



Project Funded by



Reducing Barriers To Ethnic Minority Groups In Volunteering.

Home-Start Hillingdon Case Study

About us

Home-Start Hillingdon was established in 1999 and has since helped thousands of families who find themselves struggling with the challenges of parenthood, often in the context of social isolation, poor mental health, previous trauma, and difficult family relationships.

Greater London Authority (GLA) has funded this project as part of its mission to contribute toward inclusion and diversity in communities.

Our mission:

Home-Start Hillingdon is dedicated to supporting our community to enable families to provide their children with the best possible start in life.

Acknowledgements

Home-Start Hillingdon is grateful to the GLA for their support with this project.

Home-Start Hillingdon would like to express gratitude to all the community

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Executive Summary

Previous studies have shown that volunteering has health and wellbeing benefits for the volunteer in addition to benefiting the community. However, there is a gap in participation in volunteering in the UK of ethnic minority groups (EMGs).

This research aims to explore how ethnic minority groups in the UK differ from the general population in terms of their motivations for volunteering and barriers to engagement, and what organisations can change to engage with those motivations and reduce those barriers.

The research consists of focus groups, meetings and interviews across Hillingdon. A total of around 150 participants have taken part in this research.

The report covers the reasons given for not volunteering by ethnic minority groups and makes a number of recommendations to help remove these barriers to develop a more diverse volunteering model.

We hope that this report will help organisations to engage with volunteers to better recruit people from ethnic minority groups.

Acronyms

The acronyms below are used throughout the report:

EMG: Ethnic Minority Group

HSH: Home-Start Hillingdon

GLA: Greater London Authority

NCVO: National Council for Voluntary Organisations

CVS: Council for Voluntary Service

H4All: H4All is a local London Borough of Hillingdon partnership operating under the charity Third Sector Together Northwest London (3ST) to deliver various wellbeing and community services with its sovereign partners.

REAP: Refugees In Effective & Active Partnership. REAP is an independent, refugee-led organisation in West London that aims to empower refugees and asylum-seekers to live as valuable and valued members of British society.

GROW: Get Ready fOr Work. GROW is an organisation which helps women to go back to work or training.

HWC: Hillingdon Women's Centre. HWC is an organisation which supports the needs of women in the community.

Introduction

This project was conceived to explore the following research objectives:

- Understand any specific barriers to volunteering amongst ethnic minority groups (EMGs).
- Explore barriers to volunteering.
- Understand the motivations of people who volunteer.
- Understand what might encourage more people from EMGs to take part in volunteering activities.
- Explore how to make HomeStart Hillingdon's volunteering model more diverse and inclusive.

Ethnic minority inclusion continues to be unaddressed in many organisations, and remains an area where people are fearful of initiating a discussion or asking questions. More organisations need to fight that fear and start challenging themselves.

This project was funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) to help fill a gap in our understanding as to why people from ethnic minority groups in the community are not volunteering. In this report we focus more on women with parenting experiences, the reason being that these women are our targeted volunteers.

Our goal is to enable more people to benefit from volunteering and to understand how we can move towards greater access to inclusion in volunteering.

Through the data analysis, meetings and interviews carried out between November 2023 and October 2024, the research aimed to understand what diversity means to voluntary organisations and explore the challenges and opportunities for greater volunteer diversity in practice.

The report also identifies lessons and reflections for organisations looking to improve in this area, including simplifying volunteer recruitment and training processes.

Background

There are many data source available which show who does and does not volunteer in the UK, but little knowledge as to why this might be in terms of understanding the different motivations and barriers to volunteering for different ethnic minority groups.

According to surveys done by Civil Society in August 2023, 38% of ethnic minority groups are volunteering less often due to the cost-of-living crisis. <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/bame-individuals-volunteering-less-often-due-to-cost-of-living-crisis-survey-reports.html>

According to a Time Well Spent survey carried out by NVO in 2023, formal volunteer participation has been in decline across almost all ethnic groups in recent years and the lowest formal participation rates are among those who identify as Asian <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/time-well-spent-2023-volunteering-among-the-global-majority/volunteer-participation/#volunteer-participation-among-the-global-majority>

According to a UK Civil Society Almanac survey carried out by NCVO in 2023, women are more likely than men to do any form of volunteering, formal or informal. 58% of women have done some form of volunteering, informal or formal, in the past year. <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/uk-civil-society-almanac-2023/volunteering/>

Methodology

Stages in the research

1. Research strategy developed. This included identifying ethnic minority groups in Hillingdon.
2. Research conducted: organising interviews, meetings and focus groups.
3. Research testing. This involved meeting groups again developing the early findings.
4. Review of results, early findings analysis.
6. Synthesis of findings of the barriers to volunteering for ethnic minority groups.
7. Review of draft report and presentation.

Research strategy

The strategy was to identify ethnic minority groups across Hillingdon and more specifically women, who are under-represented amongst our volunteers.

We focused on building relationships with different communities.

- ⇒ Schools
- ⇒ Children's Centres
- ⇒ Faith Groups
- ⇒ Other voluntary organisations

We have taken part in community events, gatherings and celebrations and created strong links with the communities.

The idea was to get to know each other and build trust. Without trust, we don't have the power to make productive changes for the community. Starting relevant conversations, being respectful, being transparent by sharing information about the goals of the project and making people feel listened to are ways to build trust.

