be noted that this does not necessarily reflect 'civic duties' such as being a magistrate or a school governor.

With such a wide array of target groups to reach, it was important to use a variety of data collection techniques and instruments. Research instruments included telephone surveys, an e-survey, focus groups and VBase (a database of volunteers in the borough). Samples and methods for each of these are explained in turn.

The information collected from both field research and desk-based research yielded a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data. A variety of research instruments was useful in order to triangulate the data and increase the reliability of results. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation and indexing of qualitative data.

All participants in the research process were given information about the purpose and aims of the research, data protection and confidentiality and how to access the results of the research. Additionally, results will be available for public view after the report launch (during Volunteers Week - June 2007) via the VCTH website at [www.towerhamlets.org.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.org.uk).

### 2.1. Phone surveys

#### 2.1.1. Tower Hamlets Residents' Panel

In order to generate a reliable estimate of the numbers of Tower Hamlets residents that volunteer, the steering committee needed to gain access to a large and representative sample of adults in the borough. LBTH had recruited a new Residents' Panel in 2006 - a representative group of individuals who are regularly asked by the Council about issues that impact them. SMSR (a private research/consultation company) recruit the sample and run surveys on behalf of

the Council. VCTH was given permission by LBTH to survey the Residents' Panel and contracted SMSR to conduct a telephone survey from among the existing sample.

The Residents' Panel consists of 3,100 local people who agreed to give their opinions on a range of issues and services impacting the borough. Members were recruited to form a representative sample of the borough's population. Borough residents could self select to join the panel via the Council website or through a number of promotional campaigns in Idea Stores and local newspapers such as East End Life. There was also targeted face to face recruitment done across the borough and telephone recruitment of residents using random dialling. The sample is based on census figures and over recruits for under-represented communities.

The survey questionnaire was designed and later agreed by the steering group, as well as tested on a number of residents. SMSR was given the final agreed questionnaire and this was further revised to fit the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. The survey included a total of 15 questions which included a combination of open and closed responses. SMSR work to the MRS Code of Conduct and respondents were given phone numbers to check the validity of the research. A copy of the questionnaire is listed in appendix 5.2.1 and Residents' Panel recruitment questions can be found in appendix 5.1.1.

A total of 1,654 phone calls were placed and contact was made with 912 Residents' Panel members, of whom 700 completed the questionnaire. The survey took place 12-22 February 2007. Before the calls began, the researcher briefed the phone team as to the specifics of the project, answered questions from callers and monitored a number of test calls. Additionally, SMSR have a quality control system in place, as well as a survey manager who monitors calls. Closed responses to survey questions were given to respondents in random order unless otherwise indicated on the survey. The CATI system was used which helps to minimise errors with data entry. The survey has a confidence level of 99% with a margin of error of +/- 5%.

There is the possibility of bias in the sample with regard to the nature and age structure of the Residents' Panel. The Residents' Panel is ultimately self selecting, although efforts were made by SMSR to recruit under-represented groups. The Residents' Panel phone survey sample is over-representative of older people and has been weighted to correct this. This is most likely due to the fact that it is normally easier to reach retired people by phone. Weights were calculated and applied to the data during analysis. All percentages and averages given for the Residents' Panel phone survey are based on weighted data unless otherwise noted. Throughout the report, 'N' is used to represent the total number of valid responses for a given question. The total number of respondents (N) for the Residents' Panel data set is not weighted.

### 2.1.2. VCTH Volunteers

In order to get an accurate picture of conversion rates to volunteering among VCTH clients, a short phone survey was completed with people who contacted VCTH for either a face to face appointment or through the 'Do It' website. A random sample of clients who had contact with VCTH between October 2005 and September 2006 was chosen from each month within that period. Do It is a national database and website ([www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)) onto which VCTH loads and advertises volunteering opportunities which links volunteers with VIO opportunities and is synchronised with VBase.

A total of 272 calls were placed. Contact was made with 79 people and 60 people completed the survey. The survey was completed in February and March 2007. A summary of the demographics of the phone sample can be found in appendix 5.1.2 and a copy of the survey questionnaire is in appendix 5.2.2. While this survey is accurately representative of the VCTH client base, it is nonetheless a small sample size from which to draw conclusions.

### 2.2. E-survey

In collecting data about the needs and experiences of VIOs in Tower Hamlets, it was thought that an e-survey would be the most efficient and convenient mechanism for groups. An online survey tool called Survey Monkey was used ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) and respondents were targeted from VCTH member organisations, the COF member database and e-mails from key contacts and the public sector. In order to participate in the survey, respondents were required to be representing a volunteer-involving organisation working in Tower Hamlets. The e-survey was accessible 24 hours a day between 13 January and 3 March 2007. It took approximately 15 minutes to complete and included both open and closed questions. A copy of the survey questions can be found in appendix 5.2.3. There was a prize draw offered as an incentive to participation.

There was a total of 125 responses to the survey and of these, 108 were valid. It is estimated that 67% of the respondents are registered with VCTH. Among respondents, 19% are from organisations in the public sector, 3% are from social enterprise and the remaining majority are in the voluntary and community sector. Data from the e-survey was exported into an Excel spreadsheet for further analysis.

Limitations of the e-survey sample include the requirement to access a computer, the internet and some level of comfort with computers. This may exclude groups who are not comfortable or unable to access the internet. Additionally, the e-survey does not reflect the experience of other types of volunteer brokerage organisations, for example those who specialise in 'professional volunteer' placements.

### 2.3. Focus groups

In addition to quantitative data, it was necessary to capture a variety of qualitative data in order to fully understand the experiences of volunteers and volunteer managers, the socio-economic impact of volunteering and barriers faced by volunteers and VIOs. The two targets therefore were volunteers in Tower Hamlets (mainly VCTH clients) and paid staff from VIOs who manage volunteers. A total of five focus groups were conducted in January and February 2007. Three involved volunteers and two were for volunteer managers in VIOs. Recruitment sources included VCTH clients via e-mail bulletins and telephone calls, the COF newsletter, e-mails from external contacts and the e-survey. Participants were assured that the information collected would be aggregated and anonymised.

Each focus group was led by the research consultant with a research assistant taking notes. Each group was recorded and the questioning route for both types of groups can be found in appendix 5.3, along with demographic information (appendix 5.1.3). Three sessions were held at the Attlee Youth & Community Centre in Tower Hamlets, while the other two were held at the VCTH office. There were 14 VIO staff participants in total at the focus groups and 18 volunteer participants. Participants were reimbursed for travel expenses to the focus groups and provided with a meal.

Quotes from focus groups are used and noted in italic boxes throughout the report. They are referenced by focus group respondent ID, as confidentiality was thought to increase valid, honest responses. The ID number corresponds to the specific focus group (odd numbers were from volunteer focus groups and even numbers were VIOs) and the second number refers to the specific respondent.

### 2.4. Vbase

VBase is a database that stores VCTH client information. This information comes either directly from volunteers via the Do It website or is entered by VCTH staff after an appointment or an organisational contact. The nature of the VBase data is one that is constantly changing and shifting. The numbers of volunteers registered grows daily and each month new VIOs register with VCTH. The data used in this report has recorded a snapshot of the organisation in the year period between April 2006 and March 2007. The data was cleaned in order to eliminate duplication and separated into volunteer clients and VIO clients. Volunteer clients were further separated into those that had an appointment at VCTH and those who exclusively used the Do It website and were advised by e-mail.

As with any type of self-reporting, the data from VBase is dependent on the accuracy of the respondent. This sometimes results in areas with gaps of information. In terms of monitoring equality strands, there were gaps in information related to sexual orientation and religion, in part

due to inconsistent monitoring methods and structures within the database. VCTH internal monitoring forms also have too few responses in these categories to provide reliable results. This is possibly due to a combination of factors including hesitancy to answer personal questions, misunderstanding of terms used and a lack of encouragement to complete the form.

### 3. Findings

This section highlights the key findings of the research and directly addresses the initial research questions. It provides the best information to date on the state of volunteering in Tower Hamlets while at the same time raising additional questions and areas in need of further exploration in the future.

Volunteering is a subject that is often talked about and rarely explained in depth. Everyone feels that they understand the concept of volunteering yet very few people take the time to seriously define it. Even when we try to define it, it often eludes our efforts. It is generally accepted that volunteering has the core elements of helping society or others by one's own efforts, it is unpaid and freely undertaken (Davis Smith, 2000). This often translates into the definitions previously offered in this report and the structuring of volunteering into the categories of formal (with an organisation) and informal (individual's sole effort). Beyond this structure, there is additionally the issue of the frequency of volunteering. For example, the Citizenship Survey mainly looks at volunteering in the previous month and the previous year.

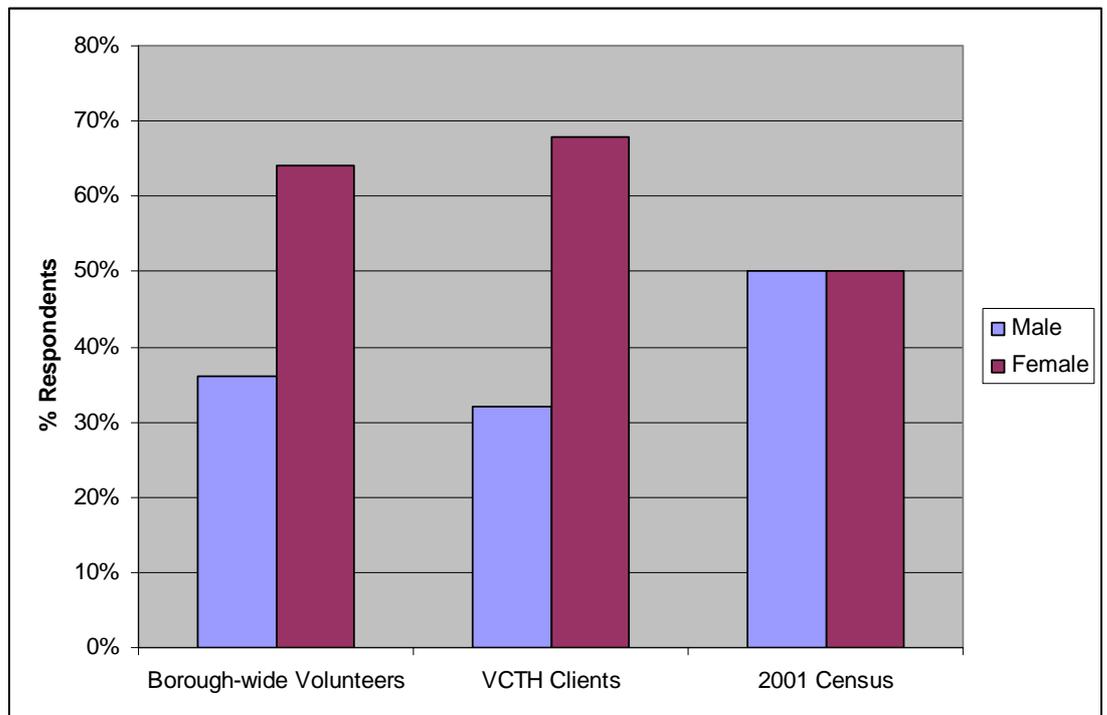
These issues highlight the dilemmas in relation to defining volunteering. Is someone a volunteer if they only ever volunteered once in their life or is the criteria a regular weekly or monthly commitment or is it somewhere in between? What types of activity count as volunteering – trusteeship, school governor, campaigner, voting, receptionist? Each study or survey of volunteering defines these areas in their own way because there are no standard boundaries for volunteering. This piece of research has chosen to focus on formal volunteering through VIOs in Tower Hamlets, although there is some attention given to informal volunteering.

#### 3.1. Volunteering in Tower Hamlets

Results from the Residents' Panel phone survey indicate that 29% of Tower Hamlets residents who are 16 years old or older have participated in formal volunteering in the previous year. Based on the 2001 census, this would translate into 43,852 formal volunteers residing in the borough. The survey also indicates that more than half the adult population (51%) have formally volunteered at some point in their lives. Informal volunteering is even more common in the borough, with 63% of adults in Tower Hamlets participating in informal volunteering in the previous year. These statistics are comparable nationally to volunteering numbers in areas with high levels of deprivation (Home Office, 2005).

Based on the Residents' Panel survey of people who volunteer in the borough, we can make reliable estimates about the demographics of volunteers. Women volunteer more than men, representing approximately 64% of volunteers in the borough (Fig. 1). The figures and tables that follow give a comparison of the demographics of volunteers from the Residents' Panel, VCTH volunteers and the overall Tower Hamlets 2001 census figures. The majority of volunteers in the borough are under 50 years of age, with a roughly equal split between the age groups that are 16-49 (Fig. 2). The ethnicity of volunteers for the most part follows the pattern in the population, with more than a third Bangladeshi (36%), and the total number of BME volunteers at 48% (Fig. 3). This is also true of religion, where volunteering patterns follow the local population numbers. The majority of volunteers are Christian (40%), Muslim (33%) or do not have a religion (20% - Table 1).

Figure 1: Tower Hamlets Demographics - Gender



NOTE: 'Borough-wide volunteers' data is extrapolated from the Residents' Panel survey and refers to people who have done formal volunteering in the previous year. 'VCTH clients' refers to individuals who have contacted VCTH in order to volunteer. All percentages were rounded to the nearest whole.

Figure 2: Tower Hamlets Demographics - Age

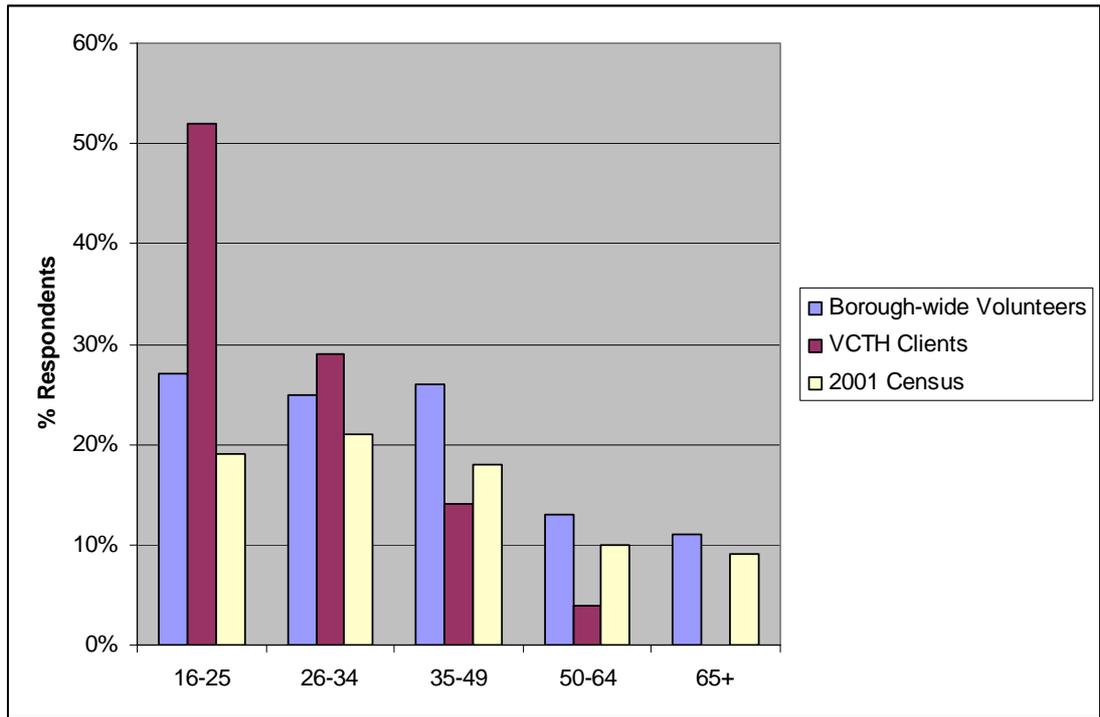
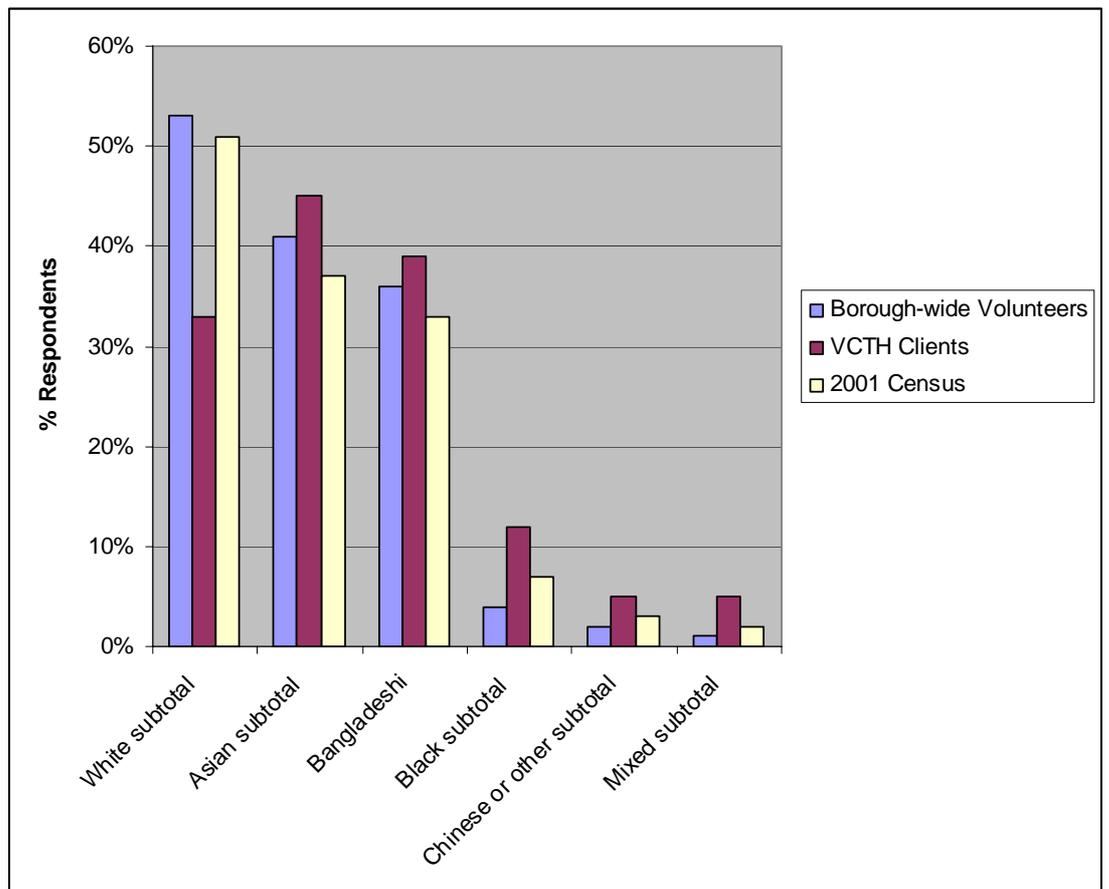


Figure 3: Tower Hamlets Demographics – Ethnicity



NOTE: 'Bangladeshi' numbers are a subset of the 'Asian subtotal'.

Table 1: Tower Hamlets Demographics - Religion

Demographic - Religion	Borough-wide Volunteers	VCTH Clients	2001 Census
Buddhist	2%	0%	1%
Christian	40%	22%	39%
Hindu	Less than 1%	1%	1%
Jewish	2%	1%	1%
Muslim	33%	66%	36%
Sikh	1%	1%	Less than 1%
None	20%	10%	14%
Other	3%	1%	Less than 1%
Refused to answer	0%	0%	7%

Rates of formal volunteering in Tower Hamlets appear lower than the national averages in the Citizenship Survey. This may be connected to levels of deprivation and the demographics of the borough, which has a large Bangladeshi and Muslim population as well as 35% of residents that were born outside the UK. According to the Citizenship Survey, people born outside of the UK have lower rates of formal volunteering than those born in the UK, even within the same ethnic group. Additionally, formal volunteering rates among the Bangladeshi community and among the Muslim community are lower than national averages (Home Office, 2005). Data from the Citizenship Survey states that Asian people born outside the UK who formally volunteer at least once in the previous year have a participation rate of 30%, almost exactly the formal volunteering rate in Tower Hamlets overall. It is possible that the demographic factors in the borough, specifically the density of ethnic minorities, high levels of deprivation and large percentages of people born outside of the UK combine to create volunteering rates that are consistent with national research.

