



Volunteer Centre
Hammersmith & Fulham

H&F Volunteer Intelligence Report

Insights into H&F
volunteering based on
feedback from H&F
Volunteer Involving
Organisations (VIOs)

March 2023

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Executive Summary



Hammersmith & Fulham Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) are experiencing, just like the rest of the UK, serious issues in volunteer recruitment and retention. The cost-of-living crisis is a significant factor in this problem, but that there are also serious structural and systemic issues impacting volunteering in the UK.

In Jan-Feb HFVC engaged with the VIOs through a survey, forum for volunteer managers, 1-2-1 support sessions and other activities to compile this volunteer intelligence report.

- Two-thirds of VIOs in H&F reporting recruiting new volunteers is their biggest issue affecting their volunteer programme.
- Almost half (47%) stated that the cost-of-living crisis was having a big impact on their volunteer programme.
- Lots of organisations have adapted their volunteer programmes since the pandemic, but potential volunteers still looking for more flexible roles

Our recommended planned actions can be found on page 12.



Dominic Pinkney
CEO



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Head of Volunteering

National Context: Large drop in formal volunteering



All across the UK, levels of formal volunteering are dropping with Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) struggling to recruit volunteers:

- Volunteer Scotland, in the context of the cost-of-living crisis, has produced several reports stating Scottish VIOs are struggling to recruit volunteers. Their latest report is from Feb 2023.
- Volunteer Now, in Dec 2022, produced a report on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis for Northern Ireland VIOs, emphasising volunteer recruitment as being a significant issues. Their report also included the negative impact this is having on volunteer managers.
- NCVO, the England umbrella body for the VCS, in December 2022 also reported a lot of its members are having issues and problems recruiting and retaining volunteers.
- HFVC co-chairs the London Volunteer Centre Network and members across London have been reporting issues for many months around volunteer recruitment and retention.

National Context: Structural & Systemic Issues (a)



Although the cost-of-living crisis is clearly having a significant negative impact on levels of formal volunteering, there are structural and systemic issues that also need to be considered:

- **Trends for VIOs and volunteering going in opposite directions** - increasingly safeguarding-conscious VIOs taking long periods to onboard new volunteers and seeking long-term commitment. Whereas volunteers increasingly want to do it on their terms, when it is convenient for them, on an ad hoc basis and as soon as possible. Volunteers says VIOs are struggling to adapt to their need for flexible volunteer roles.
- **Lack of funding to support volunteer programmes** – The economic squeeze of VIOs over the past 10 or more years has led to reduction in volunteer management resources. In many cases, managing volunteers is tacked onto existing roles rather than it being a dedicated roles.
- **Weak national bodies** – the national agencies which represent and champion volunteering and volunteer infrastructure do not have the clout and influence to persuade government agencies to invest in this area.

National Context: Structural & Systemic Issues (b)



- **Post-pandemic volunteering is different.** As well as cost-of-living, there are many factors that have impacted volunteering, such as:
 - (i) Many older people who volunteered in-person have not returned to their volunteer roles;
 - (ii) Perception that the pandemic is over and so volunteers not needed so much;
 - (iii) Fatigue and burnout of volunteers who have given so much of their time;
 - (iv) Desire to volunteer remotely and/or less inclination for in-person volunteering
- **Voluntary sector infrastructure funding has reduced in real terms.** The Feb 2023 360 Giving report highlights the changes in funding for VCS infrastructure organisations over the last 12 years.
- **The true monetary value of both volunteering and the infrastructure needed to keep it prospering and responding to social priorities is not understood.** Although seen as being important across the country by local authorities, without having a clear monetary value has impacted some local authorities in commissioning decisions.

