



Hackney East

End of Project Report

2018-2020

A skills development and
capacity-building partnership
project



PROJECT OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Hackney East was a 3-year partnership between Linklaters, Societe Generale, Societe Generale UK Foundation & UBS and delivered by ELBA, which began in January 2018.

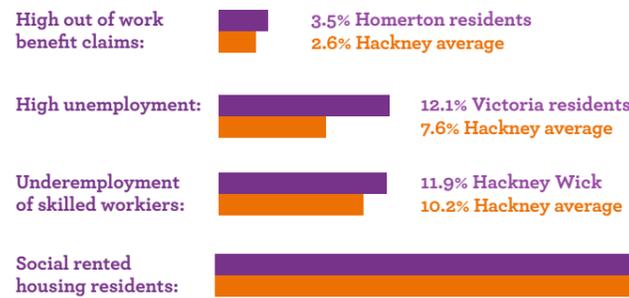
Hackney East followed on from seven successful years of collaborative delivery on another ELBA project, Hackney Works. Towards the end of Hackney Works it was identified that whilst Hackney as a whole had experienced rapid change, there were still specific areas of deprivation rapidly emerging, particularly in the east of the borough.

The project began with a prominent focus on employability and skills for local residents, in

response to the higher levels of unemployment in east Hackney, and over the 3 years, evolved into a more holistic offer encompassing the wider community. This included capacity-building support and interventions for local community leaders and organisations, in order to maximise their ability to create impactful social change in their local area and therefore address east Hackney's higher levels of deprivation more broadly.

The end of the Hackney East project marks ten years of collaboration between Linklaters, Societe Generale, Societe Generale UK Foundation, UBS and ELBA, in support of the Borough of Hackney.

The statistics and need in 2018



In 2018, Hackney was ranked the 11th most deprived local authority in the country. The needs in the east of the borough were, and continue to be, greater than the borough average. As of 2021, Hackney is rated the 7th most deprived local authority in the country in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

*Source: London Borough of Hackney Ward profiles, 2017

Project development

The partners, ELBA and Hackney Council worked together to design a new programme to address the greater levels of unemployment and income deprivation in the east of Hackney, by focusing on skills development for local residents, and forming a partnership with the Homerton Employment Hub – a local outpost of the Hackney Council Employment team based in the east of the borough. The project would draw on the time, skills and expertise of corporate volunteers to achieve its aims.

Original project objectives

- 1) Build the employability and life skills of local residents with employability training in collaboration with the Homerton Hub (a Hackney Council employment service), with a focus on those residents suffering from worklessness and participating in Hackney's Troubled Families programme.
- 2) Build the capacity of Homerton Hub by providing support to the management and advisory team so it can better serve the employability and employment needs of local residents of the Homerton area.
- 3) Build the capacity of local community organisations actively serving residents and families in the other areas of the Troubled Families programme, in addition to the worklessness criteria, for a joined-up approach to addressing their needs.

THE JOURNEY AND KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2018 the project began with the delivery of multiple employability skills workshops and the partnering of Homerton Hub employees with corporate mentors. The Year 2 programme of activity saw the introduction of support and development opportunities for local community organisations. These capacity-building activities were designed to better enable community organisations to provide essential support to local

residents. The success of Year 2 activities created a strong foundation for Year 3 planning and delivery. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on employment and communities in the borough required the project activity to be more flexible and responsive to community need, in order to support those most affected. This resulted in some restructuring of the activities on offer, and greater engagement from the community.

Key Achievements of Hackney East Years 1-3



Employability:



Community capacity building:



YEAR 1 2018 OVERVIEW

Year 1: 2018 – Project Activities

The key focus of Year 1 of the Hackney East project was employability - on upskilling local residents and building their confidence, and helping to develop and empower the employment advisors supporting them. This included hosting a number of different skills workshops for a variety of

jobseekers, including Hackney Apprentices, and matching staff at the Homerton Employability Hub with corporate mentors. Support for employability-focused community organisations was primarily achieved through sourcing board members for charities in need.

Year 1 Key Achievements



122
volunteers
engaged



303
volunteer
hours



927
beneficiaries
supported



8
employability
workshops

"I have gathered a lot of information about other people's life journeys through work and am able to understand routes I can take for my future."