Due to inconsistent monitoring standards, it was not possible to compare information related to sexual orientation, as this is not captured in the national census and was not available via VBase. However, we can gather from the data that 82% of volunteers identify as heterosexual and estimate that 5-18% of volunteers in the borough identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual (Table 2). The high number of refusals in this category may indicate an area that needs further research.

Almost a fifth (19%) of volunteers described themselves as having a limiting long-term illness, which is comparable to the population in the borough overall (Table 3). Volunteers are split in terms of their employment status, with roughly half (44%) being employed and the other half (55%) being unemployed, not seeking work, unable to work, retired or in education (Fig. 4). Volunteering is clearly spread out around the borough, with areas fairly evenly represented by volunteers (Table 4).

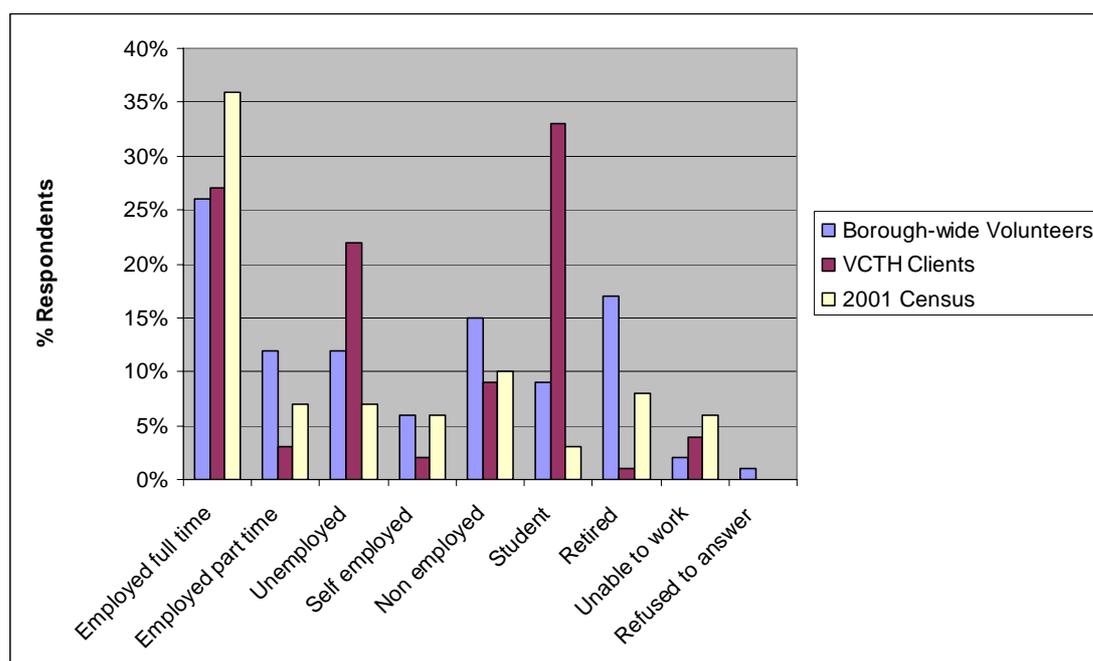
Table 2: Tower Hamlets Demographics – Sexual Orientation

Demographic – Sexual Orientation	Borough-wide Volunteers	VCTH Clients	2001 Census
Heterosexual	82%	Reliable data not available	
Homosexual	2%		
Bisexual	2%		
Other	1%		
Refused to answer	14%		

Table 3: Tower Hamlets Demographics – Disability

Demographic - Disability	Borough-wide Volunteers	VCTH Clients	2001 Census
Yes	19%	4%	17%
No	81%	96%	83%

Figure 4: Tower Hamlets Demographics – Employment Status



NOTE: 'Non employed' refers to people who are not in employment and who are not seeking work, such as homemakers.

Table 4: Tower Hamlets Demographics – LAP Areas

Demographic – LAP Area	Borough-wide Volunteers	VCTH Clients	GLA Population Projections
1: Bethnal Green North, Mile End, Globe Town and Weavers	12%	16%	18%
2: Bethnal Green South, Spitalfields and Banglatown	13%	11%	12%
3: St. Dunstons, Stepney Green and Whitechapel	14%	18%	10%
4: Shadwell, St. Katherine's and Wapping	16%	11%	12%
5: Bow East and Bow West	9%	9%	10%
6: Bromley-by-Bow and Mile End East	16%	11%	12%
7: East India, Lansbury and Limehouse	11%	11%	12%
8: Blackwall, Cubitt Town and Millwall	11%	12%	15%

NOTE: Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number. Greater London Authority (GLA) population projections are for June 2006 and are based on 2001 census numbers ([www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk)).

Among the types of organisations people were involved with (this excludes giving money or any activity required by an employer), respondents most commonly gave help to groups related to children and young people or faith groups such as a mosque or a church (Fig. 5). The types of activities that volunteers undertake in organisations vary, but are broadly consistent with the results of the Citizenship Survey. Organising activities and events, leadership and fundraising are the most common types of activities in Tower Hamlets as well as the country overall (Fig. 6). Almost two thirds (65%) of formal volunteers have been a volunteer for more than three years, while 19% first began volunteering in the previous year. By far the most common ways of learning about volunteering among respondents was either through word-of-mouth (45%) or through previously using the services of an organisation (33%).

When asked about the frequency of their formal volunteering activities, more than half (51%) the volunteers gave at least two hours per week (Fig. 7). Of these 'regular' volunteers, respondents averaged 13 hours of volunteering in the previous month. Based on that data, it could be estimated that there are at least 22,466 regular formal volunteers in the borough, contributing over 100,134 seven-hour days of work each year. This is the equivalent to more than 2,000 full time staff each year. Based on the average hourly London wage, this represents an economic value of £51,939,595 per year, before taking into account any costs associated with volunteering. It is important to note here that this represents only a minimal economic value of local volunteering, as it does not include volunteer work that happens periodically, seasonally, as a 'one-off' or any informal volunteering activity. Quantifying the total range of volunteer activity would require additional time and resources and is perhaps an area for further investigation in the future.

Figure 5: Types of Organisations Where People Volunteer, N=203

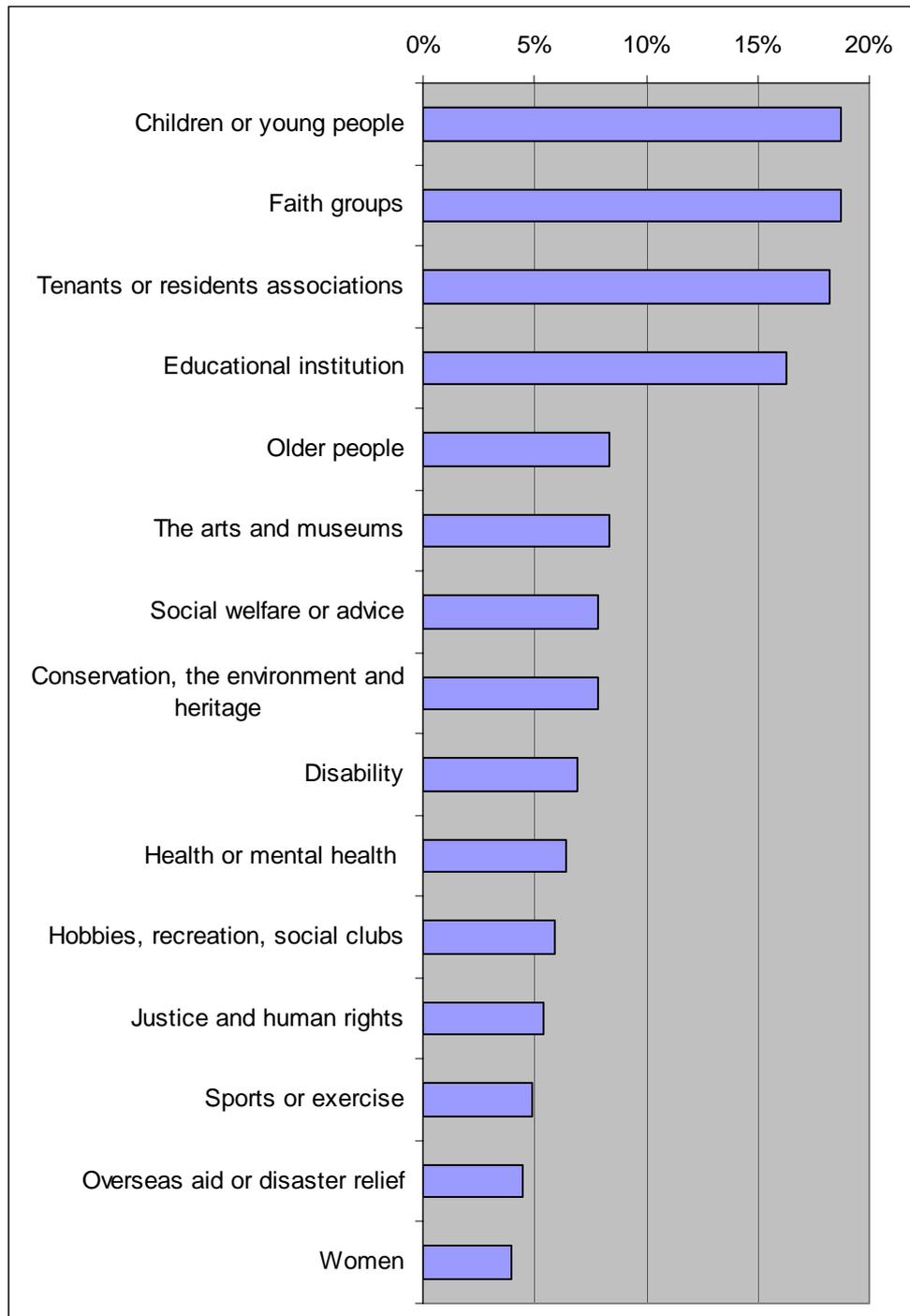


Figure 6: Formal Volunteering Activities, N=205

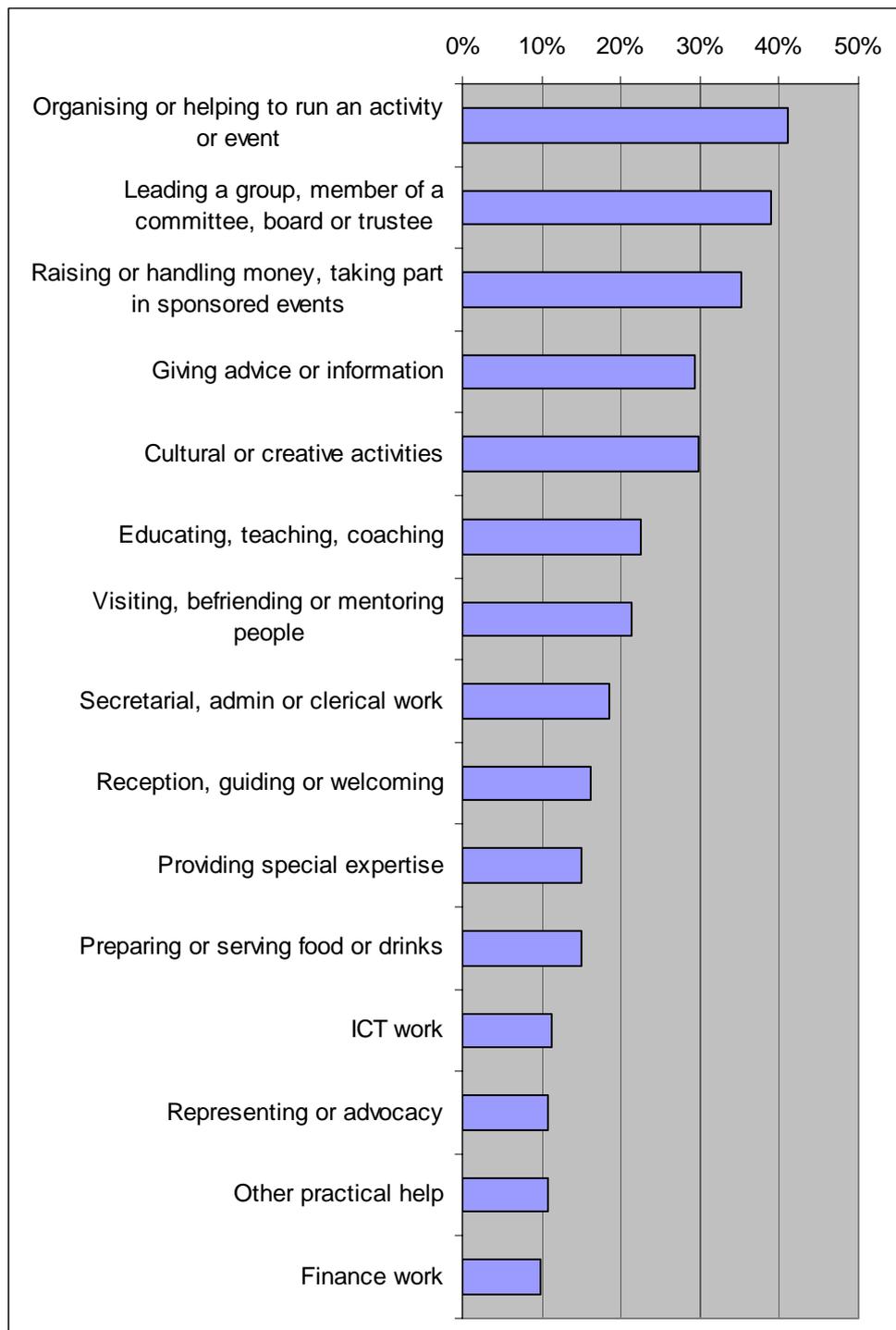
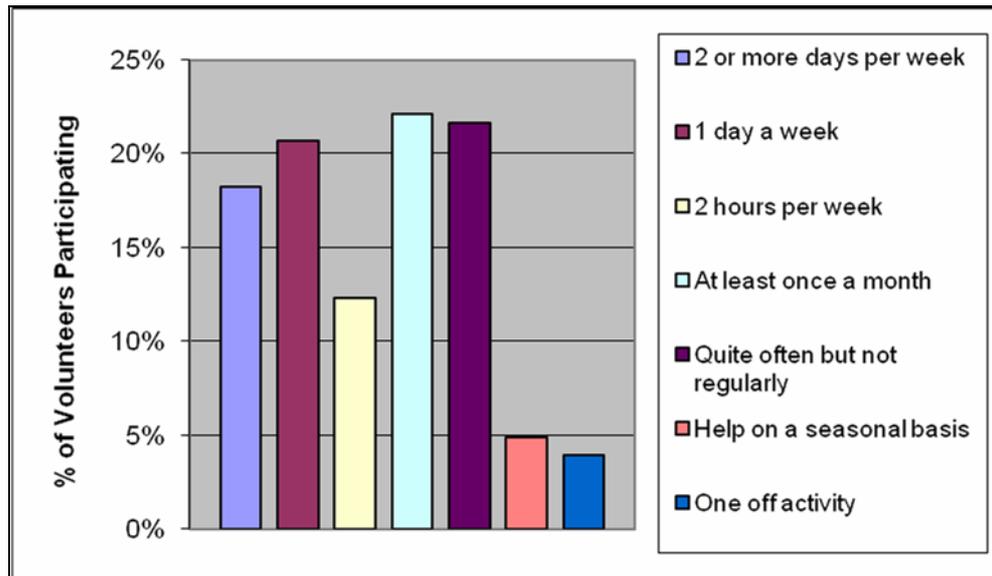


Figure 7: Frequency of Volunteering, N=203



### 3.2. VCTH Volunteers

One of the main functions of the Volunteer Centre is to provide brokerage services between people and VIOs in Tower Hamlets who need volunteers. The criteria in place to access the services of VCTH, in addition to living, working or studying in the borough, is that clients must be at least sixteen years old. However, some specialist projects, such as Millennium Volunteers have additional criteria for participants. In this case clients must be 16-25 years old. Potential volunteers can access the specialist volunteer opportunity database, Do It ([www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)) which provides an online registration process and database for VCTH, as it does for many Volunteer Centres around the country. The online information about volunteers and opportunities is synchronised regularly with the VCTH database, VBase. After volunteers register an interest in a volunteer opportunity in Tower Hamlets, the volunteer is e-mailed by VCTH with contact details for the organisation.

The other type of brokerage service for volunteers happens through face-to-face appointments with a trained advisor. These take place either at the VCTH office or in satellite locations across the borough. Information from volunteers attending appointments is also entered onto the database. In order to get an accurate picture of the VCTH client profile, both the Do It clients, as well as the appointments, were examined. In some cases the data was separated in order to fully understand the demographics of the clients.

During the financial year 06-07, VCTH assisted a total of 1,265 individual clients. In addition to this, VCTH refer many people out of the borough to their local VC or other appropriate agency. Of clients assisted, 792 were online clients and 473 were face-to-face appointments. As can be seen in Figure 2, VCTH clients tend to be

young and this is even more pronounced for Do It users (Fig. 8). Women volunteer in greater numbers than men (Fig. 9) and the majority of VCTH clients describe themselves as Asian, most of which are Bangladeshi (Fig. 10). Volunteers in the Bangladeshi community are significantly more likely to attend an appointment to volunteer than to access the online system, although there are still large numbers of Bangladeshi people accessing Do It. On the other hand, White people, Chinese and 'other' ethnic groups are somewhat more likely to access online services rather than attend face-to-face appointments. Among VCTH clients, 17% hold Bangladeshi nationality and 14% hold other non-UK nationality. Additionally, 66% describe themselves as Muslim, 22% Christian and 10% with no religion.

