



Consultancy & Capacity Building



BIG ALLIANCE

CASE STUDY:

Alison McBurney

Senior Learning Manager
at Linklaters



In September 2019, Alison McBurney, Senior Learning Manager at Linklaters, delivered an interactive training and learning session for leaders in the community and corporate sectors. Since then, she has worked with ELBA to develop a leadership series, particularly thinking about ways in which leaders have needed to adapt during lockdown. Here she shares her thoughts on why she initially volunteered.

WHAT ORIGINALLY MOTIVATED YOU TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY?

Back in August 2019, I was invited by the Corporate Responsibility team at Linklaters to volunteer to support ELBA with developing content for their upcoming Leadership Skills Workshop (part of City Giving Day 2019). It sounded like a great initiative, and one where I had skills and experience that I could share and 'give back' to a local community. I previously lived in East London - my husband was born and raised in Bethnal Green, our daughter was born in Whitechapel, and I worked for more

than 10 years in Hackney prior to joining Linklaters. So, still having friends, family and work colleagues in East London, I had multiple reasons for wanting to volunteer

WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE LIKE? WHAT DID YOU ACHIEVE?

Collaborating with our clients and ELBA to deliver leadership skills training to attendees who are spearheading life-changing services (such as mental health support to teenagers, employability skills to victims of domestic abuse and osteopathy to typically 'out of reach' patients) is a hugely inspiring, humbling

and rewarding experience. It is easy to forget, in our busy roles, just how valuable our skills are in our local community. The experience brought this thinking into sharper focus and helped me to achieve great satisfaction in helping to make a difference to these leaders and the people they lead.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT THE COMMUNITY AND THE ISSUES THEY ARE FACING?

Working with ELBA educated me about the needs of the local community. There has been a real reduction of funding in the borough of Hackney - some 40% reduction. As such, all community leaders have common needs in leading their charities i.e. staffing issues, and how they can continue with less and less money available.

WHAT IMPACT HAS THE ROLE HAD ON YOU AND YOUR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT?

It's really quite inspiring to work with people doing such amazing work. I was so impressed talking with people who have genuine belief in what they are doing. So, the impact, for me and my personal development, is to keep this front of mind personally for me too - particularly when the going gets tough.

WHY SHOULD STAFF IN CORPORATE COMPANIES VOLUNTEER? WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

The reason 'why' speaks for itself. The benefits, for me, come from doing a 'greater good', and genuinely wanting to make a difference to people's lives. Volunteering, surely, doesn't get better than that.



Alison McBurney with community leaders on City Giving Day 2019

ANY OTHER THOUGHTS ON YOUR EXPERIENCE?

I suppose, it is easy to think that we 'don't have time' to volunteer; or, that we think that 'we don't have much to give'. The reality is that we DO have time and we DO have a lot to offer. I will be encouraging more people to volunteer because it makes a huge difference to people who are truly thankful for any amount of time or expertise that we can offer. It is really motivational and education to step outside of your own 'bubble' of the world, and to experience someone else's. I'll definitely be doing this again. It teaches you a LOT!