

VOLUNTEER STRATEGY

2024

the **HARRIS**

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INTRODUCTION

This is the Harris' first Volunteer Strategy. It covers the period between 2022 and 2025, a period in which our listed building is closed for re-development, and we are based in alternative venues nearby, delivering our services within the community of Preston. The strategy is aimed at new and existing volunteers, staff, stakeholders, partners, and anyone else who is interested in our work.



ABSTRACT © JOHN ARMSTRONG

This strategy has been created to show our commitment to Harris volunteers and to demonstrate our respect for them and our wish to care for and support them - especially during this unusual time, the first time that the Harris building has closed since it was opened in 1893. We hope this strategy will guide everyone who works alongside Harris volunteers, showing the approach we would like to take and our attitude towards the generous people that choose to volunteer with us.

All Harris staff will honour this strategy within their work with volunteers, specifically project leaders delivering projects that are part of our public programme of activities, events, and exhibitions.

The strategy has been informed through The Harris' participation on the Museums Development North West Volunteer Development Programme 2022/2023. It has been developed with Harris Staff and our volunteers.

We will review and update the strategy every year, the next revision will be in Autumn 2024. It will be adapted to reflect our return into the redeveloped Harris and will incorporate the learning and experiences of our staff and volunteers from the previous 12 months.

We hope that the volunteer journey with the Harris will be smooth and enjoyable. We will strive for our relationship with volunteers to be built upon mutual respect, that they will be treated as equals and feel like an important part of our team.

We will outline clearly at the start of this journey what volunteers can expect from us and what we expect from volunteers. We recognise that our volunteers need meaningful experiences and to have a heartfelt acknowledgment for the time they give to the Harris.

We aim to create a permanent “Perks Package” to feature training and development opportunities, discounts to use in the Harris’ new shop and café, free entry to Harris activities and events, research trips, social events and an awards scheme. Along with clearer messaging about travel reimbursements and complimentary refreshments - which are rightfully theirs to access as a Harris volunteer.

All volunteers will be supported by a range of staff during their journey and will be encouraged to express

feedback, suggestions, and concerns openly and safely, resolving problems together – fostering positive and authentic experiences for both volunteers and staff.



NEAR QUANG TRI, VIETNAM © IAN MCCULLOCH

THE HARRIS' VISION

What do we believe in? We believe in community, creativity and learning.

THE HARRIS' VISION

COMMUNITY

We believe in an inclusive community that serves everyone, especially those who may feel excluded. We consider needs and respect everyone, ensuring they see themselves represented and their voices heard through our artwork, literature, exhibits, and experiences.

CREATIVITY

We believe in providing the physical and head space for people to approach problems, and see the world, differently. We are a place to both create and be creative. We remove barriers to creativity and use the power of working together to create an inclusive and safe environment where everyone can unleash their potential.

LEARNING

We believe that discovering yourself and different communities is a vital part of personal growth and community building. We love sharing knowledge and helping people, whether it is through our resources, exhibitions, or our friendly and welcoming environment.

WHY WE EXIST

We are here to serve as a cultural hub, bringing together communities and promoting creativity and learning. Through our exhibitions, events, resources and spaces we celebrate the diversity of Preston and beyond and make culture accessible to all, free of charge. We are an inclusive and welcoming environment where people of all ages and backgrounds can come together, experience the richness of art, culture, and knowledge, explore innovative ideas, and connect with their community.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE IN 5 YEARS

The Harris is the cultural heartbeat of Preston, a thriving hub of creativity and community that highlights the best of art, literature, and history. We will elevate Preston by putting it on the map as a must-visit destination for locals and tourists alike. By providing innovative experiences, we will inspire and engage visitors of all ages and backgrounds. We will promote inclusivity and diversity, giving a voice to those who are often excluded, and fostering a sense of community ownership and pride in our shared cultural heritage.

The Harris has a long-standing commitment of encouraging volunteers to be an integral part of our service. Volunteers have been part of the Harris for at least 50 years since the 1970's. We have experienced at least 3 Preston Guilds together with our volunteers: 1972, 1992, 2012 and they continue to show their devotion to the Harris and the City of Preston which indirectly affects Lancashire - contributing to keeping the Northwest region on the cultural map.

