



2007-2008  
*Increasing Voluntary  
and Community Sector  
Service Delivery*



## **Case Study No. 1 - Volunteer Centre Croydon**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Volunteer Centre Croydon (VCC) promotes volunteering in the community. Last year it advised 3,000 volunteers, referring them to voluntary and statutory organisations. Over half of these volunteers were from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and 33% were unemployed or unable to work. Volunteering is one of the four strategic priorities of Croydon Voluntary Action and recognised as an effective way to build self-esteem and reduce the social exclusion of minority groups.

### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

VCC uses volunteers extensively in its service delivery. There are six volunteer interviewers, three administrative volunteers and 56 mentors, helping people with extra support needs into volunteering. VCC is also a quality accredited member of Volunteering England.

The centre manages a number of projects that deliver effective services to vulnerable members of the community and supports organisations engaged in volunteering in both the voluntary and statutory sector.

It leads on key multi-agency projects such as Millennium Volunteers which promotes sustained volunteering to young people in partnership with Croydon Youth Service; and Capital Volunteering which tackles issues of mental health, in partnership with the Primary Care Trust and a multi-agency mental health partnership (see partnership projects page 2).

Other key services that support volunteering include: facilitating a quarterly Volunteer Organisers' Forum where those involving volunteers can meet to share information and ideas and raise issues of common concern; helping organisations attain minimum standards of good practice when involving volunteers through its Good Practice Workers; building networks with other organisations and volunteer centres to develop new policies and projects, and discussing common problems.

VCC represents volunteering on the Sport and Physical Activity Task Group and the Chief Executive's Olympic Group. It has secured six-borough funding

from London Councils to develop sports opportunities and is helping to develop pre-volunteering programmes for the Olympics.

It is the only voluntary sector agency to lead on one of the 12 stretch targets in the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA), which aims to encourage, enable and track volunteers to complete 100 hours volunteering in a year. On completion, successful volunteers are awarded certificates.

### **Funding:**

VCC receives some core funding from Croydon Council, which has enabled it to bring in larger amounts from central government and charitable trusts, including the Department for Education and Skills and V for Millennium Volunteers, Bridge House Trust Estates Fund, the Wates Foundation and the Treasury for Capital Volunteering.

### **Examples of Partnership Projects:**

**Millennium Volunteers** is a joint project with Croydon Youth Service, which encourages young people aged 16-24 to volunteer over a sustained period. After 200 hours service, they are awarded a certificate by the Mayor. Two workers promote the scheme, identify voluntary placements, negotiate volunteer plans with young people and support them through their voluntary work. Over 550 young people have registered and over 200 have completed 200 hours. Award ceremonies are held twice a year. Volunteers participate in a wide range of activities, including football coaching, supporting stammering sufferers, running a youth dance group, shop work and a youth-led graffiti art project.

### **Capital Volunteering**

VCC is the lead agency for Capital Volunteering in Croydon, a multi-agency project to help people with mental health needs become volunteers. There are more barriers to volunteering for people with mental health needs than other groups. The project uses volunteering to help challenge negative stereotypes, build self-esteem and reduce social exclusion.

VCC helps organisations by providing free training on mental health issues to challenge stereotypes and increase volunteering opportunities, and supports volunteers through the Menteer project, which supplies mentors for volunteers throughout their volunteering experience.

These partnerships have been very successful, linking expertise and establishing contacts between various agencies.

## **GOOD PRACTICE POINTS**

### **Volunteer placements and support are user-led**

All volunteers are treated as individuals. Their views are pivotal in discussing their interests, situations they would find stressful and where their strengths lie. Young people are encouraged to develop their own youth-led projects, for example graffiti arts, street dance and peer mentoring. Mental health service users run an After Lunch Bunch for volunteers and service users who are

interested in volunteering. Volunteers can feed back their views and experiences through the Volunteers' Forum.

### **VCC responds adequately to need**

The Good Practice team are both proactive in ensuring health checks are carried out for all organisations involved with volunteering that are registering with VCC, and responsive to needs identified by organisations. For example, developing new opportunities or helping to devise volunteer agreements that do not risk any legal complications. They also respond to the needs identified through feedback from volunteers and advise organisations how to make their services more inclusive.

### **Diversity**

Of the volunteers advised by VCC in 2004, 56% were from BME communities. This was achieved through targeted promotion of volunteering opportunities with text and images that reflected the diversity of the local population. Now word of mouth recommendations from successful volunteer placements means there is a steady flow of volunteers of all ages from a wide cross-section of the population, including BME communities, people with mental health needs or acquired brain injury, the unemployed and single parents.

### **Publicity**

The 32-page full-colour quarterly magazine *The Volunteer* has been nationally acclaimed. It contains good practice tips and updates on policy issues. Many Volunteer Centres have drawn from its example.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND REFERENCES**

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Websites:

[www.volunteercentre.net/croydon](http://www.volunteercentre.net/croydon)

[www.cvalive.org.uk](http://www.cvalive.org.uk)

[www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)