

Report of the Corporate Director People

## **Management of council volunteering in response to Covid-19**

### **Summary**

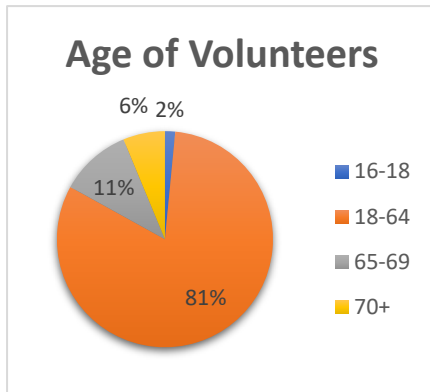
1. This report provides an update on the council's arrangements for managing volunteers in response to Covid-19 in the current recovery phase.
2. This paper should be read in the context of the paper taken to the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities in October, entitled *Community Hubs – Post Covid Recovery* (attached at Annex 1). With respect to the recovery phase, that paper provided for hubs to be maintained in their current form to continue to provide support to those who need it but beginning to make a clear transition from an emergency response to a community approach, looking at longer term solutions, both for those directly affected by the virus and for those affected by the longer-term community impacts. The model emphasises a person-centred approach helping to build resilience to prevent future crisis.

### **Background**

#### **Registration:**

3. During the first COVID-19 national lockdown period over 4,000 citizens registered an interest in volunteering; however, in August, reflecting the changes in people's circumstances, volunteers were asked, through the fortnightly email, to update their records through an online survey in order to continue to be offered future volunteer opportunities. As a result over 600 people are now on this revised volunteer database.

## Allocation of volunteers:



4. We use the updated registration process to provide offers based on volunteers' interest, skills and where appropriate the area of York they are from. Most volunteers are aged 18-64; we had to restrict volunteer opportunities initially for the 70+ to meet government guidance. This meant that volunteers 70+ could only undertake tasks at home like wellbeing calls.

There is a stronger representation of female volunteers with only 30% being male. So far we have successfully allocated volunteers to every appropriate request with over 1,000 volunteers allocated. We did, however, have one request for a male volunteer to do socially distanced walks for someone with autism and mild learning disabilities, initially with no suitable match. However, 9 citizens have since come forward after doing a call out through the fortnightly newsletter.



5. During the early phase of COVID-19, it was recognised that many local citizens were in need of regular contact whilst maintaining social distancing. Volunteers initially supported this through being



allocated to wellbeing telephone calls. We set up a referral process through the COVID-19 Helpline and widened the offer to include doorstep natters, pen pals, walking buddies and IT connection to loved ones.

[Age UK York](#) have a 'home from hospital' service, which is very important to support the discharge process of patients from York Hospital. They work closely with a number of teams within the trust and also are based there.

As part of our Covid-19 response, the council has provided [Age UK York](#) with 25 additional volunteers from our [pool of volunteers](#), who came forward recently to offer their support. These volunteers will be supporting the hospital, [Yorkshire Ambulance Service \(YAS\)](#) and the council during the outbreak. They will primarily be helping people get from the hospital to their homes (following discharge) and giving them a hand with any shopping they need when they get home, to help them get settled in. Volunteers will also be helping people to urgent appointments such as cancer treatments, to free up the [YAS](#) capacity which is crucial during the pandemic.

This also contributes to the council's local social care support, as the [Age UK York](#) volunteers will be reporting back to their office to identify any further support needs, which will then be shared with the council to ensure we don't miss anything during this busy time.

All the volunteers are being inducted now and will be starting very soon. Gemma Oliver, Technical Project Manager said: *"It has been amazing how quickly and seamlessly everyone within the council, CCG and Age UK York have pulled together to get this service set up as quickly as this. It is also amazing to see how many members of the public are willing to step forward and help out during the pandemic; it is heart-warming. I feel very proud to have helped extend this service to support more people leaving hospital during this difficult time."*

Also, to help the volunteers to deliver this service, local residents and businesses have been offering their support by donating disposable seat covers for the vehicles, so that we're able to follow PPE guidelines and keep everyone safe. We've now received 1,800 of them, so would like to say a special thanks to: **Stoneacre Ford York, Vantage Toyota York, Butts of Bawtry and Fulford Auto Services**, for their support.

Buzz

6. The approach used by the Volunteer Management Team (VMT) was to act as a brokerage to allocate volunteers to groups or organisations that required them. Where it was not possible to do so we would

**Volunteers working with the Local Area Coordinators**

"Since the lockdown was implemented, I started to get many new introductions from residents in Clifton, who were ringing the council helpline.

They needed, amongst other things, supermarket vouchers, benefits advice and their prescriptions collected.