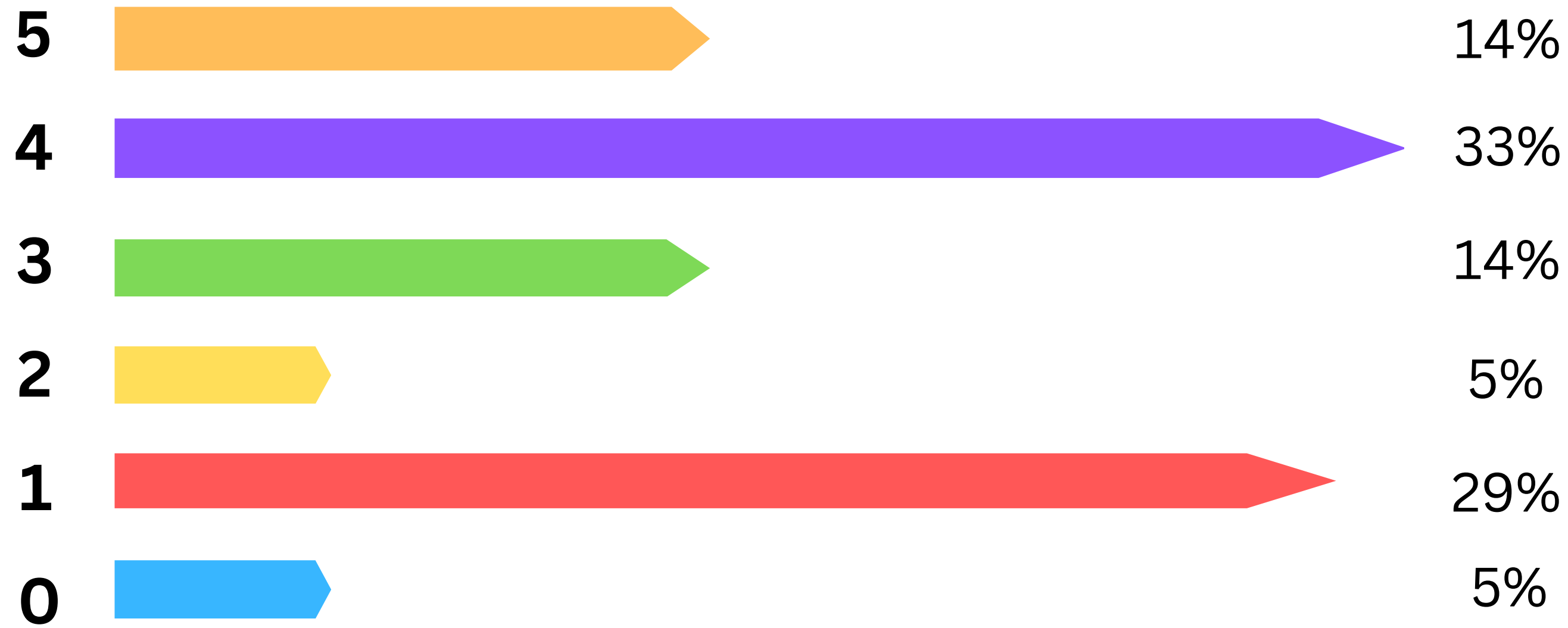


What is the biggest issue affecting volunteer programmes at the moment?





On a scales of 0-5 how much is the cost-of-living crisis impacting volunteer programmes? (0 not at all and 5 being a large and significant impact)



Almost half (47%) rated 4 or 5 that the cost-of-living crisis was having a big impact on their volunteer programme. A third rated 0 or 1 stating little or no impact.



Are volunteer programmes the same as they were before the pandemic?

