

Appendix 1: Volunteering and Community Action Strategy Action Plan 2015-16 Update

<p>Objective 1: To develop a web-enabled platform (one stop shop) to ensure individuals, groups and organisations have a single access point to volunteering and community action</p>
<p>Complete</p>
<p>Update Feb 2016 – new VolunteerMerton portal launched internally 29th February and goes live to the public on 22 March 2016, providing a web-enabled platform for all Merton residents wanting to volunteer. A local online platform of Merton-based volunteering opportunities, which allows people to search local opportunities and apply for them instantly.</p>
<p>1.1 Agree how individuals, groups and organisations can improve their use of this platform and use it to its full potential</p>
<p>Training and testing has been carried out by MVSC, other Volunteering Involving Organisations and volunteers to inform the design and operation of the VolunteerMerton platform. Ideas and amendments have been incorporated accordingly.</p> <p>After the launch on 21st March, Merton Connected will promote use of the VolunteerMerton platform and MVSC Volunteering Team will be on hand to offer assistance/troubleshooting to individuals and organisations.</p> <p>The hope is that the platform will be intuitive and easy to use. However, if the need arises, there will be training sessions offered to optimise its use and potential.</p> <p>Link to VolunteerMerton platform to be incorporated in all emails, communications from MVSC and disseminated via Merton Partnership.</p>
<p>1.2 Review and agree how such a channel is enhanced by face-to-face, telephone and online conversations and in what circumstances these would be required.</p>
<p>In 2015/16, 2,203 residents (850 with face-to-face support, 1,353 via MVSC website/do-it.org), were able easily to identify volunteering opportunities and either approach organisations direct, or be assisted to do this by the Volunteering Team at MVSC, if required.</p> <p>The new web-enabled platform, VolunteerMerton, provides information on how to access support to volunteer, for those who need it. They are provided with clear information on how to obtain face-to-face support, where required (eg. those with disabilities, mental health issues, vulnerable young people and others who would like to speak to someone from the Volunteering Team to help them find a suitable volunteering opportunity.) They are able to make an appointment with the Supported Volunteering Team, or book on to one of MVSC’s monthly Group Volunteer</p>

Recruitment sessions. This is supplemented by regular volunteering presence (leaflets, banners etc) at public and community events around the borough.

Objective 2: Define and agree a local, shared approach to volunteering and community action

2.1 Define support for volunteers which ensures that they are supported proportionately and enabled to fulfil the role being undertaken

Development work under way currently by MVSC Volunteering Team to work with organisations to design volunteering opportunities with built-in or peer support. For example, the Avanti Club is a Peer Support group for mental health service users, which provides regular meetings and activities, but also encourages group volunteering, led by a Peer Support volunteer. This allows a VIO to take on volunteers with support issues in the knowledge that they will receive support in the placement.

MVSC, with the support of Circle Housing and the backing of LBM Children Schools and Families, has also piloted the Youth Approved Volunteering Award (YAVA), a new quality mark to improve the standard of volunteering opportunities and experiences for young people. 4 organisations achieved the YAVA in 2015 and MVSC has applied for funding to roll out the quality mark across Merton as an incentive to organisations to involve young people effectively in their work.

In 2015/16, 850 volunteers who required extra support to volunteer, including those with disabilities, long term health conditions, mental health issues, 16-18 year old and long term unemployed have been interviewed by MVSC's Volunteering Recruitment Team and assisted into volunteering opportunities in their local community.

23 organisations have received either 1:1, or group guidance and support on volunteering practice. In addition, all Merton VIOs have access to Good Practice advice via MVSC's Virtual Development Worker and Information Bank on Merton Connected website.

2.2 Agree Merton-wide the shared local policy to managing risk, including the use of DBS checks, to ensure that they are proportionate to the risks and that any checks are co-ordinated and managed as efficiently as possible

There appears to be a demand from smaller voluntary organisations and groups to use the MVSC paper DBS checking service for the time being. However, we envisage the demand diminishing over 2015/16, as more people use the Update Service to make their DBS portable and renewed annually online.

2.3 Develop a brand to promote and market a single approach to volunteering and community action across public, private and voluntary, community & faith organisations

New MVSC branding for VolunteerMerton website/online portal includes Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation logo to indicate that MVSC incorporates an accredited Volunteer Centre. 'Hands sign', as used in My Merton, is also employed in Merton-wide campaigns and media. (Currently being used to promote the new Merton Befriending Service pilot.)

