



Event Report

Greater Manchester Volunteer Conference

18th March 2025



The Greater Manchester **Volunteer Conference** successfully brought together a diverse range of organisations offering volunteering opportunities and individuals interested in volunteering. The event aimed to **facilitate connections**, share best practices, and explore potential collaborations. With 12 organisations and 54 attendees, the conference provided a platform for meaningful discussions and relationship-building. Several organisations reported forming **new partnerships** and expressed interest in future collaboration.

Primary goals

- To create a platform for organisations to **network, exchange ideas, and explore collaboration**.
- To showcase volunteering opportunities and discuss best practices for **recruiting and retaining volunteers**.
- To foster **partnerships between organisations** to expand the reach and impact of volunteer programmes.
- To provide organisations with practical insights on enhancing their volunteer management strategies.
- To **equip potential volunteers** with the **confidence and contacts** to get out there and help their communities.

Event Summary

- 10:10-10:25 AM – Housekeeping & Opening Remarks
 - Overview of the day's agenda, fire evacuation details led by: Ula Pietrzyk, Volunteer Coordinator, and Sam Cooke CEO, Tameside Arts LTD.
- 10:25-11:00 AM – "Know Your Neighbourhood" Presentation & Volunteer Stories
 - Presentation on the importance of volunteering in the community.
 - Speakers: Ula Pietrzyk (Tameside Arts Ltd) and Jonathan King (Action Together).
 - Personal volunteer stories shared by Diane Williams, Lee Ashworth, Geoff Thompson, and Tonilee Duff.
- 11:00 AM-12:00 PM – **Workshops**
 - Workshop 1: *Mapping and Skills-sharing*
 - Participatory workshop on volunteer introduction, assessment, support plans, training, and supervision.
 - Creation of a Greater Manchester and Tameside Networking Map
 - Networking documents within this report.

- Led by: Molly Taylor (Royal Exchange Theatre) and Sam Cooke (Tameside Arts Ltd CEO & Creative Director).
- Workshop 2: *Our Skills, Qualities, and Talents*
 - Craft session celebrating volunteer contributions and helping potential volunteers unlock their skills. Led by: Jojo Hayfron (Tameside Arts Ltd) and Asma Begum (Soul Sisters CEO).
- 12:00-12:45 PM – Lunch, Networking, Exhibition Spaces and Stalls
- 12:45-1:00 PM – Talk on the Impact of Volunteering
 - Presentation on the measurable impact of volunteering on services, communities, and volunteers. Led by: Jonathan King, Community Development Officer, Action Together
- 1:00-2:00 PM – Concurrent Workshops
 - Workshop 3: *Let's Network and Build a Plan*
 - "Top Trumps" activity: attendees introduce their organisations, discuss specialisations, and share current challenges.
 - Networking documents within this report.
 - Led by Ella Walker (National Football Museum) and Ula Pietrzyk (Volunteer Co-ordinator)
 - Workshop 4: *Helping Hands Craft Activity*
 - Participants create a tree mural with messages reflecting how they've helped or been helped by others.
 - Led by: Jojo Hayfron (Tameside Arts Ltd) and Asma Begum (Soul Sisters CEO).

Outcomes Workshop Top Trumps and Map of Greater Manchester

1. Organisations and Their Focus Areas:
 - **Tameside Council Cultural Services:** Developing and delivering a cultural programme. Volunteers help run cultural events and contribute to the borough's creative sector.
 - **Made by Mortals:** Bringing lived experiences to life through podcasts for children and health/social care. Volunteers help create podcasts by sharing stories and skills.
 - **National Football Museum:** Showcasing football heritage. Volunteers support front-of-house, lead object-handling sessions, and enhance visitor experiences.
 - **Tameside Arts:** Supporting people with creative activities and person-centred care. Volunteers help with arts, companionship, and technical support (e.g., IT, admin).
 - **Royal Exchange Theatre:** Producing theatre in Manchester and for communities. Volunteers assist with visitor experiences, archives, and performances.

- **Tameside Pulmonary Fibrosis Support Group:** Supporting patients and carers. Volunteers raise awareness, fundraise, and provide emotional support.