- Beneficiary Feedback

95%

of beneficiaries reported improved self-awareness after attending an employability workshop

93%

of beneficiaries reported improved confidence & resilience after attending a workshop



City
Giving Day
employability
workshop,
2018

"Great networking opportunity. I'm inspired to do so much now!"

- Beneficiary Feedback

The
launch of
Hackney
East



YEAR 1 2018 OVERVIEW

Year 1: Case Studies

Beneficiary – Andrea Sulyman

Homerton Hub had been working with Andrea for just over a year to support her with the development of her CV. Andrea was struggling to make progress, however with the support of corporate volunteers she applied for jobs and began attending interviews.



"The CV that I have now in comparison to before is very different and so much better. I have really developed self-confidence as part of the workshops. I have learnt from interacting with others to create goals and positive things to work towards. I now know what type of work I want to do and even who I want to work for! It has affected my mental wellbeing for the better."

- Andrea Sulyman,
Employability
beneficiary from
Hackney

Community partner – Homerton Hub

Senior volunteers from the three partner companies formed an advisory group and supported three senior members of the Homerton Hub employability team to discuss strategy and how to overcome key challenges. Business support was given to the team through advisory workshops, and mentoring relationships started with three of the team.



"The senior volunteering support made a huge impact on the team thinking differently about their jobs. They have expressed they are happier and more confident."

- Dujon Harvey, former
Employment Team
Engagement Officer at
Hackney Council

YEAR 2 2019 OVERVIEW

Year 2: 2019 – Project Activities

Year 2 saw the introduction of longer-term community capacity-building activities to ensure that local organisations were in the strongest position to support local residents - therefore enabling a more holistic approach to upskilling and widening the offer of support to local residents in east Hackney. The relationship with Homerton Employability Hub was strengthened, and engagement with the employability workshops increased.

Year 2 activities:

- Continuation of employability workshops & remote CV reviews with Homerton Hub
- Introduction of 'Strategic Solutions' workshops to support local charitable organisations with strategic challenges in comms, business strategy, HR and IT
- Introduction of 'Leaders in Partnership' – a 10-month coaching programme for leaders in the community
- Development of longer-term relationships between volunteers and community organisations

Year 2 Key Achievements



412
volunteers
engaged



871
volunteer
hours



236
beneficiaries
supported



60
community
partner
interactions



£6,320
estimated
in-kind
donations

Beneficiary feedback, employability:

100% of attendees reported they felt more confident in their ability to perform at interview after attending a workshop.

99% of attendees reported they felt more motivated to attend an interview after taking part in a workshop.

Beneficiary feedback, community capacity building:

100% of organisations who attended our Strategic Solutions sessions stated they left with effective and achievable solutions to their challenges.

"Best CV & interview skills workshop I've been to. Usually they don't help this much. Volunteers were fantastic and very helpful"



Employability workshop at UBS, September 2019

"This was a wonderful opportunity to think about our strategic plan. Lots of possible solutions were offered which were very useful, but the main benefit was stepping back to get an overview of what we actually need as an organisation. Very helpful, thank you."

YEAR 2 2019 OVERVIEW

Year 2: Case Studies

Employability - Simeon Earnshaw

Simeon is from Clapton in east Hackney and in 2019 had been long-term unemployed. He attended 2 Hackney East employability workshops in 2019 and at the end of the year was offered a full-time role as a Youth Work Manager.

"I found out about the employability workshop via an email from Hackney Council. I wasn't really sure what to expect at the beginning, however the sessions were relaxed and didn't feel rushed. It was really reassuring to speak to professionals who had been through similar job situations as me, such as redundancy, and who also had experienced similar issues with confidence and imposter syndrome. In the communications skills session the focus on the 'tell me a bit about yourself' question that comes up a lot in interviews really helped - I have been practising and feel more confident with it! It was also great to practise interview questions without the pressure of it being real, and getting useful feedback after."

I now feel much more relaxed and confident in interviews. I am more aware of my body language in interviews too - it was so useful having it pointed out because there were some things I didn't even realise I was doing. Thank you!"

Simeon Earnshaw (centre) at Communications Skills workshop in November '19



Community capacity-building - ecoACTIVE

Kay Richardson, former Director of ecoACTIVE - an environmental charity based on the Kingsmead estate in the east of Hackney. ecoACTIVE engaged with a number of Hackney East activities in 2019 – including the IT and Business Strategy Strategic Solutions sessions, and the Leadership session on City Giving Day.

