

Advising Newham New Deal Partnership on a data collection framework for volunteers

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Newham New Deal Partnership (Newham NDP) is a service delivery charity working in Newham since 2004. The Good Neighbours Services (GNS) provide support to older people, people with dementia and those with disabilities in Newham, delivered by trained volunteers.

The charity came to Pro Bono Economics to ask for advice on their current data collection and to establish a framework from which they can measure the social and economic value of volunteering at Newham NDP. There are a range of important benefits that the Good Neighbours Scheme delivers particularly around the economic and social benefits to older people with dementia. However, for this project, Newham NDP were particularly interested in understanding the economic and social benefits to the volunteers, many of whom are students, in training, under-employed or unemployed Newham residents.

PBE matched an economist, Helen Dunn to Newham NDP. Helen Dunn has been working as an independent economic consultant since early 2016. Previously, she was a senior economic adviser at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for 16 years. Helen produced an advice report on the data collection framework for volunteers that analysed the charity's current data collection methods and made recommendations to help measure the social and economic value to volunteers.

The initial stage of the PBE project included the development of a framework ('logic model') for mapping the activities and outputs of the Good Neighbours Scheme to the costs and benefits; this helped to inform what data may be useful for measuring the social and economic value to volunteers. Subsequent stages of the work reviewed the methodology for valuing the economic and social benefits, and the economics literature in terms of wellbeing values associated with volunteering as well as the links between volunteering and employability.

The advice report provided some illustrative calculations of social and economic benefits using 2015 volunteer participation data. The focus of attention on benefits is necessarily partial and so should not be considered the full assessment. It does, however, provide an illustration of some of the key benefits. Evidence from the literature on volunteering as well as specific evidence from the Good Neighbours Services highlights that even in cases where the volunteer is looking at training and employment related benefits, the general wellbeing benefits from volunteering are just as important. In addition, the report provides advice for assessing the economic costs of volunteering in order to have a complete picture of the costs and benefits of volunteering.

The output of this project is to be used by the charity to review their volunteer administration and support requirements, to highlight the value of the volunteer role in skills development, work readiness and employment, and to develop an appropriate paid volunteer manager role for which they will seek funding.

"The advice has provided us with a good understanding of the issues in capturing volunteer involvement metrics and the confidence that we can now, as a small charity, take this forward internally."

Fiona Baird, CEO, Newham NDP

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