Top Strengths Highlighted

- **Collaboration & Resource Sharing:**
 - Organisations expressed a strong willingness to share resources, policies, and training.
 - Suggestions for joint projects and cross-borough volunteer swaps.
- **Creative Volunteer Engagement:**
 - Many groups highlighted their focus on creative volunteer roles (e.g., storytelling, crafts, and history-based activities).
- **Commitment & Passion:**
 - Volunteers were praised for their enthusiasm, empathy, and dedication.
 - Organisations emphasised their friendly and inclusive environments.

Challenges Identified

- **Funding Issues:**
 - Many organisations cited inconsistent or limited funding as a major challenge.
- **Volunteer Recruitment and Retention:**
 - Several groups mentioned difficulties in recruiting new volunteers or retaining them long-term.
- **Barriers to Engagement:**
 - Some organisations highlighted issues such as public perceptions, accessibility, and communication barriers.

Opportunities for Collaboration

- **Cross-Borough Volunteer Swaps:**
 - Idea to “swap” volunteers across organisations, allowing them to gain diverse experiences.
- **Joint Training & Events:**
 - Suggestions for collaborative training sessions (e.g., first aid, food safety, customer service).
 - Interest in hosting joint volunteer social events.
- **Shared Platforms & Communication:**
 - Proposal for a virtual noticeboard or monthly Zoom calls to share opportunities and ideas.

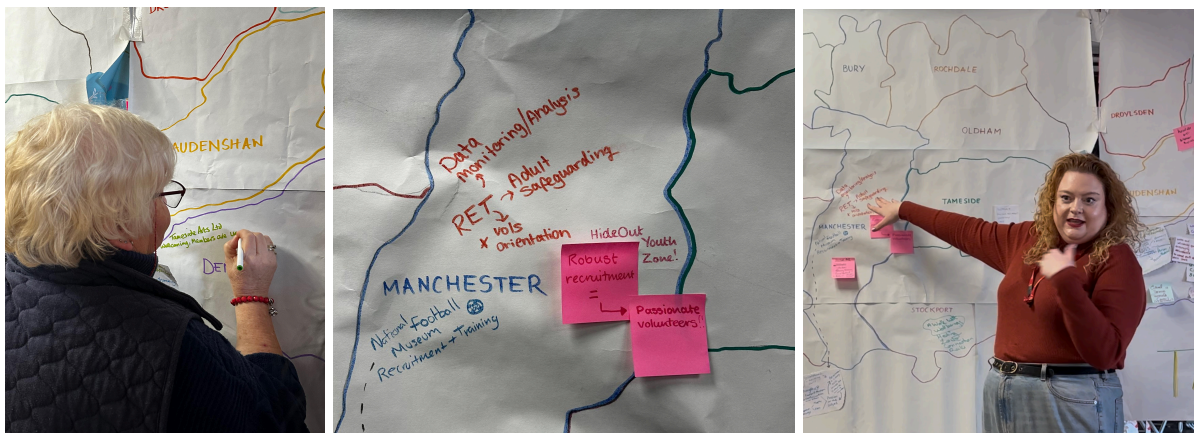
Email Addresses Shared at the Workshop

Here are the email addresses of participants who agreed to share their details:

