

Specialist Civil Society Infrastructure – Evidence base

1. Purpose or aim of the policy/fund

The Specialist Civil Society Infrastructure programme is a capacity building programme which aims to strengthen Civil Society Infrastructure (CSI) through providing targeted support and resources to specialist civil society organisations. The programme will be delivered in partnership with City Bridge Trust and the National Lottery Community Fund.

To achieve a strong and vibrant Civil Society, the sector needs access to a robust, diverse and effective support system. This takes the form of CSI, which consists of organisations that deliver capacity building, facilitate networks and partnerships and strengthen the ‘voice’ of the sector. London’s specialist civil society support organisations play a vital role that goes beyond the scope of generic CSI organisations. They are a key element of support for people with protected characteristics and seldom heard groups as well as enabling strong local and grassroots groups that interact with Londoners most at need.

This layer of support has been particularly affected by cuts to civil society funding; and despite growing demands on services this trend has continued and is only likely to increase as a result of any further deterioration of the public finances resulting from recession or economic slowdown.

There is currently little targeted support for specialist infrastructure organisations – a gap which the GLA, with the support of others believes needs to be filled.

2. Why do we want to focus this fund on equalities?

The GLA are keen to focus this funding on Civil Society Infrastructure which specialises in supporting organisations with an equalities focus – that is, those organisations that specialise in serving specific communities, including those that share protected characteristics. Recent research has reinforced the fact that many of these communities face a disproportionate negative impact as a result of policy changes or societal trends. Some of the research reviewed includes the [Survey of Londoners](#); the Mayor’s [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#); the [cumulative impact assessment](#) of tax and welfare reforms; the [ethnicity pay gaps for London and the UK](#); the [gender pay gaps for London and the UK](#); [hate crime figures](#) and the data on London’s [disability employment gap](#).

3. Current provision of specialist infrastructure

To inform decisions on which specialisms should be prioritised for funding, an assessment of the organisations providing specialist support in the following categories have been assessed: disability, socio-economic status, age, race, sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBT), gender, and faith. Organisations providing cross-cutting support have also been included. A list of the organisations considered as part of this analysis is presented at appendix 1.

Disability

Inclusion London is the only London wide organisation providing sector support to civil society Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations (DDPOs). Inclusion London works with over 65 frontline London DDPOs in London who have a combined total turnover of over £25,000,000 delivering a range of essential independent living advice, advocacy and advice services. These DDPOs provide vital civil society support to 1.2m Deaf and Disabled people in London but have experienced significant losses in capacity due to funding cuts, creating an inequality in provision across the city. Borough-based disability action groups have been especially affected by local authority cuts and a reduction in pan-London sector support. Trust for London launched the Strengthening Voices, Realising Rights initiative in late 2018, which aims to bolster the capacity DDPOs to provide advice on social welfare issues to Deaf and Disabled Londoners. The initiative has funded seven organisations.

A small number of organisations provide specialist sector support at national level. Reclaiming our Futures Alliance (ROFA) is a grassroots alliance of Disabled People and their organisations in England. ROFA provides peer support and tools to enable DDPOs to share information, co-ordinate campaigns and influence policymakers. ROFA also represents DDPOs and groups in England at an international level. Disability Rights UK (DRUK) delivers advocacy at a national level including disability equality campaigning and guidance on welfare benefits and accessing skills and employment.

Socio-economic status

Whilst there is only one civil society infrastructure body focused on London which specialises in issues relating to socio-economic status and poverty (4 in 10) the sector is supported by a number of larger organisations which co-ordinate work at a London level relating directly or indirectly to socio-economic status. For instance, the London Child Poverty Alliance is a network of organisations and funders who work together to tackle child poverty in the capital, and Debt Free London, facilitated by Toynbee Hall, co-ordinates access to debt advice.