"I have been given tremendous support and a wealth of expertise to draw on via ELBA. Within a fortnight I had created an IT strategy, had training on dealing with leadership challenges and with legal experts created some incredible ideas for new income revenue streams. The support I have been given has been exceptional. I may have had time away from the office but I have utilised it to the maximum and now have a clear plan and strategy in place enabling our charity to move forwards dynamically."

It has been refreshing having experts from a different sector view our work in a different way and to identify new audiences, flesh out strategy and offer vital support. Life in the charity sector is incredibly challenging and I am time starved. However, I could not waste the opportunity that ELBA have provided and it has given an enormous boost for our charity in terms of direction and having achievable steps."

Kay Richardson, ecoACTIVE director, at the IT Strategic Solutions session, Societe Generale, September '19



YEAR 3 2020 OVERVIEW

Year 3: 2020 – Project Activities

The original priority for Year 3 of the Hackney East project was to consolidate the relationships and development work of the previous years – the goal was to focus on specific demographics with regards to employability skills in order to address their unique support needs, as well as work more closely with the community and Hackney CVS to deliver more tailored organisational support. However, COVID-19 and the national lockdown in March 2020 hugely impacted both the employment and community sectors, and it became necessary to pivot all activities to address the more urgent needs that arose as a result. The Homerton Employability Hub closed and redeployed services, and the charity

sector was put under greater strain. Year 3 therefore became more focused on response and recovery for the wider Hackney community, and all activities and sessions were moved online.

Year 3 activities:

- Introduction of 'Digital Employability Seminars' to address the increased demand for skills support
- Continuation of Strategic Solutions and Leaders in Partnership to support community leaders
- New series of 'Learning from Leaders' workshops to enable cross-sector learning
- Funding review system introduced to help local organisations with funding applications

Year 3 Key Achievements



365
volunteers
engaged



700
volunteer
hours



341
beneficiaries
supported



122
community
partner
interactions



10
employability
workshops

Beneficiary feedback, employability:

81% of attendees to the Digital Seminars stated it was beneficial to speak with corporate volunteers to ask for advice.

72%

of attendees reported they felt more confident going forward in their employment journey following the seminar.

“The presentation was really useful and to the point. I am following the advice given and now I apply with different CVs to different positions.”

Beneficiary feedback, community capacity building:

100% of community participants on the Leaders in Partnership programme stated they had improved their problem-solving skills.

100% of organisations who attended our Strategic Solutions sessions stated they left feeling more confident in addressing their particular challenges.

“Very helpful and motivated team of volunteers, lots of ideas, helped me to focus my strategy - I have fresh ideas to take with me to trustee meetings for the board to review.”

YEAR 3 2020 OVERVIEW

Year 3: Case Studies

Employability - Richard Allen, Training Manager at Hackney Council

Richard Allen works at Hackney Council as part of the Hackney Works Employment team. They work with all Hackney residents regardless of their background, education, or what kind of job they are looking for.

“Since the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown began, our borough-wide hub-based system - which included the Homerton Employment Hub - has been made redundant, as all our services moved online. Skills and training for Hackney residents became one of our main priorities, and it became necessary to strengthen our relationships with training partners like ELBA to help expand our capacity and the variety of our offering. Running skills workshops with corporate volunteers was incredibly attractive to our clients during this difficult time - when advice is coming from those with seniority and authority clients take it on board more.



Richard Allen,
Training Manager
at Hackney
Council

Through this partnership, I was able to give my input and feedback about the specific needs of our clients to help design workshops in response to the effects of COVID-19 on the job market - for example, sessions on transferable skills and job searching online that were designed in partnership with UBS. Corporate volunteers add value and people really look up to their contributions - they are really inspirational for attendees. Equally, the CV service has been really useful - advisors have been giving really positive feedback and we've noticed a pattern of people improving their CVs which is good!

Overall this partnership has been hugely valuable and has made things a lot easier for us at a really difficult time - it has meant we could focus on other work streams and has really helped to maximise my team's capacity!”

Community capacity-building - Support When It Matters (SWIM)

Peter Merrifield, CEO of SWIM - a Hackney-based social enterprise set up in 2019, supporting local people by widening access to local services. In 2020 they engaged with a variety of Hackney East activities.