Focus Group, interviews and meetings:

We have carried out:

- ⇒ Qualitative interviews, Focus Groups, Meetings and Interviews. Some of our discussions were recorded and transcribed. Quotations from these interviews can be found in ***Annex I***

- ⇒ An analysis of quantitative data from our online survey (SurveyMonkey) and paper-based survey.

Early findings analysis

Extracted data from surveys and transcription of discussions were synthesised and helped identify patterns telling us that there are a number of barriers to volunteering.

Research Testing

We reached out to the community again using the language that we learnt in the early research. We listened to what people told us and proposed easier ways to get involved in volunteering after implementing some changes to our recruitment and training in response to the research findings.

The changes included:

- ⇒ Developing a partnership with H4All (provider of volunteer brokerage services)

- ⇒ Simplifying the volunteer application process (making simpler application forms)

- ⇒ Recruiting potential volunteers to coffee mornings (where they could access more information) instead of recruiting directly to training courses

We found that having volunteers from ethnic minority groups in the coffee mornings, helped to make potential volunteers feel included. The volunteers acted as advocates with their background and experiences.

We found that people from EMGs can feel intimidated by the recruitment process; making the interview as friendly as possible helps the potential volunteer to feel at ease.

Results

Results from Focus Group, Meetings and Interviews

Date & Location	Type	Organisation, Participants
16/11/2023, West Drayton	Interviews	REAP, 6 women & 4 men
08/12/2023, Hayes	Interviews	GROW, 5 women
13/12/2023, Uxbridge	Meeting	HWC, 8 women
20/12/2023, Hayes	Interviews	Gurdwara, 4 women
27/12/2023, Uxbridge	Interviews	Hindu Temple, 3 women
29/01/2024, Hayes	Meeting	Yeading School, 12 women
01/02/2024, West Drayton	Focus Group	REAP, 5 women
22/02/2024, West Drayton	Focus Group	Children's Centre, 4 women
13/03/2023, Hayes	Interviews	Mosque, 3 women
18/04/2024, West Drayton	Interviews	REAP, 4 women
25/04/2024, Hayes	Interviews	Gurdwara, 3 women
22/05/2024, Hayes	Meeting	Mosque, 5 women

Focus groups, meetings and interviews were held across Hillingdon, in several locations (see table above) and attended by over 65 people, 59% were from South Asia, 48% were from a Muslim background, 16% from a Sikh background, 13% from a Hindu, 13% from a Christian background and less than 5% from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds.

Focus Groups: We had only two focus groups, but we were expecting to have more, and the attendance was less than expected. It is generally good practice to offer financial compensation to participants in focus groups, but we didn't have the budget to do so. We were offering instead lunch, coffee, tea and biscuits.

Women from local communities were being invited to attend and a consent form was signed beforehand to allow the group discussion to be recorded. We had lots of consent forms signed but only half of the people, who had given consent, came on the day. The questions asked within the focus groups to generate discussion can be found in **Annex 2**, the information leaflet in **Annex 3** and the consent form in **Annex 4**

Interviews and Meetings: These were attended by between six and twelve people. Some of these groups were specific to gender and faith groups to provide a safe environment in which honest discussions about the topic could take place.

Some of our discussions were recorded and transcribed to identify themes and issues. The participants gave permission to record the discussions. We talked to three groups of women:

- ⇒ A group of women who had no experience of volunteering.
- ⇒ A group of women who had some experience of volunteering.
- ⇒ A group of women who thought they had no experience of volunteering but were already involved in supporting a cause.

This highlighted that the term “volunteering” is not always understood. Words like “help”, “support” and “give” may resonate better with some communities.

Why do they volunteer?

Most of our participants were more likely to be motivated to volunteer by religious belief or career-related benefits.

- ⇒ Route to gain skills and get back to work.

They want to gain skills and experiences; this is particularly for those seeking employment or to improve their career prospects.

⇒ Religious reasons

Within the EMGs, faith plays an important role in their life and therefore it is inevitable that it plays a part in any voluntary work that they do. It is an easier choice to spend time helping amongst their own community where they do not have to make special requests such as prayer facilities and food.

There is a high level of informal volunteering taking place within communities that is not recognized by the voluntary sector. Some viewed volunteering less as a distinct vocation and more as part of their everyday identities as Muslims or Sikhs. Faith and belief play a major part in the motivation to volunteer.

Related to the concept of volunteering as part of 'being a Muslim', - Muslims also have '**Zakat**', the mandatory giving of money to charity. This is one of the five pillars of Islam, and all participants described giving 2.5% of their income to charity as a matter of course. Discussions of volunteering were therefore tightly bound up with notions of regular charitable contributions through money, rather than time.

Volunteering at a **Gurdwara** (a Sikh place of worship) is a way to contribute to the community. At the local Gurdwara in Hayes, volunteers work against the clock to prepare food for the hundreds of people that queue for a hot meal, every day. This is part of following one of three core Sikh values, **Sewa**, which means to selflessly help others.

Some women can only help other women due to their religion or culture. This may explain why they are more likely to volunteer informally and decide who they are helping out, and in most cases, it is a family member or a friend.

Why don't they volunteer?

