

**Project code:** 8357

**Project name:** Community Champion Programme

**Contact:** Amy Burns, Hounslow Council

**Category:** Community Involvement

**Category type:** LGC Awards Categories

**Project title:** Community Champion Programme

- These awards primarily cover achievement and performance in the calendar year 2020 and the first two months of 2021, and entries should have a particular focus on that period. However, judges will take into account work that began before that period, as well as achievement and performance since that period.
- The awards will reflect the fact that Covid-19 and the response to it have posed an unprecedented challenge to local government. Judges' decisions should reflect attributes such as performance, resilience, compassion and adaptability in the face of the pandemic alongside achievement, innovation and vision. However, entries which are primarily not about the council's pandemic response should be treated equally to those that are.
- You only have to submit a single statement explaining why you should win (up to 1,000 words).
- Please also provide a 100-word summary of your entry. Please use this as an opportunity to make a pitch to our judges about what makes your work innovative and bold.
- Please use the questions in the bullet points below as a guide and break up your submission accordingly. Some may be more applicable than others for your entry.
- Please specify which private sector partners do you work with (if any).
- While you have the option of providing supporting material, we urge you to do this sparingly, and only if you feel further evidence is required to back-up your entry. The critical information should however be included in the main part of your entry.

If you require any help with your entries contact: **Rafael Younes** on **020 3953 2115**, email [Rafael.Younes@emap.com](mailto:Rafael.Younes@emap.com) or **Jae Taylor** on **020 3953 2117**, email [Jae.Taylor@emap.com](mailto:Jae.Taylor@emap.com)

**Supporting material:**

[community\\_champions\\_supporting\\_evidence\\_.pptx](#)

Please use the questions in the bullet points below as a guide and break up your submission accordingly. Some may be more applicable than others for your entry.

**Total word count: 1,000**

**Submissions should focus on:**

- Summarising the project concerned and the nature of the community involvement;
- Setting out the aims of the project and the extent to which they have been achieved within the relevant timescale;
- How community engagement contributes to the council's wider objectives and strategy;
- The main drivers of success and the approach the council has taken.

**Award entries will be judged on:**

- Evidence of community satisfaction with the process and achievement of the council's objectives;
- The depth and extent of community involvement, in particular in getting people involved who would not otherwise have done so;
- The extent to which the involvement has influenced service quality and/or the way in which the council works;

- The contribution to the council's wider objectives;
- The sustainability of the approach.

**Your answer here:**

Based on research, our community champions programme builds on the skills and knowledge of local communities. We have 124 community champions in Hounslow who deliver two clear, timely COVID-19 messages weekly through their networks.

This is through newsletters, social media, face-to-face discussions and WhatsApp groups. The messages are aimed at people who live and work in Hounslow, with a special focus on residents who don't speak English as their first language and those who are socially isolated, vulnerable and digitally excluded.

## Budget

We had a small budget for this campaign from which we recruited two community engagement officers to lead this project, supported by a communications officer and in-house designer.

To help our champions feel supported and skilled we offer 'RRR' training (Recognise, Respond, Refer). This empowered them to hold conversations with their networks. We also offer wellbeing training and the opportunity to gain RSPH accreditation.

Champions have also completed 'Make Every Contact Count' Training for conversations around behaviour change and vaccine hesitancy.

## Challenging misinformation and conspiracy theories

A popular method for champions to share information with their networks is using WhatsApp and other social media methods. A great example is Mike, he's a champion, who has over 14,000 connections on Facebook. When he sees people spreading the wrong information he acts; commenting underneath their post using the messages and links we have provided him as part of our weekly update. He has said people have contacted him to say thank you, as they felt very confused about where to go to get trusted advice.

Other champions have identified people in their community who don't have smart phones or computers and rely on a phone call. They have reported that they value this interaction as the only way they can receive genuine information from someone they trust.