We appreciate the time, skills, and expertise that our volunteers bring to our team. They play a vital role in our organisation and we want them to continue to do this for a long time to come. With the help of our volunteers, we can do more – they volunteer behind the scenes and in public facing roles, supporting our programmes and staff, they volunteer alongside specialists but often our volunteers are the specialists!

They carry out research to enhance public knowledge, they look after the collections with staff, helping to prolong the life of our artefacts for future generations. They support the delivery of a range of activities and events to increase public engagement and they influence the way we do things by telling us what they think, based on their lived experience.

During a consultation session we held with Harris staff in November 2023 about the role of volunteers within our organisation, our staff told us that Harris volunteers are important to them because they:

- ▶ Have different skills and opinions to staff
- ▶ Are natural marketers - spreading the word of the Harris
- ▶ Help us achieve more
- ▶ Enhance and complement our service
- ▶ Inspire us with their enthusiasm and energy
- ▶ Offer valuable support
- ▶ Enable the Harris to “give something back”
- ▶ Can engage in activities to “upskill” – this promotes improved access to better employment opportunities
- ▶ Have unique specialisms different to ours
- ▶ Represent our local community
- ▶ Help us to connect to different communities in Preston

- ▶ Bring fresh, innovative ideas and alternative viewpoints
- ▶ Provide valuable in-kind support towards externally funded projects
- ▶ Help to keep the Harris relevant
- ▶ Contribute to the regeneration of the city – the Harris’ position in the city centre is key, it is part of the cultural quarter and contributes to cultural growth and redevelopment

EMPOWERING OUR VOLUNTEERS

We aim to foster a culture of facilitating our volunteers to flourish in ways that suit them.

EMPOWERING OUR VOLUNTEERS

1. HARRIS VOLUNTEER MAKERS

The Harris uses an open to all, available 24/7, personalised web platform called Harris Volunteer Makers which is a volunteer engagement and management tool. We pay a marketing company called Tickbox Marketing an annual fee to host our platform. Volunteer Makers is their brand and they support charities, councils, business, heritage and community organisations including: The University of Liverpool, The University of Cambridge Museum, Rugby Art Gallery and Museum, Royal Armouries in Leeds and Cultural Services, Nottinghamshire.

Harris Volunteer Makers was introduced as a pilot at the Harris in 2019 to help with volunteer management.

Curious new volunteers can sign themselves up to be Harris volunteers anytime that suits them – it is open 365 days a year. They get their own personalised control panel and can volunteer their time as little or as much as they choose. They are in control of “banking” their own volunteer hours and all our volunteers are included. They can access each volunteer opportunity in one transparent place, with new notifications automatically going out daily at 4pm to all volunteers.

This fair and open approach moves us away from historical approaches of “cherry picking” favourite long-term volunteers, creating cliques that exclude everyone else. Harris Volunteer Makers uses a first come, first served method. Traditional barriers of application forms and interviews have been removed and replaced with the quick and fair process of “registration.”

2. THE HARRIS VOLUNTEERS ADVISORS

We send clear messages to our volunteers letting them know that their voices and viewpoints are important to us. The volunteer advisors are advocates for the wider volunteer team and their aim is to influence change. They are a core team of 6 volunteers and they are diverse in backgrounds, speaking out from their own quite different points of view. Anyone can join this team as and when the topic interests them by accepting the monthly opportunity on Harris Volunteer Makers.

The Volunteer Advisors role is all about giving advice to Harris staff on policies, procedures and strategies – including this one – our programme, exhibitions and other public services for example: marketing, branding and our café offer. They are the content generators and editors for the electronic Harris Volunteers Newsletter, responding to a need highlighted by them, to improve communication throughout the volunteer team, crucially since the Harris building has been closed.

EMPOWERING OUR VOLUNTEERS

3. MONTHLY VOLUNTEER MEETINGS AND SOCIALS

Part of our meetings are devoted to volunteers updating each other and Harris staff on their individual volunteering journeys, including their successes and challenges. This is so important as it is where exciting developments from volunteering are shared with a captive audience.

During meetings we encourage and record constructive feedback in a “You told us, we did...” document which is shared by email with Harris staff and then followed up - in the bi-monthly staff forum and the quarterly staff Activity Plan meeting, where items are highlighted for specific staff or teams to action.

