

Volunteering in Havering

A research report into the level of volunteering in the London Borough of Havering and the quality of volunteering placements.

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Commissioned by the Havering ChangeUp Steering Group

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Executive Summary

This report under the Recruiting and Developing Volunteers Strand of the ChangeUp Infrastructure Development Framework was commissioned by the Havering ChangeUp Consortia and managed by VCAH, the volunteer centre for the borough. The aims of the research were to determine the level of volunteering within the borough, consider what type of people become volunteers and evaluate the quality of the volunteering experience. This will assist in understanding where gaps exist, what additional support is needed in the future and how the local voluntary sector infrastructure can support volunteering activity in the next ten years.

The methodology consisted of three stages: firstly interviewing organisations by telephone with a detailed questionnaire; selecting another group of organisations to complete a shorter questionnaire and thirdly, holding three focus groups looking specifically at barriers to volunteering. Data relating to the level of volunteering from another piece of research commissioned by the Steering Group was also included.

The 130 organisations that took part in the research shared between them 4,637 volunteers giving 69,348 days of volunteer labour each year. It is estimated from statistics held by the volunteer centre that this is only 20% of the actual level of volunteering in the borough. Volunteering labour is a significant percentage of the workforce in the Voluntary and Community Sector in Havering. Two thirds of organisations in the sector in the borough rely purely on volunteer labour. However, the volunteering infrastructure in the borough is under-funded and under-resourced in comparison with neighbouring boroughs. Investment in the volunteering infrastructure and in particular in the borough's volunteer centre would help to create a vibrant sustainable workforce which will help with the local citizenship agenda and community cohesion.

Strategic investment will help to raise the profile of volunteering in the borough. A marketing strategy will encourage more volunteers themselves to become involved but also to engage with those Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, private companies and statutory bodies that have yet to engage with the volunteering infrastructure.

There is a need to address barriers to volunteering that exist for particular parts of the community. The volunteering infrastructure plays a vital role in all aspects of volunteering support especially educating Voluntary and Community Sector organisations about more flexible approaches to volunteering and will assist in removing the barriers identified. Also identified was the need to improve the support for volunteers and their host organisations, to improve the quality of the volunteering experience and to find ways of speeding up the process for potential volunteers to access suitable opportunities.

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of research commissioned by the Havering ChangeUp Steering Consortium under the Recruiting and Developing Volunteers Strand of the ChangeUp Infrastructure Development Framework. The aim of the research was threefold: to determine the number of volunteering hours within the borough, consider what type of people become volunteers and to evaluate the quality of the volunteering experience.

1.1 ChangeUp Infrastructure Framework

The ChangeUp Infrastructure Framework is the Government's response to the need to build the capacity of the Voluntary and Community Sector through underpinning the support offered to frontline organisations¹. The Government has made £80 million available until March 2006, with a further £70 million to run until March 2008. It is proposed that further funds will become available after that time.

The investment is available for second tier support organisations; each regional, sub-regional and local area have been required to put together a steering group to identify the specific capacity needs within their area and to decide how to use the investment to meet the overall aim of ChangeUp. The initial focus in many areas has been on reviews of current provision, mapping of provision and need, and the development of area-based business and strategic plans.

The ChangeUp framework sets out a ten year vision to improve the infrastructure of the Voluntary and Community sector. The high level objective is described as follows:

“This Framework sets out a bold but achievable aim – that by 2014 the needs of frontline voluntary and community organisations will be met by support which is available nationwide, structured for maximum efficiency, offering excellent provision which is accessible to all while reflecting and promoting diversity, and is sustainably funded.”²

The framework outlines the basic support structure offered by infrastructure organisations the Government expects to see in place by 2014.

Recruiting and Developing Volunteers was one of the six strands identified in ChangeUp as the key strategic priorities for the development of the infrastructure of the sector. The high level objective set by ChangeUp for this area is:

¹ ChangeUp: Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector, Home Office (2004), p.7

² ChangeUp: Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector, Home Office (2004), p.7

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“There is a leaner, effectively marketed and high quality volunteering infrastructure reaching, recruiting and placing a greater number and diversity of individuals coupled with improved volunteer management.”³

The ChangeUp Infrastructure Development Framework recognises the integral part that volunteers have to play in the Voluntary and Community Sector. The Government is keen to increase the levels of volunteering across the UK and is particularly interested in encouraging more young people to volunteer. Across the UK particular groups have been identified as taking up less volunteering opportunities and these include those who are from socially excluded groups, those over the age of 75 and those from certain ethnic groups who volunteer less than other groups.⁴ ChangeUp also highlights the role of employee volunteering in the sector and the opportunities to develop this route into volunteering.

The Framework recognises the recent improvements made within the volunteering infrastructure. In particular it highlights the success of volunteer centres in:

“...reaching and placing a diverse range of individuals, in particular the unemployed and black and minority ethnic communities, into volunteering opportunities, both through local projects and through participating in national schemes such as Millennium Volunteers.”⁵

It outlines its expectations to see a continued improvement in access to volunteering opportunities, high quality support for recruiting, training and managing volunteers within organisations and the quality of services delivered by volunteering infrastructure organisations.

The Framework outlines three particular areas where they would like to see ChangeUp investment improve the volunteering infrastructure:

- collaboration with local infrastructure organisations
- increasing the number of volunteers
- improving the quality of the experience.

Collaboration with Local Infrastructure Organisations

Volunteer Community Action Havering (VCAH) is the volunteer centre for the London Borough of Havering, they work alongside the other local infrastructure organisations in the borough, including the Havering Association of Voluntary and Community

³ ChangeUp: Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector, Home Office (2004), p.37

⁴ Home Office Citizenship Survey (2001)

⁵ ChangeUp: Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector, Home Office (2004), p.38

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Organisations (HAVCO), the Social Economy Support Unit (SESU) and the London Borough of Havering's External Funding and Community Regeneration teams. As the volunteer centre for the borough, VCAH took lead responsibility for this piece of work.

Increasing the Number of Volunteers

On a national level Volunteering England, with a number of partner organisations are developing an approach to promoting volunteering based on research into the benefits a volunteering experience can bring to individuals. Local volunteer centres and other local infrastructure organisations that work with them will then deliver on these national campaigns to boost their own work within their local area. In May 2006 the new Russell Commission will focus on recruiting young people into volunteering through new programmes and initiatives.

Improving the Quality of the Experience

ChangeUp has identified that volunteers who are not managed well do not continue to volunteer. At a regional level Volunteering England is developing a volunteer management training and skills development programme. Locally, VCAH are developing a support and training programme for volunteer managers, which includes a peer support forum.

Year of the Volunteer

The year 2005 was designated by Gordon Brown as the Year of the Volunteer. Local volunteer centres and their national support bodies ran events and campaigns to promote volunteering opportunities and the local volunteering infrastructure. The overall aims of the campaign were to:

- increase the number of volunteers, particularly individuals from marginalised groups and young people
- open up more volunteering opportunities in the public and voluntary sectors
- raise the profile of the work of volunteers nationwide
- thank volunteers everywhere for their time and commitment⁶

Locally Make a Difference Day was promoted amongst local businesses to encourage employees to take part in projects to benefit the local community, including a joint initiative between VCAH and the Business Education Partnership in Romford Market. A joint celebration organised by the local authority (Community Regeneration Department) VCAH and HAVCO acknowledged the work of over 200 volunteers nominated by their organisations for long term or exceptional service.

⁶ <http://www.yearofthevolunteer.org/html/about.asp>, accessed on: 10 January 2006

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1.2 Havering ChangeUp Steering Group

A Steering Group to lead on the implementation of the ChangeUp Infrastructure Development Framework was established in March 2005. Since that time it has met on a regular basis and commissioned research in order to better understand the current level of local infrastructure support in the borough.

In September 2005 the Steering Group submitted the Havering ChangeUp Infrastructure Development Plan after consultation with the Voluntary and Community Sector in the borough. The plan outlined the work that was to be commissioned as part of this first year of ChangeUp. It also set out the aims and objectives set by the Steering Group for improving the capacity of the local infrastructure by 2014.

The current organisations serving on the Steering Group, on behalf of the sector, can be found in the table below:

Heather Ball	Borough Director	Havering Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
Marie Edgar	Director	Volunteering Community Action Havering (VCAH)
Kim Guest	Chief Executive	Havering Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations (HAVCO)
Paul Kennard	Corporate Affairs Manager	Havering Primary Care Trust (PCT)
Amanda Lewsey	Project Manager	Social Economy Support Unit (SESU)
Joyce Tapper	Community Regeneration Manager	London Borough of Havering (LBH)

1.3 Research Report

This report is divided into four sections. The first section outlines the research methodology and the adaptations made to it during the research process to respond to problems experienced during the early stages of the research. The second section details the results of the research question by question. The third section presents an analysis of the research and includes additional statistics collected by local agencies. The final section summarises the conclusions drawn from the research and makes recommendations for further action.

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2. *Research Methodology*

The sample group was chosen based on the following two factors. Firstly, the organisations VCAH provide volunteering services to within the London Borough of Havering. Secondly, the organisations were to either be members of VCAH or have contact with VCAH in relation to volunteering issues. The sample size chosen was 200 organisations. The majority of these (170) were members of VCAH. The remaining 30 were other local voluntary and community sector organisations who have volunteers.

The data to be collected was to reflect:

- the number of volunteers
- the frequency of volunteering
- the hours they work
- the tasks they undertake
- where they come from – are they an employee volunteer, are they a member of the organisation, etc.
- monitoring information on individuals – sex, age, ethnic origin, employment status, borough of residence
- how long they have been volunteering
- what support is offered (if any) to volunteers – informal or formal volunteering experience
- the percentage who transfer into paid employment
- young people and volunteering
- support for volunteering from outside agencies
- gap analysis of support needed for particular groups
- barriers to volunteering

The original methodology proposed collection of the data using telephone questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed with the support of the VCAH staff to ensure that categories matched their own data. Where organisations needed to refer to their records in order to respond, the questionnaire was emailed or posted to them.

Of the 200 organisations telephoned only 34 assisted in completing the questionnaire (17%). It was decided to adapt the methodology to encourage additional responses. Those who had not responded to the initial contact were followed up by telephone and asked just four simple questions:

- 1) How many volunteers they had?
- 2) How often their volunteers gave their time to the organisation
- 3) How long each time?
- 4) What groups of people volunteered for them?

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By collecting this additional data we were able to gather information from a further 36 organisations. This brought the response rate up to 35%; doubling the initial response rate. In addition to this we were also able to introduce into the data set the responses about volunteers numbers from the other piece of research running concurrently with this one. This provided a further 60 local voluntary and community organisations using over 1500 volunteers.

Focus groups were established with the support of three local voluntary and community organisations. Each group was chosen as it represented a different client group that had been identified by the researchers and by VCAH as being proportionally under-represented in volunteering statistics previously collected. These groups were young people, parents with young children and members of minority ethnic communities.⁷

Each Focus Group was asked to consider the following three questions:

1. What volunteering do you do already?
2. Would you be interested in doing more volunteering?
3. If there was a local charity you were really interested in supporting what might get in the way of you giving up some of your time to volunteer for them?

A following issues were identified that had contributed to the initial low response to the telephone questionnaire.

1. Database

The database of contacts used was out of date with regard to some contacts

2. Insufficient Monitoring

Some smaller volunteer-led organisations had not collected the type of data we were requesting. A significant number of the larger staffed organisations were unable to comment on where their volunteers came from and how they were recruited. Many volunteers in Havering have volunteered with their organisation for so long that it was not clear how they had found the organisation.

3. Interview Fatigue

The data collection stage followed almost immediately after that of the other piece of work commissioned by the Havering ChangeUp Consortium. Some organisations who had already been interviewed for the other piece of work felt unable to co-operate with both exercises.

⁷ Home Office Citizenship Survey (2001)

4. Inaccurate Responses

This research was originally designed as a telephone questionnaire to minimize the incidences of interviewees not correctly understanding a question. However, as the majority of organisations interviewed requested that they be able to complete the questionnaire whilst consulting their records, the control the researcher had over understanding of the questions was reduced.

Alongside these factors was that of the research design itself. As with many pieces of research that are undertaken, if one were to replicate the exercise it is possible that an alternative method of data collection would be used and the questions phrased differently.

However, we are confident despite the relatively low response rate of 36%, with the additional data gathered from the 60 organisations who participated in the other research set that the data set will be sufficient to be of use to the infrastructure organisations in the borough as they develop their plan for the future.