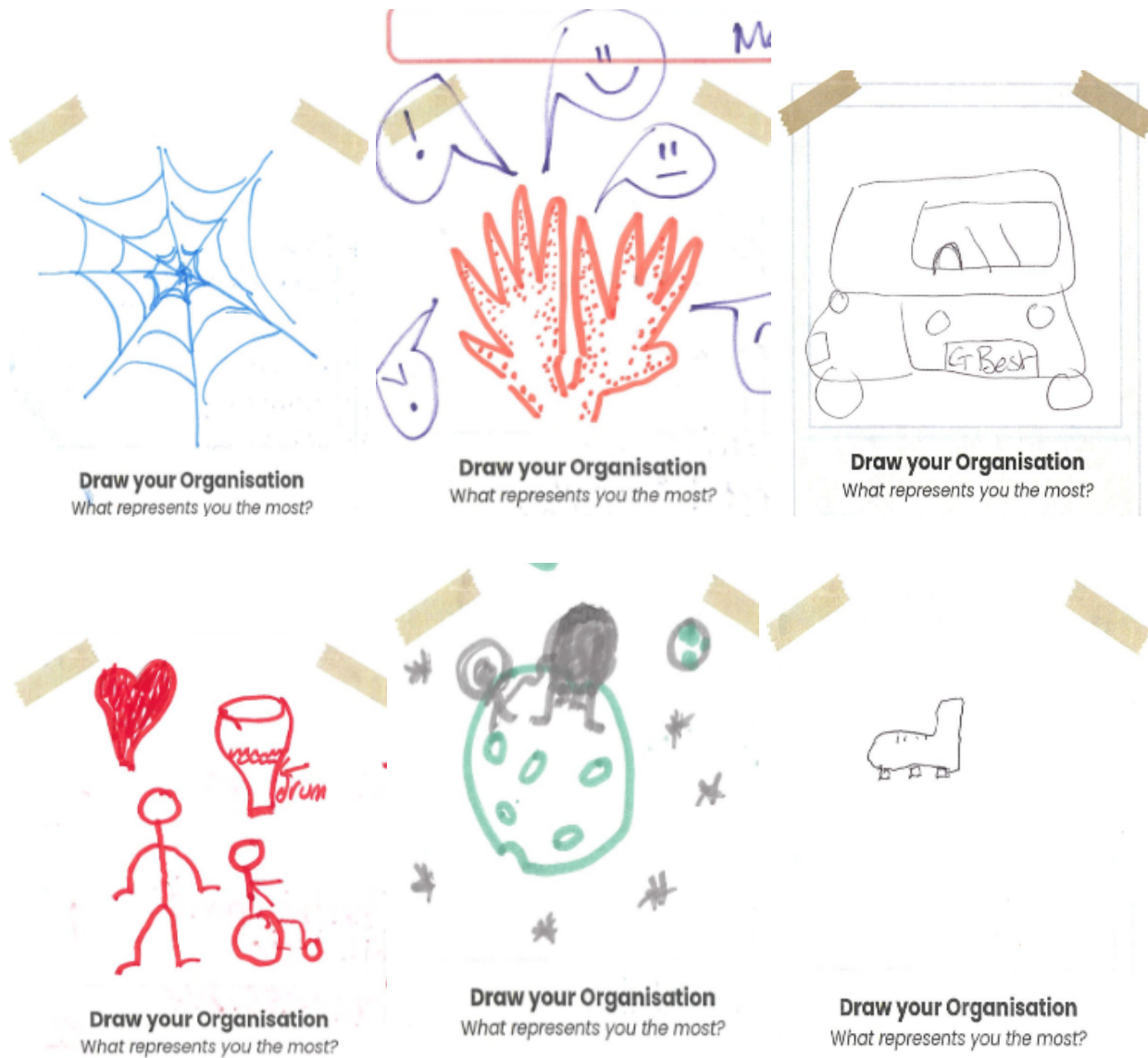
1. Hannah Alwan-Weston – Tameside Council Cultural Services:
hannah.alwan-weston@tameside.gov.uk
2. Tessa Keeble – Made by Mortals:
tess@madebymortals.org
3. Ella Walker – National Football Museum:
Ella.Walker@nationalfootballmuseum.com
4. Diane Williams – Tameside Arts:
dianne@createconnect.org.uk
5. Molly Taylor – Royal Exchange Theatre:
molly.taylor@royalexchange.co.uk
6. Ula Pietrzyk – Tameside Arts:
ula@createconnect.org.uk
7. Allan Maul – Volunteer:
ahmaull9@gmail.com
8. Stuart Taylor – Volunteer:
staylor19531127@gmail.com
9. Geoff Thompson – Tameside Arts:
geoffthompson@hotmail.co.uk
10. Barbara Evans – Tameside Pulmonary Fibrosis Support Group:
barbarae34@gmail.com