Residents that I had worked with in the past also got in touch by text, phone call or Facebook messenger, reporting that they were all struggling with isolation, uncertainty and occupational deprivation. These residents used to get visits from their families and friends weekly, some of them used to attend community groups that are now temporarily closed.

As a Local Area Co-ordinator (LAC), it's important to address the person holistically and help the person to stay safe, resilient, independent and connected to their communities. The lockdown has been a big challenge but also a good opportunity to reflect on what we value and what is important for us as social beings.

The council has received numerous applications from volunteers willing to complete tasks for residents, such as wellbeing phone calls to isolated residents. The list for volunteers was shared with the LAC team.

Having a long list of local people willing to help other locals is truly the LAC dream! Clifton is a diverse ward; it has elderly residents, people living with mental health issues and also young families, to mention just a few. To ensure their needs and preferences could be met, I identified a group of people including a retired social worker with experience in mental health, a community support worker, a woman shielding as she recovers from cancer, a young art therapy student, and a mum on maternity leave. I got in touch with some of the volunteers, shortlisting candidates by skill set, interests and life experience.

All the volunteers were matched to residents living with mental health or alcohol issues, residents who don't have any family, residents having to live with their ex-partners and are finding the lockdown extremely challenging, and residents who asked for a friendly call to tackle the negative feelings and thoughts the lockdown can bring. What is so important is that these calls work in both ways. They help the isolated residents, but they also help the volunteers too. They are all on different journeys in their lives.

Residents feel now safer and less isolated by receiving these calls, and are less likely to need input from formal services. This is a good example of people helping people, and of activating a community-based solution - concepts we LACs often talk about.

Some time ago, I read a quote that really got me thinking: "We are all in the same storm, not the same boat". We all have had different life experiences, which have shaped us to cope differently with the crises we encounter in life; we all have different social support networks, financial capacity to be off work or not and health issues etc. This is why it's important to help each other to get through this crisis as safely as we can, sharing our gifts, knowledge, time and experience.

I hope this crisis keeps demonstrating to all residents in York that we are not alone and that we will never be alone no matter the circumstances. We are a strong community which is only getting stronger, day by day."

create an introduction between the resident and the volunteer and had a lead person to liaise with to ensure this remained as a positive experience for both resident and volunteer. The Local Area Co-ordinators now have a range of volunteers which include these specialist match volunteers. This will enable future volunteer matches to take place where people have indicated

they would like to support someone with specific needs.

7. The VMT can provide additional information about any DBS in place, if they have a driving licence and advise around requiring business insurance. ID badges were initially provided to any COVID-19

