

Volunteering in libraries

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Background

- History of volunteering dating back some 20 years
- Started in Heritage & Local Studies Centre
- Scope and variety of roles developed significantly since initial inception

Lending Time Project (CSV)

- 2-year project (2003 - 05)
- Established added value volunteering roles (e.g. children's activity support, IT training, coffee morning support etc.)
- Administered by library staff after funding finished
- Some volunteers still supporting libraries

Home Visits Library Service

- 2008 – formal partnership with VCM established
- Fully administered by volunteers
- Established on the foundations of the Council's Befriending Service
- Volunteers give clients more time
- New services established (e.g. dementia collection)

Volunteering Strategy

- Established 2010, service wide contract with VCM
- Developed a new suite of volunteering roles
- Part of foundation for extending library opening hours
- All roles support staff, without their support the project would not have been a success
- Enables the service to provide a broader offer and focus staff on core professional work

What do the volunteers get out of supporting libraries?

- Training
- Doing something for the community
- Well being and sense of value
- Increase employability prospects

Outcomes

- HVLS usage up by 25% since 2008
- Over 400 volunteers recruited since April 2010
- 301 volunteers recruited since April 2011
- 250 active volunteers
- Retention rate of 83%
- Extended library opening hours
- Greater community voice

Outcomes (continued)

- Volunteering England good practice example
- Basis for Team London funding bid
- Increased usage and satisfaction with libraries
 - Resident satisfaction up 4% since 2008
 - User satisfaction up 3% since 2008
 - Stock issues up 16%

Lessons learnt

- Takes time to develop
- Make use of volunteering bodies
- Volunteers are not free
- Engage with staff / unions throughout
- Be clear on your own expectations

Volunteer Quote

“Libraries are essential for local communities and something I feel very passionate about. After losing my last job I volunteered for the Home Visits Library Service. The skills I learnt and the training I received from Mitcham Library staff gave me the confidence to think about changing my career. I was apprehensive about applying for a school librarian role but the library staff provided me with invaluable training and support, I got the job and have never looked back. I owe a lot of this to the wonderful staff at Merton’s libraries.”