Londoners on lower incomes are also highly likely to go to cross-cutting advice agencies for support with problems relating to issues like welfare benefits, debt, employment, or housing. Many of these agencies are supported by regional or national infrastructure. For example, all local Citizens Advice offices are supported by the national Citizens Advice Service, Turn2us support grant giving organisations, Law Centres are supported by the National Law Centres Network, advice agencies generally are supported by Advice UK, and a large proportion of food banks are part of the Trussell Trust Network. Many smaller organisations also have access to expert second-tier advice, support and resources from organisations like the Child Poverty Action Group and Shelter.

Age

Age UK London is a civil society infrastructure body in London which specialises in issues relating to older people. In addition, there are local Age UKs in many of the boroughs and there is a national Age UK. Whilst these are all independent bodies, they all work with and can readily draw on each other. There

are other pan-London older people's organisations, such as Positive Ageing in London (PAiL), the Greater London Forum for Older People (GLF) and London Older People's Strategies Group (LOPSG). None of PAiL, GLF or LOPSG currently have paid staff.

The Partnership for Young London is a staffed civil society infrastructure body in London which specialises in issues relating to young people. London Youth and Young Foundations also provide infrastructure support to youth organisations. In addition, Children England provides 4in10 London Child Poverty Network with funding and a member of staff.

Race

In London, most of the race equality specialist sector support organisations have either a national or borough remit and, since the closure of the majority of the Race Equality Councils, the sector has been recognised as being depleted of most of their second-tier organisations. The Coalition of Race Equality Organisations (CORE) brings together many of the UK's leading black Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) voluntary and community organisations for the promotion of race equality. Amongst these are some sector support organisations, such as Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG), Voice for Change England and Race on the Agenda (ROTA) which are all based in London but have a national focus. These organisations all have a turnover of less than £500k and limited core funding to deliver sector support.

In recognition of the need in this area ROTA has convened the AVOCADO+ project, a two-year collaboration with Money4Youth and Black Fundraisers UK to improve the sustainability and capacity of BAME charities and social enterprises (with less than £250,000 annual income). This indicates the wider need for further investment in BAME-led second-tier organisations to increase the support for BAME-led civil society in London.

Sexual orientation and gender identity

Civil society infrastructure established by LGBT+ people has been affected by austerity¹. It has been estimated that only 0.04% of overall voluntary sector income goes to the LGBT+ VCS². Whilst there are nationally focused LGBT+ organisations such as Stonewall based in London, infrastructure bodies like the LGBT Consortium are nationally focused and based outside of London. The LGBT Consortium have a member of staff dedicated to co-ordinating the sector in London. Organisations such as the Manchester-based LGBT Foundation and Opening Doors London provide services and support directly to LGBT+ individuals rather than organisations, with the latter focusing on the over-50s. Consequently there is an absence of a regional-level infrastructure body for this sector.

¹ Source: Implications of reductions to public spending for LGB and T people and services, NatCen (2016)

² Source: 'Staying Alive': The Impact of 'Austerity Cuts' on the LGBT Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in England and Wales, TUC (2014)

Gender

There is no civil society infrastructure body in London which specialises in issues relating to gender or women's issues. There is the Women's Resource Centre, which is a national staffed body that is located in London. It does provide infrastructure support in the form of training and events. These mostly take place in London, making them readily accessible to London's women's organisations and civil society activists. There is also the National Alliance of Women's Organisations, an umbrella organisation of women's organisations operating in England. It principally focuses its activities at national and international government bodies.

Faith

London's faith sector benefits from two regional infrastructure bodies: Faiths Forum for London – a charity that provides a platform for London faith communities to share good practice and collaborate with public authorities, corporations and the voluntary sector with a turnover of less than £500,000 – and the London Borough Faiths Network, which is an informal network of practitioners bringing together people from religious and intercultural groups who engage with local statutory bodies to help improve local areas. Elsewhere, the organisation Strengthening Faith Institutions works across faiths and the UK to help 'professionalise' places of worship, so that faith centres have strong governance arrangements and can access more funding. Although the organisation provides specialist sector support and a range of free and subsidised courses, it appears to focus on places of worship as opposed to faith sector organisations which may not coalesce around a place of worship.