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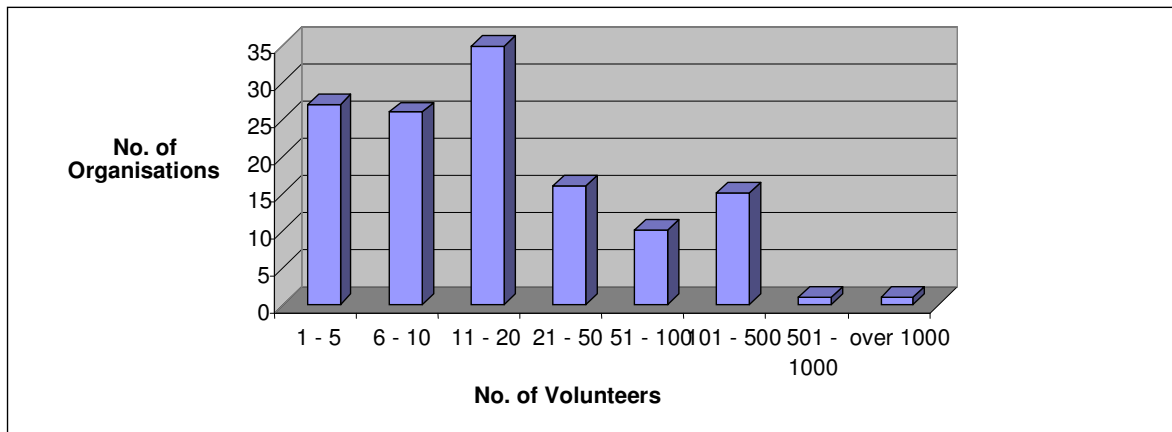
3. Research Results

There are four tiers of research results as outlined in the research methodology (section 2). Firstly, the question was asked of 131 voluntary and community organisations how many volunteers they had. The second tier of results relates to the additional two questions asked of the smaller sample of 72 organisations regarding how often and for how many hours their volunteers would give their time. The fourth tier of results outlines the responses of the 35 organisations that completed the entire questionnaire. The final tier is that of the responses of the focus groups as outlined in the research methodology.

3.1 Numbers of Volunteers

The graph below shows the number of volunteers each organisation interviewed stated they had.

Of the 131 respondents to this questionnaire one had over 1000 volunteers on its books. However, this organisation was a unique case in that it related to an annual activity for which it uses over 4000 volunteers. Because the organisation keeps all volunteers' details on one large database they were unable to break down the exact number of these volunteers that lived in or volunteered in the London Borough of Havering. For this reason, this organisation is excluded, for the purposes of statistical accuracy, from all questions relating to numbers of volunteers and hours worked per organisation.



Graph 1 – Numbers of Volunteers

The 130 organisations that are included in this response have 4,637 volunteers between them.

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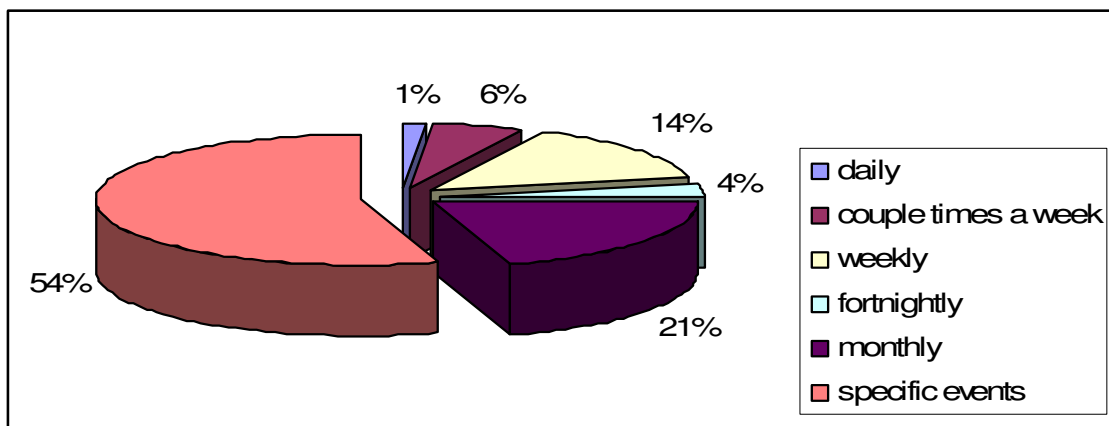
The most frequent categorisation noted amongst the organisations interviewed was that of between 11 and 20 volunteers (35 organisations). A further 27 and 26 organisations respectfully have either between 1 and 5 or between 6 and 10 volunteers. Therefore the great majority of organisations interviewed had 20 or fewer volunteers (67% of organisations).

However, a further 26 organisations did have between 21 and 100 volunteers (20%); 15 organisations had more than 100 volunteers but less than 500 (11%). There is also one further organisation that stated they had over 500 volunteers, but less than 1000.

On average the organisations interviewed had 36 volunteers each (not including the organisation that has over 4000 volunteers). Those organisations that did not have volunteers were not used in this calculation.

3.2 Frequency of Volunteering

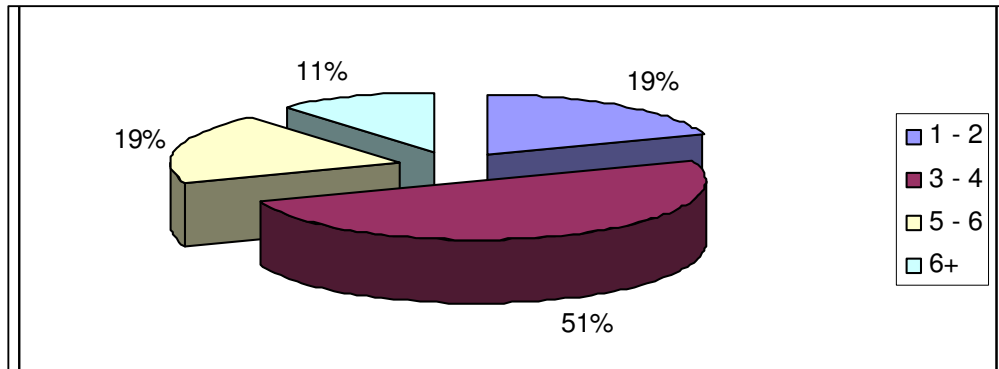
There were 64 respondents to this question. The highest proportion of volunteers give their time for specific fundraising events (54%) – on average giving three hours of their time for each event. However, only thirteen organisations 20% of those interviewed used volunteers on such an infrequent basis. Whereas 91% of organisations used volunteers on a monthly basis or more frequently and 72% of organisations had volunteers who worked for them on at least a weekly basis.



Graph 2 – Frequency of Volunteering

Of the remaining volunteers 21% volunteer monthly, 4% fortnightly and 14% weekly. A further 6% volunteer a couple of times a week and 1% volunteers across the borough do so on a daily basis.

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Graph 3 – Average number of Volunteering Hours

Over half (51%) of volunteers gave 3 and 4 hours at a time to volunteer or approximately half a day. A further 19% worked for less than that, from between 1 to 2 hours. The equivalent number, again 19%, work between 5 and 6 hours and finally 11% work a full day at a time of over 6 hours at a time. This indicates that almost a third (30%) of volunteers would be giving their time for the majority of the day at any one time.

The 61 organisations that provided information on the frequency of their volunteers' commitment shared between them 4,300 volunteers. Across an average year the volunteers of these organisations would give 1,664,346 hours to support voluntary and community organisations across the borough. This is the equivalent to 237,764 (7 hour) days or 850 full-time staff.

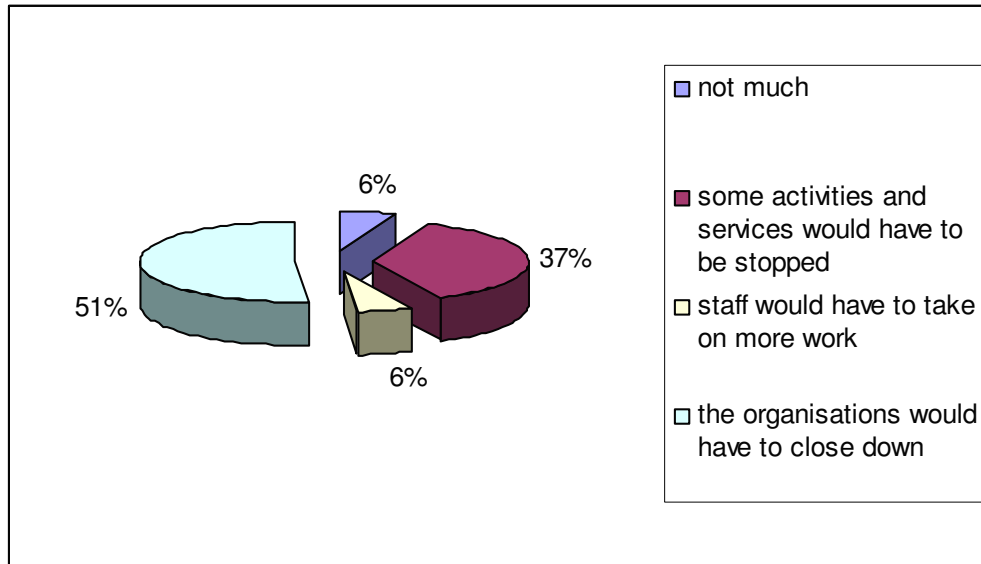
3.3 Role of Volunteers

The remainder of the data gathered is from the smaller sample of 34 voluntary and community organisations within the borough, who collectively have 1,258 volunteers. When asked to rate the importance of volunteers to their organisation on a scale of 1 – 10 (where 10 was 'very important') 82% scored at 10. A further 4 organisations scored 8 or above leaving only 6% stating that volunteers were not very important to their organisation (3 or lower).

For over half of the organisations interviewed the prospect of losing volunteers could lead to the organisation having to close down. This is illustrated in the graph on the following page.

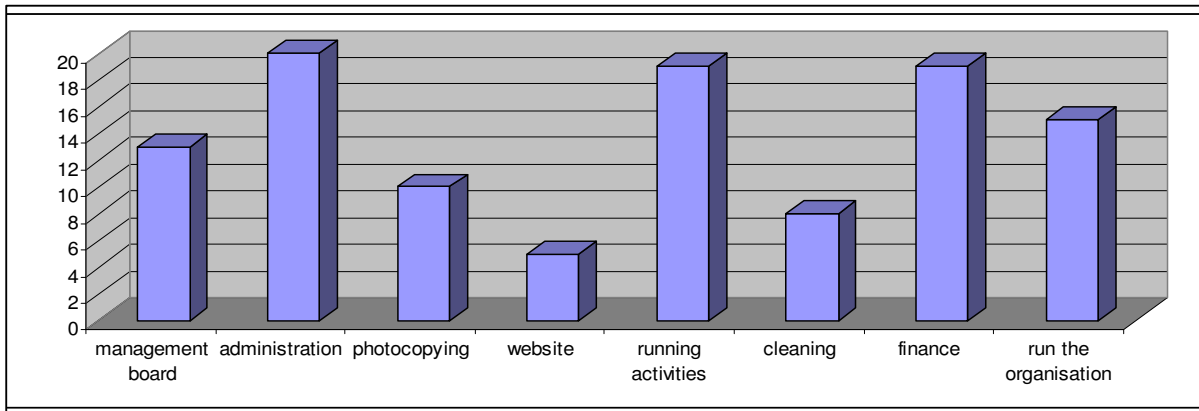
Over half of the organisations (51%) stated that their organisation would have to close down. 37% stated that some activities or services would have to be stopped. 6% stated that their paid staff would have to take on more work, with only 6% feeling that losing their volunteers would not affect them very much.

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Graph 4 – Effects of Losing Volunteers

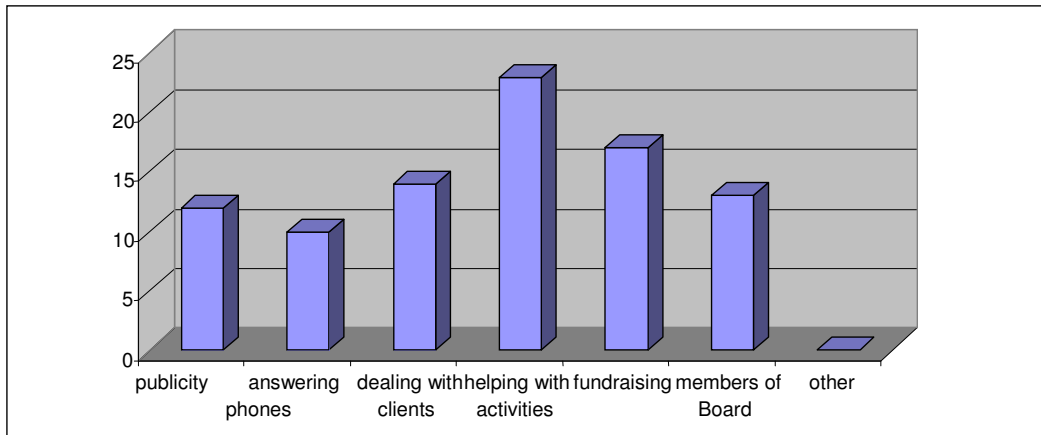
Organisations were asked what activities their volunteers assisted with. They were asked to select as many as were relevant. The two graphs below show the breakdown of activities that volunteers perform.



Graph 5.1 – Activities Undertaken by Volunteers

The second graph on the following page continues the results with further categories.