Figure 8: Age Structure of VCTH Clients, N=1265

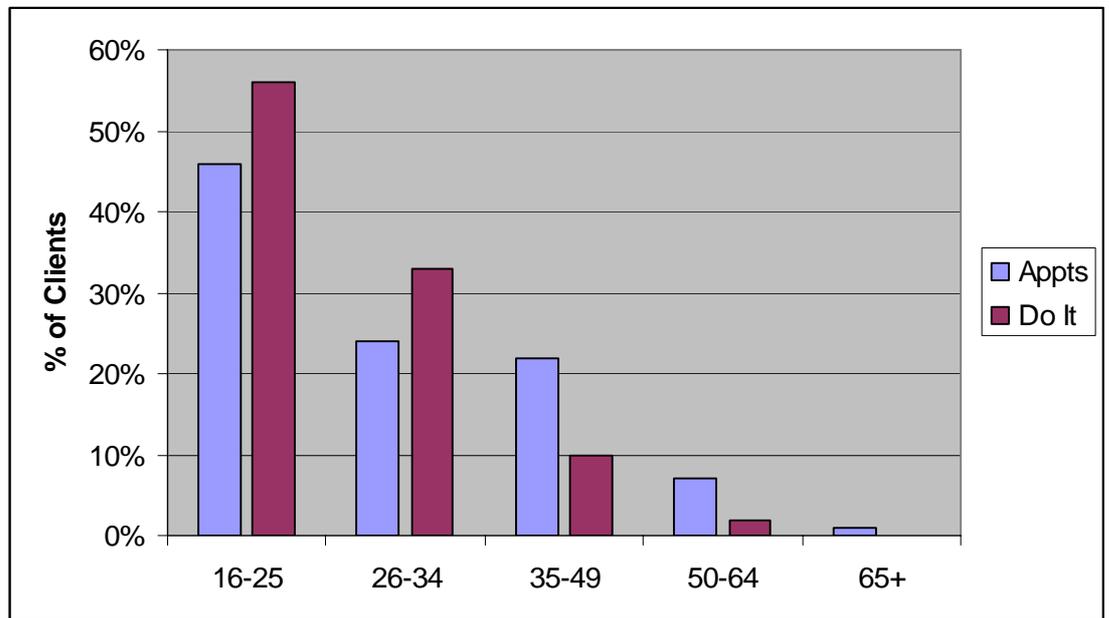


Figure 9: Gender of VCTH Clients, N=1265

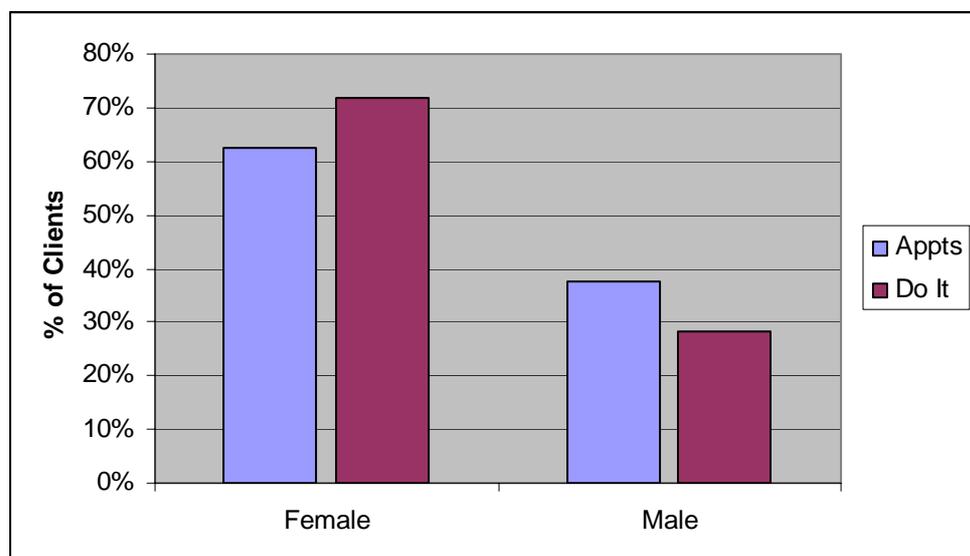
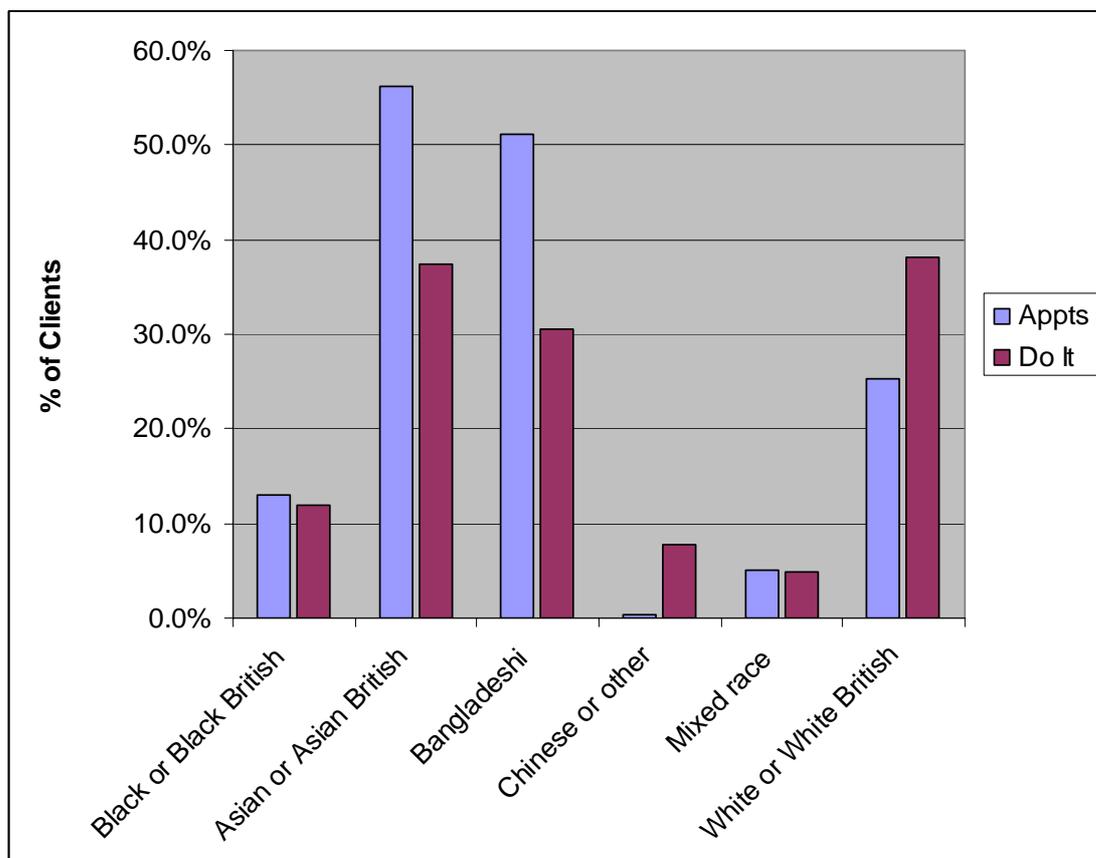


Figure 10: Ethnicity of VCTH Clients, N=1179

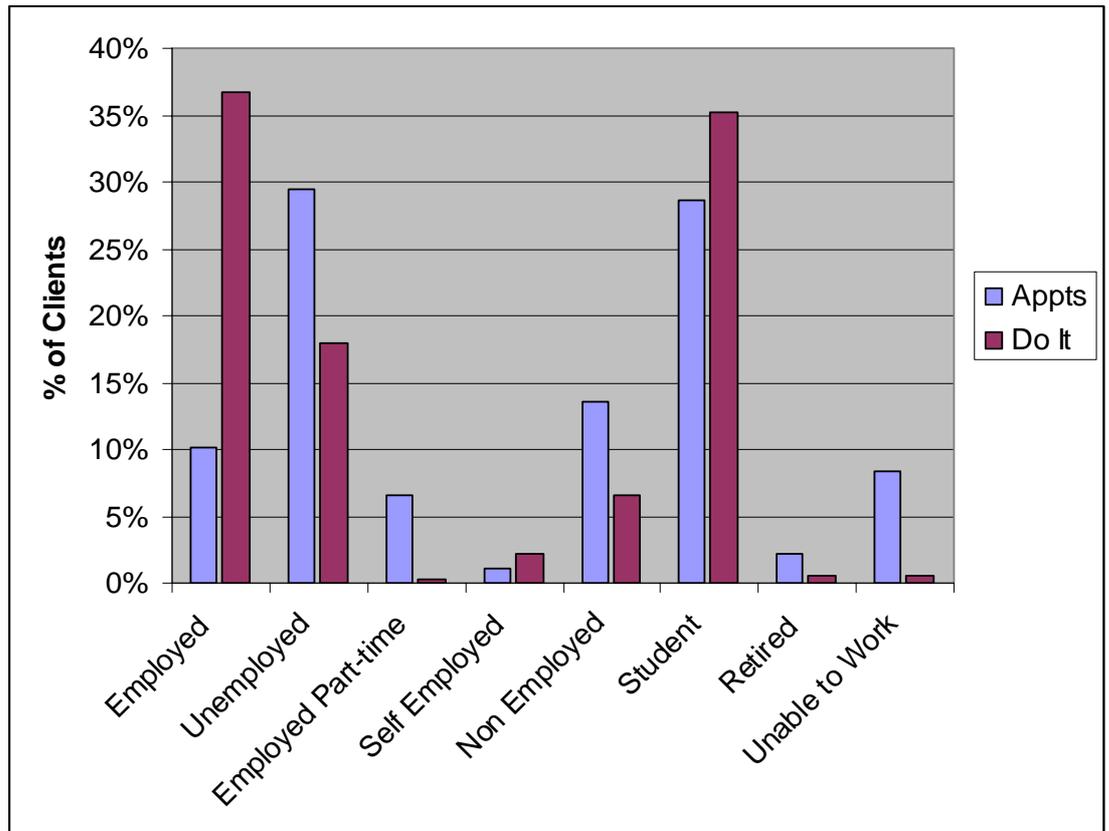


NOTE: The figures for the Bangladeshi community are a subset of the Asian/Asian British figures and are highlighted because of the particular demographics of Tower Hamlets.

VCTH has a relatively low number of clients identified as disabled compared to borough wide numbers and this is perhaps because of underreporting due to inconsistent definitions of the term disabled and a wide range of understanding of the term. VCTH do not provide a detailed explanation of disability on their monitoring form, whereas the Residents' Panel and census wording describes a 'limiting long term illness' and provides a further explanation. People who are self classified as disabled represent 7% (N=448) of all appointments while those using Do It make up 3% (N=696) of the total.

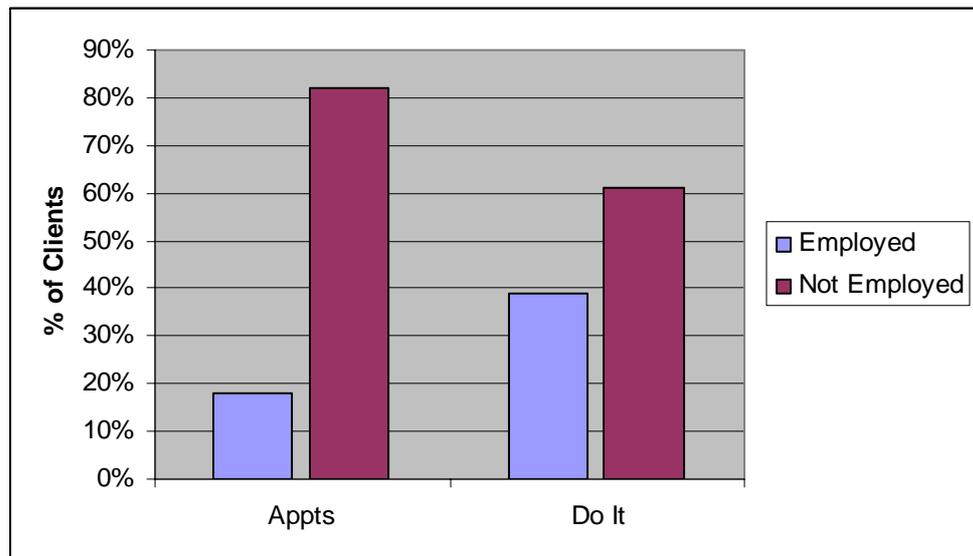
In terms of employment status, the majority of clients are not employed and the largest single group are students (Figs. 11-12), followed by those that describe themselves as employed (27%) then unemployed (22%).

Figure 11: Employment Status of VCTH Clients, N=1200



NOTE: 'non employed' refers to people who are not in employment and who are not seeking employment, such as homemakers.

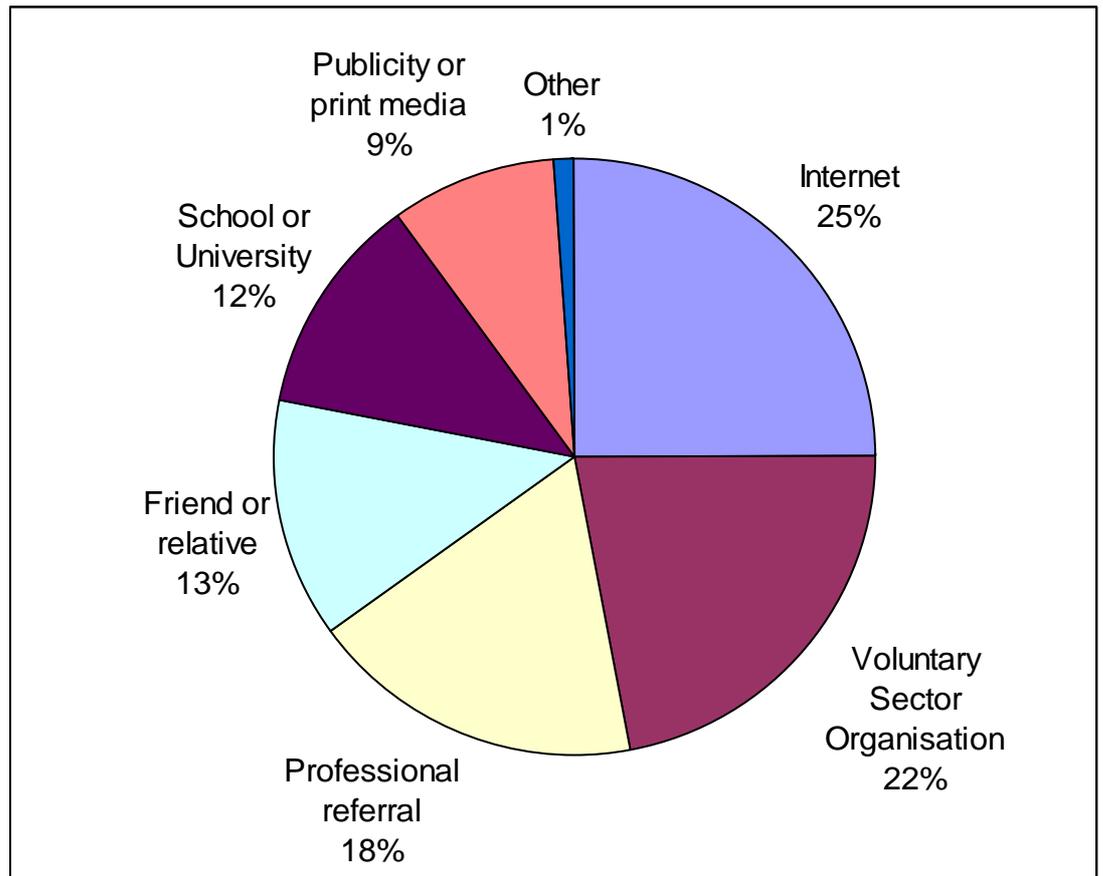
Figure 12: Employment Comparison of VCTH Clients, N=1200



NOTE: Employed includes full time, part time and self employed workers and not employed includes full time students, retired, unemployed, non employed and those unable to work.

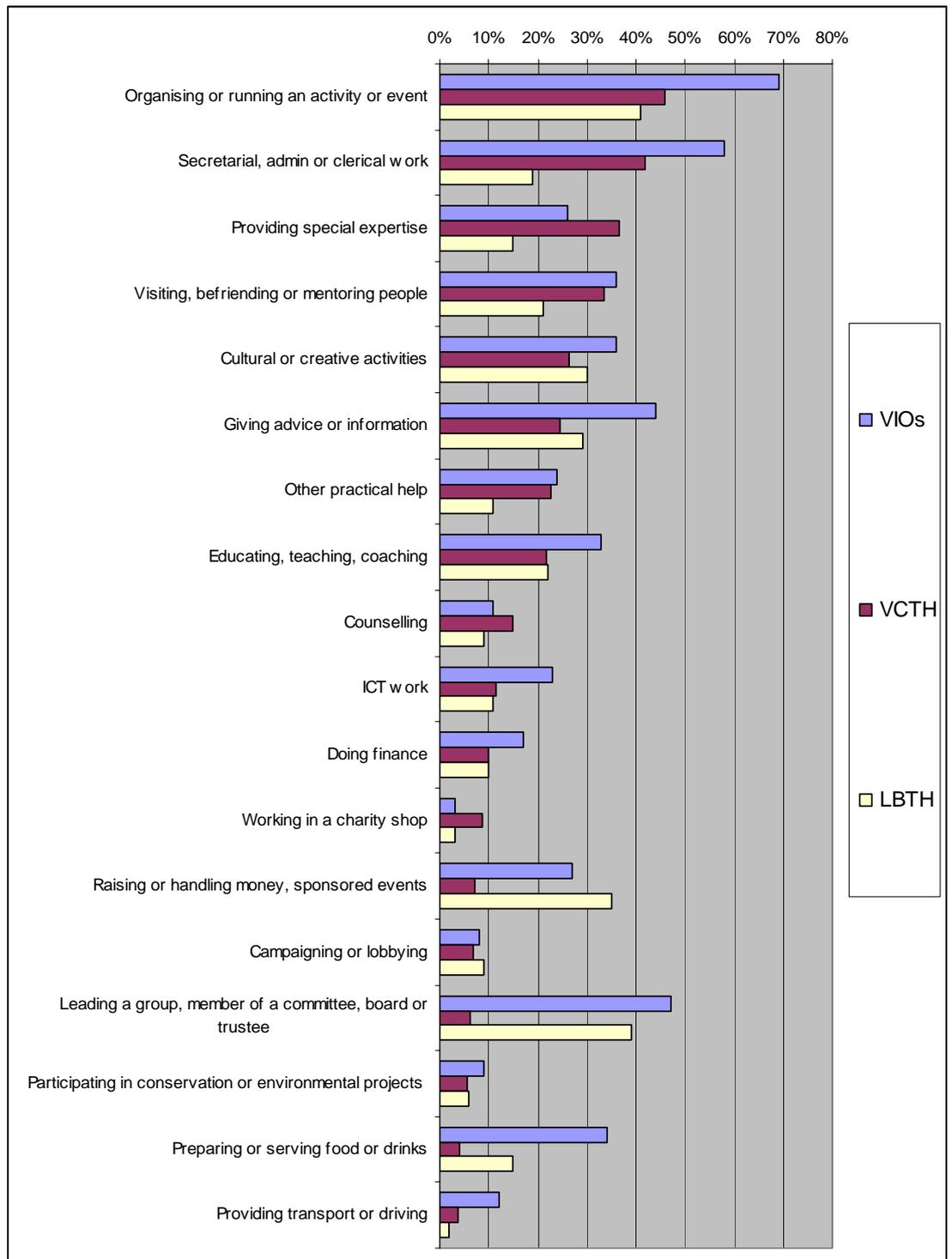
When asked how they heard about the services of VCTH, people attending appointments were commonly referred by an organisation, key worker or agency such as a job centre (Fig 13). The internet, including the Do It website, was also a common response in addition to word-of-mouth. When overall VCTH client data is broken down further, the source of referrals is shown as voluntary sector organisations, professionals and educational institutions.

Figure 13: Source of VCTH Volunteer Clients, N=423



By comparing the types of activities provided by VIOs with activities that volunteers report they are doing along with what VCTH clients report that they would like to do (Fig. 14), areas emerge where VCTH could further grow volunteering efforts. As can be seen in figure 14, volunteering areas of leadership and fundraising in particular have growth potential.

Figure 14: Comparison of Types of Activities



NOTE: VIOs indicate the activities volunteers do in those organisations (N=89), VCTH indicates the type of activities volunteers would like to do (N=1349) and LBTH indicates the types of activities that Residents' Panel respondents have done in the previous year with VIOs (N=205).

### 3.2.1. Conversion Rates to Volunteering

Volunteer Centres have a clear mandate to enable people to begin volunteering with an organisation in need of help. This process can be fraught with stumbling blocks for volunteers. It is often difficult to track the numbers of volunteers who actually start volunteering and even harder to track their progress over time. To understand how many clients began volunteering with VIOs after brokerage (the conversion rate), a phone survey was carried out among VCTH clients. Results revealed that overall, 25% of clients began volunteering. However when the data is broken down by face-to-face appointments and online volunteers, the conversion rates are 38% and 17% respectively. This can be compared with the overall national conversion rates of online volunteers experienced by Do It of 20% (YouthNet, 2007). The picture that emerges suggests that approximately half of all VCTH clients attempt to contact VIOs but fail to begin volunteering, predominantly due to not hearing back from VIOs or extremely long wait times. Another quarter of VCTH clients never attempt to contact VIOs at all due to lack of time or the loss of interest. The remaining quarter successfully begin volunteering.

Once VCTH clients begin volunteering, they appear to be having positive experiences. Most of the phone survey respondents who had started volunteering were given an induction and 12 out of 15 volunteers were volunteering one day per week or more. VCTH volunteers averaged over five hours per week of volunteering.

### 3.2.2. VCTH Services

When asked to rate the services of VCTH, a majority of respondents rated them as adequate, good or excellent in all areas (Fig. 15). When asked an open-ended question to suggest ways that VCTH might improve their services to volunteers, ten people specifically referred to the need for additional follow-up from the Volunteer Centre. This was echoed in qualitative data from the focus groups as well and was by far the most common theme in terms of client needs. Additionally, seven people mentioned that they would like a faster response from their Do It enquiry. The key message coming from VCTH clients is that they would like the Volunteer Centre to make it easier for them to start volunteering.