“I was connected with ELBA via Hackney CVS, and I have since attended several events and activities organised for Hackney organisations. The biggest areas of support have been around developing our social media platforms - we have had several 1-1 sessions with volunteers from Societe Generale, who helped us to consider the key factors at play which make for a successful offering when developing a social media platform. I also attended a Business Strategy session last summer, and one of the volunteers we worked with has since agreed to become our advisory board member!

My experience of working with ELBA and corporate volunteers has been an extremely positive one. It has exposed me to a new world of organisations, it has helped demystified attitudes and anxieties I had about talking to large organisations. It has really built my confidence in communicating with a wider range of organisations during a difficult time, particularly corporate companies that I probably would not have contacted had I not been brought together by ELBA.”



**Peter
Merrifield,**
CEO of Swim
Enterprises

Across the years: Leaders in Partnership

Leaders in Partnership



A core capacity-building activity that was delivered as part of the Hackney East project was the Leaders in Partnership programme. Community leaders – CEOs, directors and managers – were matched with senior employees in corporate companies for

a 10-month coaching partnership, focusing on their personal and professional development. Linklaters and Societe Generale took part in Leaders in Partnership as part of the Hackney East project, and in that time 22 partnerships successfully completed the programme across 2 cohorts. Community participants came from significant Hackney-based community organisations, including Hackney Council, Hackney CVS and the Volunteer Centre Hackney.

Community participant feedback

96% of community participants agreed that the programme had increased their confidence in communication and managing change and transformation as leaders.

92% agreed they were now more confident in problem-solving.

75% of participants in Cohort 2 (which took place during the COVID-19 pandemic) stated that the programme ‘significantly’ improved their wellbeing and resilience.

“It was really good to speak to someone outside the organisation to get perspective e.g. how to ask for things and to be bolder in a professional, less emotional way.”

“For me the main thing has been a change in mindset whereby I feel more ownership over my role in the organisation and what I can bring to the table. I am much more confident and assertive. I feel my influence within the organisation has improved.”

Volunteer feedback

100% of volunteers felt they had significantly improved their active listening skills as a result of taking part in the Leaders in Partnership programme.

91% felt they improved their communication skills and their knowledge of the third sector.

“I’ve gotten so much out of seeing (my partner) grow - she is so determined and COVID-19 hasn’t slowed her down! The programme has given me more drive, energy, and less fear - trying out new things and seeing what happens!”

“Very rewarding experience. I have thoroughly enjoyed my interactions with my partner and fully intend to maintain our relationship after the programme ends.”

“My match was a good one. My coachee was willing to discuss his challenges and I felt that I developed as a coach during the experience through my reflection after our conversations and the different style I needed to adopt with him.”

Across the years: Beneficiary Feedback & Impact

The project received incredibly positive feedback from its beneficiaries in response to the variety of activities delivered over the years.

Jobseekers' feedback on Hackney East employability workshops

“I think the workshop information was concise and relevant and all sections were covered in depth while still remaining engaging - great session, great knowledge shared. Thank you also to the volunteers who have been involved. The contributions made by all hosting the event was extremely insightful and I’m genuinely grateful.”

“The group discussion was very good. And one to one mock interviews gave me more confidence in how to prepare myself for an interview.”

“All the volunteers were incredibly supportive, kind and generous and really boosted my confidence. I liked meeting other people in similar situations and visiting a really nice building - I felt valued and relevant.”

“I really enjoyed it and I appreciate the feedback I received to improve my CV, and how to answer interview questions in a structured way. Very positive and valuable experience. Thank you!”

Community Partners' feedback on Hackney East activities

“Great space to bounce new ideas with talented professionals - who can view the project from a different perspective and give a good overview of what needs to be done to make the project a success.”

“We got so much from the workshop, really good tips and our volunteer actually spontaneously came up with a suggestion for a tag line / mission statement which we are going with! So thank you so much for the introduction, really impacted our organisation hugely.”

“I just wanted to say a huge thank you for organising the Learning from Leaders session yesterday and sending through this information. It was honestly the most inspired I’ve felt since this whole working from home process has started. The webinar was a huge success.”

ACROSS THE YEARS

Volunteer Feedback & Impact

Corporate volunteer engagement was at the heart of activity and delivery in the Hackney East project. Particular activities – such as the themed Strategic Solutions sessions, and leadership-focused work – relied on specific volunteer expertise and skills, which enhanced the already-high quality of the support being offered to the community. Volunteer experience was also a key focus of impact measurement, and below is a summary of volunteer feedback over the course of the Hackney East project.