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Graph 5.2 – Activities Undertaken by Volunteers

The most prominent task that volunteers undertook was ‘helping with activities’ run by the organisation. In addition to these 23 organisations, a further 19 stated that volunteers actually ran activities on behalf of the organisation. Three other popular roles for volunteers were that of helping with administration tasks (20), finance (19) and fundraising (17).

Sixteen of the organisations interviewed stated that it was volunteers who ran the entire organisations. Thirteen organisations also referred to the members of their Management Board as being volunteers within their organisation.

Fourteen organisations also stated that their volunteers dealt with clients on behalf of the organisation. A couple of interviewees elaborated on this stating that when potential volunteers contact the organisation they are often keen to get involved in the activities for which they are known rather than back office tasks.

Other organisations did register a number of volunteers who undertook such behind the scenes tasks such as photocopying (10), website maintenance (5), publicity (12), answering phones (10) and cleaning (8).

3.4 Breakdown of Volunteers’ Monitoring Information

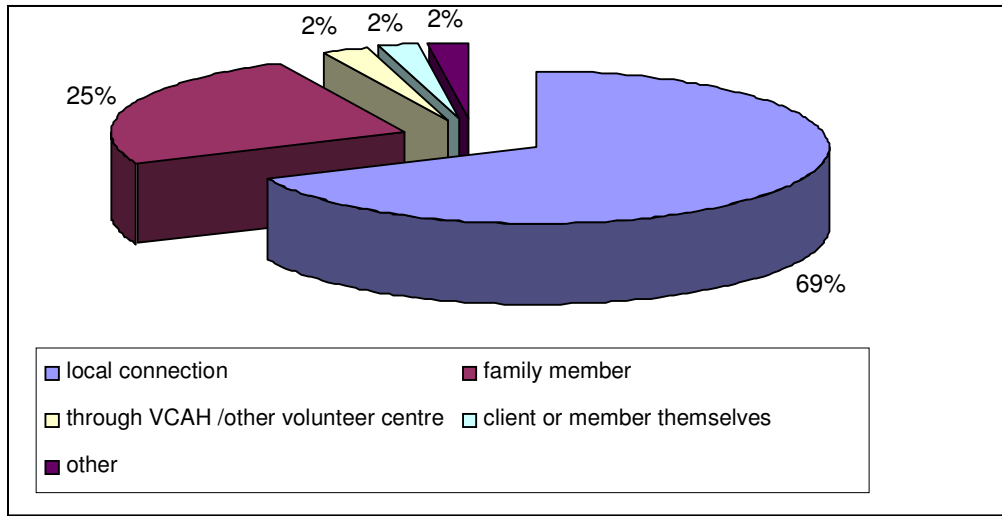
This next section relates to the monitoring information collected about each volunteer. It looks at areas such as paths into volunteering, the age, gender and ethnicity of volunteers. It also considers the employment status of volunteers, where they live and the time they have spent volunteering with the organisation.

A majority of the volunteers had become involved in the organisation they were working for because of a local connection (69%). A quarter of the volunteers had had a family

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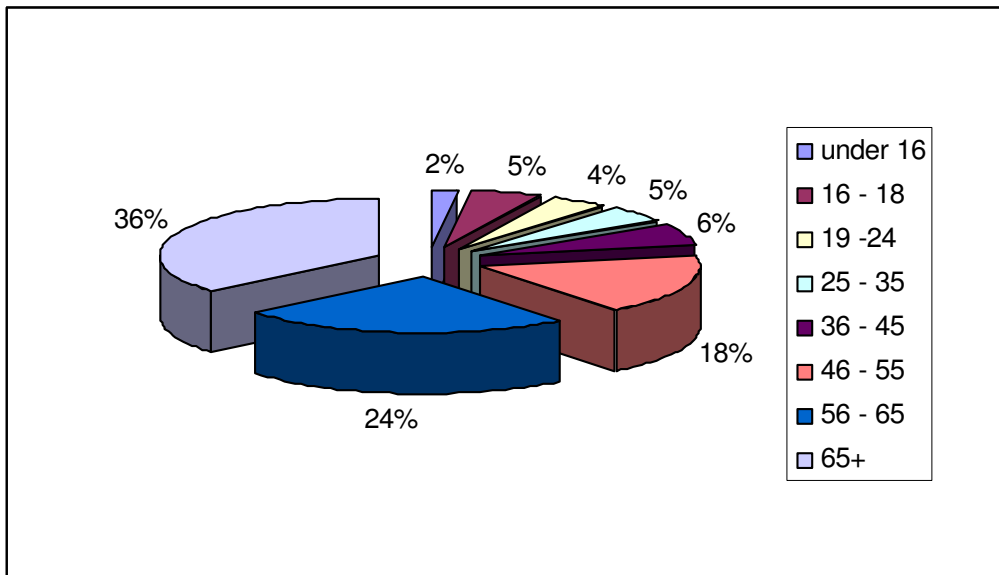
member use the service provided by the organisation. This had then encouraged them to volunteer. Only 6% of volunteers were members and clients of the organisation they volunteered for. The organisations that were interviewed identified only 2% of their volunteers as having no connection with the organisation before they were referred by VCAH or another such organisation.

The graph below illustrates the results.



Graph 6 – Paths into Volunteering

The graph below indicates the breakdown of the ages of volunteers who work within the organisations interviewed.

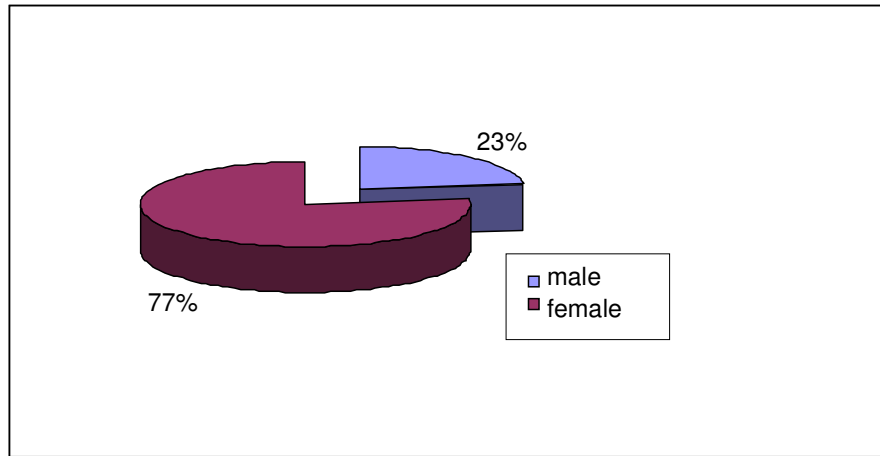


Graph 7 – Ages of Volunteers

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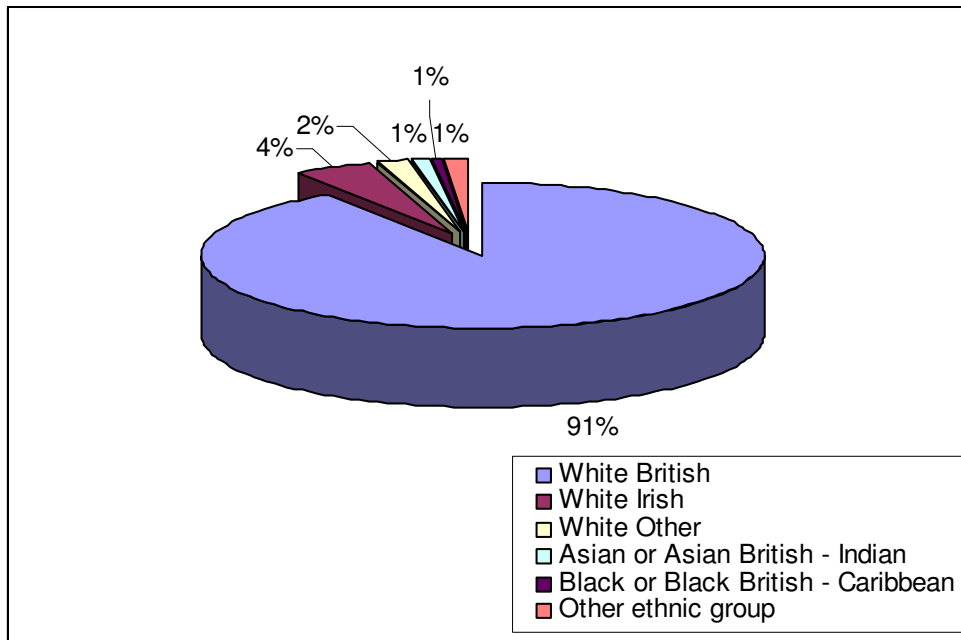
36% of volunteers in Havering are over the age of 65. A further 24% are between the ages of 55 and 65. Therefore 60% of all volunteers within the organisations interviewed are over the age of 55. There are few volunteers under the age of 35 and with 2% under 16, 5% between 16 and 18 and 4% in the 25 to 35 age brackets. A further 6% of volunteers are between the ages of 36 and 45 and 18% between 46 and 55.

In terms of gender diversity, over three quarters of volunteers in the organisations interviewed are female (77%) compared with 23% male volunteers. The graph below illustrates this:



Graph 8 – Gender of Volunteers

The ethnicity of volunteers within the organisations interviewed is illustrated in the graph below:



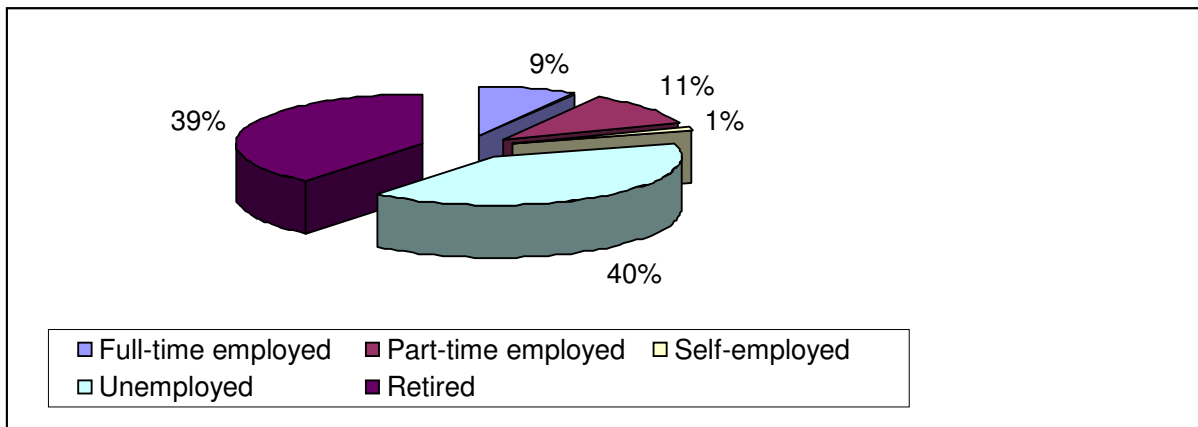
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Graph 9 – Ethnicity of Volunteers Breakdown

When asked about the ethnicity of their volunteers, organisations stated that 91% of their volunteers were White British. A further 4% were White Irish and 2% White Other. Black or Black British and Asian or Asian British account for 1% respectively of volunteers in the organisations interviewed. All other ethnic origins including Chinese were represented by the remaining 1% of volunteers.

Organisations were asked about the employment status of each of their volunteers. Those that were either unemployed (40%) or retired (39%) made up the majority of volunteers. A further 11% of volunteers were in part-time employment, 9% in full-time employment and 1% were self-employed.

Graph 10 – Employment Status



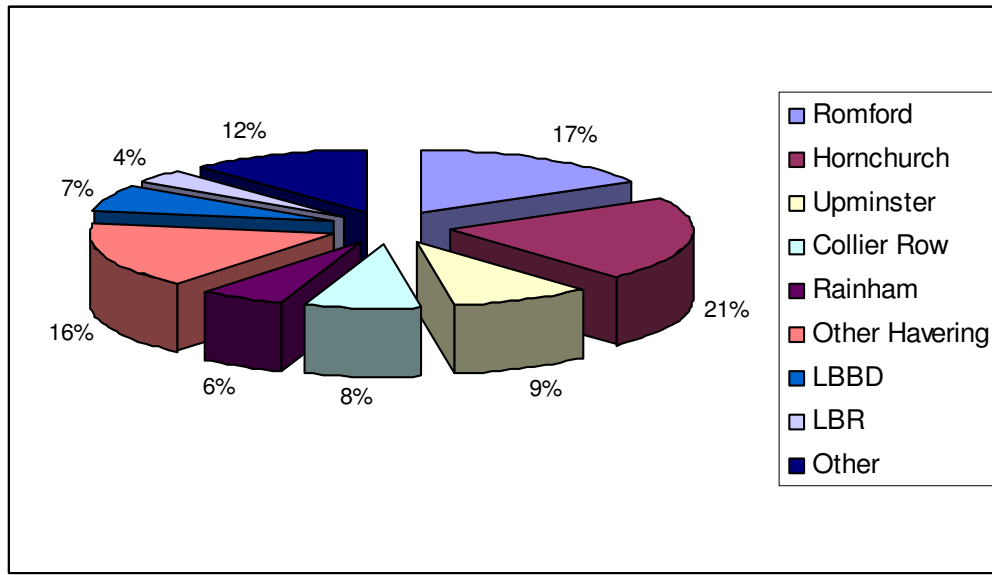
The geographical area that the volunteers came from was not information that many of the organisations interviewed recorded. This was particularly true of the larger organisations with higher numbers of volunteers. Those organisations with smaller numbers of volunteers found it easier to respond to this question because they often knew each of their volunteers well enough to give an accurate answer.