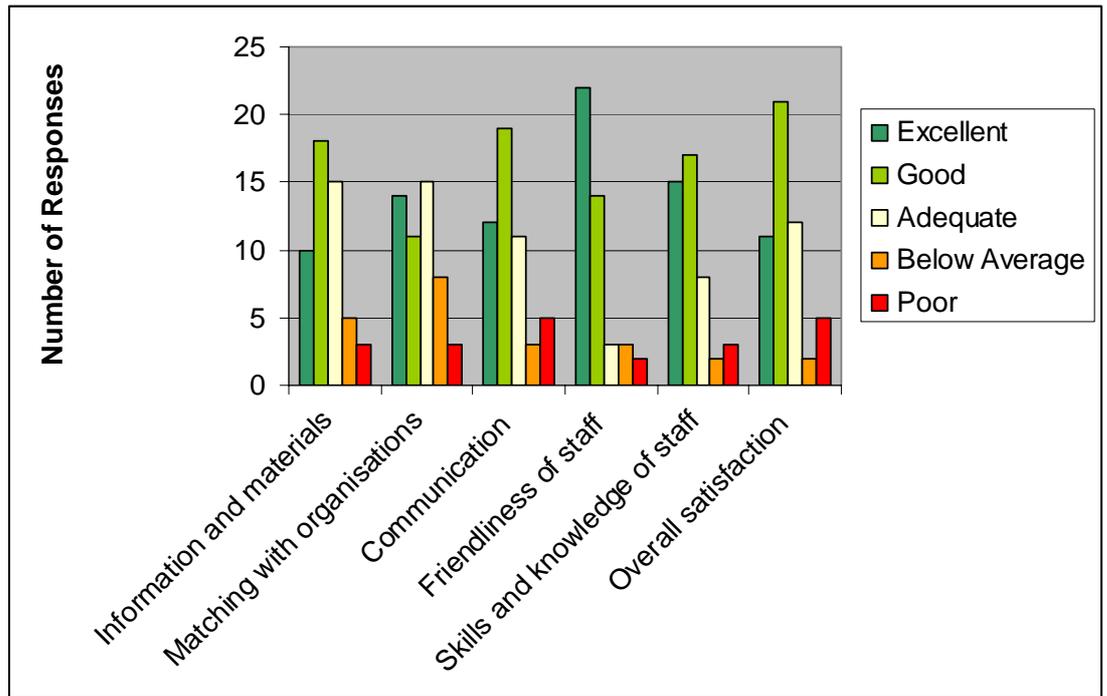
*They [VCTH] give you places and tell you to keep on trying, but when they don't respond I think VATH needs to do something...we keep on phoning but there is no response so we just give up (FG1-3).*

*When I came here, they just put all my details on the database and the particular area I want to volunteer...there is no way in Tower Hamlets I can volunteer in this way...they gave me about seven names and asked me to call them as many times as I can...I started calling and calling and then I gave up...what I think they should do is to look back and to ask us how far we have gone and not just to leave us on our own (FG1-3)*

*I hope we are gonna hear more from you...that this will continue (FG1-3).*

*They just matched me with organisations and then that was it...they should find out how it is going with the organisations: is there problems, would you recommend it to other people, what are you gaining...so not only are we benefiting because we feel like we are being looked after...but also the volunteer centre knows what is happening...for example...the amount of people that have dropped out I don't think VCTH is aware...these volunteers are dropping out and they're not coming back...VCTH should act as a mediator with us and the organisations we are working with (FG3-2).*

Figure 15: VCTH Services Rating, N=45-51.



NOTE: Respondents did not necessarily rate each area, for example if they did not have an appointment, they did not rate the friendliness of staff.

VCTH are clearly providing a specialised volunteering brokerage service to people in the borough who have a variety of additional support needs and who are not necessarily people who have traditionally been seen as volunteers. VCTH are servicing a niche market of volunteers who have particular support needs that may be quite different from volunteers in other areas.

### 3.3. Motivations and Barriers

In regard to what motivates people to volunteer, respondents felt a combination of altruistic, instrumental and obligatory motivations. Altruistic motivations are related to helping others or the community, while instrumental motivations involve gaining something from the exchange. Obligatory motivations mean volunteering is done out of a sense of religious, moral or family duty (Cnaan et al, 1996). Among both the Residents' Panel respondents and VCTH clients, altruistic motivations such as wanting to help people and improve the community were most common. Second to this were instrumental

motivations such as learning new skills, meeting people and the need to fill spare time. A smaller minority of respondents were also motivated by religious obligations or family or cultural traditions.

The three most common reasons stated for volunteering by Residents' Panel respondents were all altruistic in nature (Fig 16). For VCTH clients there was a more even mix of motivations between altruistic, instrumental and to a lesser degree, obligatory (Fig 17).

Figure 16: Volunteer Motivations from Residents' Panel Respondents, N=200

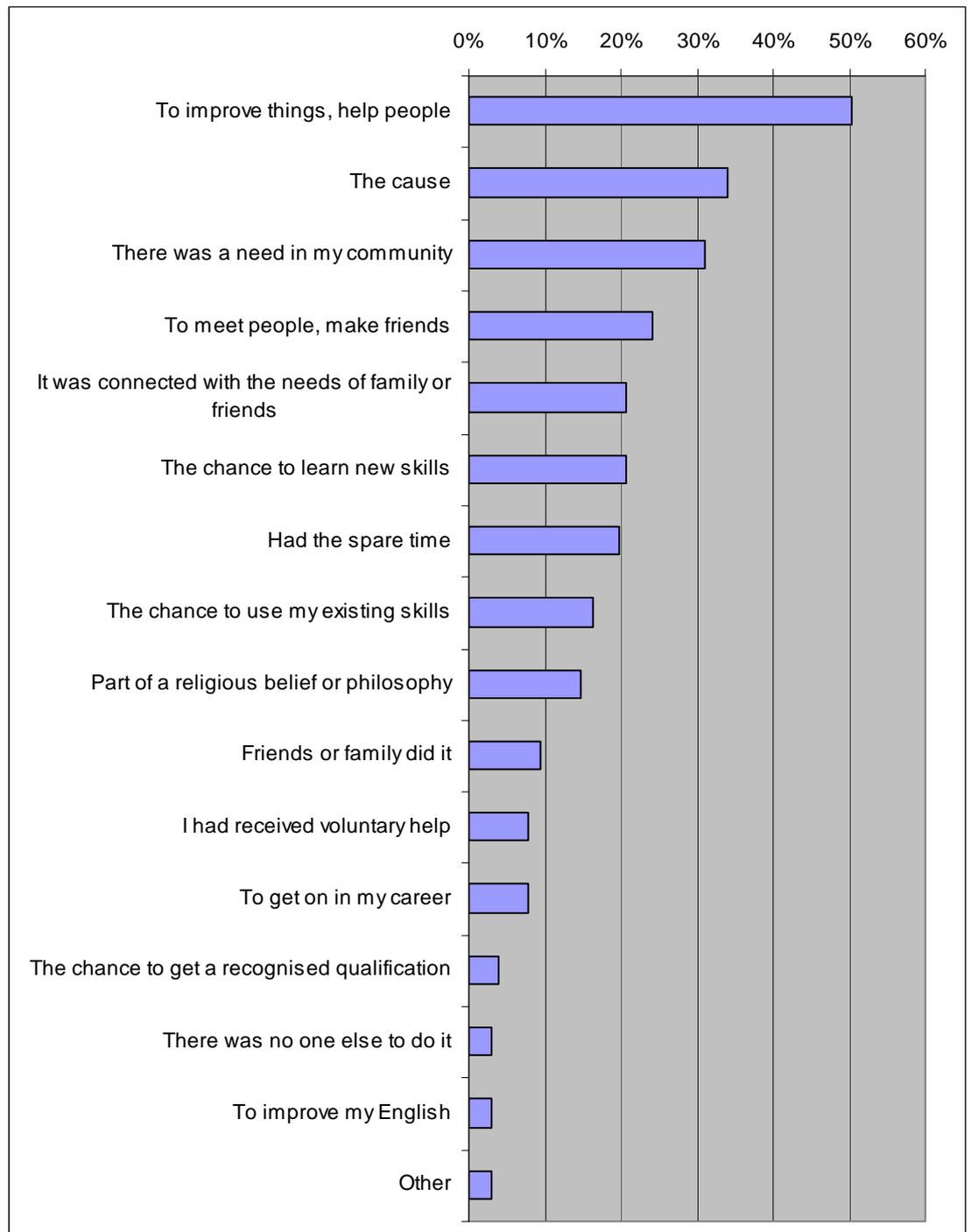
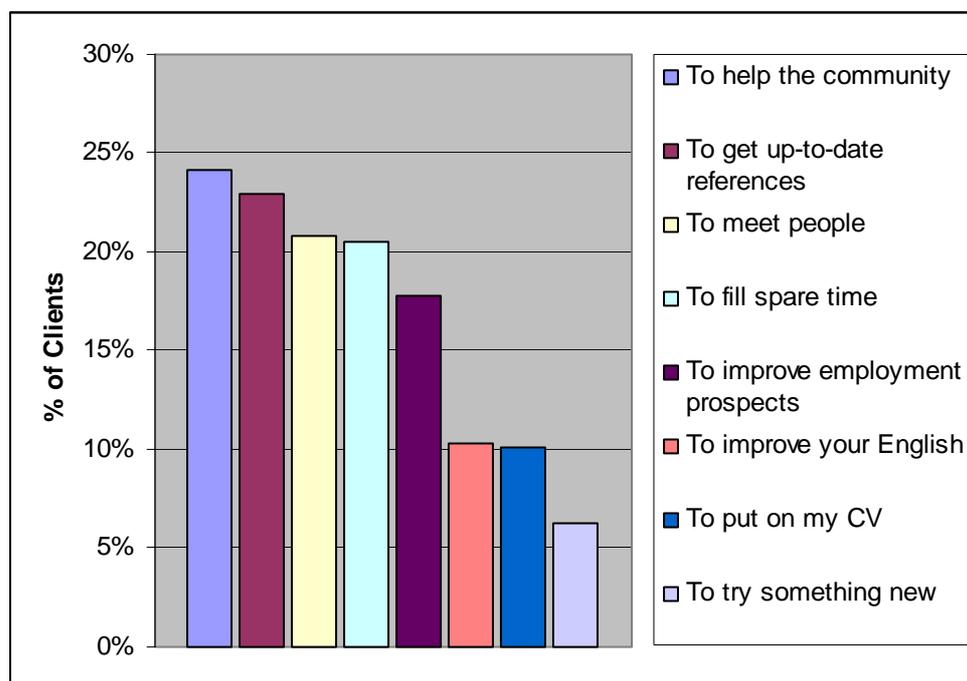


Figure 17: Motivations of VCTH clients, N=1382



The motivations expressed by respondents in both the Residents' Panel and the VCTH data were triangulated by the qualitative data from the focus groups. Tower Hamlets volunteers who participated in the focus groups spoke about current situations in their lives where they find themselves with time to spare – perhaps because they are not working, recently retired or a full-time student – and they want to make a positive contribution to the community. Many people also spoke about the need to gain skills for future work. Additionally, some respondents volunteer out of a need for social contact or personal relationships, religious duty or to build their confidence. There were also people who had used the services of an organisation and who felt the need to give something back to the VIO.

*I started volunteering to fill spare time, it was during summer holidays and I had just done my exams and I didn't have a job as well. But then I liked it and I got to meet people and learned a lot of things I didn't have previous knowledge of (FG1-5).*

*One of the best things about volunteering is all the people you get to meet and the different ages (FG1-5)*

*To give something back...and get out of my own head...it's good for the self-worth (FG3-6).*

*You get that rewarding feeling that you are doing something for the community...and if I am giving my services then I will be pleasing God (FG1-1).*

*Being able to get experience in fields that you would never imagine going into...(FG3-2).*

*I have just retired, so I wanted to use my time in a creative way (FG3-1).*

*What really drove me to volunteering was I was looking for a job and I can't really get a job...because my background is domestic and it is like two years experience...now I'm on to another training to learn how to advise...I'm preparing myself to land into a good job...(FG5-1)*

*I could help give back to the community because I got a lot out of the community...and I just wanted to pay back and use the skills I picked up (FG5-4).*

The barriers to volunteering fall into two categories. The first are barriers experienced by people who have never volunteered that prevent them from ever starting. The second are barriers experienced by people who are ready, willing and able to volunteer but are having problems starting or staying in a volunteer post. The main problem that stops people from ever attempting to volunteer is time and this is due to work commitments or responsibilities at home. This conclusion is consistent with national data from the Citizenship Survey. A smaller number of people have health or personal problems that prevent them from volunteering.

The number one barrier experienced by current volunteers or those currently attempting to volunteer is the lack of or slow response from VIOs to volunteer enquiries. In addition to this key barrier, other factors at play include an unwelcoming organisational environment, the lack of flexibility of VIOs, extensive training requirements, lack of clarity as to roles, poor volunteer management skills, lack of support for volunteers, high levels of competition for volunteer posts, low numbers of 'desirable' volunteer posts and low self-esteem among volunteers. These factors, if present, are likely to cause volunteers to leave or limit the extent of volunteering within a VIO.

*I call them but everywhere I have applied they say "we'll let you know"...I have a problem – I'm no good at reading, that kind of thing....I don't feel comfortable so I just give up (FG1-4).*

*They aren't as receptive to people coming along as they should be...if someone is a little tentative or nervous...they should look seriously (FG1-6).*

*You just think you're incapable...I have some friends who have studied at Eton and they find it very easy to find things...so what is it about me, what have I missed out on? You just think that "he's more educated than I am"...or is it something else (FG1-7)?*

*Maybe I don't have the confidence when I am talking on the phone and maybe they think this is not the right person (FG1-4).*

*Both my volunteering has had to be in fixed hours...they don't realise that you are a volunteer and you have other commitments too...they shouldn't make you feel bad, I already feel bad as it is but when the person gives you that feeling it's not good (FG3-2).*

*The negative vibes...that really puts me off when I feel that I'm not being appreciated for what I'm doing, that makes me want to leave a place...I am volunteering and giving up my time (FG3-5).*

*You have to mould yourself around them and it should be the other way around (FG3-2).*

*I started this process over a year ago...I got in touch with a few organisations and one of them never came through which was the housing one I wanted to do but they never got back to me...what I really wanted to do was to put my foot into housing...I haven't achieved the goal I wanted to achieve (FG5-4).*

*At a time when the government goes on about as Muslims, to be integrated in the community...here's me offering my service and no one is giving me the opportunity...to be an asset to my community and I'm running around begging...but no one is getting back to me (FG1-7)*

Among those who had never done formal volunteering, 41% indicated that they would like to volunteer in the future and 19% said they had never thought about volunteering. Although 61% of respondents stated that nothing would make it easier for them to volunteer, 11% said that being asked directly would help and another 10% said that greater awareness of the range of activities available would help. Reasons that stopped people volunteering were mainly the lack of time (49%) or poor health (18%).

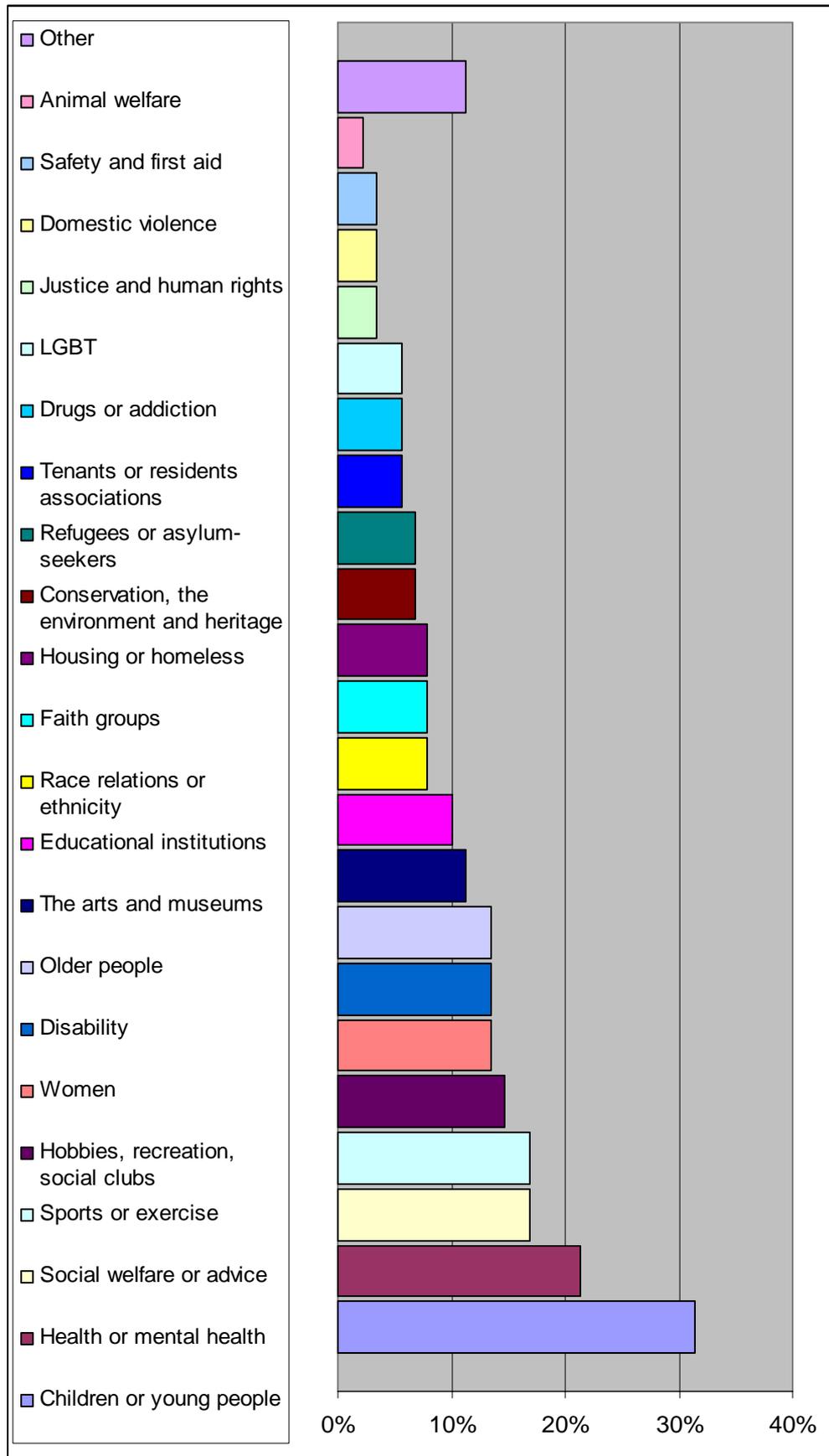
VCTH clients expressed frustration with the length of time they are waiting to hear back from VIOs after registering their interest, if they hear back at all. This is seen as a major barrier for people, preventing a higher conversion rate to volunteering. Additional data from focus groups confirm that one of the biggest barriers felt by volunteers is lack of communication from VIOs when volunteers initially contact them to enquire about volunteering. Added to this is the length of time it often takes for volunteers to complete any necessary paperwork, training or security checks.

#### 3.4. Volunteer-involving Organisations

In addition to the Volunteer Centre and the volunteers themselves, the third piece of the puzzle of the volunteering maze is the organisations that involve and support volunteers. VIOs in Tower Hamlets are as varied as the voluntary sector itself and there are volunteering activities happening at all levels, from the grassroots volunteer-led and run organisations to large international NGOs to medium-sized service providers. Because of the vast array of VIOs in the borough, it is difficult to make generalisations about their dynamics, needs, strengths and areas for growth. In both the quantitative and qualitative field research, efforts were made to capture the diversity of VIOs in Tower Hamlets (Fig. 18) and to reach beyond VCTH clients and into the public sector and groups who have not yet registered with VCTH. This was done in order to better understand the needs of VIOs, as generally only a minority of VIOs make use of the resources and services of Volunteer Centres, as there are more than 1,000 VIOs in the borough.