## Sharing messages with harder to reach communities

In Hounslow there are 188 different languages spoken and our champions translate messages for different communities. Feedback suggested that despite the Council sharing messages in community languages, the formally written translation was not understood and reaching our communities. Our champions have changed that, and this simple action improved our engagement. They stepped up and not only share messages but translate them.

One of our longest serving champions, Taz, works for Heston youth Group and when we needed to reach out to young people to remind them to wear face coverings, he immediately stepped-up to help. A group of young people produced a Tik Tok video, based on a popular episode of Friends. It appealed to their peers because it was funny, consequently got fantastic engagement and helped us better connect to an audience we previously found difficult to engage with.

## Good practice

An example of a successful piece of work, co-produced with our champions, was a project to encourage residents from the Somali community to get vaccinated. Our champion, Omar, has links with influential people in the community. He talks with shop owners which are frequented by our Somali residents and encourages them to put posters in their windows directing residents to vaccination centres. He also arranged for the sheikh/imam at the mosque to advertise the vaccine events during Friday Prayers. This sent a message of reassurance from trusted and respected members of the community and resulted in around 100 people getting their vaccinations.

Working with our NHS and CCG colleagues, we arranged for Somali nurses to deliver vaccinations, ensuring people felt comfortable in the setting. A GP and sheikh/imam also attended the centre on the day which sent a clear message that this event was supported by community by their faith and community leaders and get vaccinated.

We also used insight from our champions to offer a culturally appropriate and comfortable setting, whereby women and men could be offered the vaccine in separate rooms. This was extremely well received, and the joint CCG/Council team, has had requests for more pop-up clinics.

Effective partnership working has enabled us to build strong relationships that are essential to better communicate with these hardly reached communities and urgently work with them to increase the uptake of services and tackle the inequalities in health that exist now and for the future.

## Networking events

We engage regularly each week through our 'coffee catch-up' online events which provide a valuable social forum whereby champions can drop-in at any point, share information, understanding, ask and answer questions, discuss their experiences and ways we can improve. This is also an opportunity to hear about other concerns and rumours being shared in our communities and develop a strategy to tackle them.

One example of this is when we heard that people weren't feeling supported in their workplace, this was causing stress and anxiety at the pandemic peak. This helped inform our targeted communications to businesses, and from which we produced a hard copy and digital toolkit for businesses which outlined the rules around supporting staff and links to Government guidelines.

This toolkit was shared with business owners through our business support officers who were on-hand to provide support and advice in person. We set up a dedicated email account for residents to report businesses which were not following Government advice. This enabled the Council to respond, work with them and support them to make positive changes in the workplace.

## Community champion case study

Dr Savio Rodrigues has been volunteering as a community champion with Hounslow Council for eight months. The 31-year-old who works across various London Hospitals, teaching medical students and designing digital health care records, said: "The community champion programme is brilliant.

"I get an email once a week with a message for me to share through my networks, family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues. Some people may not have access to the internet so it's great being able to send them a message via WhatsApp and know that it has come from a trustworthy source.

“Many of my family and friends live in multi-generational households so making sure they know what current COVID-19 guidance is and where they can go for support is really important.”

Savio, who speaks Russian and a range of Asian community languages summarises:

“I feel really proud to be a community champion and encourage others to do it. It’s a great way to support your local community and it doesn’t take up much time.”

100 word summary\*

**100 word summary:**

COVID-19 has radically changed the way we go about our day-to-day lives. It has shifted where we turn for help and support and how we interact with friends, family and neighbours. The speed and scale of the pandemic has helped to breed uncertainty and emotional disruption. As part of our community champion programme, we have delivered positive change in our communities by giving the right information, at the right time, in words they understand and that resonate.

**What private sector partners do you work with (if any):**

**\* If you are a private sector organisation Please provide contact details of the local authority that you are in partnership with. You will need to obtain prior consent from the local authority contact to pass on their details for GDPR compliance.**

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