2.4 Identify an approach to micro-volunteering to increase the opportunities for individuals, groups and organisations to get involved

Informal and more flexible, 'lighter touch' volunteering opportunities have been developed such as 'Good Neighbours', 'Out and About' and one-off opportunities such as Team Merton, which have been able to support events over 2015/16, eg. Legends Rugby Festival, Mitcham Carnival, Wimbledon Village Fair, Merton Partnership Volunteer Awards, Ride London, Bonfire Night Fireworks, Light up Morden, Light up Mitcham, Phipps Bridge Winter Wonderland, Christmas Hampers Deliveries, Fulham FC Healthy Living Campaign, Find Yourself in Merton Festival. In addition, Team Merton Volunteers have been involved in one-off community action opportunities, such as litter-picking and neighbourhood clean-up campaigns.

Other one-off community action events planned for Volunteers' Week, 1-12 June and Queen's 90th Birthday celebrations.

Merton Welcomes Refugees has been supported by Merton Partnership to engage with Merton residents interested in offering material help, or volunteering their skills. First event organised in December 2015. Extremely well attended by volunteers and the community, although very few refugees attended. Nevertheless, worthwhile event to bring everyone interested in community action together and to reassess alternative methods for engaging with refugees.

Employee/Group Volunteering: groups from Public Health, CCG, faith groups have committed to engaging in one-off volunteering tasks, eg. in partnership with Sustainable Merton and Mitcham Community Orchard.

Merton Befriending Service pilot, funded by Public Health and a partnership between Age UK, Wimbledon Guild, Carers Support, MVSC and Positive Network has now been in operation for 12 months.. Volunteer befrienders are asked to give up an average of 1 hour of their time per week for face-to-face befriending. They can also get involved in telephone befriending, again giving them more flexibility around their other commitments.

A range of flexible roles are being developed for volunteers within Merton Council (see objective 4). One-off roles continue to be filled successfully when promoted on Merton Connected and through the 'Team Volunteers' with VCM.

These will be advertised separately on the new MVSC volunteering portal, VolunteerMerton.

Good Neighbours includes many micro-volunteering opportunities.

MVSC Head of Volunteering in discussion with Sustainable Merton around support for Community Champions project.

Objective 3: Develop and implement a communications plan to promote and raise the profile of volunteering and community action

3.1 Develop and implement a communications strategy to ensure the ongoing drip-feed messaging of volunteering and community action to change hearts and minds across the Borough to include case studies, social media, print media, supporting the individual's voice.

Merton Connected newsfeed and weekly ebulletin has dedicated Volunteering section, with regular stories, news, events, campaigns etc. From March 2016, this information will be automatically imported to the new VolunteerMerton portal.

Volunteering stories and events communicated via Twitter, Facebook, blogs on Merton Connected and VolunteerMerton portal.

National Volunteers' Week 2015: Volunteer recruitment campaign and events across Merton, including Centre Court Shopping Centre, Wimbledon, Morden Baptist Church, Mitcham and Raynes Park Libraries.

My Merton call to action for Merton Befriending Service volunteers resulted in over 50 enquiries.

Major campaign planned around National Volunteers' Week 2016 (1-12 June) and the Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations, including Clean for the Queen community events in April and June (following on from event on Saturday 5th March).

Campaign also planned around European Capital of Volunteering 2016.

3.2 Ensure communications are targeted to disadvantaged and under-represented groups to encourage volunteering and community action

All communications are circulated widely. This can be developed further to reach those outside of the usual communication channels i.e. Merton Connected and My Merton. Effective engagement and communication carried out via new BAME Voice Forum and Small Groups Forum.

3.3 To review Borough-wide volunteer recognition including the role of the infrastructure organisations and the Merton Partnership

ValueYou scheme agreed by Merton Partnership - MVSC and Merton Partnership to partner with ValueYou to provide '100 hour certificates' of volunteering achievement that provide the basis for eligibility for the scheme. MVSC will work with them to promote the scheme to the volunteering community. Merton Chamber of Commerce has agreed to support promotion of the scheme to the business community. The scheme is currently available for charity volunteers in other boroughs. The Merton model of ValueYou will be widened to recognise the wider volunteering

community such as Library volunteers and small community organisations. MVSC will have the roles of approving these organisations.

Meets Objective 4 of the Merton Volunteer Strategy is to 'Ensure local public and private sector organisations are engaged and supported to creatively deliver their corporate social responsibility agenda and involve volunteers.' Additionally, one of the community participation outcomes of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy is to increase the number of people engaged in their communities through volunteering.

Merton Partnership Volunteering Awards 2016 scheduled for June 2016 (date and venue to be finalised asap).

3.4	To continue to work in educational establishments across Merton to raise the profile of volunteering and community action		
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Volunteer networks set-up in Morden Primary School Priory Primary School and St Peter and Paul Primary School.

South Thames College and Cricket Green School in discussion with MVSC re hiring their Fayre and Square shop in Centre Court Shopping Centre to deliver 'live' retail training to groups of students.