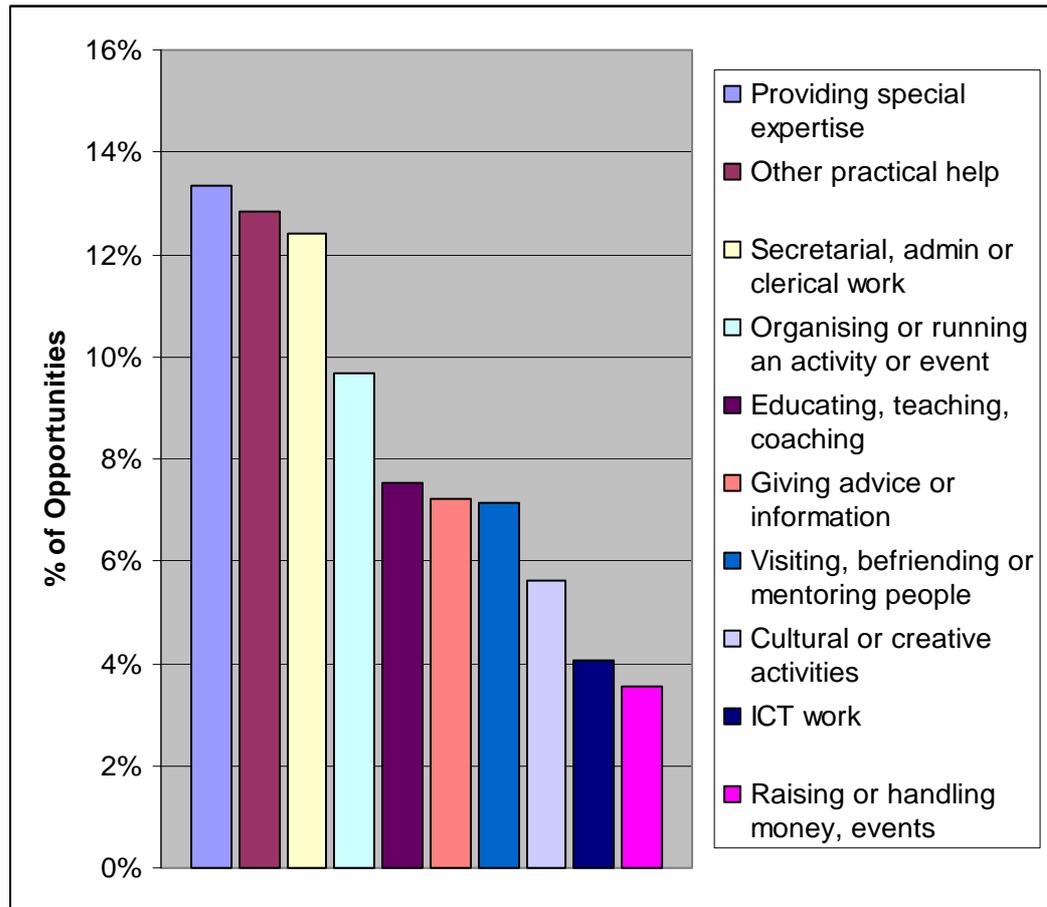
VCTH currently have 265 registered VIOs in Tower Hamlets. In order to register with VCTH, VIOs must be non-profit-making, operating and providing volunteer activities in Tower Hamlets (or be pan-London or national organisations seeking volunteers from Tower Hamlets), provide insurance for volunteers and have a health and safety policy.

Figure 18: Types of VIOs respondents, N=89



Organisations provide a wide variety of volunteering activities (Fig. 19), with the most frequent being providing special expertise such as languages, legal help or technical expertise in information and computer technology. Practical help such as DIY and administrative duties were also very popular.

Figure 19: VCTH Registered VIO Opportunities, N=982



Staffing and budget levels in VIOs generally follow the pattern in the voluntary sector as a whole, with a mix of sizes of organisations, including many with no staff at all and a large concentration of small organisations with less than five staff (Figs. 20-21). Approximately half (46%) of VIOs do not have a central volunteer coordinator or manager responsible for recruiting and managing volunteers. Within these groups, volunteer management responsibilities would seem to be spread out between programme staff, administrators, senior staff, trustees and other volunteers (Fig. 22).

Figure 20: Staffing Levels of VIOs, N=88

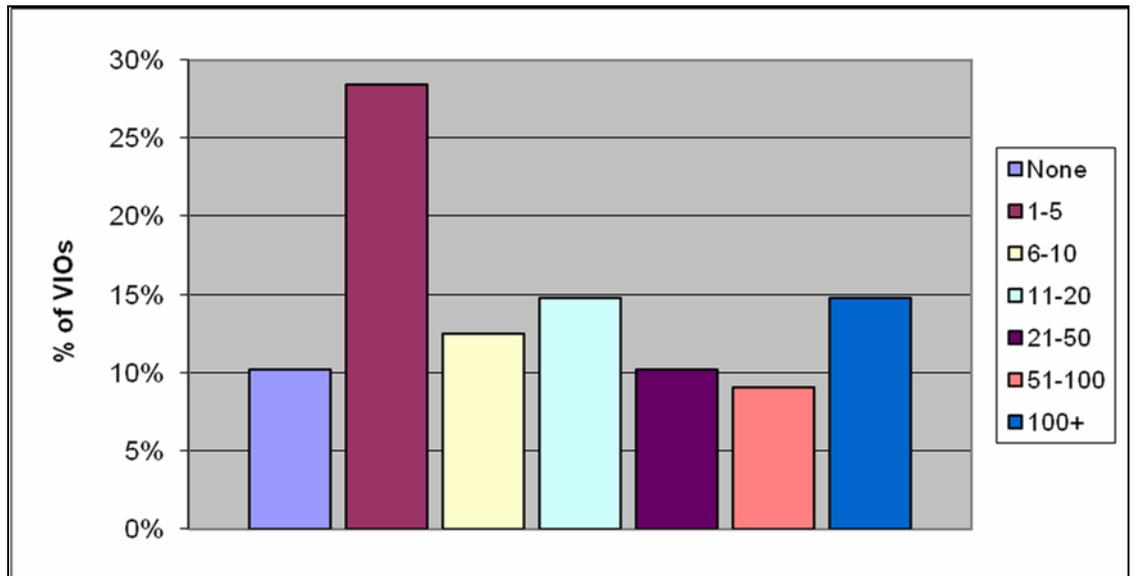


Figure 21: Budget Size of VIOs, N=80

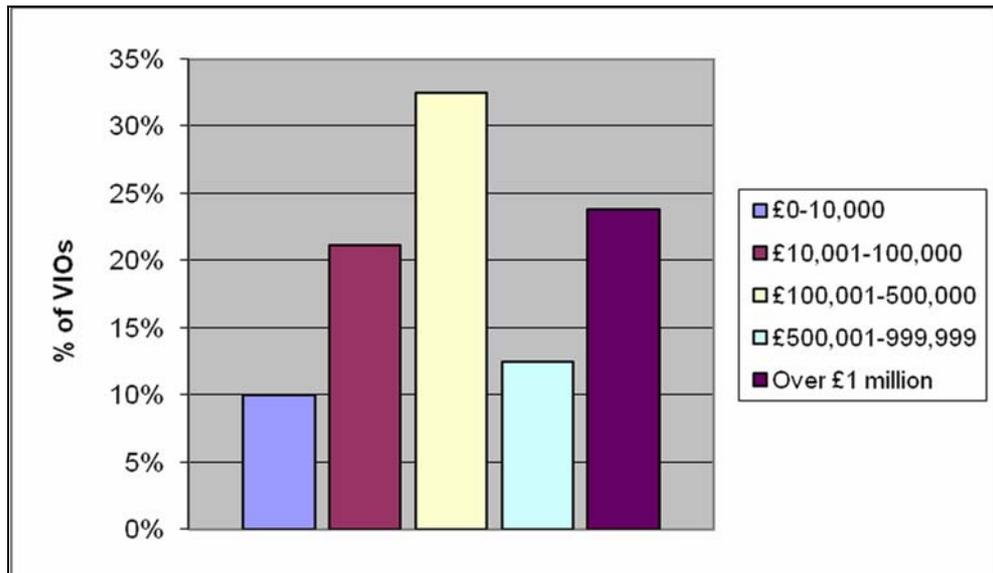
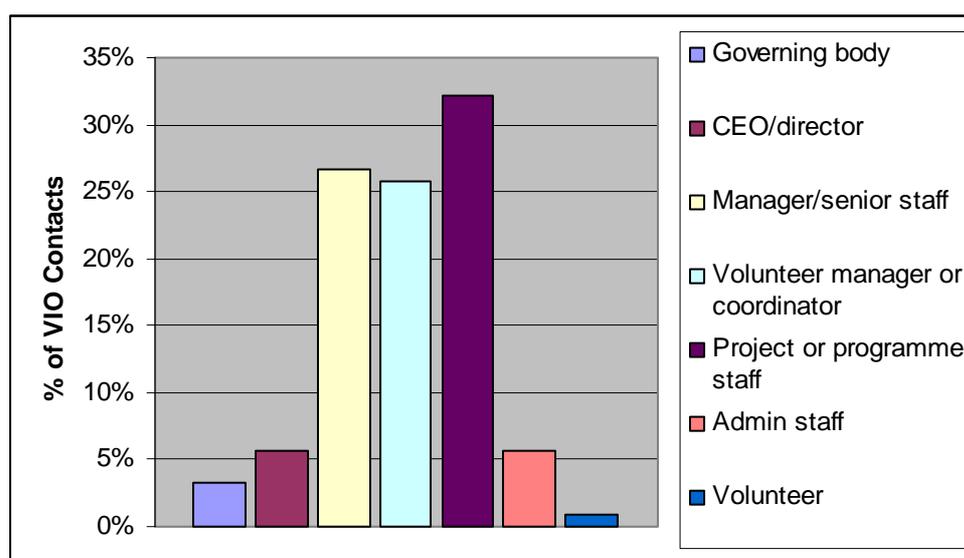


Figure 22: VCTH Registered Organisational Contact Job Title, N=214



NOTE: The source of this data is from VBase.

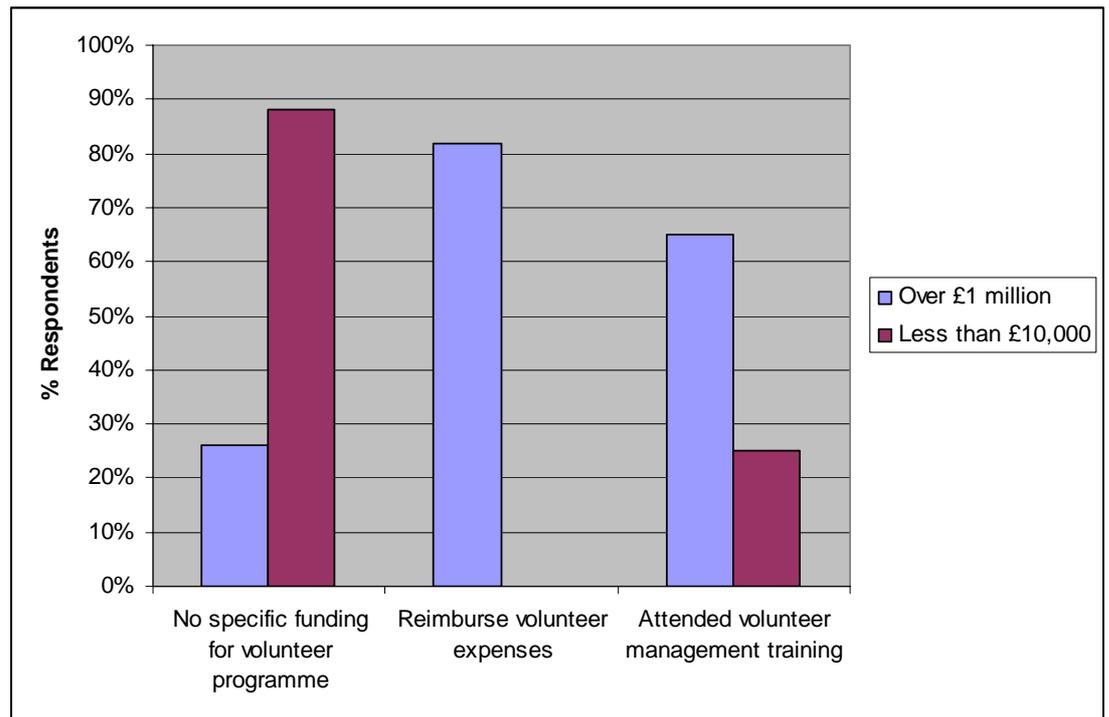
VIOs use a range of recruitment methods to spark volunteer interest with 88% using word-of-mouth and more than half (53%) tapping into VCTH recruitment services. Almost half of all respondents (49%) use leaflets and posters to recruit volunteers.

### 3.4.1. Volunteer Policies

Respondents were asked about the extent of policies and procedures they have in place related to volunteers. More than three-quarters of all VIO respondents have policies and procedures in place that reflect volunteering best practice standards: 76% have a volunteer policy; 92% meet with volunteers before they start; 78% provide an induction for new volunteers; 88% offer supervision to volunteers and 81% provide training to volunteers. Additionally, 76% reimburse volunteer expenses such as travel and lunch. These numbers increase across the board when looking only at VIOs registered with VCTH by 1-8%.

Well resourced groups are more able to support and manage volunteers than VIOs with few resources. This can be particularly evident when looking at the example of reimbursing volunteer expenses and staff training in volunteer management (Fig. 23).

Figure 23: Comparison of VIOs According to Budget, N=71-86



#### 3.4.2. Retention

Retention levels among VIOs are extremely difficult to gauge as many organisations do not fully monitor information about their volunteers such as start and end dates. It also presents a problem because there are different time periods of activity among volunteers, with some doing one-off or episodic volunteering for example. This research has attempted to provide a snapshot of volunteering levels over the course of one year for VIOs. In this time period, the 67 respondent VIOs worked with a total of 11,814 volunteers. The median (middle point in a range of data) number of volunteers among respondents was 23. Of the total number of volunteers, 9% were inactive over the course of the year, 11% were 'new start' volunteers and a further 5% stopped volunteering. It would be fair to estimate from these numbers that there is an overall small net gain of volunteers among respondent VIOs over a year. VIO focus group respondents commented on a possible correlation between the length of training required of volunteers and volunteer commitment. There may be lower retention among volunteer posts with high training requirements but these volunteers may make longer commitments. Posts with lower skill or training needs may have lower levels of long term commitment.

#### 3.4.3. VIO Barriers

VIOs are clearly operating in a changing and challenging environment where they are facing competition for scarce resources. Despite this operating environment, VIOs are still able to deliver an amazing array of services to the community. In terms of volunteering and volunteer

management, VIOs face barriers in areas related to resources, training and development, organisational culture and the clash of needs between volunteers and organisations. The scarcity of resources is interrelated with the lack of appropriate training and skills development related to volunteer management. Low levels of resources in VIOs often means there are not enough staff and most staff are juggling multiple roles, such as being the receptionist, volunteer coordinator and office manager in one post. This phenomenon is bound to have an effect on the quality of volunteer recruitment and management. There does not seem to be a large take-up of training related specifically to volunteer management and this combined with a lack of time and resources among VIO staff create an under-skilled sub-sector of volunteer managers who are often struggling to meet the demands of an under-resourced organisation.

*What we're doing is not seen as innovative...and that's quite difficult to sell to funders because they want you to do something new but the people we work with have very little mobility...all they want is to see someone to chat with...(FG2-4)*

*Sometimes you think there should be more paid jobs and you are filling gaps...there is a difference between what's appropriate for volunteers and what's appropriate for paid staff...it's a matter of finances...maybe it's just impossible to get the funds...(FG3-1).*

*They scrutinise you so much...I find it quite stressful at times...you always have to find loopholes and you can actually link it to what they are offering rather than what you really are aiming for...you have to go by what they set out...we are working with a vulnerable group, a socially excluded group and there's not much out there...everything is aimed at the 2012 Olympics and tourism...it's really hard to take our organisation and our aim where we want (FG2-2).*

*There are projects which do not have any budget at all for volunteers but nevertheless we will need volunteers to move things forward...and that takes up a lot of financial resources (FG2-1).*

*Not having funds to provide lunch is a barrier (FG2-2)*

*The main issue is how you record costs...how we can budget for these things...it can be difficult to come up with systems to reimburse volunteers for expenses (FG4-1)*

*The reality of it is it costs us £19,000 to train a number of people...how do you keep them involved, the ones who just come along and do the course and don't come back again (FG4-9)*

Organisational culture also has an impact on volunteering. The leadership and staff of VIOs can sometimes be resistant to volunteers and volunteering within the organisation. The organisational culture needs to be one that values volunteering and volunteers if they want to fully capitalise on the positive impacts that volunteering can bring.

There is a constant tension between the needs of individual volunteers and the needs of organisations. Volunteers are motivated by the types of needs already described such as skill building, social needs or a sense of obligation, while organisations have specific goals, tasks and activities that are required in order to meet the day-to-day operational needs of the institution. VIOs are not well-equipped to fully analyse the cost-benefit ratio of volunteering for their organisations and

volunteering clearly has costs associated with it that have the potential to result in a net-loss for organisations. Volunteers may not always be interested in the mundane tasks required by organisations in order to survive, yet these tasks tend to make up the bulk of activities needed by organisations. Unless volunteers and VIOs are able to share an overall vision and agree goals that are mutually beneficial, there will always be this tension present.

*I have an issue around how our staff interact and work with volunteers...that has caused some problems...an attitude...certain people who see volunteers as there to be used...I've got an internal education thing I need to do...I'm working with volunteers to try to get them on board and then I send them off with a supervisor...who doesn't treat them how I would like them to be treated (FG4-6)*

*Our main problem is that some apply and the process before they can start is quite long because they have to have a CRB...they have to apply, do an interview, get references and then we have to wait for their CRB to come through...we have waited 3-4 months...we get quite a number falling out there (FG2-5)*

*It takes so long...you lose people because they want to volunteer now, not in 3-4 months (FG2-3).*

*We still have under-representation of certain ethnic groups...Somali and Bengali communities...we hardly have any volunteers from this community...we have quite a lot of members from this group...although they have access to the services, they use the services less and less...we don't have any sort of budget for translating...we find it hard to reach out to this group (FG2-5)*

*The type of hours it's open: Monday to Friday, not on the weekends, it restricts people's ability to volunteer (FG2-2)*

*There is a lack of reliability...people start and then they don't show up on time, they don't cancel or they cancel on very short notice and it's just a complete waste of time and energy and it's very disheartening...taking places on training that other people could have...(FG2-3)*

*We are looking to get accreditation in our volunteering and there isn't one place where you can go and look up what accreditation there is available out there for volunteers (FG4-5)*

*You are turning people away who want to work in some areas (FG4-8)*

*It becomes hard to keep volunteers interested in what they are there for...(FG4-1)*

*You get 40 hours training for free...I have met career minded people who come along and take the training...and then they leave. It perhaps cost £1000 for the training...and they wander off...each year they train another 20-50...we still have only 25 who have stayed long term (FG1-6).*

Another issue for VIOs has to do with the lack of reliability and commitment among some volunteers as well as keeping the interest of volunteers throughout the life of a project. Lastly, there is the problem of volunteer 'free riders', or those volunteers who take advantage of training or development available (which is often expensive and time consuming for VIOs) only to leave the organisation without giving anything back in terms of their contribution of time and energy. This can use up valuable resources within VIOs and drastically limit organisational outputs.

#### 3.4.4. VCTH Services

Among all e-survey respondents, 23% say they are not registered with VCTH but another 20% are not sure whether or not they are registered. More than one third of respondents (36%) say that they have been sent volunteers from VCTH and another 23% of VIOs are not sure if they have ever been sent volunteers from VCTH. In addition to the services of VCTH, VIOs are also using brokerage and recruitment services from other Volunteer Centres, East London Business Alliance, universities and other organisations.

Among those organisations who describe themselves as being registered with VCTH, 61% say they have been sent volunteers from VCTH but a further 18% are not sure if they have had VCTH volunteers in their organisation. Among these respondents, 40% felt that they had not been sent enough volunteers from VCTH while 36% felt that they had been sent the right amount of volunteers from VCTH. Most of these (69%) feel that their volunteers have all the skills their organisation requires and 62% felt that staff needed more training in volunteer management. Respondents were split on the quality of the volunteers they were sent, with 32% saying that the volunteers were not exactly right for their organisation and 29% saying that the volunteers were able to meet their organisational needs.