(i) VOLUNTEER NUMBERS

Volunteer numbers have increased



22%

Volunteer numbers are about the same



33%

Volunteer numbers have decreased

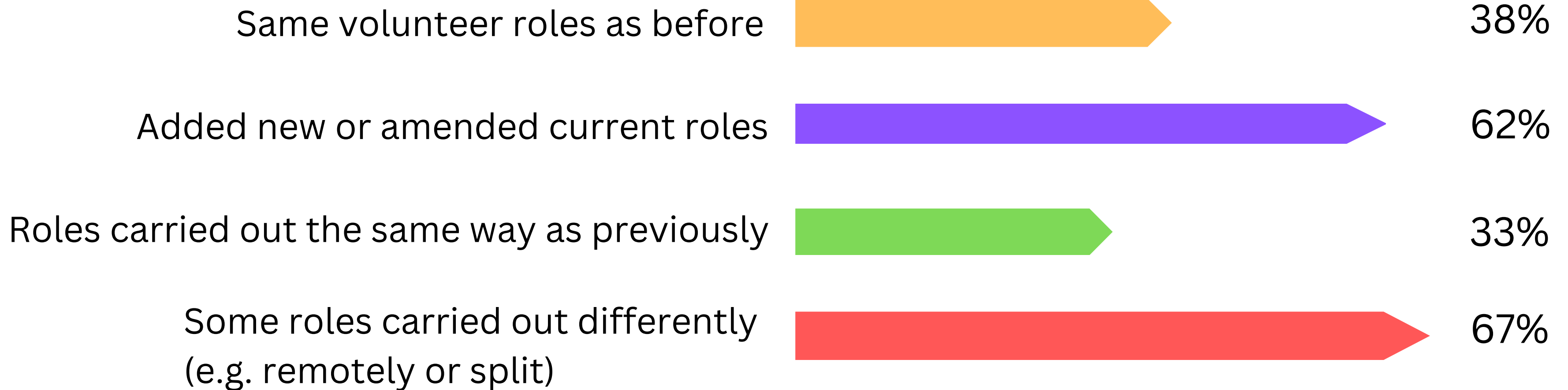


44%



Are volunteer programmes the same as they were before the pandemic?

(ii) VOLUNTEER ROLES



Strong evidence that H&F VIOs have had to adapt their volunteer programmes since the pandemic.



Are volunteer programmes the same as they were before the pandemic?

(iii) VIO Comments

"We need volunteers and have less applications from adults and more from young people".

"We now have group sessions which are run remotely via Microsoft Teams as well as Face to Face sessions".

Hammersmith & Fulham VIOs & Volunteers

Feedback/Learning (a)



From our forums with volunteer managers and 1-2-1 support, feedback and learning from H&F VIOs and volunteers:

- Many H&F VIOs reporting lower levels of volunteers compared to during the pandemic
- Fuel and food poverty affecting people's ability to volunteer
- Volunteer expenses normally paid back to volunteers after the volunteering and if they do not have money this prevents them carrying out the volunteering in the first place.
- Some volunteers reporting that charities are very slow in reimbursing expenses
- Some prospective volunteers have barriers of needing to look for additional paid work or providing unpaid care to family member(s)
- Drop in volunteers from the EU. Many EU countries have a strong volunteering ethic and made up a significant part of volunteer pool
- Covid-19 led to many people moving out of the borough/London
- Many regular volunteers (e.g. every week) who had health conditions had to give up volunteering due to Covid

Hammersmith & Fulham VIOs & Volunteers

Feedback/Learning (b)



Continued from previous page

- Too many different websites and apps promoting volunteering causes confusion of where to look for opportunities and where to advertise them. Too time consuming to advertise in multiple places/platforms.
- No money to recognise volunteers with celebration events. Fewer offers of free theatre or concert tickets available to charities to thank volunteers.
- Fewer approaches from businesses to sponsor events or offer donations
- Volunteers doing volunteering hours towards completing an education course are very reliable, but younger volunteers looking for work experience much less so
- Many volunteers reporting onboarding process taking too long, i.e. it takes too long to actually volunteer from initial enquiry
- Some prospective volunteers gave feedback that some volunteer roles not attractive and/or charity asking too much
- Regular volunteers felt uncomfortable when activities of charities or the volunteering environment changed, for example, when spaces that were previously women only then became mixed.



Informal Volunteering is described as supporting friends, neighbours, and community members independently of any third-party organisation, and without financial compensation of any kind. Nationally, informal volunteering has been slowly increasing according to NCVO.

In Hammersmith & Fulham, our research suggests a strong culture and level of informal volunteering, with many people carrying out activities who do not see themselves as volunteers:

- Faith-based volunteering
- Being part of a club or group (sports, environmental, 'Friends of', etc.)
- Political activism
- Residents/tenants associations, residents panels
- Donating blood, supporting health initiatives, Patient Participation Groups
- Helping a neighbour (shopping, cleaning, gardening, collecting medicine, etc.)
- Helping at a community event



Without volunteers there is no voluntary sector

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the voluntary and community sector. From informal gifts of time through helping a neighbour or at a community event through to formal roles such as Trustees, volunteering is ESSENTIAL to the sector functioning.