The many barriers that prevent the ethnic minority population from volunteering were raised during all the focus group discussions, interviews and meetings. These included:

Time: a lack of time was the most common reason for not volunteering. Family commitments were particularly significant: the sense that "family comes first" meant that participants felt that, where possible, spare time should be spent with relatives. In addition to childcare, providing care for older family members was also common, particularly for women.

Family perceptions: Reflecting the centrality of family, women noted that family members might raise questions around motivation and personal safety if they expressed a desire to volunteer. As a result, many felt that volunteering would not be worth the friction it would create within the household.

English skill: For some communities, low English language proficiency was a significant barrier to volunteering. Although these participants were some of the most motivated to volunteer to gain skills, they expressed concern about communicating and many did not feel comfortable travelling to unfamiliar locations.

Travel: The travel required to volunteer was also seen as a barrier, both in terms of time, cost and difficulty, which was a particular concern for some women, who lacked confidence in navigating public transport alone. This was partly as they rarely travelled far from home.

Lack of awareness: There is a lack of awareness about what volunteering is and about the volunteering activities available. Volunteering is not valued enough.

Physical health: Among older people, poor health and physical functioning has generally been found to be negatively correlated with volunteering.

Safety concerns: We identified physical and psychological safety concerns. Some women worry about their personal and physical safety, especially in volunteering activities like home support visits (opportunities offered by Home-Start); and some women worry about not doing a good enough job and not being supported.

Fear of not fitting in: For some communities, there is a fear of not being welcomed in an organisation. This could be due to prejudice, experiences or lack of confidence.

Cost: Money is an important consideration for volunteers. Several of the participants described concerns about money. The cost-of-living crisis is having a negative impact on volunteers and volunteering. Some people worry that they cannot afford to volunteer.

Skills: Some participants felt they simply would not meet the entry criteria and would not have the skills to volunteer.

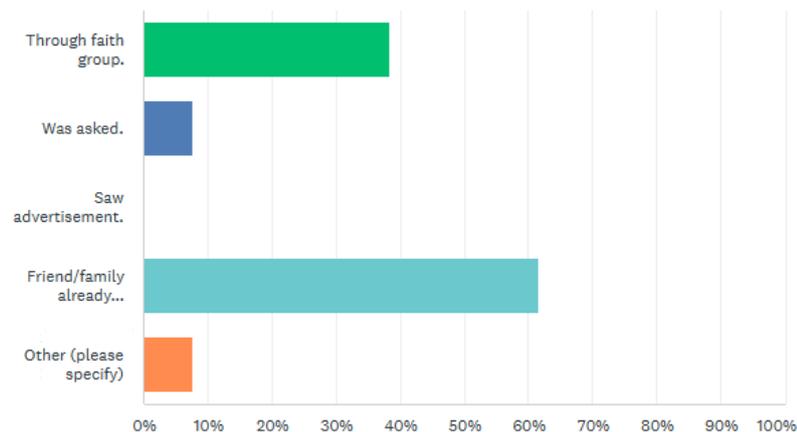
Intimidation over formality. Potential volunteers can be discouraged by formal recruitment processes, such as completing long registration forms and attending interviews, especially those where English is not their first language.

Results from Surveys

Experiences in Volunteering

How did you get involved?

Answered: 13 Skipped: 18



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Through faith group.	38.46% 5
▼ Was asked.	7.69% 1
▼ Saw advertisement.	0.00% 0
▼ Friend/family already involved.	61.54% 8
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 7.69% 1
Total Respondents: 13	

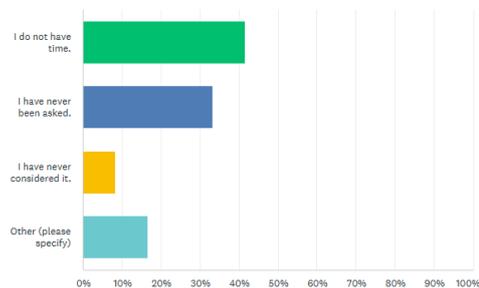
- There is a large amount of informal volunteering going on in ethnic minority communities.
- Faith and belief play a major part in the motivation to volunteer.
- Family and friends play a key role in the choices of whether to volunteer.
- Ethnic minority groups do not tend to have regulation within their volunteering.

This research has found that religion, culture and family values, play an influential role in volunteering and provide the motivation to volunteer for EMGs. Family and friends' attitudes to volunteering have a major influence on an individual's choice to get involved.

Barriers to Volunteering

Why don't you take part in any of these activities?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 19



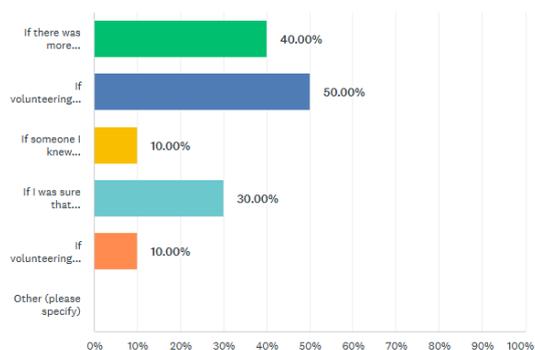
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ I do not have time.	41.67% 5
▼ I have never been asked.	33.33% 4
▼ I have never considered it.	8.33% 1
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 16.67% 2
Total Respondents: 12	

- Time is one the most common reason for not volunteering.
- Just after the time commitment, comes the lack of awareness.