100% of volunteers agreed that the positive impact of their contribution to the Hackney East project justified time away from their desks

“This is a great volunteering opportunity for staff short on time and only able to give a couple of hours. It was great to meet the organisations face to face and help with their problems.”

83% - of volunteers said that volunteering with Hackney East enabled them to ‘inspire and motivate others’ - reported that their volunteering experience has increased their understanding of and empathy with others

“The workshop was a great experience, and the chance to interact with the participants who were willing to listen and take advice. Sometimes I think simply just sharing your experience and tips can be really helpful.”

80% of volunteers reported they now have a greater awareness of social issues as a result of volunteering for the Hackney East project

“As many people in creative industries, I have a sense of imposter syndrome that I’ll be discovered for the fraud I am at any moment. I was nervous about this session for that reason, but once I got speaking to the organisation, my confidence increased and their receptiveness to my ideas went a long way in making me feel like less of an imposter. Definitely recommend that colleagues take part if they can.”

78% of volunteers stated that volunteering with Hackney East was a positive and fulfilling way to share their knowledge and experience

“It was really great to meet and work with volunteers from the other two companies!”

59% of volunteers stated that volunteering with the Hackney East project has positively contributed to their sense of wellbeing and happiness at work

“It was very good, and I hope we were able to make a difference. Interestingly our community partner asked as to why we do these things, and I think they are a really good way to exercise our brains in a totally different direction as well as developing active listening skills. It’s intellectually stimulating and, I for one, come away feeling stretched and challenged – in a good way.”

ACROSS THE YEARS

Across the years: Project case studies

Manuela, Employability beneficiary

Manuela is in her 50s and is based in Hackney. She was made redundant from her job as a communications advisor in March 2015; and after a short period in December 2015 she decided to start her own business using her redundancy money from her previous post. She then decided to close her business and seek full time work, and has been working freelance, volunteering and job-hunting for several years. Manuela has engaged regularly with Hackney East’s employability offering - attending 3 workshops and receiving interview support across 2019 and 2020.



Manuela,
Employability
beneficiary

“I initially attended an Employability workshop session at Societe Generale in June 2019, and an employee there critiqued my CV and gave me some excellent feedback about changing the structure and format. I also did mock interview practice and did ice breaker ‘bingo’ games with other event participants. As I had taken redundancy, I was not eligible for benefits or other forms of government support, so I really enjoyed the interaction with ELBA’s skilled and experienced professionals and the experienced and highly skilled volunteers who helped me regarding employability issues and how I could improve my job search and confidence. My job interview practise was with a Societe Generale director who had extensive international experience and was a leader in his field. I felt very privileged to receive such high-calibre and insightful interview coaching. The interview coaching really boosted my self-esteem and confidence and my coach also was eager to provide me with feedback after my interview and stay in touch with me.

The employability sessions have been outstanding and the support I have received has been excellent. The volunteers and staff are very friendly, welcoming and inclusive and I received a lot of help and support. I felt I was treated as an individual with dignity and respect and my unique personal circumstances and background were taken into account and explored. The volunteers and ELBA staff take a really personal interest in you and go above and beyond the call of duty. It has really boosted my confidence and I feel I have a network and support system of experienced professionals that I can always turn to for advice.”

ACROSS THE YEARS

Across the years: Project case studies

Alison McBurney, Senior Learning Manager at Linklaters and long-term volunteer

Alison McBurney is the Senior Learning Manager at Linklaters. In 2019, she volunteered to support ELBA with developing content for our Leadership Skills workshop as part of the Hackney East City Giving Day celebration. It was such a rewarding experience that she continued her volunteering relationship with the project, co-designing the Hackney East 'Learning from Leaders' series in 2020 and adapting it in response to the pandemic.

"During 2020, volunteering has given me the opportunity to learn how COVID-19 and the resulting lockdown has been a particularly challenging time for community organisations, with the double strain of increased demand for services and reduced funding.