A significant reduction in volunteering can lead to:

- VCS organisations less able to delivery their support to the community they serve
- Less diverse volunteering - volunteers will less represent the community they support and organisations will not be able to benefit from the lived experience, skills and knowledge of a diverse pool of volunteers
- Poor leadership and strategic development of VCS organisations (lack of Trustees)
- Increased demand on Council, NHS and other statutory services
- Communities less resilient and cohesive



Flexible Volunteering (Flexibility)

H&F VIOs need more support to be able to offer flexible roles to meet demands and needs of prospective volunteers. Unfortunately there is not a one-size-fits-all approach possible as organisations and their volunteer programmes are very different. A tailored 1-2-1 consultancy is the most impactful support. HFVC continues to look for additional funding to carry this out and recommends any future commissioning by LBHF to have this as a focus.

Greater Promotion/Awareness of Need for Volunteers

In these difficult times, we need as many people and organisations to help promote the need for volunteering as well as specific roles. HFVC aims to:

- Work with LBHF to create a volunteering campaign
- Raise awareness of need and importance of volunteering, e.g. this report, social media and multiple networks (VCS, residents, businesses)



Young People

Feedback from H&F VIOs as well as national research, such as from Pro Bono Economics, suggest there is a new wave of young people who want to volunteer. Structural issues in volunteering, such as lack of flexible volunteer roles, as well as safeguarding concerns act as barriers. HFVC will work with organisations to help overcome these barriers as well as collaborating with and supporting stakeholders such as Young Hammersmith & Fulham Foundation, Youth Council etc.

Trustees

The stronger the board of trustees, the better organisations can navigate through these difficult times and develop strategies to survive and thrive. On top of its normal work to promote and help find Trustees for local charities, HFVC will carry out a dedicated campaign to educate and inspire people from all across the borough to take up this dynamic but underrated volunteer role.



Employee Volunteering

Businesses and their employees can help play an increasing role to support the VCS. HFVC, through its social enterprise Works4U, is already developing work in this area and can help lead coordinate to focus support in priority areas.

Informal Volunteering

HFVC has adopted a 'participaction' approach to the strategic development of volunteering since 2019, which involves the development of information volunteering, social action and formal volunteering. HFVC continues to seek funding for 'Our Hammersmith & Fulham' initiative put together in partnership with the Council, VCS and businesses.

HFVC Core Functions

1) Brokerage

Match individuals looking for volunteering with volunteer-involving organisations and community groups.

2) Marketing Volunteering

Stimulate and encourage local interest in volunteering and community activity.

3) Good Practice Development

Promote, support and advise good practice in working with volunteers to Hammersmith & Fulham volunteer-involving organisations.



HFVC Core Functions

4) Develop Volunteering Opportunities

Working in partnership with statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies as well as community and faith groups to develop opportunities.

5) Strategic Development of Volunteering

As local experts on volunteering, HFVC will inform strategic thinking and planning at a local, regional, national and international level.

6) Maintain & Strengthen Viability of HFVC

Continue to focus on maximising its fundraising potential and running its operation as cost effectively as possible. Adapting to changing environments and needs.



Employee Volunteering



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Employee volunteering came to a stop during the pandemic but 2022-3 has seen a return of this activity and is expected to grow.

To help develop employee volunteering further, HFVC set up, in 2009, a not-for-profit social enterprise Works4U to deliver this work. Works4U is a 100% self-sustaining social enterprise and as well as supporting 1,000s of employee volunteers to help local charities and community groups, it has grown to be a UK leader of employee volunteering:

- Set up and runs national Employer Supported Volunteering network
- Launching world's first employee volunteering quality standard (EVA)
- Producing national employee volunteering analysis



HFVC History



Volunteer Centre
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The Hammersmith & Fulham Volunteer Centre (HFVC) began as a project within Fulham Good Neighbours in 1986. 10 years later it became its own entity as the H&F Volunteer Development Agency, providing volunteering support to local people and community organisations.

Since then, HFVC has grown to establish itself as the lead volunteering agency for the borough as well as a leading Volunteer Centre in the country. It has been recognised internationally, including being invited to the UN to lead and facilitate discussions around volunteering.

Our focus is on supporting local people and organisations and HFVC prides itself on its collaborative approach to delivering its services, both within and outside the borough if it will further help beneficiaries in Hammersmith & Fulham. In 2015 HFVC set up a partnership with Volunteer Centre Camden which has led to innovative projects such as the CAMERA Emergency Volunteering programme and Mutual Aid Plus.

Contact



Volunteer Centre
Hammersmith & Fulham



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