Nearly 80% of the volunteers lived in Havering as well as volunteering within the borough. The other 20% of volunteers came from the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (7%), the London Borough of Redbridge (4%) or from further a field (8%).

Of those that lived in Havering 21% lived in the Hornchurch area and 17% in Romford. A further 9% lived in Upminster, 8% in Collier Row and 6% in Rainham. The remaining 39% of volunteers were classified as living in other areas of Havering.

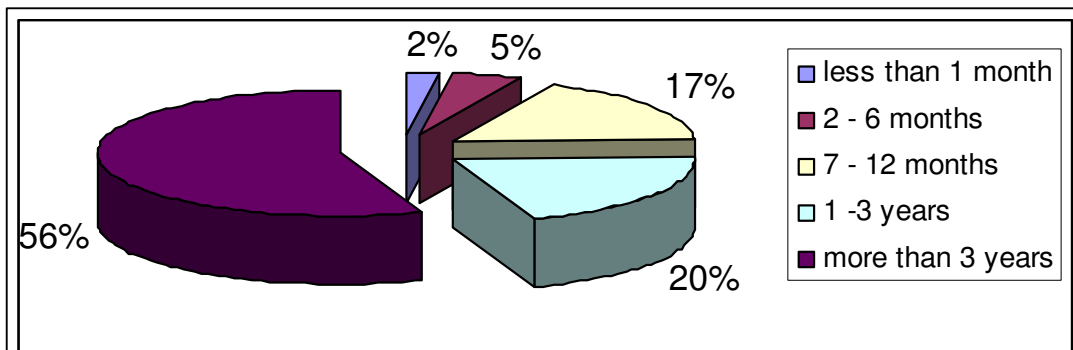
The graph on the following page illustrates these facts.

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Graph 11 – Geographical Area

Organisations were also asked about the length of time their volunteers had remained with them. Over half of the volunteers (56%) had been volunteering for the organisation for over 3 years. A further 20% of volunteers had been committed to the same organisation for over a year. The remaining 24% of the volunteers had volunteered for less than a year with 2% volunteering for less than one month, 5% for between 2 – 6 months and 17% up to a year, as illustrated below:



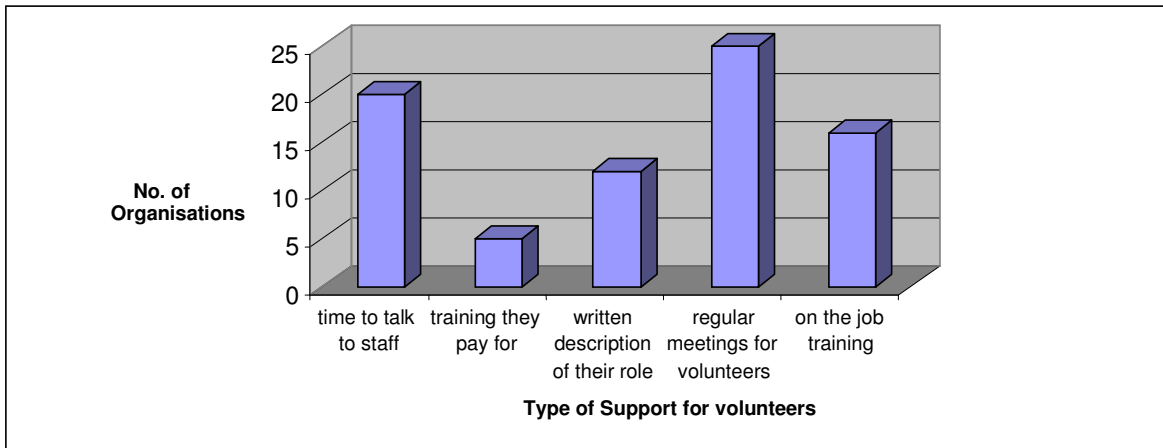
Graph 12 – Time with Organisation

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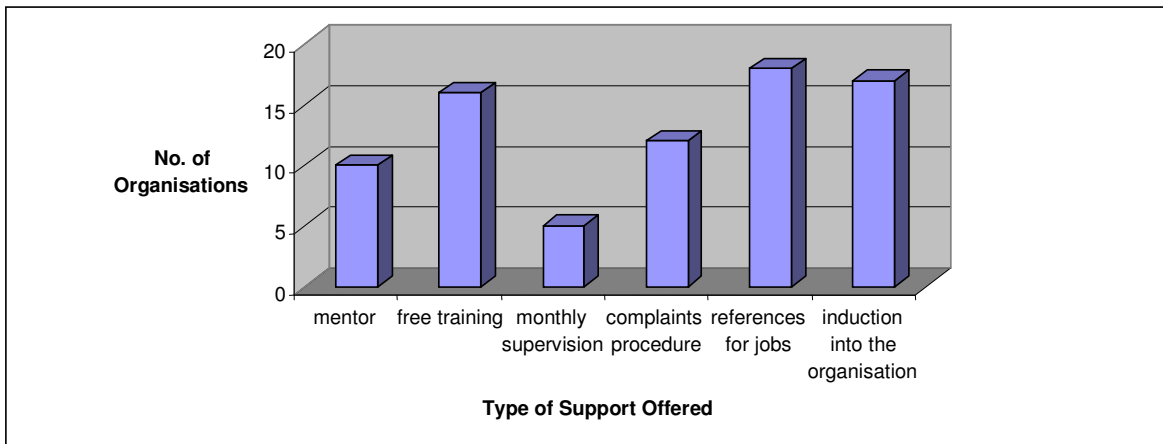
3.5 Support and Development

This section of the data gathered focuses on the quality of volunteer management and development that is offered by organisations.

The two graphs on the following page show the type of support that is offered by organisations to their volunteers.



Graph 13.1 – Types of support offered



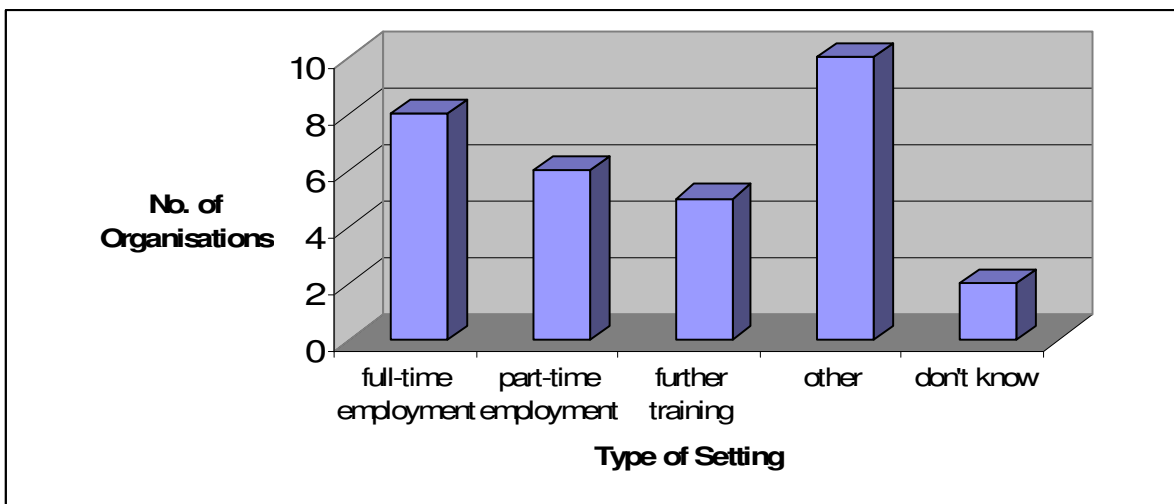
Graph 13.2 – Types of support offered

Of those organisations that were interviewed 5 did not offer any additional support to their volunteers. Of the remaining 29 organisations over 80% held regular meetings for their volunteers (25 organisations) and 66% offered volunteers opportunities to talk to members of staff.

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Just over half of the organisations provided volunteers with an induction to the organisation (17), free (to the volunteer) and on the job training (17 and 16 organisations respectively). 60% of organisations will provide their volunteers with references for jobs when they choose to move on. A further 40% of organisations provide written descriptions of volunteering roles and a complaints procedure. 33% of organisations offer a mentoring scheme for volunteers. 17% provide access to training that volunteers need to pay for and the same number offer monthly supervisions for volunteers.

Only 11 of the organisations interviewed (35%) kept any form of record of volunteers who moved on from their organisation. Some of these records were informal as the organisations concerned had a small enough number of volunteers to be able to recall from memory who had left the organisation and where they had gone (with 73% of respondents having 20 volunteers or fewer). The organisations interviewed indicated only 31 volunteers moved on from their organisation in the last year, which is a rate of loss of 8% a year.



Graph 14 – Moving On

Of those 8%, 8 went onto full-time employment; 6 into part-time employment; 5 left to undertake further training; 10 to other situations and for 2 of the volunteers who left the organisations were unsure of what they left to do. Overall this means that 60% of volunteers who left for other situations went on to paid employment or into further training.

Eight of the organisations interviewed stated that they had young people volunteering for them. Of these organisations 5 stated that they needed to provide constant supervision; 2 mentioned the additional support needs of their younger volunteers and 2 referred to the need to provide more flexible volunteering hours in order to encourage younger volunteers. One of the organisations said they had extra support from their umbrella body to help them support their younger volunteers.

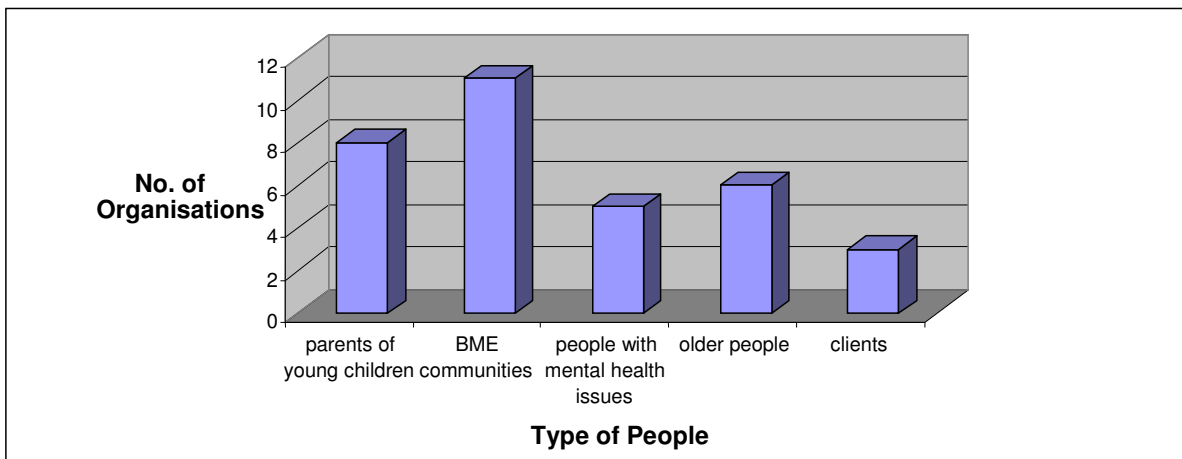
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Of the organisations that accepted younger volunteers, two said that they needed to offer more flexible times to volunteer, 3 groups stated that younger people needed more support than other volunteers. 5 organisations stated that they had to give their younger volunteers constant supervision. A further 5 specified that they did have to offer additional support. 20 organisations who don't have young people volunteering in their organisations would consider it in the future. 10 organisations would not.

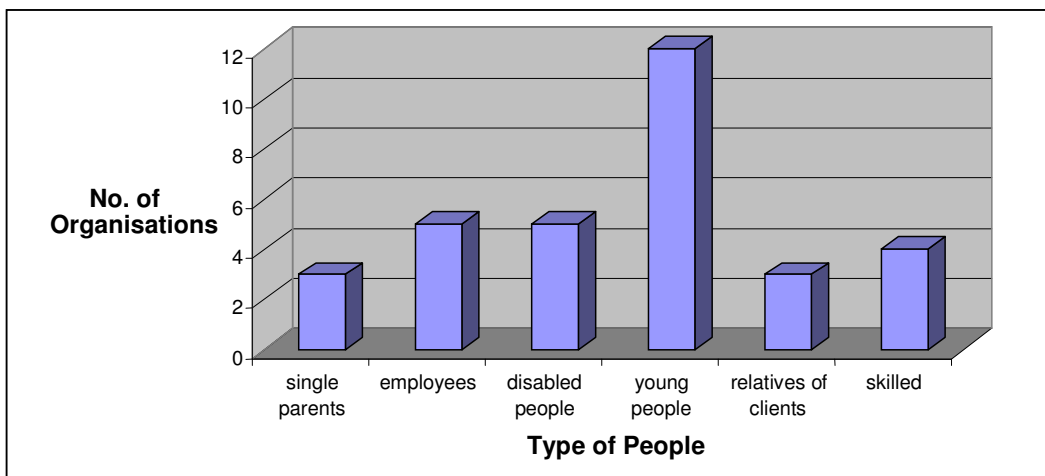
A further 23 organisations who did not already have younger volunteers responded when asked if they would consider taking on young people. Nearly one third stated that they would not consider it; and two thirds said they might in the future.