Factors that would encourage new volunteers:

What factors would make it easier for you to help others?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 21



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ If there was more information about volunteering opportunities. (1)	40.00% 4
▼ If volunteering could improve my career and job prospects. (2)	50.00% 5
▼ If someone I knew volunteered with me. (3)	10.00% 1
▼ If I was sure that volunteering would fit in with my other commitments. (4)	30.00% 3
▼ If volunteering was good fun. (5)	10.00% 1
▼ Other (please specify) (6)	Responses 0.00% 0
Total Respondents: 10	

- The lack of awareness is often specified.
- 50% of the people asked said they want to go back to work and see volunteering as a stepping stone.

Training

Q11

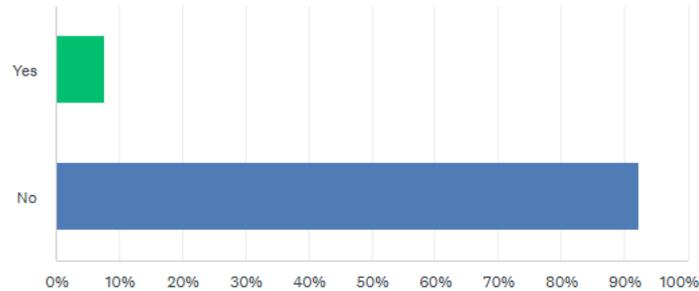


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Do you receive training to enable you to carry out your role within this group/club/organisation?

Answered: 13 Skipped: 18



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	7.69% 1
▼ No	92.31% 12
Total Respondents: 13	

- Less than 10% of volunteers from ethnic minority groups, receive training for the roles they undertake.
- Most people from EMGs are recruited through their friends, family and other contacts. They pass on information about a need or opportunity, and people come forward.
- Most volunteers within EMGs, whether formal or informal, are recruited by word of mouth.

Results from the Testing Phase

We met the community groups again and conducted further discussions using the language learnt from our initial research. The language we use has a powerful impact on inclusivity within the local community. Reflecting on the terminologies that resonate with communities and individuals is crucial for creating a space where everyone feels valued and heard.

Seeing the community groups again and doing what we said we would do at the beginning of our project, created a feeling of safety and trust. Community is both a feeling and a set of relationships among people.

Interviews and meetings were held across Hillingdon, in several locations (see table below) and attended by over 80 people.

Date & Location	Type	Organisation, Participants
07/08/2024, Uxbridge	Interviews	Summer Play Day, 20+ women
13/08/2024, Hayes	Interviews	GROW Picnic, 11 women
11/09/2024, Hayes	Interviews	Gurdwara, 4 women
13/09/2024, Hayes	Meeting	Mosque, 8 women
18/09/2024, Hayes	Meeting	Yeading School, 14 women
20/09/2024, Hayes	Interviews	Friday Prayer at the Mosque, 7 women
26/09/2024, West Drayton	Meeting	Lunch at REAP, 12 women
27/09/2024, online	Meeting	GROW Coffee Morning, 8 women

We spoke to the groups about all the solutions and ideas, we had formulated to overcome the barriers to volunteering that we identified in our initial research. We focused on making it easier for members of EMGs to volunteer for HSH and proposed the possibility of attending a coffee morning, as a preliminary first step to meet the HSH team, ask any questions around volunteering and get help completing the application forms. At the coffee morning, potential volunteers could also speak to our existing volunteers, who would be present to share their experiences.

In this second phase of the research, we informed people about our coffee mornings and advertised our induction training to help increase the diversity of our volunteer pool and recruit more people from EMGs.

This approach proved successful. In the first HSH induction training for the new volunteers after we adopted this approach, which took place in October 2024: 75 % of the participants were from EMGs.

We have also been asked if we could give our induction training in a school in the near future, where most of the mothers, interested in volunteering for Home-Start Hillingdon, are from EMGs.

Being non-judgemental is key. Offering individual support wherever needed and accepting that people volunteer for a variety of reasons.

Discussion

⇒ Encouraging more people to Volunteer

Insight from the groups highlighted the following key opportunities which could help to encourage greater volunteering from EMGs.

Raising awareness. There is a big job to do around raising awareness about what volunteering is and which volunteering activities are available. Outreach to the community groups is essential.

Benefits of Volunteering. There is an opportunity to highlight the benefits of volunteering (benefits “for the soul” and for the community). We need to talk more to the communities and explain all the following points:

- **Sense of purpose:** Volunteering can give you a sense of purpose and belonging.
- **Mental health:** Volunteering helps improve your wellbeing and makes you feel good.
- **Confidence:** Volunteering can help you gain confidence and self-esteem.
- **New challenges:** Volunteering gives you the opportunity try new things and achieve personal satisfaction.
- **New skills:** Volunteering can help you learn and develop new skills.
- **Social skills:** Volunteering can help you improve your social skills and meet new people.
- **Career enhancement:** Volunteering can help you boost your career or find a job. Employers like to see volunteering experiences in a CV.
- **Community:** Volunteering can help you connect to your community and help making it a better place.
- **Fun:** Volunteering can be fun.

Inclusion approach. A volunteer programme, that is more inclusive and diverse and reflects the community, will be more attractive to that community. These programmes tend to have a higher impact in the community and within their own organisation.