Five areas of priority identified through trends in volunteer feedback - captured during volunteer meetings between November 2022 to March 2023 - are:

- ▶ Review, update and re-circulate the Harris Volunteer Handbook to all volunteers along with improving the induction process for all new volunteers
- ▶ Increase the number of opportunities for volunteers in general
- ▶ Diversify opportunities to include a wider range of tasks, for example tasks that can be completed from home

- ▶ Extend the Collections Champs teams - we have the Costume Collection Champs but we would like: Fine Art Champs, Social History Champs, Decorative Arts Champs, Contemporary Art Champs
- ▶ Prepare and train volunteer teams in suitable time for “recant” (moving back into the Harris building)

One of our three Senior Managers gives a regular update on service developments either in person or in writing for the volunteer meetings. The meetings are followed up with up-to-date photographs of the Harris building developments and shared after the meeting to accompany the notes we take as a record. The notes are then shared by email to all our volunteers - currently 248 volunteers - and our 37 staff from the Harris team including our 3 senior managers.

WORKING TOGETHER AS EQUALS

Since 2021 significantly, the Harris has been committed to change. We have been part of a 2-year online programme for civic and cultural organisations called The OF BY FOR ALL Change Network. It has given us a tried and tested framework, resources and access to a network of experts in the field around the world. We have been developing our ways of working and getting a helping hand to be more inclusive, equitable, and relevant to the community that we are part of. We are now part of an international network of changemakers.

To help us stay mindful of our ways of working whilst we develop new habits, we have been using the Harris' Community Empowerment Guidelines to inform all our work. The 6 guidelines were created with staff, partners, volunteers, and stakeholders during lockdown 2020 – 2021. They were created to help us be more accountable to the community and each other in our decision making.

the HARRIS

The Harris' 6 Community Empowerment Guidelines for staff and volunteers

Responding to local needs

What do our communities want from us?

Give communities a say in their Harris

Are we really being authentic, transparent and inclusive?

Collaboration is key

How will this increase our strength?

Working and learning together

Have we moved out of our comfort zone?

Committed to change

Are we clear and confident that this supports our aims?

Reflect and react

Have we invested time and energy to develop?

WHERE WE ARE NOW

The infographic to the right, clearly shows a snapshot of statistics from our volunteer programme for a 10-month period from 1st April 2022 to 31st January 2023. It shows the following statistics:

- ▶ 45 new volunteers registered using [VolunteerMakers.org](https://www.volunteermakers.org)
- ▶ 195 volunteer opportunities completed
- ▶ 659 hours/109.8 days that our volunteers gave to the Harris
- ▶ £8,807 of in-kind support given
- ▶ 28.4% of our volunteers are aged 65+
- ▶ 18.8% of our volunteers are aged 55-64
- ▶ 7.4% of our volunteers are aged 45-54
- ▶ 18.8% of our volunteers are aged 31-44
- ▶ 21.2% of our volunteers are aged 19-30
- ▶ 5.3% of our volunteers are aged 18 and under

It also highlights that since the removal of a paper application process and the launch of a simple online registration in 2019, numbers have been increasing and have started levelling off:

- ▶▶ 23 between April 2019 – March 2020
- ▶▶ 48 between April 2020 – March 2021
- ▶▶ 78 between April 2021 – March 2022
- ▶▶ 52 between April 2022 – March 2023



OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Where does The Harris fit in?

WHERE THE HARRIS FITS IN

LOCALLY

The Harris is one of the main departments within Preston City Council to work with volunteers along with Neighbourhood Services, which includes parks and recycling. Together we have formed a Preston City Council Volunteer Working Group to share good practice, experience, opportunities, and resources. There is a diverse range of organisations in Preston, shown as a collective on the Help in Preston website, that actively provide volunteering opportunities. The Harris is part of this collective. It includes Home Start; Age Concern; Intact; Mind Lancashire; Inspire; Let's Grow Preston; Lancashire Teaching Hospitals; Oxfam; Emmaus Preston; The Foxton Centre; Caritas Care; Sue Ryder and Lancashire Volunteer Partnership. There is also Preston Community Network along with a new Preston Volunteers Centre, headed up by Community CVS. The Harris is now a member of their Preston Volunteer Managers Forum.



THE COMMON MARKET © ESTATE OF JOHN DAVID ROBERTS



HER HEAD © DHRUVA MISTRY

WHERE THE HARRIS FITS IN

REGIONALLY

Official statistics from an annual household survey for adults aged 16+ living in England called The Community Life Survey (conducted by the Department for Culture Media and Sport), has highlighted several areas of significance in volunteering covering a period from October 2021 to September 2022.