When asked about employee volunteering schemes only two organisations stated that they had had volunteers placed with them through this route.

The two graphs below illustrate the types of people that the organisations interviewed had difficulties in recruiting



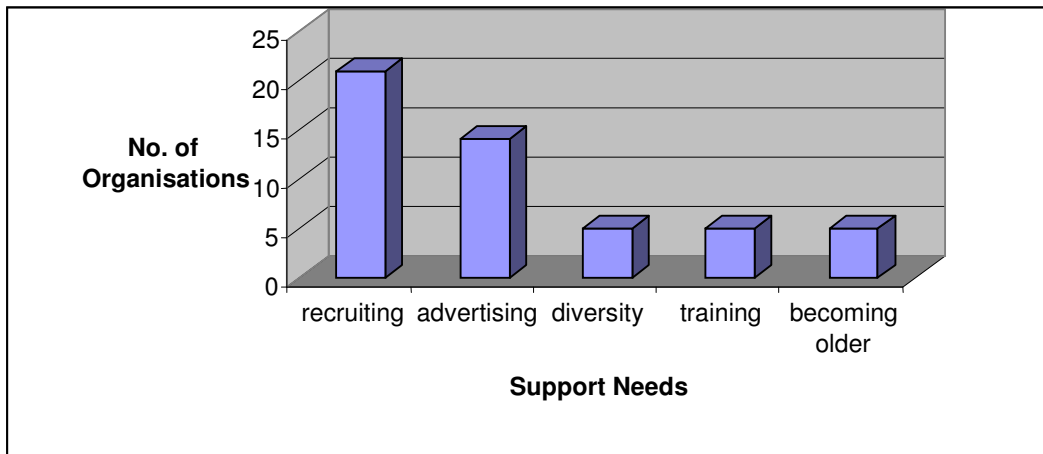
Graph 15.1 – Recruitment Issues



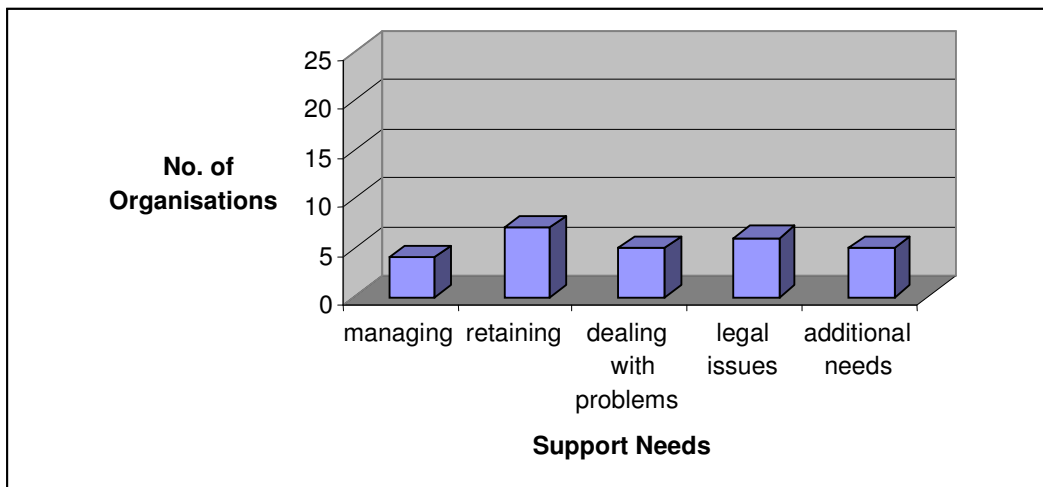
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Graph 15.2 – Recruitment Issues

Twenty-three organisations stated that they had difficulty in recruiting volunteers. Young people (52%) and people from BME communities (48%) were considered the hardest people to recruit as volunteers. A quarter of the organisations stated that they struggled with recruiting parents with young children and 35% with older people. Other groups of people mentioned were disabled people (22%), people with mental health issues (22%), clients (13%), single parents (13%), relatives (13%), skilled workers (17%) and volunteers that come through an employee volunteering scheme (22%).



Graph 16.1 – Support Needs



Graph 16.2 – Support Needs

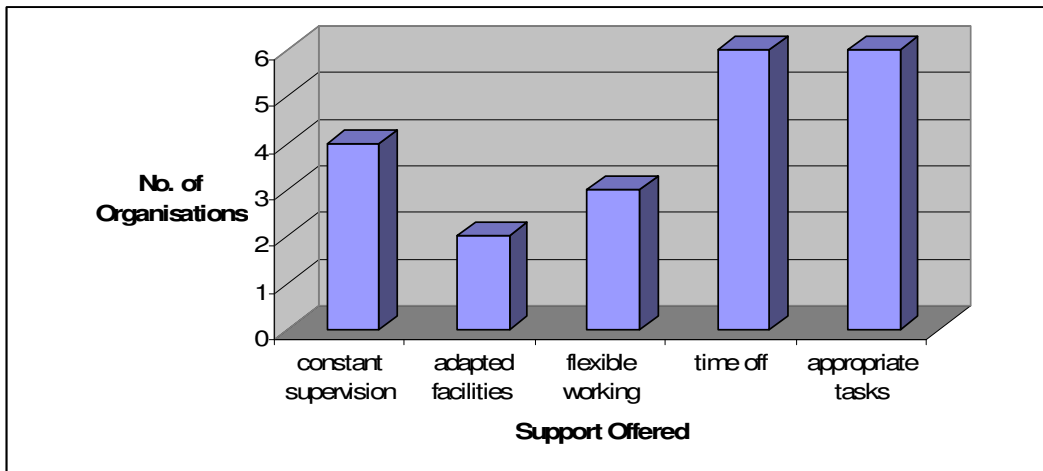
Twenty-six organisations (84%) requested support with issues concerning volunteers. Recruiting volunteers was the type of support most requested, with 84% of the organisations looking for support requesting help in this area. Advertising their organisation to potential volunteers was the second most requested type of support

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(56%). On average five organisations requested support with each of the following issues: managing volunteers, retaining volunteers, dealing with problems, legal issues, additional needs of particular volunteers, creating a more diverse volunteer team, training volunteers and replacing a volunteer community that is getting older.

Of the twenty-six organisations who requested support with volunteering issues over half of them (58%) were looking for support with three or more issues. The remaining 42% stated that they thought they might only need support with one or two issues.

Thirty organisations responded to the questions regarding volunteers with additional support needs. Of these organisations 9 currently had volunteers to whom they offered additional support to that normally provided. The graph below illustrates the type of support they offer:



Graph 17 – Additional Support Offered

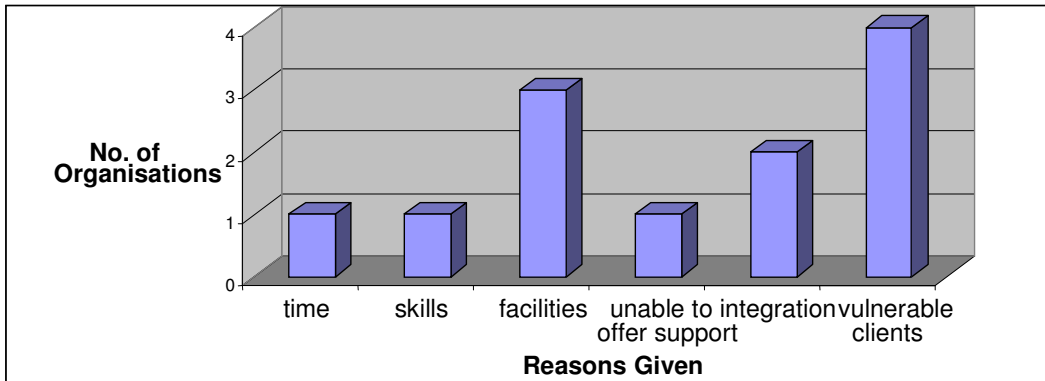
Additional time off for volunteers and providing appropriate tasks were the two most common support measures organisations had put in place (67%). Other support measures included constant supervision (44%), flexible working (33%) and adapting facilities to suit the needs of volunteers (22%).

Twenty-six organisations responded when asked if they would be willing to take on volunteers with additional support needs if there was a support network available externally. Of these, 73% said that they would be willing if the support was available. Seven organisations said they would not consider it. The graph below shows the reasons why.

The two primary reasons given by organisations for not being able to take on volunteers with additional support needs is that they themselves work with vulnerable clients and they feel it would be an inappropriate environment for some volunteers (4 organisations) and that they do not have the necessary facilities (3). Two organisations stated that one

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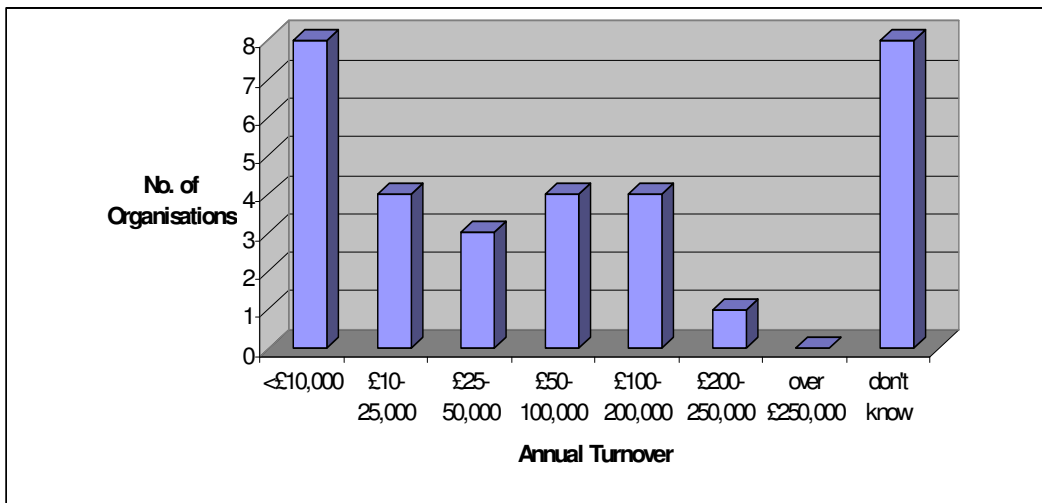
of the reasons they had for not being willing to take on volunteers with additional support needs was that it would be difficult to integrate them into the existing staff team. One organisation commented on volunteers potentially not having the right skills; one that it would take up a significant amount of time to supervise such volunteers and as such was not viable in their organisation; and one organisation felt they would not be able to offer the right level of support. The graph below illustrates the responses:



Graph 18 – Barriers to Taking on Volunteers with Additional Support Needs

3.6 General Information

This final section of data relates to the general information collected from the interviewees. It covers the areas of annual turnover, sources of finance, legal structures, charity registration and staffing levels.

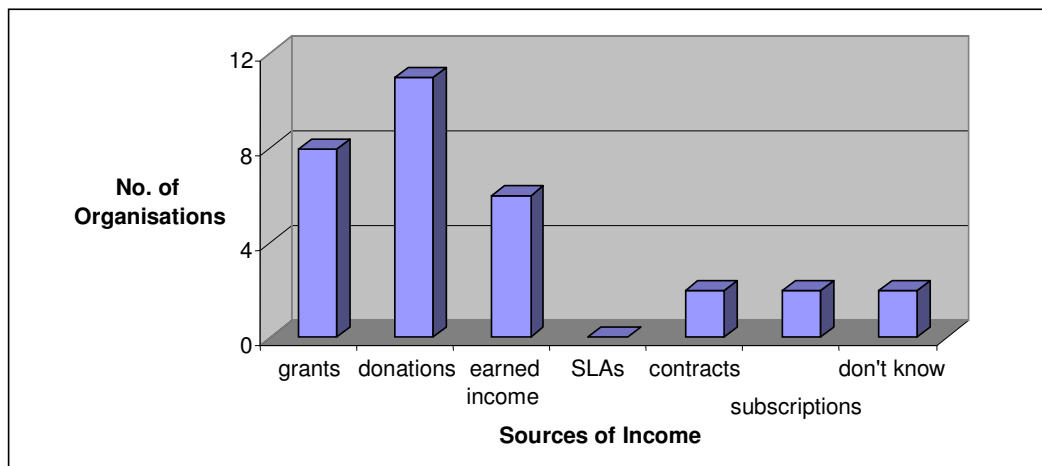


Graph 19 – Annual Turnover

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23% of the organisations had an annual turnover of less than £10,000. None had an annual turnover of more than £250,000. Amongst the remaining organisations, 63% had an annual turnover of less than £50,000 and 25% of between £50,000 and £250,000.