Welcome everyone. Organisations seeking volunteers need to help overcome the fear of not fitting in, by showing how volunteers are celebrated. In HSH, we get to know our volunteers well; we support them and help them develop. We want them to feel included and appreciated.

Flexibility. Offering opportunities with flexible hours will make it more accessible for people with other commitments. In HSH, we have family friendly opportunities, and the commitment is only two to three hours a week.

Simplifying the process. Recruitment practises are the gateway to volunteering. The initial stage of the volunteer process is so important for engaging volunteers. Helping people to get involved is key, as is having a simpler entry process. Organising coffee mornings has been a big help for HSH.

Providing Training. Training needs to be more accessible. Training courses need to be given to make sure volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities.

Expenses. A solution to the cost challenge of volunteering is paying expenses. This solution will remove a barrier for volunteers on low income or with little spare cash.

English skills. English skill can be a barrier but there are ways to overcome this barrier. A solution, for a charity like HSH, would be to have a coordinator, who could speak the necessary languages to manage a group of volunteers with a poorer level of English.

Safety concerns. For the physical safety concern, we can reassure the potential volunteers by letting them know that in HSH, we always deliver our best work in a very professional way. Our policies and processes are well thought and designed to ensure safety, protection and quality. For the psychological safety concern, we can reassure them that they are not on their own, each volunteer is under a coordinator's wing and there is a very close relationship. The volunteer is the heart of Home-Start and is always a priority.

How has this project impacted our organisation and how has this project impacted others?

Impacts of this research for Home-Start Hillingdon

This project has helped us develop a partnership with H4All and we have made some changes to our recruitment and training processes.

⇒ **H4All Partnership:**

H4All Partnership

H4All is a local London Borough of Hillingdon partnership operating under the charity Third Sector Together Northwest London (3ST) to deliver various wellbeing and community services with its sovereign partners. H4All was founded by five prominent third sector organisations: Age UK Hillingdon Harrow & Brent, DASH, Carers Trust Hillingdon, Harlington Hospice and Hillingdon Mind.

A successful and diverse volunteer model can benefit from the establishment of a partnership with a trusted organisation. H4All is a valuable partner in HSH's journey towards nurturing a diverse community efficiently.

During this research, we spoke to many people interested in volunteering but who could not commit to volunteering for Home-Start Hillingdon. We are looking for volunteers who are parents or have experience with children and can support a parent. We think that parents can understand each other better. Some people we met, were not our target audience, for instance Asylum Seekers, who have the time to volunteer as they are not allowed to work, but they have some challenges to be volunteering candidates: the DBS process which has to be completed by all HSH's volunteers can be problematic due to the timescale and access required to documentation, access to referees is complicated and transport is an issue due to the lack of money. Students may also be interested in volunteering but may not be suitable candidates for HSH as they may not have parenting experience.

H4All is a provider of volunteer brokerage services, and this partnership will help everyone to get involved in volunteering and create an inclusive environment for everyone. HSH is able to refer volunteers who do not meet our specific criteria to H4All where suitable opportunities can be found.

⇒ **Adapting our volunteering model:**

Volunteering should be an inclusive and rewarding experience for everyone involved. By adapting volunteer environments to cater to ethnic minority groups, we can help the community to thrive. By recognising the unique perspectives and experiences that EMGs volunteers can bring, we can enhance organisations' effectiveness and outreach.

Adapting volunteer experiences to the needs of ethnic minority groups doesn't mean sidelining those of other volunteers, either. It's about creating an inclusive environment that embraces all contributions and provides every volunteer with the resources and support they need.

The changes to our recruitment and training in response to the research findings are:

- Simplifying the application process: we have made simpler application forms
- Recruiting to coffee mornings: Instead of recruiting volunteers directly to the induction training, we recruit them now to coffee mornings.

We have found that having an informal chat with potential volunteers and getting to know them at a coffee morning, allowing them to ask about the charity, helps with their commitment to the organisation.

We have also found that having volunteers from ethnic minority groups available to participate at these coffee mornings is a great way to make potential volunteers feel included.

In addition, we have increased our visibility in the community.

⇒ **Increase of our visibility**

Along with other work, the project has helped increase the visibility of HSH in different communities. Lots of people didn't know about the work we do with the community, the families we help in the borough and how beneficial it is. Some people want now to help too, and some people need the help. We noticed an increase in family self-referral.

This project has also helped us increase the diversity in our volunteer pool.

⇒ **Increase of non-white British Volunteers**

In the last two years, the percentage of non-white British volunteers went from 37% to 50%.

In the last two training courses, we have seen a much more diverse cohort of volunteers:

- Training course, April 2024: 75% of non-white British
- Training course, October 2024: 88% of non-white British

⇒ **Embrace faith and culture**

We have increased our cultural knowledge, and we understand that some motivations to volunteer will derive from different cultures and faiths.

Impacts of this research for others

⇒ **Increasing volunteering awareness in the community**

In addition to helping communities to work together, volunteering is also instrumental in helping individuals to integrate, both within their own community and the wider Hillingdon community.

⇒ **Helping other organisation to diversify their pool of volunteers**

By working alongside the diverse communities, we learnt a lot, and we want to share our work and establish best practices. In the voluntary sector, learning from one another is key.