Statistics show that the percentage of people taking part in volunteering during that year was the lowest participation rate recorded since 2013. It also shows that the age grouping 25-34 were the lowest participants. Participants from an Asian ethnic group showed lower participation levels; participants who were classed as economically inactive took part in more voluntary activity than people that were employed. Most common barriers for not taking part in volunteering were *'I have work commitments'* and *'I do other things in my spare time.'*

According to another study conducted by Pro Bono Economics with Nottingham Trent University, an influx of younger volunteers is coming forward to take part in volunteering. One in six people aged 18-34 had planned to start volunteering in 2023. The study also found that a fifth of social sector organisations were expecting volunteer numbers to rise again after a noticeable

decline of people taking part in volunteering caused by the current cost of living crisis and the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic.

This is great news for the Harris as young people are one of our target audiences. We hope to reach out to more young people to encourage them to take part in volunteering at the Harris in the lead up to our building reopening and influence the programming and management of our new young people's space "No.9".

We are part of the Regional Heritage Volunteers Group who feel that networks are vital to supporting volunteer managers within the heritage sector. The networking forum provides peer support, shared resources and an opportunity to share ideas and good practice to inform the work we do.



THE FOUR SEASONS © WALTER CRANE

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

Heading into 2024 and 2025

As part of our participation on the Museums Development Northwest Volunteer Development Programme 2022/2023, the Harris has started to look at our volunteer programme up close. The analysis shows an honest reflection of what some of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are in relation to The Harris and its volunteer programme. It highlights some of the internal factors that are influencing the way we work. This analysis does not consider external factors.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Our base is a fantastic heritage site	Loss of volunteer perks during our 3 year building closure period	Involve volunteers in designing their own roles	Loss of experienced volunteers through the closure of the building
Specialist and experienced staff to work with	Online recruitment portal has left a loop hole in processes - including inductions	Training for staff to improve confidence in volunteer management	Short sightedness in planning ahead therefore last minute call outs for volunteers. This has led to frustration in volunteers
Longstanding commitment to volunteers	Virtual recruitment is impersonal and doesn't suit everyone	Targeted recruitment drives in the community	Cultural attitudes towards volunteers of "we need you to help us" rather than a more balanced approach of "how can we help you"
Broad range of activities for volunteers to get involved in	Communication lines between different internal teams can be weak	Give participants engaged in activities, routes in to volunteering	Lack of volunteer roles helping with the moving out of the Harris. Possible repeat of this issue in moving back in to the Harris
Very committed volunteer team that LOVE the Harris	Limited range (mainly low skilled) of actual volunteer opportunities	Annual celebration events both local and regional to show appreciation and recognition to volunteers	
	Volunteer co-ordination is more than a part time role or project		

THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

The **physical closure** of the Harris building has had a significant impact on our volunteers, particularly the long-term volunteers. We no longer have the beautiful base that was a major attraction for them. Closure has brought with it lots of frustration - previous volunteer roles are no longer available, access to the Harris collections is now supervised and by appointment only, volunteers fear a loss of knowledge once kept sharp with a physical connection to the building. They tell us they have suffered a real loss without access to the building - what made volunteering with the Harris so unique has been temporarily taken away. We have received regular feedback for the 3 years that we have been closed, that volunteer roles and opportunities have been limited to certain activities and there are simply not enough to go around.

Our **online recruitment portal** has replaced the face-to-face application and induction process at a time when our volunteers needed more face-to-face contact - not less. The virtual registration process which is open 24/7, has left a loophole in “catching” new volunteers to follow up with reference checking and completing inductions. This has had a knock-on effect with some volunteers reporting that they have felt unsupported and not fully clear and confident for their volunteering.

Luckily, we have a very loyal core volunteer team that love the Harris! Nothing could ever put them off and they keep coming back for more! They are long sighted and hold on tight to the vision of the Harris building reopening.



THE FULL RIVER © THE ESTATE OF SIR ALFRED MUNNINGS



GUILD 1992 HEADSCARF



VASE BY KEITH MURRAY FOR WEDGWOOD

Through consultation with Harris staff and volunteers, we have identified 4 key priorities for the volunteer programme in 2024 and 2025.