When asked about the organisation's main source of income the majority of organisations stated that they raised money through donations (36%) and grants (26%). Nineteen percent of the organisations interviewed undertook income generating activities which were their main source of income. The remaining organisations raised their income through either subscriptions (6%) or through contracts (6%). None of the organisations interviewed had a Service Level Agreement as their main source of income. The two remaining organisations (6%) did not know the answer to the question.



Graph 20 – Sources of Income

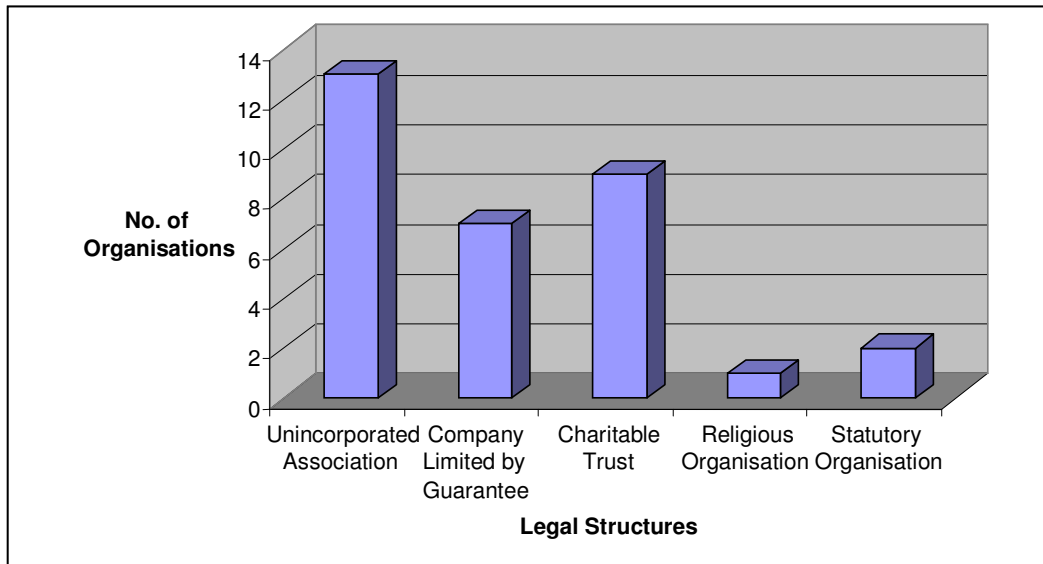
The main group of respondents were unincorporated associations with no legal entity of their own (41%). None of these organisations had any staff and most relied on donations. Their turnovers were likely to be under £10,000, although 3 of these unincorporated associations had an annual turnover of between £10,000 and £100,000.

Nine of the organisations were Charitable Trusts and seven were registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee. One religious organisation, which for legal purposes came under their national church denomination, and two statutory organisations, also took part in the research.

Of these organisations 75% were registered charities. Of the six organisations that were not registered charities: three were unincorporated associations, one was a company limited by guarantee and the remaining two were statutory organisations for whom it was not an option.

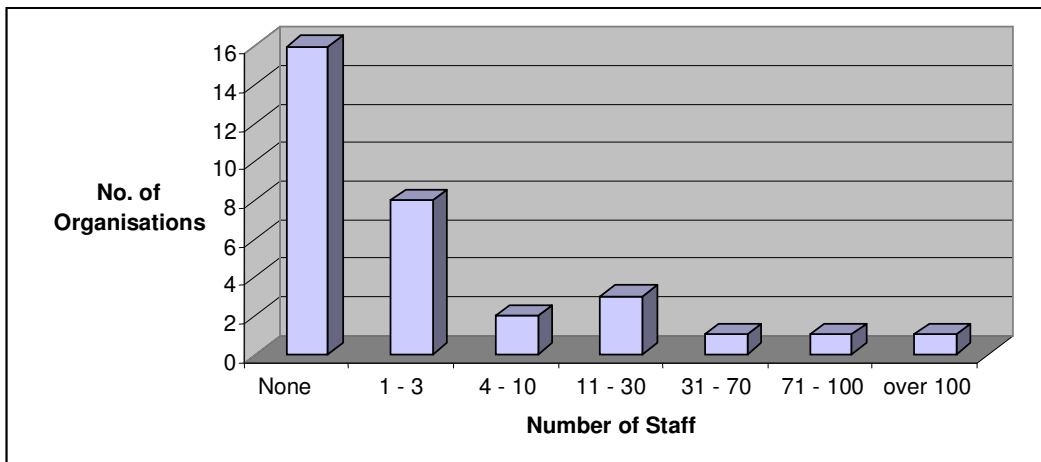
The graph on the following page illustrates the breakdown of the different legal structures used by the organisations who took part in the research.

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Graph 21 – Legal Structures

Half of the organisations interviewed had no paid staff and relied purely on volunteer labour. Of the remaining 16 organisations that do employ paid staff 60% have less than 10 staff. Only three organisations have between 11 – 30 staff and one organisation fits into each of the remaining categories: 31 – 70, 70 – 100 and over 100.



Graph 22 – Number of Staff

Organisations currently without any paid members of staff were asked whether they thought they would employ someone in the next five years. Nearly 60% of these organisations stated they did not know whether they would or not; 24% said they would not make such a move and 16% of the organisations were planning to become employers.

3.7 Barriers to Volunteering

Parents of Young Children

The individuals that took part in the focus group were part of a parents and toddlers group based at a church in the London Borough of Havering that meets on a weekly basis. All the parents have children under school age.

When asked what volunteering they already undertook the parents responded in the following ways:

- *2 ½ hours per week for local primary school during pre-school time*
- *crèche helper once a month*
- *parents peer support group leader twice a month*
- *church group every other month*
- *I help with a youth group once a fortnight aged 14-18, and I help out at crèche once a month on a Sunday and at a parents group once a month to look after children*
- *I often baby sit for people and child mind one day a week for a friend*
- *I help out with the crèche at church once a month on a Sunday*
- *I also help out with the crèche for a parents group once a month*

The parents were then asked if they would consider undertaking anymore volunteering at this time. Below are a selection of their responses:

- *I help with a youth group once a fortnight aged 14-18, and I help out a crèche*
- *not at the moment due to present pressures of bringing up a family.*
- *yes, when the children are older and less dependant on me.*
- *I would love to be able to volunteer more but I don't have any more free time.*
- *I have 2 children 3 & 6 years old and I am thinking of returning to work part time when both my children are at school.*
- *I would love to be able to volunteer more but I have a 4 month old baby, and so it is not possible at the moment.*

When asked if they would consider volunteering for a charity whose social mission particularly interested them all the parents responded that they did not have the capacity. One parent commented that finding a part-time job would have to take priority over further volunteering. Another parent stated that if they did have the capacity they would need to ensure that travel costs were provided.

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Young People

A second focus group was run with a group of young people from a youth project. When asked about what volunteering they already undertook some of the young people gave the following responses:

- *I help out at a youth group twice a month for 14-18 years old.*
- *I also help out at a youth group twice a month.*
- *I am involved in children's work for a week during the summer holidays.*
- *I first started volunteering with youth groups 3 years ago.*
- *I now help out at a youth group twice a month for year 10 upwards.*

The young people were then asked if they would like to undertake anymore volunteering. Below is a selection of their responses:

- *I am interested in doing more volunteering when I am older, but at the moment I need to earn some money part time to save up for university after 6th form college.*
- *I enjoy working with youth and would be interested in more opportunities.*
- *I am experienced in web design and computers and could possibly put that to use for a charity.*

When asked about a specific volunteering opportunity for a charity that the young people believed in, a number of the young people responded in the following way:

- *It depends if I was given some expenses for my bus fare and lunch.*
- *It depends if it affects my studies and how much time was needed.*
- *One problem I have is that I have health problems and so I have to be careful how much I do in addition to my work.*
- *It depends how much time it involves.*

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BME Communities

The final focus group involved individuals from BME communities who lived in the borough. Many of the individuals were already volunteering in their communities either for neighbours or friends or within the religious institutions. However, in most cases they did not consider this work to be volunteering rather “just what they do for each other”. Opportunities for volunteering outside of their own community were often limited because of cultural roles.

A number of the participants were refugees and they particularly raised issues around language stating that volunteering opportunities offered often needed better English language skills than they felt they had. They talked of the difficulty of balancing the demands of family life and trying to sort out benefits, housing and legal issues. These made committing to a regular volunteering opportunity difficult.

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4. Analysis of Findings

This section of the report will take each of the areas of results and present an analysis. Further data gathered from local volunteering organisations will also be introduced.

The relatively low response rate of the organisations approached to take part in the research was disappointing. However, with the adjusting of the research methodology to include two further tiers of research we believe that the results of the research present an adequate response to the research questions. Even at the bottom tier of the research methodology, with 34 respondents, twenty percent of VCAH's membership took part in the research, representing 1,258 of the borough's volunteers.

4.1 Volunteering in Havering

There is a large and well-developed volunteering culture in the London Borough of Havering. Even if this research had achieved a 100% response rate there was never any expectation of capturing all incidents of volunteering. The 130 organisations that took part in the first tier of research represented 4,637 of the borough's volunteers.

It is suggested that based on the experience of the local infrastructure organisations there are as many as 1,100 voluntary and community organisations within the borough. With schools, religious organisations and informal volunteering added to this list the number of people who actually volunteer in the borough increases dramatically. It could be reasonably approximated that there could be as many as 20,000 people who volunteer in the borough.

Most volunteers offer their time for specific events, perhaps even just once a year. The average time that a volunteer gives per session is between 3 and 4 hours, or half a day. Even at what might be considered a low level of volunteering, across 64 organisations that responded to questions about frequency, volunteers were giving 69,348 days in volunteer labour each year. That is the equivalent of 206 full-time staff.

This not only suggests that there is significant volunteering activity already happening in the borough, but also that there is potential for considerable growth in this area. If those who already volunteer just once a year, doubled their involvement to twice a year the voluntary and community organisations in the borough would benefit from an additional 37,448 days in volunteer labour a year. This of course does not even include those who are not yet involved in any volunteering activity.

Because the Change Up report aims to identify how the local volunteering infrastructure can be developed in the borough, this research was focused around volunteering activity done through voluntary and community organisations. Nearly two thirds of the organisations that took part relied purely on volunteer labour to keep them going. This

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figure confirms the levels of volunteering identified through the larger group of voluntary and community organisations that took part in the Governance Mapping for the Havering ChangeUp Steering Consortium in 2005. In that research 60% of voluntary and community organisations interviewed had no paid staff and relied on volunteers.

In this research 82% of the organisations interviewed considered volunteers to be vital to the running of their organisation. Only 6% of organisations stated that losing volunteers would not have a significant impact on the running of their organisation.

The voluntary and community sector within the London Borough of Havering is heavily reliant on volunteer labour; as are the clients of these organisations who receive services from them. The support of volunteers and the organisations that host them then becomes very important in order to ensure a continuation of services to local people. Many organisations would simply collapse or have to severely reduce their services if their volunteers were to leave.

Although the evidence suggests that volunteers work in all the areas of the organisations, there were a number of comments about volunteers generally being attracted to a volunteering position because of the nature and core activity of the charity, such as counselling, client support or caring for sick animals. Those interviewees commented that they found it more challenging to recruit to the more generic roles, such as administration or bookkeeping. Although only raised by a number of interviewees as they expanded on their response, it would be useful to see whether this is in fact a general trend or specific to those organisations that raised it as an issue.

The experience of VCAH is that they have a great number of people enquiring about opportunities to volunteer in administration, however not all have the necessary skills to do so, or are unaware of what such a responsibility entails. Others may have completed a returning to work course and are looking for experience before entering the employment market. This often means they are only looking for short-term volunteering commitments.

Less than half of the organisations included the members of their Board of Management as part of their volunteer workforce. This raises the following questions. Firstly, if Board Members are not being included in figures then the level of volunteering in the borough is even higher than is suggested here. Secondly, if there a mismatch between the volunteering infrastructure's definition of Board Members as volunteers and organisations' understanding there could be the potential for accessing this untapped market and developing new services.

4.2 Breakdown of Volunteers' Monitoring Information

It is also worth noting that the vast majority of volunteers get into volunteering through informal paths. The responses indicate that most people volunteer for organisations and activities that happen in their own area or which they have heard about from friends, family or their social network.

Those organisations interviewed identified only 2% of their volunteers had been placed with them through VCAH or other similar organisations. This was particularly interesting as VCAH's statistics identify that it is currently working with over 1,300 volunteers in 170 voluntary and community organisations across the borough.⁸

There are two probable explanations for this. Firstly, record keeping in these organisations may be limited and informal. The second explanation is that once a volunteer is placed in an organisation their motivation for volunteering – be that personal, emotional or professional, becomes much more prominent than the route they took into volunteering. Rewording the questions in subsequent research may help to clarify this point

It is clear that the local infrastructure organisations are playing a vital role in developing volunteering in the borough and this work needs to be supported and encouraged. The Volunteer Centre has a particular role in attracting those new to volunteering and younger volunteers.