⇒ **Helping different communities to take part in more formal volunteering activities**

We have found that having volunteer champions from ethnic minority groups, who can inspire their communities through volunteering, has made a big difference. Volunteer champions can be influential in promoting the benefits of volunteering in their community as exemplified by Harjeet's story below.

Harjeet Case Study

Harjeet is from Afghanistan and follows Sikhism. She is a busy mother, and she is really involved in supporting her faith group.

We met Harjeet few times, at a focus group and in school meetings. We created a good connection and a feeling of trust. Harjeet said at first that she was too busy to add volunteering to her busy schedule. She was supporting her child, her parents and her faith group, but she loved what we do and mentioned the fact that she would love to work for a charity like HSH in the future. She was not sure about joining Home-Start but finally took part in the training course in April 2024. She had the confidence to try something different that she had previously thought was for other people. She had a great time and created great relationships with the rest of the volunteers. She is now ready to start giving her support to a family. She told her friends and family about Home-Start and some of them would like to meet us and hopefully start their journey with us.

Harjeet will hopefully benefit from being engaged as a volunteer with us and will influence her own communities and promote the mental and physical benefits of volunteering and be an advocate for the wider community.

She is opening the doors to different communities to come and join our Home-Start family.

Conclusion

This report aims to offer insights into the factors that prevent people from ethnic minorities from volunteering. It is intended to prompt discussion and thinking on how volunteering can be made more inclusive

Below is a summary of our main conclusions and recommendations on the findings and on the project organisation.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this research:

Putting effort into understanding the barriers to volunteering and changing to being more diverse, encourages people from ethnic minority groups to volunteer. By taking steps to be inclusive, we create a more equitable space for volunteers, and potential volunteers.

There is a need for more openness and more dialogue, as a foundation step in working on equality, diversity and inclusion. We need to get out and build local connections to support inclusive recruitment.

There is also an opportunity for more proactive partnerships, tapping into the expertise of those already involved in building inclusivity. Working in a collaborative way with other charities and voluntary organisations provides the community with different ways to get involved in volunteering.

By working together to remove these barriers, we will enable volunteers to make a real difference in their communities and we can continue to build stronger, more connected and compassionate communities.

The findings of this report aim to inform and facilitate those discussions in the voluntary sector.

Recommendations

The recommendations in our report, such as providing better support, easier ways to get involved, and a welcoming environment for volunteers, will improve the volunteer experience for many, and help organisations attract a broader range of volunteers in the months and years to come.

Recommendations on the process

Challenges	Lesson Learnt/ Actions
<p><u>Meeting Communities:</u></p> <p>It was hard to get in touch with some communities.</p>	<p>The connection with the council Interfaith Lead was key for this research. It provided us with introductions to all the faith group leaders from a trusted mutual connection.</p> <p>We got in touch with schools and other organisations who organise events for the community (libraries or community centres for instance). We sent emails, contacted them directly, followed their social media, kept an eye on newsletters to identify smaller community groups that were connected to them.</p>
<p><u>Focus Groups</u></p> <p>We were expecting to do more focus groups.</p>	<p>From conversation with other researchers during the project we identified that Focus Groups would have been more successful if we had offered financial compensation.</p> <p>Instead of Focus Groups, we gathered data from interviews and meetings.</p>
<p><u>Finding the right audience</u></p> <p>We met lots of people, who were interested in volunteering but were not our targeted volunteers.</p>	<p>We have created a partnership with H4All, the organisation in Hillingdon providing a CVS/Volunteer Centre function to enable volunteering opportunities for people who were unsuitable for HSH roles.</p>
<p><u>English skill</u></p> <p>We also met lots of people, whose level of English was poor.</p>	<p>Having a member of staff who speaks different languages is ideal and enables richer conversations.</p>
<p><u>Online surveys</u></p> <p>People were not always receptive to online surveys.</p>	<p>The audience, with whom we were speaking, were better engaged with paper-based surveys.</p>
<p><u>Community Engagement Co-ordinator</u></p> <p>We had a part -time community engagement coordinator to reach out to the community, who was dedicated to this research.</p>	<p>It is very helpful to have a community engagement coordinator from an ethnic minority group. People tend to identify better with such an individual, feel less anxious and speak more openly.</p>

Recommendations on the findings

Below are the recommendations on the findings and HSH’s experience of implementation.

Challenges	Lesson Learnt/ Actions
<p><u>Intimidation over the entry process</u></p>	<p>Recruitment and Training processes</p> <p>Making changes to simplify recruitment and training processes is a good way to start.</p> <p>Investing time to go through entry process from the viewpoint of a potential volunteer, identifies challenge points for engagement and where barriers might cause someone to drop out of the process.</p> <p>This can also be approached by reflecting on process and materials to consider, “is this really necessary?” or “what do we gain from this?”</p> <p>It can be helpful to give particular consideration to the first step of engagement – reflecting on how easy it is for a potential volunteer to make the first contact point for this opportunity above any other opportunities they might be considering.</p> <p>For speakers of other languages, removing complicated, technical or unclear language from adverts and application forms helps engagement.</p> <p>Waiting time between contact points is another important consideration. If you cannot take volunteers on immediately, how do you keep them engaged in the interim?</p>
<p><u>Time</u></p>	<p>Flexibility</p> <p>Consideration to how making opportunities as time flexible as possible can help enable more diverse volunteers to engage.</p> <p>Reflecting on how, within the remit of an organisation’s capacity, to enable people to volunteer in the time they have available given other commitments that might include work, family,</p> <p>For HSH’s audience, we found it was particularly important to enable family friendly volunteering opportunities.</p>
<p><u>Language</u></p>	<p>Vocabulary that communities understand better</p> <p>The word volunteering is not always understood. Words like “help” and “support” resonate better with some communities.</p>
<p><u>English skill</u></p>	<p>Co-ordinator from an EMG</p> <p>Having a Volunteer Co-ordinator from an EMG and speaking different languages can help. Even if they don’t speak the same language as the people being engaged, the commonality of experience can break down barriers.</p>