► **Priority 1: Diversity – increase diversity of age, gender, ethnicity and disability.**

We will take confident steps to ensure that Harris volunteers better represent the make-up of the city of Preston. We will conduct an annual profiling exercise and use the findings to specifically target under representation, comparing volunteer diversity to Preston diversity. We will connect to other organisations and charities in the city to develop a better joined-up approach to provision of volunteer opportunities and recruitment. We will consider poverty and tending to basic needs as part of the volunteer experience. We will target young people aged 18-25 – our current profile is 21.2% - we will explore and improve pathways to employment for this age group through partnership working. See our current profiling in: Appendix 1: Diversity of our Volunteers April 2023, Appendix 2: Volunteer diversity vs Preston diversity April 2023.

► **Priority 2: Engagement – improve the volunteer journey.**

We will commit to a continual review of our volunteer management systems, including the pros and cons of using the Harris Volunteer Makers. We will research other systems of recruitment if we feel that this product is not fit for purpose. We will ensure that any decisions made are made democratically. We will flex with organisational change to ensure the volunteer recruitment and induction process is adaptable and developing to align with the move back into the Harris building. We will improve marketing and publicity to reflect our current position. We will review our policies and procedures to ensure they are relevant and dynamic. We will continue to strive to hear all volunteer voices and encourage staff to reflect and react trying out new and innovative ways of working with volunteers. We will highlight connectivity to other areas, offering clearer progression routes through the Harris, for example membership into the Friends of the Harris, the new Community Gallery and young people's space No.9, as well as promoting applications to join the Harris' Programme Advisory Group and Access Group. We will continue to advocate for equality of opportunity in all our work with and for volunteers, sharing employment and training opportunities.

► **Priority 3: Transition – moving back into the Harris as a formidable team.**

We will ensure that staff and volunteers are working compatibly using clear transition routes and shared goals. We will improve communication channels in general. We will facilitate staff and volunteers to work together, co-creating and participating in relevant and quality training. We will ensure that we are a kind and compassionate workforce, taking responsibility for helping each other through the changes we will encounter. We will make sure that information is shared regularly and in diverse ways – verbally in person, written, pictorially, recordings in audio and video – to promote knowledge and understanding, we will consider that volunteers have a spectrum of abilities and needs. We will be confident and positive about the Harris through this improved information sharing, knowing and understanding. We will strengthen our organisational culture with better preparation and communication including contingency planning. We will ensure that volunteers are crucial to our success by encouraging them to co-design with staff their own volunteer roles.

► **Priority 4: Approach – a move away from a project approach to a team approach.**

The re-opening of the Harris will naturally facilitate new ways of thinking and doing. We will begin to embrace volunteers in 2024 with a team-led approach in preparation for 2025. We will start moving away from our current project-led approach towards a warmer, more inclusive way of working. We will co-create natural roles for volunteers with, by and for volunteers, using more democratic ways of working so that volunteers become more integral to our service delivery. We will identify a mixture of engagement styles from static volunteer roles within staff teams, complimented with flexible one-off volunteer opportunities. We will connect closely to our community empowerment guidelines to make sure that we are working and learning together. We will take informed risks and loosen our grip, creating the space necessary for real volunteer engagement to happen. We will programme and deliver awareness training/re-training to all staff and volunteers annually to demonstrate our organisational commitment to diversity. We will be a positive role model for other local and regional volunteer programmes.

The delivery of this strategy will be embedded into our day-to-day work using a 2-year Action Plan covering the period of 2024-2025. This Action Plan has been put together and approved in consultation with Harris staff and our volunteers. We have used SMART goals within the plan to ensure that we can achieve our 4 Key Priorities. The teams named in the Action Plan will be responsible for specific components of the plan and we will be accountable to each other and our volunteers for embracing and managing it. The Harris' Communities and Volunteers Officer will take the lead on monitoring and evaluating the progress of the Action Plan and this will take place formally every quarter of the year, aligning with the same frequency as our other reporting, reflecting and evaluating milestones. The Action Plan will be dynamic - it will be adaptable and responsive to changes that we experience or foresee as our organisation transitions back into the Harris Building and settles. We will review and update the Action Plan every 12 months.