The majority of volunteers within the organisations interviewed are over the age of 55. There were very few young people with the organisations interviewed only recording 7% under the age of 18 and a further 4% between the ages of 18 and 25. This is maybe to be expected both because people who are retired have more time to offer as volunteers and also because the London Borough of Havering has a higher than average number of residents over the age of 65 across England and Wales.⁹

What is particularly interesting is a comparison between the statistics on age gathered as part of this research and those of VCAH. The graph on the next page shows a breakdown of VCAH's active volunteers by age. Some of the categories of ages differ by one year, but this is not enough to cause any significant variance.

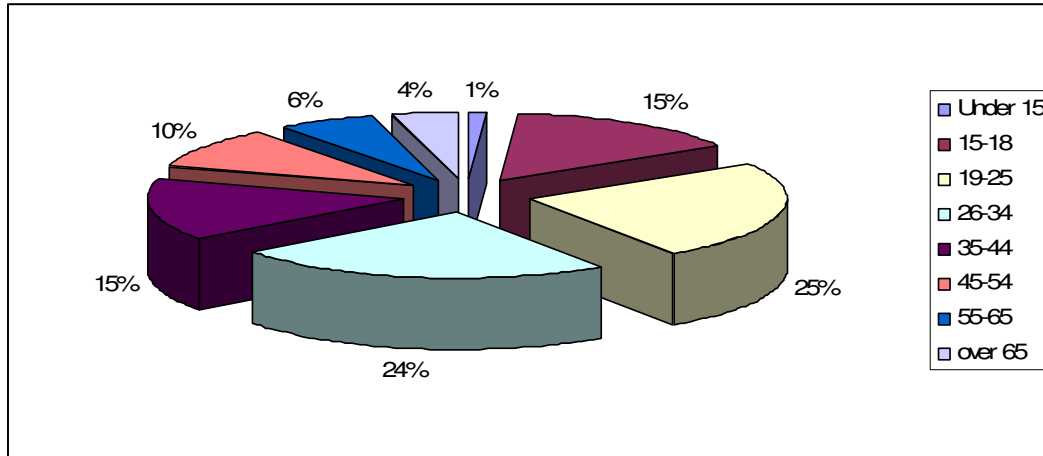
VCAH places a far higher proportion of volunteers in those age groups than is representative. Forty one percent of its clients are under 25, whereas under 25 year olds only make up 11% of the volunteer workforce. The same is true for the 25 – 35 and 36 – 45 years olds who make up only 5% and 6% of the volunteer workforce, yet amongst VCAH's clients they represent 24% and 15% respectively.

⁸ VCAH Business Plan 2005 - 2008

⁹ <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/AreaProfile2.do?tab=2>, accessed 17/02/06

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At the older end of the spectrum, well-represented in the overall volunteering population, the opposite is true. Where the over 65 year olds make up 60% of the volunteer workforce in the borough, only 10% of VCAH's clients are from that age group.



Graph 23 – VCAH Age Breakdown 2005

There are two possible reasons for this difference. In Havering VCAH has only been in operation since 2001. Many volunteers' involvement in local community and voluntary organisations, in particular those that are maybe older, pre-date the volunteer centres. This was illustrated at a Volunteering Awards ceremony held in Havering in 2005 where a number of individuals were being celebrated for service of more than 40 years as volunteers within their organisations.¹⁰

The second reason for this variance in figures could be attributed to way VCAH has developed its services in response to needs in the borough. They have developed and worked in partnership with a number of specific projects for encouraging under-represented groups into volunteering including young people, people with mental health problems and those with additional support needs. The special projects that have been developed are reflected in their statistics.

Those organisations that do not need the service they offer – often older volunteers already established in organisations will not choose to use it; but those who need the service will find additional and appropriate support there to ensure equal access to volunteering opportunities.

The organisations interviewed stated that their volunteers were predominantly female (77%). This is also the experience of VCAH who record 73% of their clients as female.¹¹

¹⁰ VCAH, 2005

¹¹ VCAH, 2005

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At first glance, the ethnic breakdown of volunteers appears fairly representative of the borough's ethnic mix. However, many organisations found it very difficult to recruit volunteers from other minority ethnic communities, and subsequently had none; whereby a few organisations specialising in working with the minority ethnic communities had a disproportionate number of non-white volunteers. Twenty-seven organisations only had volunteers who classed themselves as White British, Irish or White Other. The volunteers from other ethnic groups are concentrated in a small number of organisations.

Again the statistics gathered from the organisations as part of this research vary considerably from VCAH's own database. VCAH's client base is much more diverse than the general volunteering population. VCAH record that 42% of their clients are from ethnic groups other than White British or Irish; this compares to only 9% in the general volunteering population.¹² This again points to VCAH's ability to facilitate the participation of under-represented groups in volunteering in the borough.

The data showed that most of the volunteers in the borough were either retired (39%) or unemployed (40%). This figure for unemployed people or more accurately those 'not in work' rather crudely includes full-time students. Only 21% of volunteers were in any type of employment, with only 9% of these being employed full-time.

The same data for VCAH shows that of their client group only 8% are retired. More than half of their clients are not in work, including 28% are students. A further 35% are in employment, 32% of which are in full-time employment.

Again there are significant divergences in the data between VCAH's client base and the research undertaken for ChangeUp. This confirms the earlier suggestion that older, retired volunteers are either choosing not to use the services offered by VCAH when they look for volunteering opportunities or their volunteering placements pre-date the volunteer centre in the borough. Many are placed by the local Business Education Partnership as a part of their training to assist those about to retire.

VCAH seem to be successful in encouraging under-represented groups such as those in employment and students into volunteering placements; whilst also working with many local unemployed people.

The data collected from the research showed that 77% of volunteers in the borough lived in Havering: of these 21% came from the Hornchurch area and 17% from Romford. VCAH clients are mainly from the London Borough of Havering with only 2% living elsewhere but volunteering in Havering. This is to be expected as VCAH remit is purely for the London Borough of Havering and other volunteer centres serve the neighbouring boroughs.

¹² VCAH, 2005

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The final piece of monitoring information collected from organisations was that of length of service of their volunteers. More than half of all volunteers had stayed within the same organisation for over three years. With some volunteers being congratulated on 40 years service this particular categorisation is very limited and breaking it down further may have produced some interesting results. However, what this statistic does illustrate is that if the volunteering experience is of high quality individuals are willing to commit to an organisation for the long term.

This particular data also shows that there is a healthy intake of new volunteers – a quarter of all the volunteers within the organisation's interviewed had arrived within the last year. Compared with the recorded loss rate of 8% a year this suggests that organisations are creating a significant number of new volunteer placements within their organisations.

4.3 Support and Development

The research reported a drop out rate of only 8% in the last year. However, only 11 organisations were able to answer this question. Although this could suggest that the quality of people's volunteering experience is high enough to ensure their commitment for the long term, this may only be the case in 11 out of the 34 of the organisations interviewed.

Twenty-nine out of thirty-four organisations did offer support to their volunteers. It is, however, a concern that five organisations offered nothing in the way of support. Although three of these had less than 5 volunteers the other two organisations had 12 and 20 volunteers respectively.

Nearly all of the remaining organisations offered meetings for volunteers to attend. About half of the organisations also offered inductions into the organisation, free training, opportunities to talk to staff and references for jobs. Areas for development in terms of volunteer support might be identified as written descriptions of roles, complaints procedures, mentoring support and regular supervisions. Around a third of the organisations offered these types of support.

Although questions have been raised already about the reliability of the retention rates suggested by this research, what is interesting is that 60% of volunteers who left organisations went on into paid employment or training. It would be worthwhile to research this area in more depth. Volunteering has long been assumed as a successful intermediate stage before individuals move into employment or further training. This limited data would confirm that assumption.

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Certainly VCAH have found that universities and employers are asking students and graduates about their volunteering experience as a way of judging their suitability. Indeed most universities have a student volunteering centre of some sort.

There was general consensus that it is difficult to recruit younger volunteers and that many organisations would be keen to do so. Those organisations who already have young people volunteering for them state the need for a more flexible attitude towards their younger volunteers.

Similarly, members of minority ethnic communities were also reported to be hard to recruit and the barriers experienced by members of these communities, as well as those for parents of young children and young people are described in more detail in Section 4.5.

Smaller numbers of organisations were keen to recruit volunteers from other groups within the community but struggled. Similarly, only two organisations had been successful in recruiting volunteers through employee volunteering schemes. As much of the emphasis from Government is on recruiting under-represented groups and organisations within Havering are keen to recruit such individuals some work could be done to facilitate this process.

The highest support need expressed by the organisations represented here was recruitment of volunteers. This was followed by a need for support with the 'promotion of the organisation'. This suggests that organisations feel strongly that they are lacking the necessary skills and resources to promote themselves in the best way possible to the kind of volunteers they would like to recruit. It is important too that the other requests for support are met by the volunteering infrastructure organisations to ensure that a complete package of support is available for organisations.

The organisations interviewed were split almost in half about the level of support they required. Half of the organisations requested support with just one or two issues; these types of requests might suit a modular approach to support services where organisations can access individual elements of support as and when they require it. The other half of the organisations were looking for a considerable amount of support. This could be provided in some form of a comprehensive support package – maybe with an annual premium charged for higher levels of support.

Seventy seven percent of organisations interviewed either have or would consider recruiting volunteers that have additional support needs. For those that already have such volunteers within their organisations they either have access to or have created the additional support structures that are required. These organisations highlighted issues of more flexible working arrangements being required adapted facilities, constant supervision from staff or volunteers and adapting tasks to be more appropriate to volunteers.

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Of those that would consider it in the future, there would be an expectation of the appropriate support being accessible by the organisation but offered externally. One such project already established in Havering is the Capital Volunteering project which provides additional support to individuals with mental health issues who are undertaking volunteering placements.

Other organisations that said they would not consider taking on such volunteers were concerned about issues such as not having accessible facilities, integration with existing staff, inability to offer the right support and how appropriate such an arrangement would be when the organisation works with a vulnerable client group.

Any external support structures that were established would need to ensure they could address these issues before more organisations would consider engaging with a scheme like Capital Volunteering.

4.4 General Information

The majority of organisations interviewed were smaller with half having no staff and relying completely on volunteer labour. One quarter had a turnover of less than £10,000 and half less than £50,000. Over 40% were unincorporated associations with no legal identity of their own and three quarters were registered as charities.

Grants and donations were the main source of income for 62% of organisations; however 19% of organisations used income generating activities as their main source of income. With the additional 6% who held contracts this indicates a significant amount of social enterprise activity. It is higher than similar income recorded in the mapping exercise also carried out for the Havering ChangeUp Steering Group which only indicated 12% of organisations generated most of their income through social enterprise activity. Whether social enterprise activity is more prevalent in those organisations that use the services of the volunteer centre and bears any relation to the use of volunteer labour would require further investigation.

With such a low representation of religious organisations and statutory bodies and no private companies there are definitely opportunities to extend services to other organisations which need volunteers within the borough.

Of those organisations that had no paid staff only 16% had significant plans for the development of their organisations that included employing staff. The remaining 84% expect to continue to rely on volunteers thereby ensuring that the demand for volunteers continues.

4.5 *Barriers to Volunteering*

Parents of Young Children

The majority of individuals who took part in the focus groups already volunteered on some level. Those that volunteered did so in other child-related support groups; with one person also volunteering in a young person's project. This is evidence therefore of a level of volunteering that has not been included in any mapping exercise to date. This must also be true of other groups within the borough – it is certainly true of the focus groups.

The key reason individuals gave for not being able to take on more volunteering opportunities was lack of time due to family commitments. The focus group seemed enthusiastic about potential opportunities for volunteering; but they all talked about not being able to commit to additional responsibilities at this time. One person spoke of finding a part-time job as being a priority over undertaking more volunteering and another of needing to be able to claim travel expenses.

They may not have capacity at this time for taking on further volunteering opportunities, but the enthusiasm is there and if this can be maintained this group may well be encouraged to undertake further volunteering in the future.

None of the individuals mentioned childcare costs; a number of them talked instead of wanting to stay at home with their children rather than using day care facilities. However if suitable appropriate childcare could be provided some of those interviewed may accept the opportunity to volunteer.

Young People

There was less interest from young people in taking part in the focus group on volunteering. The young people who took part in the focus group were those that were already volunteering in children's and young people's organisations.

The young people seemed generally interested in accessing more volunteering opportunities. They were concerned with balancing their own commitments, in particular around study and work, and with ensuring that their travel expenses would be covered. One of the young people suffered from health problems and was concerned about the amount they would be required to do in a volunteering placement.

Young people who volunteer are often full of enthusiasm and energy. This creates a real opportunity for organisations to open up volunteering within their organisations. However, organisations must be willing to be flexible when creating these opportunities and be aware of young people's particular needs. For example, paying volunteer expenses is important to young people as they may not have any other form of income.

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Times for volunteering are also an issue – organisations that are looking to offer young people opportunities really need to be able to offer evening and weekend work.