<p><u>Lack of awareness</u></p>	<p>Creating ways to increase information, understanding and visibility of opportunities</p> <p>Reaching out to the community is key.</p> <p>Physically going and participating in community events and speaking with people builds trust.</p> <p>Multiple points of contact within communities including following up attendance at an event with marketing materials can enable engagement.</p>
<p><u>Fear of not fitting in</u></p>	<p>Visible representation of people from EMGs within staff or volunteer teams</p> <p>This is a big advantage because people want to be in places where they feel there are people who are like them.</p> <p>Not seeing yourself represented can lead to anxiety about going somewhere new.</p> <p>To address this, it can be helpful to ask existing volunteers from EMGs to speak with potential volunteers about their experience</p> <p>Increasing diversity within your team will encourage further diversity as word of mouth encourages greater participation within communities.</p> <p>Another important action to address this is to reflect on marketing materials to ensure diversity is visible.</p>
<p><u>Cost of Living pressure</u></p>	<p>Expenses</p> <p>Paying expenses is a great way to remove this barrier.</p> <p>Making this visible at an early stage, encourages engagement.</p>
<p><u>Safety concerns</u></p> <p>This is specific to some volunteering opportunities like Home-Visiting Roles in HSH. There were personal, physical and psychological safety concerns</p>	<p>Demonstrating Professionalism</p> <p>Showing potential volunteers that the organisation is working in a professional way and putting the volunteers in the heart of what they do, is very important.</p>
<p><u>Understanding of Mutual Benefit</u></p>	<p>Demonstrating what volunteers can gain</p> <p>Some communities with less experience of “formal” volunteering have not considered the personal development opportunities related to volunteering. Communicating this effectively can enable more volunteers to engage.</p>

It is also recommended that further research be undertaken to explore remaining and new questions emerging from this work.

Areas for future research

⇒ Long-term volunteering

This research helps to find ways to diversify volunteers in an organisation. A next step could be to find ways to retain volunteers from EMGs. Looking at how likely volunteers from EMGs are to continue volunteering in their organisation and their reasons for continuing or not. Some research has shown that people who volunteer early in life are most likely to continue long term; we also need to look at the younger generation from EMGs to help them get more involved in volunteering activities.

⇒ Gender and Ethnicity

How do issues of gender and ethnicity intersect in the volunteering experience and how might organisations work with this to attract a diverse group of volunteers?

Our research was mainly done with women, but research on potential male volunteers would be a great way to extend this work.

⇒ English skill

Giving people from EMGs with a poor level of English an opportunity to practice their English and help them meet other people, will offer them a chance to experience the English language and culture in real-life everyday situations. Giving back to the communities not only brings people closer to the community but also closer to the language.

Some people from EMGs can find it hard to participate in volunteering activities because of their level of English; we need to study ways to close this participation gap. For instance, pairing volunteers or setting up small groups so volunteers with lower level of English so they can chat with someone with a shared language, or encourage volunteers to help each other with translation apps.

⇒ Volunteering Within the Asylum Seeker Population

During this research, we identified huge enthusiasm and skill within the Asylum-Seeking population for volunteering. The main barrier to involvement is the instability of circumstance – whilst some remain in one area for a year or more, asylum seekers can be moved on within days. Identifying ways to enable this group of people to volunteer could be of huge mutual benefit to the VCS and within the Asylum-Seeking population.

Annex I: Quotes from interviews, meetings and FG

“People in my community are looking for paid jobs”

“Asylum Seekers don’t have the right to work, but they can volunteer, and they have plenty of time!”

“What if the family I am matched with, doesn’t like me?”

“I would love to give my time to help elderly people because I always remember that one day, I will be old too...”

“Do we have a certificate at the end of the training?”

“I will be honest with you, I am looking for a paid job, I just came from India and I need money.”

“In our tradition, we don’t go to someone’s house if we don’t know them. I am ok to meet outside.”

“My husband would not want me to go to someone’s house.”

“...I think if there was information delivered in local communities like Mosques...then perhaps you’d get more people.”

“Some people go to Church once a week, we come and help the Gurdwara every day, and we have so many other commitments: our children and our parents.”

“We are struggling with having volunteers in the Mosque, since covid we lost 70% of our volunteers.”

