

JVN History

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At JVN, we are incredibly proud to have recently celebrated our 10th Anniversary in 2017, marking a successful decade of networking, expansion and connecting volunteers to volunteering opportunities across the Jewish community and beyond. What you may not know is that JVN's history dates back much further than 10 years.

In fact, JVN could be said to date back 20 years to 1997, the year that the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) instigated its Long-Team Planning for British Jewry (LTP) project. The aim of LTP was to survey and analyse the Jewish voluntary sector and to make recommendations on how organisations could strategically plan for the future; Margaret Harris, a professor specialising in the voluntary sector (and now a JVN Trustee), amongst others, contributed to the research and a final report, which was published in 2003, entitled: *Long-term planning for British Jewry: final report and recommendations*.

The report noted that organisations had trouble attracting volunteers; and that would-be volunteers were willing, but unable, to get in touch with organisations that needed their help. Professor Harris concluded: *'A way of resolving this problem is through a well-funded and efficient Jewish volunteer bureau, a central agency, which would register the details and interests provided by individuals wishing to volunteer and would put them in touch with organisations that need them.'* Thus, the seed for JVN was planted.

In October 2004, the late Dr Judy Citron z"l was having problems finding a suitable volunteering role, following her recent retirement. As an elected representative at the Board of Deputies of British Jews, she discussed this with Esmond Rosen, the Board's new Director of Community Issues. Esmond ensured that Professor Harris's recommended 'Jewish Volunteer Bureau' was adopted as a policy innovation by the Board.

Unfortunately Judy was shortly diagnosed with cancer and the initiative was abandoned as a priority by the Board. Fortunately Judy recovered to go into remission and joined forces with Susan Winton to ensure that, with great energy, skill, determination and enthusiasm, this great project would survive as an independent agency.

Susan met with Debbie Usiskin, an experienced volunteer manager; Debbie suggested that the organisation should also be a resource for volunteer managers to network and share problems and solutions. Thus JVN got its name – not as the Jewish Volunteers' Network, but rather the Jewish Volunteering Network, encompassing all things volunteering in the community. Susan and Judy also met with Leonie Lewis to discuss the idea.

On securing funding from the Pears Foundation, JVN moved into the newly created Jewish social action hub, JHub. Leonie was appointed Director in September 2007 and helped obtain additional funding from Jewish charitable trusts and foundations, enabling the organisation to achieve registered charity status in November 2008. Her focus was to develop the structure of the charity and grow its awareness and reputation.

Unfortunately, Judy passed away in 2009, but the ball was already rolling. With the appointment of Susan as JVN Chairman in the same year, a Board of Trustees and an Advisory Board were formed to inform decision-making and help set the direction of the organisation. Quick to follow was the appointment of a full-time Operations Manager and a part-time Regional Development Manager, to firmly establish JVN as a national charity. 2010 saw several key developments:

- JVN management of the Yoni Jesner Award Scheme;
- A Volunteer Managers' Steering Group, establishing JVN's biannual Volunteer Management Seminars;
- An overhaul of the JVN website from a 'dating site' matchmaking platform to an interactive portal for searching for volunteering opportunities.

JVN recruited its first intern in September of that year and, in 2012, became a Faith Partner of Volunteering England, the forerunner of the NCVO.

Following relocation to the premises of the London School of Jewish Studies in April 2012, JVN, guided by Leonie and new Chairman David Lazarus, has experienced exponential growth. The team is now comprised of seven paid part-time members of staff, one full-time staff member and five regular office volunteers.

JVN is a partner of NCVO and respected throughout the Jewish community and beyond as an unparalleled resource for all things volunteering and volunteer-related. In 2013 we also started working with Lead on improving Trustee development and charity governance.

Our first evaluation of the charity's performance, entitled *The Door to Knock On*, was commissioned in that year also (a new ten-year report has recently been written, more detail of which is available further on in this brochure).

In 2015, the JVN Companion to Volunteering provided enhanced good practice guidelines around volunteer management and also for volunteers on what to expect from a volunteering experience. The JVN Kitemark was then launched, awarding endorsement to charities demonstrating good practice in volunteer management.

In 2016 an enhanced partnership was formed with Caritas Westminster, from which the Catholic Volunteer Service was established, based on JVN's model.

In 2017 we continued this work in the interfaith arena, delivering training in volunteer recruitment and management for faith leaders and producing a new version of the Companion for faith institutions and places of worship, funded by Strengthening Faith Institutions (a project of the Department for Communities and Local Government), alongside an enhanced interfaith winter festive volunteering programme with Caritas and Light Up A Life.