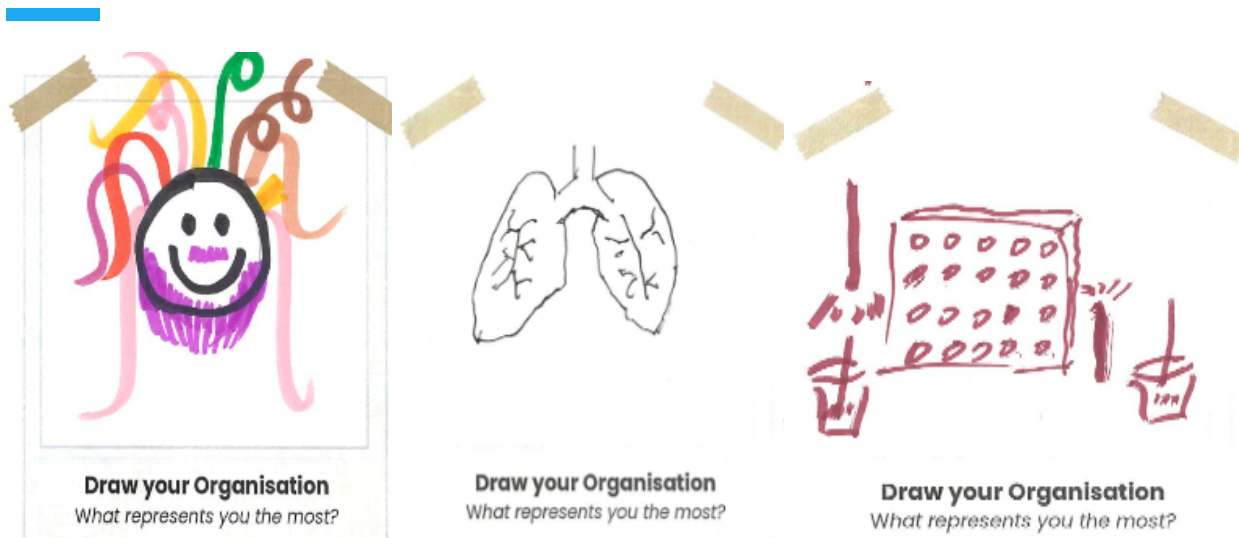
[Link to the map we created](#)

[Text document of map information](#)



[Link to the Top Trumps Networking Activity Database](#) - Prepared by Ella Walker, NFM





Action Plan following the event:

Keep the Connections Going

- **Use the Networking Map:**
 - Refer to the **Greater Manchester networking map** to spot potential collaborators nearby.
 - Reach out to organisations with shared goals and suggest **informal meet-ups** or coffee chats.
- **Plan Group Catch-Ups:**
 - **Quarterly catch-up** with a group of organisations to share updates, challenges, and opportunities.
 - This can be as simple as a **casual Zoom call** or an in-person coffee morning.

Put Volunteer Management Tips into Practice

Use what you learned in the workshops to **improve how you support and retain volunteers**.

- **Review Your Processes:**
 - Take a look at how you currently **recruit, train, and support volunteers**.
 - Use ideas from the **Mapping and Skills-sharing workshops** to make small but meaningful improvements.
- **Volunteer Development:**
 - Introduce **skills-building activities** for your volunteers based on the “Our Skills, Qualities & Talents” workshop.
 - Help them discover and develop new strengths through **fun, creative tasks**.

- **Check In with Your Volunteers:**
 - Set up regular **chats or feedback sessions** with your volunteers to see how they're doing.
 - Use their feedback to shape your future volunteer programmes.

Shout About the Impact of Volunteering

Use the data from the conference to **promote the value of volunteering** and attract more support.

- **Share Volunteer Impact Stats:**
 - Use the **impact data from Jonathan King's talk** to highlight the difference volunteering makes.
 - Add stats to your **social media posts, website, or newsletters**.
- **Tell Real Stories:**
 - Use photos, quotes, or short videos to make it more engaging.
- **Celebrate Your Volunteers:**
 - Plan a **volunteer appreciation day** or feature volunteers in your organisation's updates to recognise their contributions.