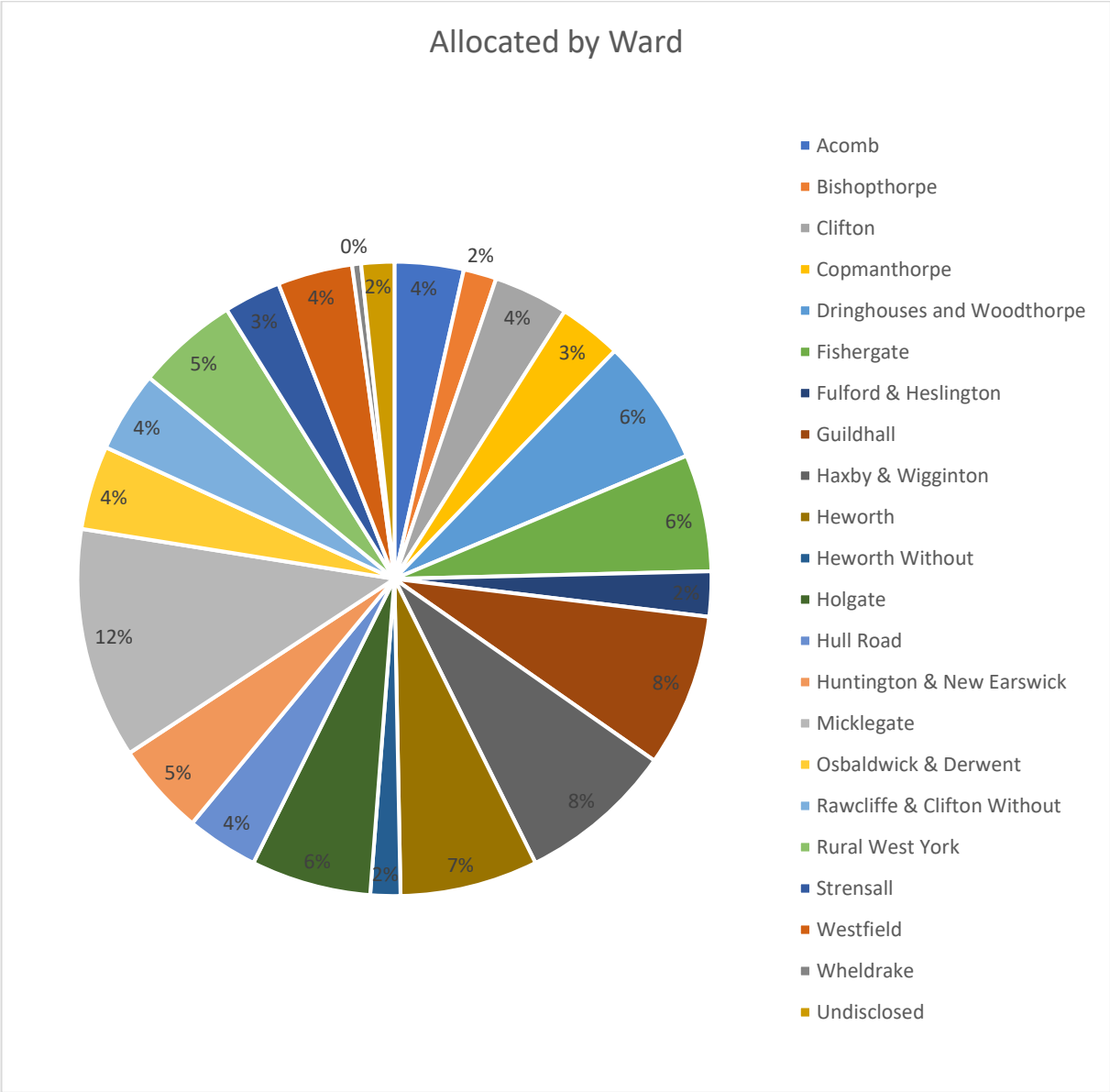


To service our community hubs with food for the medically shielded, we have created a central depot with volunteer drivers and vehicles to transport goods to the hubs. There, food boxes are put together and delivered to people identified through our dedicated support line.

From making phone calls to thousands of residents, the volunteers in the hubs are building a picture of the amount of food needed and how urgently, meeting special dietary needs and adding to the government-supplied food.

volunteer in the community as well as validation letters where a volunteer was collecting food for a number of residents and quantity of items were

restricted per person. The VMT also arrange safeguarding training through the Workforce Development Team portal and information governance training with a volunteer agreement signed before they start either issued by the council or the organisation requesting the volunteers to lay out expectations of the volunteer.



**Post-COVID Volunteering model:**

8. The other reason for updating the volunteer registrations was to provide the opportunity to plan for post-COVID volunteer opportunities and to make any considerations of how this would fit into the People Helping People strategy, utilising this group to inform any further progress:
  
9. **Formal volunteering** – applicants had the opportunity to indicate whether they would like the opportunity to volunteer for a charity or organisation. York CVS were at the stage of planning to create a volunteer centre and have received funding from CYC and the lottery. They now have two volunteer coordinators in post. The intention is then, at the agreed right time, to ask permission to pass their details onto York CVS to provide options that are available to them.

10. **Emergency volunteers** – we have been working with the emergency planning team to look at the best approach to maintain a list of volunteers ready to respond in any future emergency. It was agreed that any registered volunteers would be contacted at the agreed right time to see if they would be happy for their contact details to be passed onto ‘Ready For Anything’. They have confirmed they would then be the go to volunteer group in York and North Yorkshire for future responses including any future pandemics. It was agreed that the Volunteer Management Team would continue to lead on the volunteer response for COVID-19 until this is no longer required.
11. **Children & Families** – the children’s directorate already had a team of 100 volunteers to support parent and children initiatives. The re-registration will enable the VMT to identify and pass on contact details to bolster this offer.
12. **Employee volunteering** – it was recognised that many registered volunteers were furloughed and may not have the capacity in their personal time to volunteer on their return to work. Those that indicated an interest in Employee Volunteering were contacted and arrangements made for the volunteers to be passed onto York Cares who co-ordinate this offer for the city.
13. **Social Action** – many registered volunteers expressed an interest in one off volunteering opportunities to make a difference in their community. This will in particular build on the amazing acts of good neighbourliness, kindness and people helping people at a hyper-local level. York University students, through a group called York Community Consulting are working with the VMT to look at how social action call outs could be facilitated through the website Live Well York. The Volunteer Centre are now also looking at one-off volunteering so we are working together with York CVS to provide the best solution going forward.
14. It is apparent from the VMT registration process that most citizens are interested in a number of these volunteer stands so we need to ensure there is “no wrong door” to ensure people know about all the options available and will look for GDPR compliant approaches to prevent the need for any joint registration. We will also use the Live Well York volunteering page to ensure people are aware of the options available.
15. York has a fantastic history for volunteering and this pandemic has created the opportunity to build this infrastructure which will be an essential tool for community resilience in years to come.

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**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 24 November 2020

**Wards Affected:**

**All**



Annexes

Annex 1 – Community Hubs Report