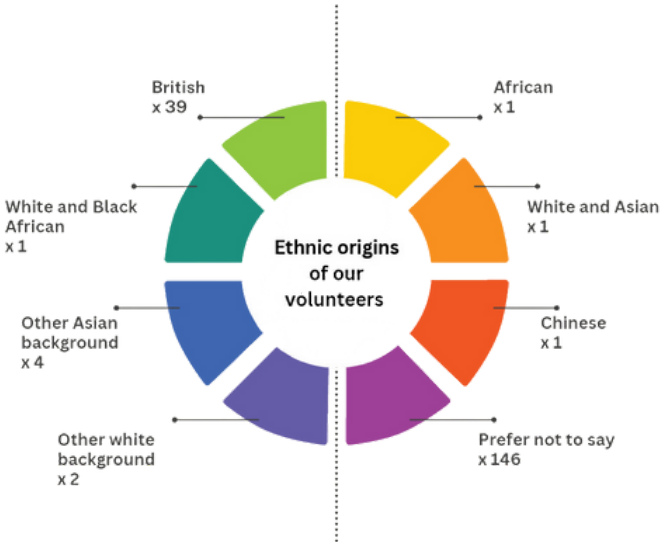
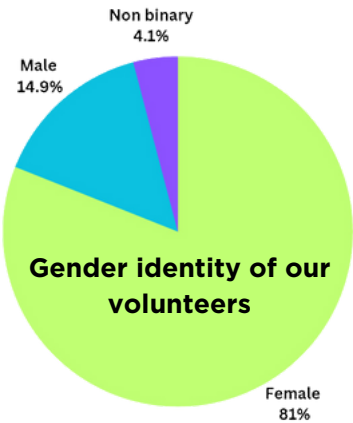


THANK YOU

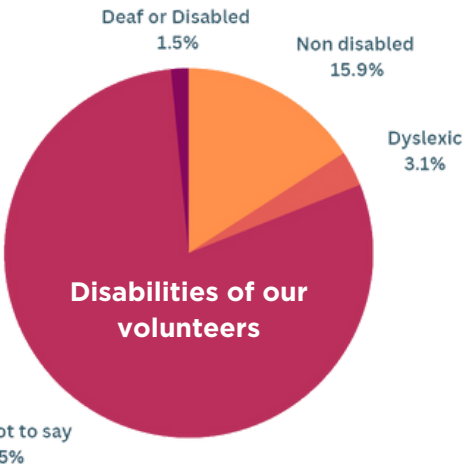
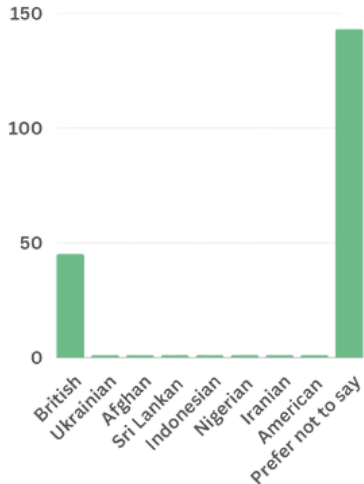
We would like to take this opportunity to show our gratitude to every single one of our fantastic volunteers who continue to give their precious time, enthusiasm and love to the Harris on a regular basis.



DIVERSITY OF OUR VOLUNTEERS: APRIL 2023 (SAMPLE SIZE = 195 VOLUNTEERS)