We had an initial plan for the Learning from Leaders series at the beginning of 2020, but this quickly became irrelevant as COVID-19 plunged us into lockdown. In response, we knew we had to find innovative ways to come up with a learning solution for Hackney community leaders – so that they were usefully equipped to help our colleagues and communities going through these extraordinary times. We achieved delivery of a modular series of not one but THREE Leadership Skills workshops for the community during 2020; attended by almost 70 different community leaders whilst collaborating with volunteers from UBS & Societe Generale. Most importantly, the feedback from attendees was fantastic: one attendee saying, "this is the most inspired I've been since lockdown!"

One of Linklaters' core values is "we act with integrity". At Linklaters, this means that we don't just do things right, we do the right thing – in that we strive to be admired as a responsible business. The impact the role has had on me is that I'm able to live this value – by working with ELBA, a longstanding charity client of Linklaters. It's a privilege to work with the ELBA community – they are truly brilliant people. I emerge feeling humbled and grateful for the opportunity everytime.

I'm very grateful that Linklaters enables us to volunteer. COVID-19 has – I hope – humanised us all. We're isolated from our loved ones. Businesses are struggling and millions are struggling to stay alive – both financially and physically. Volunteering with ELBA throughout 2020 has made me experience that "doing good really makes you feel good". It's an incredible way to stay connected, to be kind, and to be the person I really want to be when (let's hope) this pandemic is over."

**Alison McBurney,
Senior Learning
Manager at Linklaters
and long-term
volunteer**



EVALUATION AND NEXT STEPS

Overall learnings from Hackney East

Overall, the Hackney East project successfully upskilled 100s of Hackney residents, supporting them to increase employability skills and confidence in the job market. The project also built the capacity of a wide range of community organisations that provide essential services for local people. Hackney East remained adaptive and flexible to the needs of the community, and this was a particular strength throughout 2020, as many activities were amended in order to meet the challenges raised by COVID-19.

A key success of the employability activities was the creation of a direct connection between corporate volunteers and beneficiaries – whether through in-person workshops or later online. The Year 3 digital seminars in particular provided a platform for volunteers to share their own career experiences, making the advice offered more personable and relatable for attendees. Volunteers really brought their creativity and their voice to this activity. UBS volunteers helped to design the sessions, and all participating volunteers were encouraged to share their professional journeys, transferring learning that they had accrued over the course of their careers to the various beneficiaries. The session plans

for the digital employability seminars provided a strong foundation to develop other forms of digital training and are currently being used to increase the employability skills of many other east London residents.

The community capacity-building work in Hackney East went from strength to strength over the course of the project. Both community partners and volunteers valued having the opportunity to work with one another, sharing learning from their respective sectors. Again, this stream of work took on a dynamic structure in response to the pandemic, adapting to meet the changing needs of the participating community organisations. Leadership was a key theme that emerged through the capacity-building work, particularly through the success of Leaders in Partnership and the development of the Learning from Leaders series. The Learning from Leaders format has been adopted by ELBA and has already been delivered to community partners beyond Hackney. Overall, the community capacity-building work emerged as a vital component of the Hackney East project, and this has formed the basis of a new Hackney-focused community project, Evolve.

The next stage of the journey: The Evolve Project

Building on the success of Hackney East and continuing their ambitions to help create positive change in Hackney, the corporate partners of Hackney East have joined forces again with ELBA to launch a new project in 2021. The Evolve Project is a collaborative partnership between Linklaters, UBS, Societe Generale and the Societe Generale UK Foundation, delivered by ELBA. The project aims to build the capacity of community organisations across Hackney, particularly in response to the effects of COVID-19, helping to ensure the sustainability of Hackney's third sector and subsequently, support Hackney residents. The organisations engaged through Evolve are all operating in the sphere of employment and/or enrichment activity, providing essential support to the local community.

Evolve will build on the learning and successes of the

Hackney East project, extending the legacy of over a decade of interventions in support of the Hackney community. ELBA will continue to work closely with key community partners, such as Hackney CVS and Hackney Council to assess community need, ensuring that Evolve interventions remain relevant and impactful. The capacity building activities created during Year 3 of Hackney East, and the best practice that was developed as a result, will form the foundation of Evolve project delivery, supporting the sustainability of Hackney's community organisations and enhancing their ability to provide essential services for the local community.

For more information about the Evolve project, or to enquire about either volunteering or accessing support from the initiative, contact Sheetal Mistry (sheetal.mistry@elba-1.org.uk).

Linklaters





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Contact sheetal.mistry@elba-1.org.uk
for more information