All Merton secondary schools contacted by MVSC (Children in Need funded) Youth Connect Programme to help them involve vulnerable 14-18 year olds in volunteering to improve confidence, decrease isolation. Also to identify students who would benefit from a peer befriender.

Objective 4: Ensure local public and private sector organisations are engaged and supported to creatively deliver their corporate social responsibility agenda and involve volunteers			
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4.1 Review approach to employers to promote employee volunteering			
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MVSC refreshed their Employee Volunteering (EV) strategy and circulated to wider voluntary sector. Merton Chamber of Commerce adopted MVSC's strategy. LBM refreshed their EV documents. Employee/Group Volunteering: groups from Public Health, CCG, faith groups have committed to engaging in one-off volunteering tasks, eg.in partnership with Sustainable Merton and Mitcham Community Orchard.

4.2	Consider what recognition to offer employers who support volunteering		
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Employee Volunteering Team of the year will again be award category in Merton Partnership Volunteering Awards 2016.

ValueYou Merton scheme will enable local businesses to support volunteering by offering discount cards. Participating businesses will be invited to awards ceremonies.

4.3	Identify new and continue to support existing volunteering opportunities to engage individuals, groups and organisations in shaping and delivering public services		
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Good progress with Merton Council with involving volunteers in adding value to public services.

MVSC Business Engagement Manager and Head of Volunteering have initiated scheme at Priory Primary School to involve Wimbledon businesses in providing a pool of employee volunteers to hear children read 1 hour per week. If successful, this will be repeated in other primary schools.

- ✓ 'Out and About' project to link adults with social needs to go out in the community with resident who is already doing the activity e.g. going to football: This project was not successful.
- ✓ Different approach needed, resulting in pilot partnership between MVSC and LBM to recruit 20 volunteers to support staff in the 4 Day Centres by 30th September 2016. Update: 7 volunteers recruited and placed by 10th March. .
- ✓ Merton Heritage Centre 'Carved with Pride' project, recording contribution of Merton residents during WW1 .MVSC Volunteering Team worked successfully with them to recruit team of volunteers. 'Carved with Pride' team were winners of Best Volunteering Team Award at Merton Community Excellence Awards, November 2015.
- ✓ MVSC Head of Volunteering is in discussion with Borough Fire Commander re volunteer support for new Fire Cadets programme, as well as the development of further volunteering opportunities within the Fire Service.

4.4	Build relationships with employers as beneficiaries of volunteers and support their development as assessors of the relevance of voluntary work for paid employment		
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No action to date

4.5	Link with employers to develop a training module relating to employee volunteering and volunteer inclusion as a route into paid work		
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No action to date

Objective 5: Design and undertake the first bi-annual 'snapshot' of volunteering and community action Complete

5.1	Design an accessible and brief survey to enable the mapping of volunteering and community action across Merton		
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5.2	Undertake a pilot survey to get a snapshot of volunteering and community action in Merton using Merton Connected and other databases to reach those carrying out volunteering and community action not engaged with sector		
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Both the ARS and the 'Help shape the future of volunteering' survey, indicated that more people would volunteer if they had flexible volunteering opportunities; one-off volunteering opportunities; easy access to finding out what was happening locally.

Response to these findings in 2014/15 has been the development of more flexible, 'lighter touch' volunteering opportunities,(see 2.4 above) In February and March 2015, Merton residents had the exciting opportunity to be selected as Team London Ambassadors to support at tourist venues around London, including Gatwick airport. Volunteers signed up for particular dates and shifts, working around their other commitments.

Further work being done by MVSC Head of Volunteering in partnership with LBM Head of Community and Housing to develop further flexible and one-off volunteering opps.

Objective 6: Ensure planning, monitoring and evaluation of volunteering and community action is useful, straightforward and minimal

6.1	Support organisations to plan, monitor and evaluate their volunteer programmes to encourage sustainability and responsiveness		
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MVSC aims to increase sustainability of voluntary sector organisations in Merton by offering to take on Volunteer Management services for organisations, rather than each having its own Volunteer Manager. This will result in savings for the individual organisations and consistent levels of Good Practice in Volunteer Management across the borough.

Objective 7: Ensure that there are the required levels of resources to implement the Merton Volunteering and Community Action Strategy

7.1	Ensure reporting to funders and key stakeholders		
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Discussions under way to combine Voluntary Sector Strategy and Volunteering Strategy as one strategy.

7.2	Explore an effective method of monitoring the volunteer journey to shape recommendations and ensure appropriate infrastructure arrangements to support future volunteering and community action		
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Volunteering journey and targets need to be captured in one place and consistent. Currently too many different targets across various thematic boards/strategies.

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