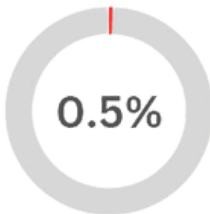
Nationalities of our volunteers



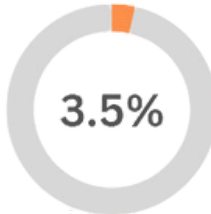
Sexual orientation of our volunteers



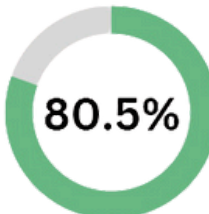
Heterosexual



Gay woman / Lesbian

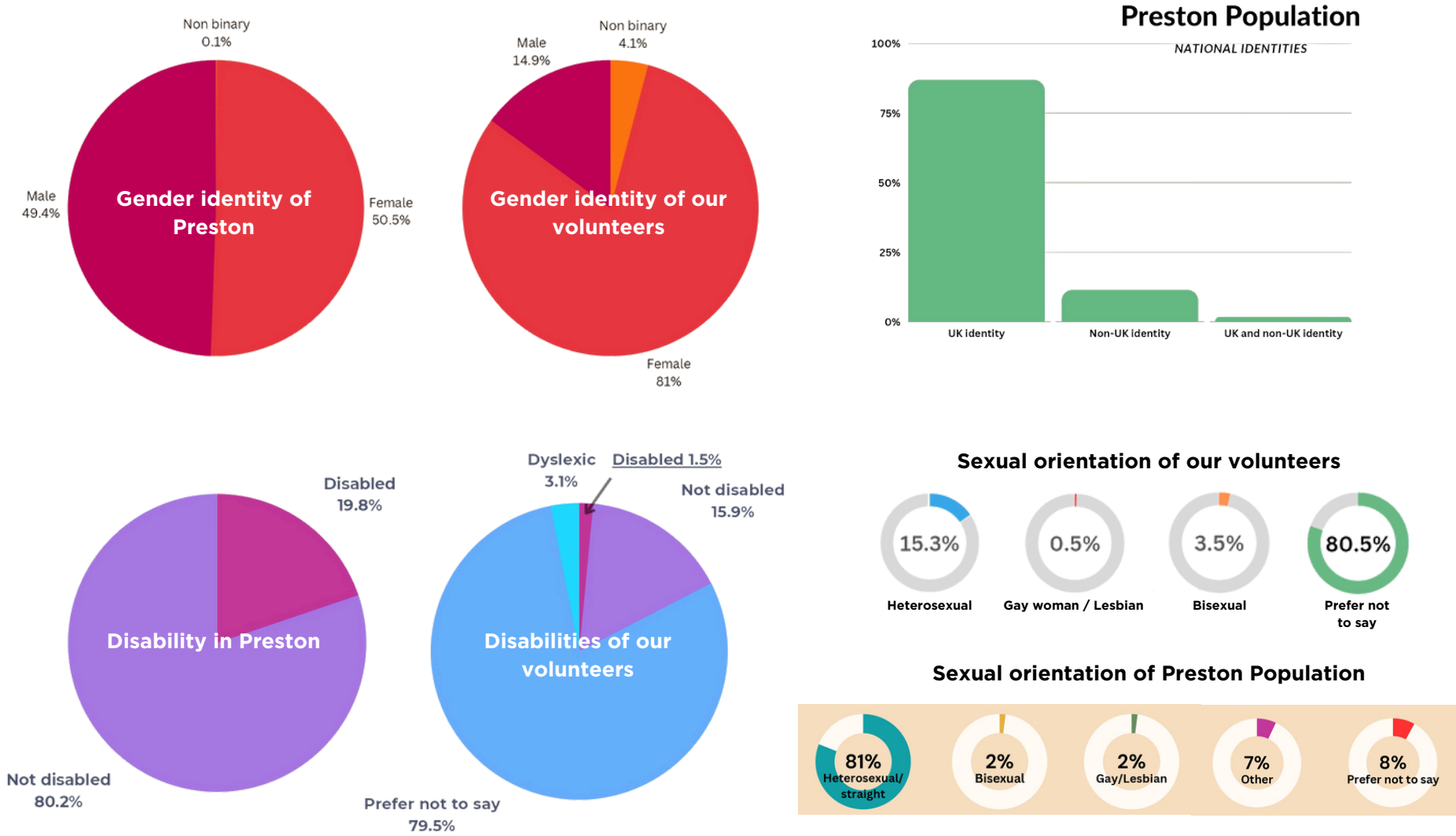


Bisexual



Prefer not to say

DEMOGRAPHICS OF HARRIS VOLUNTEERS COMPARED TO PRESTON'S POPULATION



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Project leaders from the Harris staff team

Representatives from the Harris volunteer team

Councillor Matthew Brown – Leader of Preston City Council

INFORMATIVE LINKS

[The Harris' Community Empowerment Guidelines | The Harris](#)

[Community Life Survey 2021/22: Volunteering and charitable giving - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[2023 may be year of the volunteer amid 'surprising enthusiasm' from young people | The Independent](#)

<https://www.helpinpreston.com/>

[What is Preston Model? - Preston City Council](#)

[Volunteer Makers - Welcome to your new Volunteering Journey](#)

[Harris Volunteer Makers](#)

[Change Network Overview — OF/BY/FOR ALL \(ofbyforall.org\)](#)