More than half (57%) of VCTH clients have participated in some kind of volunteer management training and 34% say they have attended a VCTH training workshop. VIOs were asked to rate their training preferences by volunteer management topic (Table 5), information which will inform future VCTH training agendas. A majority of clients (68%) have received volunteer management advice from VCTH while 18% of clients did not know that this service was available.

Table 5: Training Preferences of VIOs, N=71

Training Topic	Percentage Response
Dealing with difficult situations with volunteers	49.3%
Supervising and supporting volunteers	46.5%
Volunteer retention	45.1%
Legal advice about volunteers	43.7%
Volunteer recruitment	42.3%
Funding advice for volunteer programmes	39.4%
Involving older volunteers	36.6%
Advertising your volunteer opportunities	35.2%
Interviewing and selecting volunteers	33.8%
Working effectively with teams and groups	32.4%
Involving young people as volunteers	31.0%
Involving volunteers as fundraisers	31.0%
Involving volunteers with specialist skills	31.0%
Recruiting management committee members and trustees	29.6%
Conducting health and safety risk assessments for volunteers	28.2%

Involving volunteers as mentors and befrienders	26.8%
Liability and insurance for volunteers	26.8%
Inducting and training volunteers	26.8%
Involving volunteers with additional support needs	26.8%
Volunteer expenses	23.9%
Criminal records bureau disclosures for volunteers	23.9%
Writing a volunteer policy	22.5%
Involving refugees and asylum-seekers as volunteers	19.7%
Volunteer agreements	18.3%
Starting to work with volunteers	15.5%
Other	2.8%

Volunteer managers were asked in the e-survey to rate the services they received from VCTH. Of the 14 respondents who had attended VCTH training, half rated it as 'excellent' and six rated it as 'good'. Respondents also agreed that the training had improved their volunteer management skills as well as the organisation's volunteer programme overall. Among the 33 VIOs who had received advice from VCTH, 32 described it as very helpful or somewhat helpful.

Organisations were also asked about which descriptions they associate with VCTH. The most frequent adjectives associated with VCTH were 'friendly' (59%), 'helpful' (59%) and 'professional' (46%). A minority of respondents (13%) described VCTH as 'out of touch with the practical needs of organisations'.

*Apart from the training which I think is excellent, the training also gives us a networking opportunity...to meet other people and find out what their issues are...very often I just have an issue and I think this is a volunteer issue I don't know the answer to this...the first person I think of is actually somebody from Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets, I'll either send an e-mail or make a phone call and to date I've done that so many times and I've always got some reply so it gives you a certain degree of confidence that...you are following good practice, that you've got somebody to get advice from (FG4-6)*

*What I'm keen on is the evaluation and monitoring side of things...what happens once the volunteer is referred on to us?...getting an idea of how many volunteers come through the volunteer centre and how many don't get through to us...it might be worth having some kind of tracking system in place...and why don't they come through to us (FG4-5)*

*I work across a number of different boroughs...and I deal with a wide range of volunteer centres...Tower Hamlets is one of the best that I deal with in terms of what I get from them and support...(FG4-3)*

*It would also be useful to have an hour before or after [the training] to talk about volunteering issues in the borough...it could be done as an open forum or through an agenda...the latest issues going on with the volunteer-involving organisations within the borough...that you wouldn't normally get having a training session...it would be more useful to have an open session...get to hear experiences or share good practice (FG4-5)*

### 3.5. Socio-economic Impact

Quantifying the socio-economic impact of volunteering is not a straightforward task, as there are few areas of agreement as to what is meant by impact and outcomes of such a complex dynamic. However,

the Institute for Volunteering Research created a framework (IVR, 2004) that is quite useful as a guide. For the purposes of this research, a matrix correlating impact on volunteers, VIOs and the community is matched with areas of impact in the categories of physical capital, human capital, economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. The research has produced a wealth of qualitative data which is matched with the IVR framework to get a thorough picture of the impact of volunteering in each area. For the most part, results from this research quantify areas of physical capital, human capital and cultural capital that are impacted by volunteering. Economic and social capital impacts were less obvious within the data.

Table 6: Matrix for Identifying Volunteering Impact

	Physical Capital	Human Capital	Economic Capital	Social Capital	Cultural Capital
Volunteers	Tangible benefits accrued such as training courses, social events, certificates.	Personal development such as confidence, skills and employability.	Individual costs of volunteering and individual value	Trust, higher rates of civic participation.	Appreciation and understanding of other cultures.
VIOs	Outputs such as number of people advice given to, meals served, etc.	Volunteer impact on staff development and increased diversity.	Value of volunteering less the costs.	Increased VIO reputation, recruitment and retention of staff and volunteers.	Services more reflective of community served.
Community	Enhanced quantity and quality of services.	Better skilled citizens, happier community.	Value for money in public services.	Increased trust, networking and participation in community.	Cultural appreciation, tolerance for diversity.

Source: IVR, Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit, 2004.

### 3.5.1. Volunteers

*When I help others I help myself (FG3-4)*

Volunteers were asked about the positive impact that volunteering in Tower Hamlets has had on their lives and any specific gains they have experienced. Responses were mainly in the areas of physical capital, human capital or cultural capital and were related to training, skills or knowledge gained or impacts that have enriched their lives in a number of ways.

Key life enriching impacts of volunteering:

- Builds confidence and self-esteem
- Meeting people and making friends
- Empowers people in terms of their rights and self awareness
- Satisfaction in seeing results, problem-solving or seeing positive change in others
- Gaining perspective on life, putting problems in perspective

Key skills gained through volunteering:

- Communication, listening, speaking to people
- Social or people skills
- Language skills
- Management skills
- Teaching
- Fundraising skills
- Organisational and time-keeping
- Leadership skills

Key impacts related to learning:

- Specific issues related to the organisation such as learning about nutrition or animal welfare
- Cultural awareness, tolerance for diversity, appreciation of others, learning to be non-judgemental

Key impacts related to volunteer training acquired:

- Mediation and conflict resolution
- Advising people

*You gain more experience of different people that you probably wouldn't meet...doing volunteering I've met homeless people, people with problems, people who are confident and happy, people in deep trouble and then so many different immigrants who speak different languages and have quite a different culture and although you are supposed to be doing something else, you get to know more about them and their lives and you get very respectful of people, what they've gone through and what they're taking on, especially people who haven't got a job and who have a family to support...you get more of an appreciation of different people and it's our people where we live...you feel you are getting to know them and they you (FG5-3).*

*Volunteering has taught me a lot of leadership skills...we don't get taught that at school or college (FG1-1).*

*...it helped me to balance my time table...helped me to be organised and prepared...I can talk to anybody now...it made me more confident (FG3-2).*

*You come across people from all backgrounds, ages, professions and you are able to interact with all of them, you appreciate the difference and work together in harmony...you learn to become non-judgemental...it's been a wonderful experience (FG3-2).*

*I'm not afraid to do anything by myself anymore...my views as well...you understand everyone else's views...it's really easy to initiate a conversation with people...but before volunteering I wouldn't have the guts to speak to these people...it's great (FG3-7).*

*I'm more aware of my rights than I used to be...I have done this for so long now, I know that there are solutions that exist, that everything has a procedure and you can actually do things...I will take an active step to do something about something that I am not happy about (FG3-5).*

*It puts life in perspective...you think you have problems...you realise that you are not the only one, that everyone is in the same boat and somehow the discrepancy is not so large and your problems don't seem so big (FG3-4).*

*I'm studying a course to become a writer...volunteering in the theatre has given me a look at all the different aspects (FG5-2).*

*I started volunteering at a very young age...my communication skills have gotten better and better...people take me seriously even though I am young which is a huge achievement (FG1-1).*

*I have seen changes in myself...my knowledge actually...I know accounting...learning to advise and actually doing it...I feel confident, I feel that I'm in the intelligent bracket...and I can brag about it because I haven't done this before (FG5-1).*

*I used to waste my time, and I was tired all the time at work. But volunteering has made me more enthusiastic about my job. I take the best experiences from the volunteer site with me to the office (FG5-5).*

### 3.5.2. Volunteer-Involving Organisations

Volunteer managers and other paid staff were asked to comment about the impact of volunteering on their individual organisations. The key areas of impact were in expanding the scope, range and diversity of services able to be offered to clients; expanding the diversity and experience of the paid staff; providing a cost effective mechanism for delivering services and other work and in taking the pressure and burden off staff in terms of workload.

Volunteer managers specifically mentioned increasing the diversity and services of VIOs by expanding the workforce to include volunteers representing the diversity of Tower Hamlets communities. Volunteers bring sets of knowledge, skills, experiences and cultures that complement and add value to the paid workforce. This can vastly increase the range of services that an organisation can offer and increase its effectiveness. Volunteers within VIOs can also take on activities that free up paid staff and that enable them to focus on other

duties. Volunteers can add value to organisations in a number of ways, by making them more cost effective and by increasing the scope, quantity, diversity and frequency of services and activities provided to users.

*The volunteers can bring more diversity because we only have seven members of staff and there are only a set number of language skills and backgrounds (FG2-2)*

*Our client base is very diverse so we seek out diversity [among volunteers]...volunteers have a very positive impact on the members...members feel more included...they share the responsibility and the members know this person is there on a voluntary basis...they feel very included (FG2-3)*

*We can give more in-depth advice with volunteers...we have an advice line completely staffed by volunteers (FG2-4)*

*Volunteers can work with clients with lower support needs and staff can deal with people with higher support needs and use their experience (FG2-5)*

*Last year we saved the organisation £70,000 (FG1-3).*

*Volunteers who are properly trained can take the pressure off the professionals...to get on with what they want to do (FG1-6).*

*Social inclusion: many of our volunteers lack qualifications...we impact on social inclusion, they get involved in the community and are getting experience and yes many people do expect a job at the end of it but at least we can enable people with the skills to find work (FG2-5)*

*Translating minutes into Bengali...because the management committee have their own translated copy, it saves so much time...I'm really thankful that we have volunteers to do that (FG2-1).*

*It wouldn't happen without the contribution of volunteers...it opens up possibilities to them...the amount of people who have wanted to change careers after that week...the percentage of volunteers who then go on to become employees is quite high as well so that's another bonus (FG4-2)*

It may be worth reiterating at this point that it is possible for volunteering to have a negative impact on VIOs if the costs associated with volunteering outweigh the outputs and outcomes generated by volunteers and volunteering. Organisations should consider the best ways to involve volunteers in their work and ensure that organisational culture, structures and resources are in place to fully capitalise on the benefits that volunteering can bring.

### 3.5.3. Community

According to respondents, the impact on the community as a result of their work is to directly improve people's quality of life by solving problems, teaching skills, empowering people and bringing the community together. Additionally, there is evidence that volunteering plays a role in improving the quantity and quality of public services, increases social capital and fosters an environment of cultural appreciation and tolerance for diversity. Increases in social capital are gained through opportunities for participation, networking and building trust within the community.

Enhanced quality of life for residents:

- Problem solving, direct assistance
- Settling disputes
- Listening to people
- Access to benefits
- Building confidence
- Improved skills in reading, nutrition
- Improved self-worth
- Learning how things work
- Empowering people: awareness of rights, ability to solve their own problems
- Greater tolerance and appreciation of diversity

*We have actually improved the quality of life for a lot of people...for the benefits that they get on which their livelihood depends (FG3-5)*

*I am doing volunteer reading with children and they are more confident and the feedback I get from the teachers is that they would never even speak up in class...now they do (FG3-2)*

*My organisation works with disabled people...by training our volunteers...we start to break down that barrier a bit...to let them know that disabled people are no different than anyone else...the impact on our volunteers is that they go away...not as prejudiced toward disabled people as they were when they started (FG4-4).*

*It provides them with an opportunity to come together in an environment where they feel comfortable to talk and also meet new people and have conversations...it's a nice atmosphere...it benefits the people who I work with (FG3-2).*

*I have been in drug addiction and I don't hide it...but they don't judge me...we learn from each other...I am this Black French man who came in and turned their life around...it's great (FG3-6).*

*Helping empower people...once you empower people you help people to solve their own problems...and their life becomes better...when you do see a smile on someone's face, that is the satisfaction (FG5-4).*

*...maybe they have just come from a remote part of Somalia or Bangladesh...this lady comes in...the Centre, gets to know people, tries to interact with them, gets to know all the intricacies of living here...they are mingling with people and knowing them, learning (FG5-5).*

*We are working with people in conflict with each other...if you've got two neighbours who are arguing, the repercussions of that can effect the whole estate...when it does work, it's whole families that are feeling the benefit (FG4-3)*

*I'm helping them...it's bearing fruit, you solve their problems...they pay out the debts, they have gone into a different avenue of life...debt free and problem free (FG5-1).*

## 4. Conclusion

### 4.1. Summary

This research has clearly shown that volunteering in Tower Hamlets has an important place within the vibrant and diverse communities and neighbourhoods and the voluntary sector. Volunteering is a lifeline to those receiving services, VIOs and for the volunteers themselves who gain so much. Volunteering is not only important to the people who benefit from it but it is also a key element to improving public services, building social inclusion, enabling greater citizenship and fostering better communities that are more tolerant – factors that should be very interesting to local government and the voluntary sector in Tower Hamlets. Lastly, it is critical that there be an open dialogue regarding volunteering costs and benefits to organisations and to minimise the number of VIOs experiencing a net loss in relation to volunteering. Organisations should be equipped to make an informed decision as to whether or not volunteering is appropriate for them. The full costs of volunteering need to be made visible along with the clear gains of volunteering so that both volunteers and VIOs can be fully supported to accomplish their goals.

Volunteering trends and issues will probably continue to shift and change but what is clear from this project is the need to support volunteering infrastructure, VIOs and volunteers so that the borough can fully access the benefits that volunteering has to offer our communities, residents and organisations. Tower Hamlets is a place that directly challenges the stereotypes about volunteers; it is a borough full of people volunteering from every walk of life, from many cultures and backgrounds. It is a place where the boundaries blur between service users, volunteers, volunteer managers and organisational leaders and this is the face of Britain – one that no longer is about the giver and the receiver but one that is about helping each other build a community based on equality, diversity, rights and responsibilities.

### 4.2. Recommendations

The research findings have produced a wealth of information related to how much and what type of volunteering takes place in the borough, the needs of VIOs and the role of the Volunteer Centre. Based on the data collected and the findings, a series of recommendations are set forth below and grouped by target audiences. The over-arching themes that run through the recommendations are in the following areas:

- Overcoming communication barriers that prevent volunteers from starting and help to increase conversion rates
- Supporting volunteers with extra needs

- Clarifying roles and expectations
- Training and accreditation needs
- Capacity building and resources for volunteer management
- Making informed organisational decisions based on an accurate understanding of the costs and benefits of volunteering
- Monitoring and tracking progress of volunteers and volunteering

#### 4.2.1. Volunteer Centres

Because the research project was based in a Volunteer Centre, there is much that has been learned which could apply to many other Volunteer Centres, especially in London. One of the reasons for this is that many Volunteer Centres share standard practices, policies and procedures that have been developed nationally and regionally through organisations such as Volunteering England and Greater London Volunteering. While the demographics of each area and the particular volunteer statistics are bound to vary by borough, most of the Volunteer Centres are nonetheless using VBase and Do It for example. Because of these similarities, the following recommendations are suggested for all VCs.

4.2.1.1. Volunteering should be seen as a lifelong process and the role of the volunteer centre is to support people into volunteering as well as throughout that process. VCs should develop systems to support and monitor volunteers throughout their volunteering experience. This should specifically include monitoring to find out if the client has started volunteering, how long they stay, the quality of their experience and reasons why they leave volunteer posts. Do It volunteers and anyone with an e-mail address could easily be followed up with an automatic e-survey that could capture this information.

4.2.1.2. Levels of communication and coordination between VIOs and VCs should be increased. This is especially important with regard to expectations, updates of information and feedback. The Do It website should be updated regularly with information about VIO volunteering contacts and current opportunities. Each VC should clarify with its VIO clients exactly what is expected from each in regard to updating the website and ensure that there is a system in place which will enable that to happen.

4.2.1.3. Create a system for capturing demographic and equalities information about clients that includes age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability and gender at a minimum. Ensure that all clients are encouraged and supported to complete the

forms so that reliable demographic information will be available for future planning and funding requirements.

- 4.2.1.4. The creation of specific guidelines for VIOs as to how to work with volunteers and associated good practice would help alleviate some of the barriers present for volunteers. For example, this could address organisational culture and staff attitudes to volunteering within an organisation.
- 4.2.1.5. Volunteers would benefit from support groups or events where they could share their experiences and support each other in a friendly atmosphere. VCs are in the best position to facilitate this happening as they work with both volunteers and VIOs across a borough. Support groups could be volunteer-led and organised either generically or for specific types of volunteers or volunteer activities. Additionally, an online forum for volunteers to share, support each other and feedback about their experiences would be very helpful.
- 4.2.1.6. VCs are also in a good position to understand training needs and to develop or facilitate training for volunteers in generic areas that their VIO clients would find useful (i.e. fundraising). Many VIOs in an area duplicate training for volunteers in areas such as advice, health & safety, data protection and teaching.
- 4.2.1.7. It should be recognised that some volunteers need multiple appointments and extra support in order to begin volunteering. VC procedures should allow for this as and when necessary.
- 4.2.1.8. A large number of VIOs are still unaware or unclear as to the services and benefits of Volunteer Centres. Increased publicity with regard to the role of VCs and services available to VIOs should be undertaken, especially highlighting brokerage, training and advice available.
- 4.2.1.9. Considering the recurrent issue of low resources available to VIOs; more information, training and capacity building specifically related to funding a volunteer programme should be developed. VCs should be getting this information directly to their clients, even if they are working in partnership with a capacity building programme, for example with a CVS.
- 4.2.1.10. VCs should take the lead in providing direct capacity building support to VIOs related to volunteer management, even if it is in partnership with a capacity building programme, for example with a CVS.
- 4.2.1.11. VIOs would benefit by having guidelines related to volunteering and the Olympics from the VC. This work should be developed in conjunction with the local council and any pertinent regional bodies.

- 4.2.1.12. Governing body volunteers such as trustees and management committee members should be more consciously included in outreach and volunteering support activities from the VC.
- 4.2.1.13. VCs should regularly capture feedback from VIOs so as to benefit from their practical experience, particularly in terms of best practice development.
- 4.2.1.14. VCs should design into events and training for VIOs more information sharing and networking among groups in the borough. This type of activity facilitates learning and partnerships.
- 4.2.1.15. VCs should clarify their role within the volunteering sub-sector as well as their expectations of volunteers and VIOs so that everyone is clear about roles and responsibilities.
- 4.2.1.16. Increase local volunteer recognition events. Volunteer recognition should happen not only within VIOs, but also as a celebration in the wider community. This will help to publicise volunteering, reward those volunteers who stand out in a community and increase retention levels. There should be at least one annual event sponsored by the VC.
- 4.2.1.17. VCs should create more partnerships with the private sector and organisations working with the private sector to encourage professional volunteers to share their skills within the voluntary and public sector as volunteers. This is an under-utilised and growing resource for volunteering.

#### 4.2.2. VCTH

The Volunteer Centre in Tower Hamlets has clearly been successful in many areas. The numbers of clients, levels of satisfaction and support given to VIOs all attest to a worthwhile service that benefits the community. As with any organisation, there are areas that can be improved and built on to create a better service. For VCTH, areas of improvement centre on follow up with volunteer clients and increasing services and communication to VIOs. There is also an acknowledgement that VCTH are providing a niche service to clients with extra support needs around volunteering. In addition to the suggestions above for VCs, the following recommendations are suggested for VCTH.

- 4.2.2.1. VCTH should review and amend their equalities monitoring form for volunteers, particularly in relation to disability, religion and sexual orientation, as these areas are probably being misrepresented by underreporting. Once an updated form is in place, ensure that volunteers are encouraged and supported to complete all parts of the forms.