Anecdotal evidence collected from young people outside of the focus group and from support workers suggests that many do not understand the concept of volunteering – potentially explaining why so few wanted to engage with this process. Support workers also suggested that if young people did understand the opportunities volunteering could offer them they may be keen to do so.

Members of BME Communities

The final focus group was run slightly differently from the other two, resulting in no direct quotes; instead the group raised more general issues.

Again the individuals that took part in the focus group were already volunteering, if only on an informal basis for friends and family or helping out within their religious community. Some talked about being limited to volunteering within their own communities because of expectations within their culture about the roles they play within the family. It is helpful to point out at this stage that the individuals in this focus group were all women.

The refugees in the focus group talked of their own perceptions that their language skills were not good enough for accessing volunteering opportunities. This included both spoken and written skills, but also the strength of their accents when speaking to clients or answering the phone.

Trying to balance the demands of family life and keep on top of all the bureaucracy involved in claiming benefits, dealing with housing and any legal issues created little time for volunteering. Support workers talked of some individuals struggling to turn up to volunteering placements on time because of appointments with housing or benefits departments.

This barrier whether created by the organisations or by the individuals needs to be addressed by the volunteering infrastructure in the borough. VCAH are working with a significant number of potential volunteers from BME communities; few of which secure volunteer placements. Once the potential volunteers leave VCAH and start looking for opportunities somehow the process breaks down. This could be for a number of reasons including the individuals not following up opportunities or there being some reason why the organisations they approach do not take them on as volunteers.

It is important that no assumptions are made concerning this issue, particularly regarding the response of organisations, but the research shows a breakdown in the process. This issue must be researched in more depth to discover what the situation is and what the volunteering infrastructure can do to ensure that this wealth of potential volunteers are able to access appropriate volunteering opportunities and the barriers to them doing so are removed.

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5. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to identify the needs of volunteers, and organisations who need them by determining the level of volunteering within the borough, considering what type of people become volunteers and to evaluate the quality of the volunteering experience.

The additional evidence introduced mid-way through the process ensured that the quality of the results was much improved, despite an initial low response rate.

According to the ChangeUp documentation the high level objective for the Recruiting and Developing Volunteers strand is that:

“There is a leaner, effectively marketed and high quality volunteering infrastructure reaching, recruiting and placing a greater number and diversity of individuals coupled with improved volunteer management.”¹³

The Havering ChangeUp Steering Consortium set the following short and medium term objectives in their ChangeUp Plan:

Short-Term Objectives

- undertake research to determine the level of volunteering within the borough, what type of people become volunteers and the quality of the volunteering experience
- identify barriers to volunteering
- make proposals to increase volunteering, improve the volunteering experience and encouraging a greater diversity of volunteers

Medium-Term Objectives

- raise the profile of volunteering in the borough
- reduce the barriers to volunteering
- improve the support for volunteers and the organisations that host them
- improve the quality of the volunteering experience
- speed up the process for both organisations recruiting volunteers and volunteers looking for placements¹⁴

This report meets the short term objectives and the proposals contained within it and aims to address the issues highlighted as medium-term objectives by the Steering Group.

¹³ ChangeUp: Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector, Home Office (2004), p.37

¹⁴ September 2005

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The volunteer workforce is significant in the provision of services to the local community in Havering. Two thirds of organisations rely on volunteers and if the same or greater levels of services for local people are to be available in the future, volunteering infrastructure within the borough needs ongoing investment. Ideally investment should look to improve the range and quality of services available to ensure that local organisations have access to a variety of high quality services, designed to meet their needs.

5.1 *Raise the Profile of Volunteering*

In the sample 61 organisations had 4,300 volunteers who gave up to 69,348 days of their time to support local voluntary and community organisations. It is recognised that this is only a small sample of the volunteering that occurs in the borough. Each year VCAH registers more than 1,000 new volunteers; a great many more people volunteer for family and friends and do not use the services provided by the volunteering infrastructure in the borough for placements, although they may access support services from the volunteer centre.

Volunteering infrastructure organisations have to market their services effectively. Their potential audience is to most of the local population. The marketing campaigns of volunteering infrastructure organisations can be targeted towards the general public as well as specific communities within the borough.

For volunteering to be promoted there needs to be investment. The new branding of volunteer centres with the support of Volunteering England will help in this process, particularly by offering support on a regional and national level.

A great deal has been attempted and carried out over the last decade to raise the image of volunteering and promoting the opportunities it can provide. The initiatives include Timebank, Millennium Volunteers, Prince's Trust Volunteering Scheme and 2005 the Year of the Volunteer, with a range of activities that resulted. The challenge locally is to carry this work forward to support the work of small and grassroots community organisations, businesses and statutory agencies and the larger voluntary organisations.

5.2 *Reduce the Barriers to Volunteering*

The Government has highlighted a number of groups that are underrepresented amongst volunteers, including young people, people from minority ethnic communities and those over the age of 75.

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Locally some work has already started to address this balance. The percentage of the volunteer centre's clients from the younger age range and from minority ethnic communities are considerably higher than that of the general volunteering population in the borough.

In order to develop this work an evaluation of VCAH's methods which have been so successful could be undertaken. The lessons learnt from these projects such as Capital Volunteering could be used to support projects around other groups within the borough that encounter barriers to them participating as volunteers.

Havering does have a higher than average percentage of older people than other areas of London and the UK. This is evidenced by the fact that 36% of all volunteers are over the age of 65. Although the statistics were not broken down to identify those aged over 75, attendance at local events shows that many people volunteer into their 80s.

Concern must be raised about the anomalies in the figures relating to volunteers from minority ethnic communities. VCAH record 34% of their clients being from minority ethnic communities. However, only 3% of volunteers were recorded in the research as being from these communities. The questions must be asked: what happens to volunteers from minority ethnic communities during the recruitment process in Havering. At what point do they drop out of the process, what organisations have they been placed with and why? Further research could determine the cause of this.

The results of the focus group suggest that if volunteering opportunities could be advertised within particular communities that were considered to be culturally appropriate then individuals might be keen to get involved. All of the individuals were already undertaking volunteering at some level; although in some cultures 'volunteering' is not considered so much a separate activity but instead just part of how that community operates. BME organisations and religious organisations could have access here to potential volunteers who are particularly looking for culturally appropriate opportunities.

The lack of appropriate volunteering opportunities for young people, particularly for those under the age of 16, is recognized in the borough.¹⁵ A pilot project to explore ways to address this was carried out during 2005 by VCAH. This has resulted in plans for partnership work between VCAH and the Youth Service to facilitate young people's own projects. Many young people are referred to the Prince's Trust and Millennium Volunteers which have projects in the borough but no evidence was collected through our sample group. It should be noted that these organisations do not work with under 16s.

¹⁵ VCAH, 2005

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Although nationally employee volunteering is growing, evidence from Havering does not support a similar level of growth locally. There is an opportunity to pilot an employee volunteering scheme building on work already being undertaken by the volunteer centre.

Many volunteers have additional support needs: some because of a learning disability; some because of mental health issues; some simply lack confidence or relevant experience. Two local initiatives which aim to address these are: the Preparing to Volunteer Courses and the help offered to mental health service users via the Capital Volunteering project. VCAH has recruited several volunteers and supported them until they have been ready to transfer to other organisations. The additional support needs of these individuals mean that many organisations are unable to accept these volunteers. Supporting these volunteers and building the confidence of the individual and their placing organisations is one of the areas where more development is needed.

The barriers experienced by volunteers seem to fall into three categories:

- access to opportunities
- inappropriate tasks
- flexible times

Access to Opportunities

The number of volunteers that used the volunteer centre for placements in the borough is small in the sample group. However, as previously indicated anecdotal evidence suggests that part of the reason for this is that many were volunteering in their organisations before the organisation existed.

As a result the volunteer centre has concentrated on serving those groups and organisations that needed to recruit volunteers rather than those who already had a healthy number of volunteers. It is suggested that this is why VCAH has a higher percentage of those referred to more under-represented than the figures that relate to the wider volunteering population. VCAH has in turn, as client numbers grew from these groups, specialised in providing services aimed at their particular support needs which have in turn encouraged more people from these communities to volunteer. The projects run by VCAH have aimed to provide equal access to these groups to volunteering opportunities.

The volunteer centre has developed its services to encourage young people to volunteer through particular initiatives and opportunities to work in partnership with other agencies like the youth service. Where there is limited capacity it has been appropriate to specialise in some of its services. This has encouraged growth in volunteering from these under-represented groups and has justified the decision to work with these groups.

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Inappropriate Tasks

Traditional volunteering tasks do not inspire all volunteers – such as putting newsletters in envelopes. The more creative an organisation can become with how it engages with volunteers the wider the pool of potential volunteers they have to draw on.

Rather than trying to fit the volunteer to the tasks, maybe there is an opportunity to design a task around the skills of an individual. Those organisations who take on volunteers with additional support needs work with the volunteer to understand which tasks are appropriate to the individual.

Flexible Times

In order to encourage under-represented groups to volunteer organisations need to offer more flexible working hours. This could be for a young person, a parent with young children or a professional.

If an organisation is keen to find a lawyer to join their committee they may have to change meetings from a weekday afternoon to another more appropriate time. Parents with young children need to work around school hours and not in school holidays.

5.3 *Improve Support for Volunteers and the Organisations that Host Them*

This report has identified a number of ways in which the existing levels of volunteering support in the borough can be improved and enhanced. Some of the issues around specific support are mentioned in the following section on the quality of the volunteering experience.

The particular support offered by a specialist volunteer centre is crucial to the variety of support for both the volunteers and the organisations they are to be placed with.

In order to improve the current support available the local voluntary sector infrastructure organisations should look to:

- market the support offered by local support agencies to the volunteers and hosts of volunteers
- ensure those who are already engaging with the infrastructure find a reason to become more engaged, and
- market opportunities to employers, businesses and statutory organisations.

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The research noted that some organisations were only looking for 'crisis' support from local infrastructure, others were expecting to access services two or three times a year and others were looking for a comprehensive package of support.

This offers a number of opportunities for development. Crisis intervention could be offered in the form of email or telephone support. Occasional access might include services such as training courses or a regular bulletin and attendance at the Volunteer Manager's Forum. The comprehensive package of support could include training, developing policies and procedures, strategic direction, access to mentoring projects, mentoring for Volunteer Managers, enhanced recruitment support and even back office facilities. Elements of the comprehensive package could be charged for, particularly if the organisations were private sector businesses, without compromising the ethos of the organisation.

5.4 *Improve the Quality of the Volunteering Experience*

This report was to collect data from the organisations that hosted volunteers. The second tranche was to turn to the volunteers themselves and report on their experiences.

Therefore this report comments from the perspective of the organisation and has highlighted issues such as the support offered to volunteers by their hosts. The data collected suggested that most organisations did offer their volunteers support in some form. However, it was a concern that a small number, some with significant numbers of volunteers, appeared to offer very little support.

The volunteer centre has an opportunity to prioritise areas of support they want to encourage through collecting examples of good practice from local organisations and disseminating it to encourage interest through the Volunteer Manager's Forum and other events. Using Volunteering England's resources or developing their own, the volunteering infrastructure could use a number of methods to increase levels of good practice in the borough including offering qualifications, training, toolkits and mentors to support organisations as they implement new support methods.

VCAH will undertake a survey of all volunteers who registered with them during 2005 to find out the outcome of the help given to them. The results of this should be fed into the design of the second piece of research.

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5.5 Speed up the Process for Both Organisations and Volunteers

There is a need for data gathering to be undertaken sooner after volunteer placements, and for host organisations to keep records. Inadequate record-keeping has affected the results of this research.

This is an area that VCAH could support through the development of its services. Much of the support required ties in with improving the volunteering experience. If organisations could be encouraged to keep records it would assist in creating a more accurate record of volunteering in the borough. There may need to be an incentive attached to record keeping that would ensure a better and quicker response from organisations.

In order to improve VCAH's effectiveness, a detailed review of their current systems must be funded and undertaken. The success of the borough in reaching its targets in volunteers hinges on the effectiveness of VCAH's systems. Investment into a review would be useful at this stage to ensure that future investment is targeted appropriately. Good practice from other volunteer centres could also be taken into account.

6. Further Research

After adding the additional tiers we feel there have been some interesting conclusions and recommendations to make.

As this piece of research was never intended to stand alone, the second phase should begin as soon as possible. Funding will need to be sought as it was not to be part of the ChangeUp process.

This second piece of research will consider in more detail the views of volunteers themselves. Narrative and case study analysis will be used to create useful stories as part of the research process.

As has already been proposed, some research needs to be undertaken to look into the process of placing individuals from BME communities into volunteering placements. The results of the research suggest there is a need for a breakdown of some form in this process. The volunteer centre should address this issue and once identified work to rectify the situation.

The review of the administrative functions of VCAH underpins any move the ChangeUp Steering Group make towards achieving the high-level objective by 2014 and should be considered a priority. The current infrastructure is under-resourced and beyond full capacity. To ensure the borough meets its ChangeUp objectives investment into the development of the volunteering infrastructure is required to allow VCAH to become a sustainable organisation in the long-term