Annex 2: Focus Group Questions

1. *Please tell me about what Volunteering means to you.*
2. *Do you have experience in volunteering?*
3. *What type of volunteering?*
4. *Are you satisfied with your volunteer experience? Why?*
5. *Why did you volunteer?*
6. *Are you still volunteering?*
7. *Why did you stop?*
8. *Is there anything you would change about the experience?*
9. *How much of a difference do you feel volunteering made?*
10. *What did you get out of it?*
11. *Would you recommend volunteering to a friend? Why?*
12. *How likely are you to continue volunteering with future opportunities?*
13. *Would you be interested in Volunteering (if no experience)?*
14. *What types of volunteer opportunities would you be interested in?*
15. *What do you think you will gain from volunteer work?*
16. *When would be the time of the week/day for you to volunteer?*
17. *What do you know about Home-Start Hillingdon (HSH)? **
18. *Would you be interested in volunteering for HSH? **
19. *What do you think, the characteristics someone volunteering with families and young children must have? **
20. *Do you know the advantages of volunteering for the community? for yourself?*
21. *Tell me about things that would stop you from volunteering.*
22. *Which factor will make it easy for you to volunteer?*
23. *Which type of organization and structure would you feel comfortable volunteering in?*
24. *Do you understand the importance of equality and inclusion in organisations and charities like HSH?*
25. *Anything else to add before concluding the discussion?*

Annex 3: FG Participation Information Leaflet

Volunteering Focus Group

Your opinion counts!

Home-Start Hillingdon (HSH) provides volunteer-led, peer-support for local mothers with children under 5 years old, who are struggling with issues that negatively impact on their child's/family life. HSH is now looking at increasing the diversity of volunteers and finding out the barriers to volunteering.

Participant Information Leaflet

Thank you very much for your interest in this focus group. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read all the information in this leaflet carefully and please discuss it with others if you would like to do so. Please ask the research team if you have any questions, full details of how to contact us is on the last page of the leaflet. When you have all the information you need, take time to decide whether you would like to take part in the focus group.

What is the purpose of this study?

Home-Start Hillingdon (HSH) provides volunteer-led, peer-support for local mothers (95%) with children under 5, who are struggling with issues that negatively impact on their child's/family life. HSH is now looking at engaging more with women from EMG (Ethnic Minority groups) and increasing the diversity of volunteers.

This information will help us understand the limitations and barriers to volunteering and find ideas for new strategies.

Why have you been invited to take part?

We are inviting women who are from EMG.

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to participate in this focus group: it is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in the focus group, you can still withdraw at any time without giving a reason for your withdrawal. If you do not to participate in the focus group, or if you withdraw, you will not be disadvantaged in anyway.

What do I have to do if I take part in the study?

Paula, a Trustee responsible for Community research and Samia, a Community Engagement Co-ordinator will run the focus group. Paula/Samia will ask you and the other participants about your experience of volunteering. She will want to hear if you know about volunteering, if you are interested in volunteering, if you know the advantages of volunteering. Samia/Paula will record the focus group discussion to make sure she has an accurate record of what you say and may also take notes during the session.

The focus group will last about an hour. It will be very informal, more like a conversation, and you will be able to say as much or as little as you like.

What are the benefits of taking part?

You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are contributing to a research project and that your views are being heard. If the project is successful, we hope that it will be used to have more volunteer and help more families.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

There is a small risk that taking part may cause you stress if you feel the topics covered are sensitive or personal. If you feel uncomfortable you can choose not to answer a particular question, or to withdraw from the focus group.

Will there be further research as part of this study?

We may want to undertake further research and may ask if we can contact you again but there will be no obligation at all to take part in further research. You can ask us to remove your contact details from our database at any stage (see our contact details below).

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

We have strict procedures to ensure all information remains confidential and anonymous. Your identity, contact details and the information you give us will be strictly confidential and not shared outside the study team. All study findings will only be presented in anonymised form so that no individual participant can be identified.

Samia will be providing a summary of the focus group to Home-Start Hillingdon. All the information will be anonymous, but HSH will know that you have participated because of the way the focus group is being set up. If you would like to see a copy of the report to HSH before it is submitted to make sure you are happy with it, please let Paula or Samia know.

Can I take part in the study without giving my contact details?

HSH will know your contact details. Samia would like to have your contact details so that she can follow up with you if she has any queries following the focus group, but you do not have to provide them. If you prefer not to provide your name, you can be identified by a study number only and still participate in the study.

What will happen to the results of the focus group?

The results of this focus group will be used to understand why the EMG are under-represented in HSH and try to have more volunteers from EMG. HSH may also use the results of the study in applications for further funding.

We will provide you with a short summary of the focus group findings on request. You will be able to contact the researchers with any questions and to talk about the findings.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being carried out at HSH and funded by the Civil Society Roots. The Trustee, responsible for the Community research, is Paula Wittels and the Community Engagement Coordinator is Samia Berkouz.

Annex 4: Focus Group's Consent Form

Your opinion counts: Volunteering focus group Consent form

<i>The participant should complete the whole of this sheet herself.</i>		
<i>Please initial the appropriate box</i>	YES	NO
<i>Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?</i>		
<i>Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this focus group?</i>		
<i>Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?</i>		
<i>Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning the focus group?</i>		
<i>Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the focus group:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• at any time</i> 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• without having to give a reason for withdrawing</i> 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• without affecting any services, you are currently receiving or may receive in the future.</i> 		
<i>I agree to my interview being recorded.</i>		
<i>I agree that the words I say may be used as anonymous quotations when the study is written up or published.</i>		
<i>Do you agree to take part in this focus group?</i>		
<p>Your Name in Capitals:</p> <p>Your Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>Name of researchers: Paula Wittels and Samia Berkouz</p> <p>Signature of researcher:</p>		



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