- 4.2.2.2. Continue to focus on volunteer clients with extra support needs at appointments and refer others to Do It. Volunteer clients with extra support needs could be anyone; people who simply need a bit of extra support in order to get started volunteering which may be due to social exclusion, personal or health related problems, low skill or qualification levels or lack of confidence. People who are ready willing and able to volunteer on their own will find the Do It website very useful whereas people with support needs will need more personalised attention and follow-up. Consider developing a method of identifying people who need additional support.
- 4.2.2.3. Volunteers who attended appointments should be contacted after a month to follow up with them as to any additional support needs they might have and to find out if they started volunteering. This could be done by e-mail, post or phone as appropriate.
- 4.2.2.4. VCTH should provide more opportunities to enable their VIO clients to do more networking, information sharing and partnership exploration. These activities could be either formal or informal and could be piggy-backed onto other events as appropriate.
- 4.2.2.5. Services provided by VCTH should have wider publicity. VCTH does not have wide name recognition in the borough and many people are not aware of the services that they offer. It is acknowledged that publicity must be balanced with capacity and resource issues within the organisation. Ensure that events and trainings for clients are fully booked by giving plenty of lead time and publicity.
- 4.2.2.6. Creation of an annual volunteer managers' award programme could highlight best practice in volunteer management across the borough, publicise VCTH and highlight training needs within the sector.
- 4.2.2.7. Creation of a volunteer leadership award given to an outstanding member of a governing body in Tower Hamlets could help to highlight trustees and management committee volunteer roles.
- 4.2.2.8. VCTH could provide clients with a 'drop-in' time for volunteers to come to VCTH (or another location) and access a range of resources and support such as telephones to call about volunteering, computer and internet access to sign in to Do It or other organisations, help speaking with volunteer coordinators or VIO contacts or a volunteering resource library with written information about VIOs and opportunities across the borough.

4.2.2.9. Volunteers with extra support needs may need more direction or targeted placements when being matched with a VIO. It should be acknowledged that they may need additional guidance and time from VC staff in order to develop a good match.

4.2.2.10. VCTH should develop additional feedback mechanisms to encourage volunteers to comment on and evaluate their services. This could be done in conjunction with the equalities monitoring form and at the discretion of the volunteer. There could also be an area on the website for clients to comment.

4.2.2.11. In order to increase staff capacity and efficiency VCTH should explore new ways to support volunteers. One possibility could be to pilot group appointments for volunteers, where people with extra support needs could come to VCTH in small groups, get the same basic information, complete their forms, have short individual meetings with an advisor and be able to share information and support each other.

4.2.2.12. The building where VCTH is currently housed could use better signage that directs volunteers to VCTH. It would also be useful to have information about volunteering available to passers-by and visitors to the building.

*...they [VCTH] send someone somewhere and they just forget about them...I phoned...to thank her but I never heard from them...to get feedback from her and for the record as well to say yeah this place is nice, the volunteers are happy (FG3-6).*

*Tower Hamlets could set up a volunteer club where you could come in and talk to somebody who could support you...teach you how to present yourself and how to follow up (FG1-6).*

*You could have a volunteer conference each year in Tower Hamlets...the volunteers could bring forward their experiences to share with policy makers...volunteers learn a lot...if only there was someone who would listen (FG1-6).*

#### 4.2.3. VIOs

There are many VIOs in the borough that could stand out as shining examples of best practice in volunteer management and there are also those organisations who are in serious crisis in relation to their very survival. Most organisations are somewhere in between those two extremes, struggling for funding, providing services, managing staff, volunteers and clients in the best way that they know how given their resources. There is an incredible diversity and range of VIOs in Tower Hamlets; from very well resourced public sector bureaucracies to completely volunteer led and run local grassroots organisations. It would be impossible to create a generic fit or solution that would work for all of them. However, there were a few threads coming through the data that would seem to apply widely to Tower Hamlets VIOs. These themes are expressed in the following recommendations while at the

same time it is acknowledged that each VIO should adapt the recommendations to fit their particular organisational environment and circumstances.

*I got a fantastic introduction and it inspired me to volunteer (FG2-2)*

- 4.2.3.1. Response to potential volunteers who have contacted the organisation about volunteering must be quick and must reach all those who have contacted the VIO. Although factors such as CRB checks, training and references may slow down the volunteering process, volunteers should be contacted initially as soon as possible (ideally within 48 hours) in order to let them know what the process involves, who the contact person is and the anticipated wait time. Every volunteer should be contacted, even if there is not a place for them in the organisation. As much information as possible, as frequently as possible should be communicated to volunteers throughout the volunteer process regardless of the outcome of their placement.
- 4.2.3.2. Publicity about VIO volunteer opportunities and needs should be easily and widely available in areas such as Do It, the VIO website and other appropriate places. VIOs registered with VCTH should update their opportunities and contact information on a regular basis.
- 4.2.3.3. VIOs should create a welcoming and friendly environment for volunteers. This is especially important at all the 'first points of entry' for the organisation such as reception, the website and on the phone. All staff within the VIO should understand the importance and roles of volunteers in the organisation and appreciate the volunteer efforts within the group. Organisational culture should foster an environment that is welcoming to new volunteers and seeks to embrace volunteers from the wide diversity of Tower Hamlets communities.
- 4.2.3.4. Volunteer managers should spend an adequate amount of time with volunteers up front in order to clarify and expand the volunteers' understanding of their role and the organisation. Volunteer managers should also clarify what kinds of support the volunteer can expect from them or other staff.
- 4.2.3.5. Volunteer managers should give a thorough introduction or orientation to the volunteer and also explain how they can tap into other opportunities to get to know the organisation.
- 4.2.3.6. VIOs should have a volunteer recognition programme which is inclusive, regular and appreciative of volunteer efforts across the organisation. This should always include the governing body and in addition to holding events and awards, volunteer recognition should be done on a micro-level throughout the VIO,

such as via 'thank-you's from staff, on the website and in annual reports.

4.2.3.7. As much as possible, volunteer managers should allow for flexible schedules in volunteer activities. This flexibility should create a more satisfied volunteer workforce and acknowledges the variety of other pressures and commitments on volunteers' time.

4.2.3.8. Every organisation that capitalises on volunteer labour should have a central paid volunteer coordinator post within it. This post will ensure that there is a central point of contact for volunteering, that the VIO has standard policies and procedures in place for volunteers and will coordinate with other staff working with volunteers. Additionally, the governing body of the VIO should appoint a volunteering 'champion' to promote and lead volunteering efforts within their organisation.

4.2.3.9. Volunteers within VIOs should be given regular feedback on the quality of their work and they should be given the opportunity to comment on and evaluate the activities of the VIO.

4.2.3.10. Paid staff within VIOs who recruit, supervise or manage volunteers should be required to attend volunteer management training and development on a regular basis (such as annually). This will ensure that volunteer management best practice is being implemented and will help to keep staff up to date with policies and legal requirements.

4.2.3.11. VIOs should develop volunteering evaluation methods for their programmes so as to demonstrate the impact, costs and benefits of volunteering.

*Organisations should have a programme to monitor volunteers and find out more about volunteers (FG2-5)*

*It could be asking you as a volunteer what you expect from an organisation and the organisation what you want from a volunteer (FG2-6)*

#### 4.2.4. Volunteers

Although volunteers give their unpaid time to benefit other people and organisations, they still have certain responsibilities and obligations that will help to make their volunteering experience more worthwhile for everyone involved. The following recommendations pertain to volunteers and potential volunteers in Tower Hamlets.

4.2.4.1. Volunteers should be responsible and reliable. Not only do volunteers need to abide by the policies and procedures set forth by the VIO, they also need to seriously consider what kind of commitment they can make to an organisation and then do their best to honour that commitment. If VCTH volunteers experience

any problems volunteering or starting to volunteer, they should contact VCTH immediately.

4.2.4.2. If training is offered as part of a volunteer placement, the volunteer should consider the cost of the training to the VIO and ensure that the volunteer time they give back to the organisation will outweigh the costs associated with training and preparation, so that there is a 'net gain' for the VIO.

4.2.4.3. Volunteers have a responsibility to do their best to understand their own needs and to articulate those needs to VC and VIO staff in order to develop a successful volunteer placement. This means volunteers need to be honest and clear about their expectations, skills, circumstances and other commitments.

#### 4.2.5. Regional and National Volunteering Umbrella Bodies

Umbrella bodies relating to volunteering are in a unique position to influence and impact the sector and volunteering overall. The ability to guide volunteering good practice development and volunteering policy place them in a prime position to be of use to VCs and VIOs in particular. The following recommendations are suggested.

4.2.5.1. Develop wider accessibility to local volunteering resources for pan-London groups. Some VIOs representing minority groups are only able to operate at a regional level and can be excluded from the volunteering recruitment and management resources that are directed at borough level. These groups should be targeted so that they don't fall through the cracks.

4.2.5.2. Do It should amend their database in order to enable VCs to adequately monitor equality strands such as sexual orientation and religion.

4.2.5.3. Do It should develop a follow up survey for VCs that would track volunteers after their initial contact with the VC through their volunteering experience.

4.2.5.4. Coordinating national volunteer recognition and award events. This could also include funding for volunteer training and accreditation schemes in particular areas of focus such as young people on governing bodies, disabled volunteers, BME fundraising volunteers, etc.

4.2.5.5. Campaign for additional resources to be directed toward volunteering efforts, particularly for VCs to provide services to people with extra needs.

*I would create a programme for recognising volunteers...but a nation-wide – rather than borough-wide system of recognition (FG2-5)*

#### 4.2.6. Funders

Funding bodies in the private, public or voluntary sector are key players who are able to shape the future of volunteering and have great influence over how it evolves. Funders also have a responsibility to the communities that they serve and should be accountable to their stakeholders and the public. The following recommendations are directed at funders and funding bodies.

4.2.6.1. When funding organisations, funders must consider the ‘full cost’ of volunteering and volunteer management within VIOs. This includes a portion of the volunteer managers’ time, volunteers’ direct and indirect expenses, training costs and recruitment costs.

4.2.6.2. Funding agreements could include volunteer management training as part of the funding arrangement for projects that have high volunteer components. This will help to ensure that programmes are being effectively managed.

4.2.6.3. Monitoring requirements related to volunteer programmes exact a heavy burden on staff. Funding arrangements should either build staff time for monitoring into the funding, provide extra support for monitoring or create a more streamlined system that is easier and less time consuming for volunteer managers.

4.2.6.4. Funders should focus on funding volunteer programmes that are clearly producing results and benefitting the community rather than a constant requirement to reinvent new projects.

*If the Council put in half a million pounds a year for volunteer training...on the understanding that they would put something back...say commit two years...it could make a great impact (FG2-6)*

#### 4.3. Next steps

The research project involved extensive data collection, of which only a portion could be used in this report. There are many additional areas that were worth consideration but due to time and resource limitations could not be pursued. There were also new questions that arose out of the project that could be a focus of future work. Key questions for future consideration are suggested in the following areas:

- Specific local and regional volunteering information for each equality strand
- Exploration of volunteer management training programmes, accreditation and other qualifications
- Research specifically on governing bodies – their needs, abilities and recruitment tools

- Follow up from baseline research in 2-5 years so as to create an ongoing measure of volunteering trends locally
- Development of reliable methods to capture demographic data related to religion and sexual orientation – both ‘invisible’ equality strands with a high rate of non-response
- An exploration of the extent of employee and corporate volunteering in the borough and brokerage services related to this type of volunteering

The recommendations proposed above will need thoughtful consideration by the range of stakeholders involved in volunteering throughout Tower Hamlets and beyond. Some of the recommendations mentioned could be implemented quickly, easily and for very little cost while others may require serious funding increases and years to properly put into place. The recommendations are food for thought and will perhaps take different forms depending on each organisation or person involved.

Research findings will be shared with partners from all sectors, and may provide a basis for new programmes of support, for example for those who volunteer within LAP areas. Findings may also influence the shape of policies and public services in the future. Volunteering is seen as a major resource for the borough and this work will hopefully enable more volunteers to get involved for many years to come as well as supporting VCTH and VIOs to generate greater levels of interest in volunteering and to increase the quality of the volunteer experience across the borough.

## 5. Appendices

### 5.1. Demographics of Survey Samples

#### 5.1.1. Residents' Panel Recruitment Questionnaire

**Q34 Would you be willing to help Tower Hamlets Borough Council by becoming a panel member?**

Yes/No

To ensure that we meet the needs of all residents it is important that we find out more about you. As with all the questions, your answers will be completely confidential.

**Q35 Male or female? (Do not ask)**

**Q36 What was your age on your last birthday?**

**Q37 Which of these activities describes what you are doing at present?**

- *Employee in a full time job - work more than 30 hours a week*
- *Employee in a part time job - work less than 30 hours a week*
- *Self employed full or part time*
- *On a Government supported training programme - Modern apprenticeship/Training for Work*
- *Full time education at school, college or University*
- *Unemployed and available for work*
- *Permanently sick/disabled*
- *Wholly retired from work*
- *Looking after the home*
- *Refused*
- *Doing something else (specify below)*
- *Please write in*

**Q38 What is the occupation of the main householder? (Fully probe as per S.E.G. guidelines)**

**Q39 Do you have any long standing illness, disability or infirmity? (Long standing means anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a period of time) Please tick one box.**

Yes/No/Refused

**Q40 Does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?**

Yes/No

**Q41 to which of these groups do you consider you belong to?**

- **White** British
- *Irish*
- *Any other white background (write in below)*
- **Black/Black British** Caribbean
- *African*
- *Any other Black background (write in below)*
- **Mixed** White and Black Caribbean
- *White and Black African*
- *White and Asian*
- *Any other Mixed background (write in below)*

- **Asian or Asian British Indian**
- *Pakistani*
- *Bangladeshi*
- *Any other Asian background (write in below)*
- **Other Chinese**
- *Refused*
- *Any other ethnic group (write in below)*

**Please specify**

**Q42 What is your faith?**

- *Christian*
- *Jewish*
- *Buddhist*
- *Muslim*
- *Hindu*
- *Sikh*
- *No Religion*
- *Any other religion*

**Q43 What is your preferred spoken language?**

**Q44 What is your sexuality?**

- *Refused*
- *Heterosexual*
- *Homosexual*
- *Bisexual*
- *Asexual*
- *Other*

**Q45 Take postcode, ward number and phone number...**

**If YES to panel member, 'could we just ask you a few additional questions as we must ensure that the panel is made up of a representative sample of the area**

**Q46 How long have you/your household been living in your current accommodation?**

- *Under 1 year*
- *1-2 years*
- *3-5 years*
- *6-10 years*
- *11-20 years*
- *21+ years*
- *Don't know/Can't remember*
- *Refused*

**Q47 How long have you/your household been living in this area?**

- *Under 1 year*
- *1-2 years*
- *3-5 years*
- *6-10 years*
- *11-20 years*
- *21+ years*
- *Don't know/Can't remember*
- *Refused*

**Q48 In which of these ways does your household occupy your current accommodation?**

- *Owned outright*

- *Buying on mortgage*
- *Rent from council*
- *Rent from housing association/Trust*
- *Rented from private landlord*
- *Other (please write in)*

**Q49 How many adults aged 18 or over are living here?**

- *Refused*
- *One*
- *Two*
- *Three*
- *Four*
- *Five.*
- *More than five (please write in)*

**Q50 How many children under the age of 18 are living here?**

- *Refused*
- *One*
- *Two*
- *Three*
- *Four*
- *Five.*
- *More than five (please write in)*

**Q51 Do you have access to the internet**

*Yes/No*

**Q52 Do you have an email address**

*Yes/No*

**Q55 Lastly, if we could take your contact details (yes to panel):**

Name.....  
 Address .....  
 Postcode.....  
 Telephone No.....  
 Mobile No .....  
 Interviewer ID .....  
 Date.....

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire**

### 5.1.2. VCTH Phone Survey

There were a total of 60 completed phone surveys from among VCTH volunteer clients. The table below shows a demographic summary of the respondents. There were not enough responses available related to religion and sexual orientation data to provide a reliable summary of information in these areas.

Table 7: VCTH phone survey demographics

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	
Male	40%
Female	60%
Age	
16-24	42%
25-39	34%
40-64	22%
65+	2%
Ethnicity	
Asian	43%
Bangladeshi	32%
White	30%
Afro-Caribbean	18%
Mixed	7%
Other	4%

### 5.1.3. Focus Groups

A total of 32 people attended five focus groups, 18 volunteers and 14 volunteer managers from VIOs. Below is a summary of their demographic profile. Please note that respondents had the option to not answer any questions, therefore the total do not always add up to 32 and some categories were left blank if no data was available.

Table 8: Demographic summary for focus group participants

Demographic	Number of VIO Participants	Number of Volunteers
Gender		
Male	5	8
Female	7	10
Age		
16-24	1	7
25-34	7	2
35-44	2	2
45-64	1	4
65+	1	2
Ethnicity		
Bangladeshi	2	8
Other Asian	1	2
White	8	5
Afro-Caribbean	1	3
Mixed	1	0
Chinese or other	1	0
Religion		
Christian	4	4
Muslim	3	8
Buddhist		1
Other	2	
No Religion	2	4

Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	8	17
Homosexual	1	
Bisexual	1	

## 5.2. Survey questions

### 5.2.1. Residents' Panel Questionnaire

**Good morning/afternoon/evening, can I speak to.....? My name is .....and I am calling from SMSR Ltd an independent research company. As a valued member of the Citizens Panel, we are calling you as we are conducting a study to find out the extent of community involvement in Tower Hamlets. The research is being conducted on behalf of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets. The interview will take approximately 5-10 minutes. SMSR work to the MRS Code of Conduct, which means we cannot identify you or show anyone outside of SMSR your questionnaire. Your answers are completely anonymous and your views will be combined with others as statistics to make up a final report. Your call may be monitored or recorded for quality control purposes but this will not be used for any other reason than this research.**

**If you wish to check the validity of this research, please ring SMSR's freephone number 0800 1380845 or contact Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets on 0207 3770956.**

**There are many things that people spend time on apart from their paid job, their household responsibilities and things connected with them. I'm going to ask you a series of questions related to this. I'd like you to think about any groups, charities, clubs or organisations that you currently take part in, support or help in any way, or which you have done in the past, either on your own or with others.**

**Q1 Which of the following describes any groups, charities, clubs or organisations you've taken part in, supported or helped over the last 12 months? Please exclude giving money and anything that was a requirement of your job (tick all that apply in column Q1). INTERVIEWER TO ROTATE CODES**

**Now ask: Do the options chosen relate to one organisation or more than one? And, for each organisation, please choose one option that you feel *BEST* describes the organisation/s (mark in column Q2).**

- Schools, colleges, universities and other education
- Children or young people
- Sports or exercise
- Faith groups (i.e. church, mosque, synagogue)
- Politics
- Older people
- Overseas aid or disaster relief
- Health or mental health
- Disability
- Safety and first aid
- Social welfare or advice
- Conservation, the environment and heritage
- Animal welfare
- The arts and museums
- Justice and human rights
- Tenants or residents associations
- Hobbies, recreation, social clubs
- Trade union activity
- Drugs or addiction
- Race relations or ethnicity
- Women

- Refugees or asylum-seekers
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
- Domestic violence
- Other (please specify below)
- None of these (SKIP TO Q6)

**Q2a Can I just confirm that this represents X number of organisations, reference from Q1, column 2 (write in as a number)**

**I am now going to ask you about your involvement with the groups, clubs, charities or organisations that you previously mentioned.**

**Q3 In the last 12 months, have you given unpaid help to any organisations previously mentioned in any of the following ways (tick all that apply)?  
INTERVIEWER TO ROTATE CODES (Yes/No)**

- Raising or handling money, taking part in sponsored events
- Leading a group, member of a committee, board or trustee
- Cultural or creative activities
- Organising or helping to run an activity or event
- Visiting, befriending or mentoring people
- Educating, teaching, coaching
- Giving advice or information
- Counselling
- Secretarial, admin or clerical work
- Reception, guiding or welcoming
- Providing transport or driving
- Representing or advocacy
- Campaigning or lobbying
- Providing special expertise (e.g. accounting, translation, legal, photography)
- Participating in conservation or environmental projects
- Providing childcare
- Working with animals
- Preparing or serving food or drinks
- Doing finance
- ICT work
- Working in a charity shop
- Doing research
- Other practical help (e.g. DIY, shopping)
- None of the above (SKIP TO QUESTION 10)
- Any other help (please specify below)

**Q4 How did you find out about opportunities to give unpaid help to the groups you have assisted in the last 12 months (tick all that apply)?**

- Through previously using services of the organisation
- Word of mouth
- Leaflet or poster
- Local event
- Newspaper
- Radio
- TV
- E-mail
- An organisation or referral agency
- General volunteering website (such as Do It, Timebank, etc.).