4. Explore Joint Projects with Other Organisations

Goal: Make the most of the new connections by **collaborating on future projects**.

- **Team Up for Events:**
 - Work with other organisations to **co-host volunteer recruitment events** or skills workshops.
 - Combine resources and share the workload to **reach a wider audience**.
- **Share Training Opportunities:**
 - Run **joint training sessions** for your volunteers with partner organisations.
 - This makes training more interesting and cost-effective.
- **Creative Campaigns:**
 - Plan a **local volunteering challenge** or awareness campaign with other organisations.
 - Use social media to promote it and encourage more people to get involved.

5. Get Creative with Volunteer Engagement

Use ideas from the craft workshops to **keep volunteers engaged and inspired**.

- **Creative Recognition:**
 - Try fun, hands-on activities like the **"Helping Hands" mural** at your own events.
 - Let volunteers create their own visual displays or message boards about their experiences.
- **Fun Skills Workshops:**
 - Offer **creative workshops** for volunteers where they can learn new skills or express their experiences through art or crafts.
 - This keeps volunteering fresh and enjoyable.
- **Use Visual Storytelling:**
 - Share photos of your volunteers in action, or create a **scrapbook or collage** showcasing their impact.
 - Display it at your events or in your office space.

Key Takeaway: Keep the Collaboration Flowing

The **Volunteer Conference** was a fantastic chance to **meet you and your organisations, swap ideas, and get inspired**. By keeping those connections alive, applying the tips from the workshops, and exploring new collaborations, we will all **boost our volunteer programmes** and strengthen our impact.

Overall Feedback and Satisfaction


The feedback from attendees was **overwhelmingly positive**, highlighting the **friendly atmosphere, engaging workshops, and valuable networking opportunities**.

Satisfaction with the Event: Attendees rated their overall satisfaction highly, with most scoring it 5 out of 5. Comments described the event as friendly, welcoming, and engaging.

Relevance to Job, Career, or Volunteering: The event was deemed highly relevant and helpful for participants' work, future careers, and volunteer efforts.

Workshop Satisfaction: The workshops received consistent praise, with attendees appreciating the opportunity to learn, collaborate, and share ideas.

Networking and Engagement: Attendees found the environment conducive to meaningful networking, with many noting they had made valuable connections.



Positive Atmosphere: The event was described as having a **warm, friendly, and welcoming atmosphere**. One attendee noted it was a **"great chance to speak to other organisations and network"**.

Centre Space: Attendees appreciated the **cosy and welcoming environment** of the venue. A participant mentioned they were unaware of the centre beforehand and were **pleased to be introduced to the space**.

Additional Comments:

- **"Well done everyone. It was a pleasure to join this event. We made a lot of promising connections."**
- **"Excellently put together and allowed me to network."**
- **"Just to say thank you and well done."**
- **"Fantastic Volunteer Conference Event - so well organized, warm reception, kind and thoughtful people and a beautiful energy - Wow, wow, wow."**
- **"I would have liked a warning about the flash photography or if we were asked if we were ok with it."**
- **"Inspiring, outstanding, fun, interactive, relaxed, interesting. Hearing the different volunteers' journeys about how they came to volunteer and how they came to volunteer was massively inspiring. You could've made it all about Tameside Arts but you didn't. It was about lots of different types of orgs, this is how conferences should be done in the future, you need to do a lot more like this."**

Thank you for being part of this event. Your participation, energy, and openness made the day a real success.

It was fantastic to see so many organisations come together to **share ideas and build connections**. Whether you contributed to the discussions, shared your experiences, or simply came along to learn and connect, your involvement made a difference.

We hope you left the event feeling **inspired and full of new ideas**—whether it's fresh ways to support volunteers, potential collaborations, or just the boost that comes from connecting with like-minded people.

Please let us know if you want to add to the **networking map and the event resources** so we can keep the conversations going and explore new partnerships.

Thank you again for your support and commitment to making a positive impact through volunteering. We look forward to staying connected and hopefully **seeing you at future events**.