- The library
- Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets
- My employer
- Set up own group with like minded people
- Other (please state)

**Go to Q11**

**Q5 When did you first get involved with the groups, clubs, charities or organisations mentioned (choose one)?**

*In the last 12 months*

- 1-2 years ago
- 3-5 years ago
- 6-10 years ago
- Over 10 years ago

**Q6 Have you ever given unpaid time to groups, clubs, charities or organisations to benefit the environment, individuals or groups (other than or in addition to close relatives)?**

- Yes (skip to 10)
- No

**Q7 Have you ever wanted to spend time giving unpaid help to groups, charities, clubs or organisations?**

- Yes
- No

**Q8 Which, if any, are the reasons why you don't give unpaid help to groups, charities, clubs or organisations (tick all that apply)? INTERVIEWER TO ROTATE CODES**

- Not enough time: I have work commitments
- Not enough time: I have responsibilities at home
- Not enough time: I have to look after someone who is elderly or ill
- Not enough time: I have to study
- I do other things with my spare time
- I don't think that I would be welcomed
- I have a criminal record
- I don't speak good enough English
- I feel that my immigration status might be a barrier
- I don't have enough skills or experience
- I have health or personal issues
- I tried, but an initial bad experience put me off
- I can't afford to volunteer
- My family will not allow me to volunteer
- I don't know any groups that need help
- I haven't heard about opportunities to give help
- I'm new to the borough
- I've never thought about it
- Other (please state)

**Q9 What, if anything, would make it easier for you to get involved in this kind of activity (tick all that apply)? INTERVIEWER TO ROTATE CODES**

- If someone asked me directly to get involved
- If there were childcare facilities
- If my friends or family got involved with me
- If I knew who to contact about it.
- If I was more aware of the range of activities possible
- If I could try a 'taster session' first
- If I knew I could get my expenses paid
- If I knew it would help me improve my skills
- If someone could provide transport when I needed it.
- If I could be flexible with the time committed.
- If it led to a qualification
- If I knew it could benefit me in my career
- If I knew it would help me get a job
- If I could do it from home
- Nothing
- Other (please state)

**Go to Q15**

**Q10 What would you say were the main reasons for stopping your involvement with those groups (tick all that apply)? INTERVIEWER TO ROTATE CODES**

- Not enough time
- Organisation closed
- I moved away from the area or left the country
- Organisation didn't need me anymore
- Lost interest
- Didn't get asked to do the things I'd like to
- Felt the organisation was badly organised
- Felt my efforts weren't always appreciated
- I was asked to leave
- My childcare or family responsibilities
- I started a job or studying
- It cost money that I was not reimbursed for
- It was too bureaucratic
- Too much concern about risk and liability
- Other (please state)

**Go to Q15**

**Q11 Now just think about your activity over the past month. Approximately how many hours have you spent over the last 4 weeks helping the organisations mentioned previously? (Give a number between 0 - 300)**

**Q12 Overall, how often over the last 12 months (since Feb 2006) have you generally done something to help the organisations previously mentioned (tick all that apply in order written)?**

- 2 or more days per week
- 1 day a week
- 2 hours per week
- At least once a month
- Quite often but not regularly
- Help on a seasonal basis
- One off activity

**Q13 Please think back to the first time you ever gave unpaid help to an organisation. I would like to ask you about why you started helping. Did you start helping for any of the following reasons (tick all that apply)?**  
**INTERVIEWER TO ROTATE CODES**

- I wanted to improve things, help people
- I wanted to meet people, make friends
- The cause was really important to me
- My friends or family did it
- It was connected with the needs of my family or friends
- I felt there was a need in my community
- I had received voluntary help myself
- I thought it would give me a chance to learn new skills
- I thought it would help me improve my English
- I thought it would give me a chance to use my existing skills
- I thought it would help me get on in my career
- It's part of my religious belief or philosophy to help people
- It gave me a chance to get a recognised qualification
- I had spare time to do it
- I felt there was no one else to do it
- Other (please state)

**Q14 Thinking about the kinds of help you give to groups, clubs, charities or organisations, what have you gained from these activities (tick all that apply)?**  
**INTERVIEWER TO ROTATE CODES**

- Meeting people and making friends
- Satisfaction from seeing the results
- It makes me feel less selfish as a person
- Enjoyment.
- Broadens my experience of life
- A sense of personal achievement
- The chance to learn new skills
- A position in the community
- The chance to get a recognised qualification
- More confidence
- Makes me feel needed
- The chance to improve my employment prospects
- Makes me feel less stressed
- Improves my physical/mental health
- Other (please specify)

**The last question relates to activities that are separate from anything you may have done with an organisation. This is defined as any unpaid help you, as an individual, may have given to other people, that is, apart from any help given through a group, club, charity or organisation. This could be help for a friend or neighbour such as caring for children, shopping, transporting someone to hospital, etc.**

**Q15 In the last 12 months have you given any unpaid help to anyone who was not a relative?**

- Yes
- No

### 5.2.2. VCTH Client Questionnaire

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I got your name from the Volunteer Centre in Tower Hamlets, formerly known as Volunteer Action Tower Hamlets. I am doing some follow up monitoring about the centre as part of an independent research project and I was wondering if I could ask you a few questions, the survey only takes about 10 minutes?

If no, attempt to book a phone appointment at a convenient time.

If yes:

Thank you, the results will be used to help improve the services to volunteers like yourself in Tower Hamlets and all your responses will be anonymous. Let's begin.

**Q1.** How did you first hear about volunteering in Tower Hamlets?  
(open ended)

**Q2.** How did you first hear about Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets specifically (this was formerly known as Volunteer Action Tower Hamlets or VATH)?  
(open ended)

**Q3.** When was your first appointment at the VCTH/VATH office?  
A. Month/year  
B. Don't remember  
C. Never attended an appointment at VCTH

**Q4.** Have you ever visited the Do It website ([www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk))?  
**Yes** (when did you first visit the site [month/year]?)

**No** (if Q3=C also, **skip to Q11**)

**Q5.** Did you attempt to get in touch with any organisations that you were given contact information for in Tower Hamlets?

**Yes**

(what was the a. month/year that you initially contacted the first VIO b. how many c. which ones?)

**No**

(d. what was the reason for this?) **SKIP to Q10**

**Q6.** Did you begin volunteering with any of those groups, clubs, charities or organisations?

**Yes** (what was the month/year that you started volunteering with them?)

**No** (what was the reason for this?, tick all that apply)

1. Not enough time:
  - a. I have work commitments
  - b. I have responsibilities at home
  - c. I have to look after someone who is elderly or ill
  - d. I have to study
2. I do other things with my spare time
3. I don't think that I would be welcomed
4. I have a criminal record
5. I don't speak good enough English
6. I feel that my immigration status might be a barrier
7. I don't have enough skills or experience
8. I have health or personal issues
9. I tried, but an initial bad experience put me off
10. I can't afford to volunteer
11. My family will not allow me to volunteer

12. I don't know any groups that need help
13. I haven't heard about opportunities to give help
14. I'm new to the borough
15. I've never thought about it
16. Other (please state)
17. Waiting to hear back

**SKIP to Q10**

**Q7.** How many groups, clubs, charities or organisations have you volunteered with since (start date)? Answer = number

**Q8.** Were you given any kind of introduction, welcome or induction from the VIO/s?  
**Yes/No**

**Q9.** How often you have been volunteering with those organisations in Tower Hamlets since [start date] (tick one for each organisation up to three)?

1. 2 or more days per week
2. 1 day a week
3. 2 hours per week
4. At least once a month
5. Quite often but not regularly
6. Just a few times
7. One off activity
8. Help on a seasonal basis

**Q9a. If 1 or 2 above:** Approximately how many **hours per week** do you volunteer?  
Answer = number

**Q10.** Jumping back to the Volunteer Centre, how would you rate your level of satisfaction with the services provided at Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets for each of the following categories? Please use a rating scale of 1-5, 1 being excellent and 5 being poor.

- Excellent (1)
- Good (2)
- Adequate (3)
- Below average (4)
- Poor (5)

- A. Information and materials
- B. Matching with organisations
- C. Communication
- D. Friendliness of staff
- E. Skills and knowledge of VCTH staff
- F. Overall satisfaction

**Q11.** Please tell us any suggestions that you may have for improving the support or services provided by VCTH.  
Open ended

**END OF SURVEY**

### 5.2.3. E-survey Questions

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, the aim of which is to find out more about the needs and experiences of volunteer-involving organisations in Tower Hamlets. We hope to learn more about how organisations are involving and managing volunteers and the levels of volunteer retention experienced by organisations. By completing the survey, you will be adding to our understanding of volunteering in Tower Hamlets which may help increase the levels and types of resources for organisations that involve volunteers. You will also have the option to be entered into a prize draw at the end of the survey for dinner for two at Cafe Spice Namaste in Tower Hamlets (they have generously donated this as an extra incentive to complete the survey).

Responses to the survey will be anonymised and we will not ask for your name, however if you would like to be part of the prize draw, we will need your contact details (this will be kept separate from the survey data). The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete and has a maximum of 35 questions, most of which are simple tick boxes. The survey will ideally be completed by the volunteer coordinator or the person who works with volunteers the most in your organisation. You may find it helpful to have the following information at hand before you begin: information about the total number of volunteers in your organisation, approximate number of volunteer hours completed and staff training needs related to volunteer management.

It is possible to go back to a survey that has been partially completed, provided that you use the same computer each time. We are looking for one response per organisation. Should you have any difficulties in completing the survey or have any questions related to the survey, please feel free to contact Kim Donahue on 02073770956 or at [kim@towerhamlets.org.uk](mailto:kim@towerhamlets.org.uk).

THANK YOU!

**\*1. Do you represent an organisation that involves volunteers in Tower Hamlets?**

**Yes/No**

**\* 2. Please tell us the name of your organisation (in order to avoid duplication only)**

**\* 3. Please tell us your role in the organisation**

- Volunteer Coordinator or Manager
- Director
- Intern
- Programme Coordinator
- Volunteer
- Trustee
- Other (please specify)

**\* \* 4. Which of the following categories would you say your organisation belongs to?**

- Public Sector
- Private Sector

- Voluntary Sector
- Social Enterprise

**\* 5. Please tell us what type of organisation you are representing.**

- Faith or interfaith group
- Justice and human rights
- Disability
- Health or mental health
- Politics
- Tenants or residents association
- Race or ethnicity
- Drugs or addiction
- Safety and first aid
- Social welfare or advice
- Sports/exercise
- Trade union
- Older people
- Overseas aid/ disaster relief
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
- Hobbies, recreation, social club
- Refugees or asylum-seekers
- Children or young people
- The arts and museums
- Women
- School, college, university or other educational institution
- Conservation, the environment and heritage
- Domestic violence
- Animal welfare
- Other (please specify)

**6. Would you describe your organisation as any of the following? (tick all that apply)**

- Disability related organisation
- Black and minority ethnic organisation
- Women's organisation
- Older people's organisation
- Youth organisation
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender group
- Faith organisation

**7. Please tell us how many paid staff your organisation currently employs. (open)**

**\* 8. Does your organisation have a central volunteer coordinator or manager?**

**Yes/No**

**9. Please estimate the total annual budget of your organisation.**

- £0-10,000
- £10,001-100,000
- £100,001-500,000
- £500,001-999,999
- over £1 million

**10. Do you receive any specific funding for your volunteer programme?  
Yes/No**

**\* 11. Please tell us the type of activities volunteers participate in within your organisation. (tick all that apply)**

- Reception, guiding or welcoming
- Campaigning or lobbying
- Board member or trustee
- ICT
- Working with animals
- Participating in conservation or environmental projects
- Educating, teaching, coaching
- Providing transport or driving
- Organising or helping to run an activity or event
- Preparing or serving food or drinks
- Secretarial, admin or clerical work
- Representing or advocacy
- Counselling
- Providing special expertise (e.g. accounting, translation, legal, photography)
- Charity shop
- Providing childcare
- Other practical help (e.g. DIY, shopping)
- Cultural or creative activities
- Leading a group, member of a committee
- Finance
- Research
- Visiting, befriending or mentoring people
- Raising or handling money, taking part in sponsored events
- Giving advice or information
- Other (please specify)

**12. Are you working with any volunteer brokerage agency or recruiter?  
Yes/No if yes, please specify**

**\* 13. What are the methods that you use to recruit volunteers? (tick all that apply)**

- Library
- TV
- Local event
- Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets
- Newspaper
- E-mail
- Radio
- General volunteering website (i.e. Do-It, Timebank)
- Word of mouth
- Leaflet or poster
- Referral agencies or other organisations
- Other volunteer brokers (i.e. ELBA, RSVP, CSV)
- Other (please specify)

**\* 14. Are you currently registered with Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets  
(formerly Volunteer Action Tower Hamlets)?  
Yes/No/Not sure**

**\* 15. Have you ever been sent volunteers from Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (formerly Volunteer Action Tower Hamlets)?**

**Yes/No/Not sure**

**16. In thinking of the volunteers from VCTH, please tick any of the following statements that you would agree with.**

- I received too many volunteers from VCTH
- The volunteers I was sent were able to meet our organisational needs
- I received too few volunteers from VCTH
- I received the right amount of volunteers from VCTH
- The volunteers I was sent were not exactly the type of volunteers we were looking for

**17. Please estimate the total number of volunteers involved with your group in 2006. Volunteers are defined as people who give unpaid time to help your organisation and this includes trustees.**

- Total number of volunteers both active and inactive in 2006:
- Total number of inactive volunteers in 2006 (meaning those who have not given any time to the organisation during the year):
- Number of new volunteers starting in 2006:
- Number of volunteers leaving in 2006:

**18. Please estimate the total number of volunteer HOURS PER MONTH, on average, given to your organisation in each of the following activities. For example, if you have a total of 10 volunteers doing campaigning in your organisation for an average of 2 hours each per month, you would multiply 10 X 2 to get a total of 20 hours per month.**

Hours per month = 1-10/11-20/21-35/over 35/N/A

- Projects, activities and events
- Leadership activities, including trustees
- Delivering services directly to clients
- Campaigning or lobbying
- Other

**19. Please estimate the percentage of volunteers working in all of the following ways within your organisation.**

Percentage = None/up to 25%/26-50%/51-75%/more than 75%

- One off projects or activities
- Episodic or intermittent volunteering
- Seasonal work
- Regular monthly activities
- Regular weekly activities
- Regular daily activities

**\* 20. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.**

(Scale = Definitely agree    Tend to agree    Neither agree nor disagree    Tend to disagree    Definitely disagree)

- Our volunteers have all the qualities and skills that we require
- We have all the volunteers that we need
- Staff have enough support to effectively manage volunteers
- Staff have enough resources to effectively manage volunteers
- Staff need more training on volunteer management

**\* 21. Does your organisation have a volunteer policy?**

Yes/No

**\* 22. Does your organisation meet with prospective volunteers before they start?**

Yes/No

**\* 23. Does your organisation have a volunteer induction or welcome programme for new volunteers?**

Yes/No

**\* 24. Does your organisation offer supervision to volunteers?**

Yes/No

**\* 25. Does your organisation provide training to volunteers?**

Yes/No

**\* 26. Does your organisation reimburse volunteer expenses such as travel and lunch?**

Yes/No

**\* 27. VCTH are planning its 2007/08 training programme for staff who manage volunteers. Please choose training topics from the following list that staff from your organisation would be most likely to participate in over the next year.**

- Volunteer retention
- Involving volunteers as fundraisers
- Involving volunteers with specialist skills
- Criminal records bureau disclosures for volunteers (police checks)
- Liability and insurance for volunteers
- Working effectively with teams and groups
- Involving older volunteers
- Supervising and supporting volunteers
- Involving refugees and asylum-seekers as volunteers
- Volunteer recruitment
- Starting to work with volunteers
- Advertising your volunteer opportunities
- Conducting health and safety risk assessments for volunteers
- Funding advice for volunteer programmes
- Legal advice about volunteers
- Involving volunteers with additional support needs
- Volunteer agreements
- Volunteer expenses
- Involving volunteers as mentors and befrienders
- Inducting and training volunteers
- Dealing with difficult situations with volunteers
- Writing a volunteer policy
- Involving young people as volunteers
- Recruiting management committee members and trustees
- Interviewing and selecting volunteers
- Other (please specify)

**\* 28. Have you personally ever attended any training related to volunteer management?**

- Yes - through Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets
- Yes - via other training providers
- No

**29. How would you rate the training that you received from Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets?**

- Excellent
- Good
- Adequate
- Poor

**30. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements related to the training you received from VCTH.**

(Scale = Definitely agree    Tend to agree    Neither agree nor disagree    Tend to disagree    Definitely disagree)

- The training I received improved my volunteer management skills
- The duration of the training was appropriate for my needs
- The location of the training was appropriate for my needs
- The date and time of the training was appropriate for my needs
- The training helped to improve my organisation's volunteer programme

**\* 31. Have you ever received telephone or e-mail advice from Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (formerly Volunteer Action Tower Hamlets)?**

Yes/No/I was not aware that this service existed

**32. How helpful was the advice service that you received from VCTH?**

- Very helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Not very helpful
- Not at all helpful

**33. Please tick any of the following choices that come to mind when you think of Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets.**

- Understanding
- Out of touch with the practical needs of organisations
- Helpful
- Friendly
- Unwelcoming
- Not relevant to my needs
- Don't speak my community language
- Unapproachable
- Professional
- Responsive
- Rushed
- Knowledgeable
- Other (please specify)

**34. Please share any suggestions you have for Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets that might help to improve their services to volunteer-involving organisations or to volunteers. (Open)**

### 5.3. Focus group questions

#### 5.3.1. Volunteers

##### **Introductions**

- Tell us who you are and give us one or two words which sum up your experience of volunteering.

##### **Transition questions**

- What type of volunteer activities do you do?
- What/who inspires or motivates you to volunteer?

##### **Key questions**

- What have you enjoyed most about volunteering?
- What specific skills or knowledge have you gained from your volunteer experience?
- How have you changed as a result of your volunteer experience?
- What difference, if any, do you feel you have made to the community or to service users?
- Are there any disadvantages to volunteering?
- What sort of barriers have you experienced that may prevent you from volunteering or make you less likely to volunteer or more likely to stop volunteering?
- If you had a chance to make improvements to the volunteer programme where you have volunteered, what would they be?
- Imagine you are in charge of the Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets. What changes would you make to provide better services for people who want to volunteer?

##### **Ending questions**

Summary – assistant moderator

Is that an adequate summary of the points raised?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

#### 5.3.2. VIOs

##### **Introduction**

- Tell us who you are, your job title, what organisation you work with and your role in the organisation

##### **Transition questions**

- What type of activities and roles do your volunteers do?
- What sort of introduction, support and/or training do you give volunteers?

##### **Key questions**

- What specific positive impacts have volunteers made to your organisation, client base or the community that you serve?
- As a volunteer manager, what resources do you find most helpful in terms of recruiting and managing volunteers? What sorts of issues within your organisation impacts volunteer management? What sorts of resource or staffing needs do you have related to volunteer management?
- Are the numbers of volunteers in your organisation growing, declining or static? Do you have too many volunteers or not enough?
- What sorts of funding sources are you aware of for your volunteer programme? Do you have specific volunteer funding streams, how do you fund the volunteer management within your organisation?
- What kind of monitoring of volunteers (if any) happens in your organisation? How long do volunteers stay in the organisation and how often do they tend to volunteer?
- What kinds of things stand in the way of you being able to effectively recruit and manage volunteers? Are there any specific groups that you find particularly difficult to reach?

- What sorts of career development, pathways or educational accreditation are you aware of for volunteer managers?
- What specific training or support related to volunteer management would you find useful?
- What services provided by VCTH do you find most useful?
- What advice would you give to Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets to help improve your organisation's ability to recruit, retain and manage volunteers?

**Ending questions**

Summary – assistant moderator

Is that an adequate summary of the points raised?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

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## 7. Contact Information

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