Summary

The sectors with the most notable absence of a dedicated regional infrastructure body are gender, race and sexual orientation and gender identity.

In addition, analysis on cold spots in funding conducted by London Funders³ revealed that, while the faith sector has two regional infrastructure bodies working in the capital, it was the sector that received the least funding. The research also highlighted that children and young people, older people and disabled people are the sectors which receive the most targeted funding.

There are other groups or communities that share protected characteristics that may also be supported by organisations or networks that may themselves benefit from regional-level support. There is a wealth of formal and informal systems of support for pregnant women and mothers of young children,

³ <https://londonfunders.org.uk/what-we-do/events-training/what-and-where-are-funding-%E2%80%98cold-spots%E2%80%99-london>

including charities such as the National Childbirth Trust, although there is no dedicated regional infrastructure body for pregnant women and new mothers, there will be a significant overlap with the gender-focused organisations supporting women.

There are no known organisations that provide regional infrastructure for organisations supporting people on the basis of their marital status.

The analysis suggests that the specialisms that would most benefit from investment in civil society infrastructure are likely to be gender, race and sexual orientation/gender identity. However, that is not to say that other specialisms would not also benefit from investment. An appropriate approach would therefore be to have three dedicated funding streams, each targeted at one of gender, race and sexual orientation/gender identity, and then a fourth funding stream left as an open call, giving applicants an opportunity to make the case for their specific theme or for an intersectional approach.

Organisations that are unsuccessful in bidding for grant funding would also still be considered for participation in the design lab and network support element of this programme, providing an alternative route for receiving support.

Appendix 1

Organisation	Website	Specialism	Geography	Income 2018	Number of Staff
Inclusion London	https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/	Disability	London wide	£574.3K	10
Voluntary Organisations Disability Group	https://www.vodg.org.uk/	Disability	National	£415k	
Disability Rights UK	www.disabilityrightsuk.org	Disability	National	£1.7m	25
4in10	http://www.4in10.org.uk/	Class	London wide	N/A	N/A
Age UK	https://www.ageuk.org.uk/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIu7u_iJCR5AIVl4XVCh2QugWEEAAYASAAEgK0y_D_BwE&gclid=aw.ds	Age	National	£140.40M	1,503
Children England	https://www.childrenengland.org.uk/Pages/FAQs/Catagory/staff	Age	National	£356.4K	6FTE
Partnership for Young London	https://www.partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk/	Age	London wide	£298.7K	6
Positive Ageing in London	http://pailondon.org.uk	Age	London wide		
Greater London Forum for Older People	https://www.greaterlondonforum.org.uk/	Age	London wide	£1,316	
London Older People's Strategy Group	http://www.lopsg.org.uk/index.php/what-is-lopsg	Age	London wide	Negligible	
ROTA	https://www.rota.org.uk/content/about-us	Race	National	£318,476	N/A
Race equality foundation	https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/	Race	National	£737k	9.5FTE
BTEG (Black Training and enterprise group)	https://www.bteg.co.uk/content/about-us	Race	National	£360k	
Money4Youth (Avocado+)	https://www.money4youth.com/	Race	National	£11,300	
Council of Somali Organisations	https://www.councilofsomaliorgs.com/	Race	National	£94k	
Croydon BME Forum	http://www.cbmeforum.org/	Race	Croydon	£179k	
Voice4Change	http://www.voice4change-england.co.uk/	Race	National	£124k	

LGBT Consortium	http://www.lgbtconsortium.org.uk/about-us	LGBT	National (based in Exeter)	£455k	N/A
Stonewall	https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/our-mission-and-priorities	LGBT	National	£8.70M	136
LGBT Foundation	https://lgbt.foundation/	LGBT	National (based in Manchester)	£2.18M	44
Opening Doors London	https://www.openingdoorslondon.org.uk/who-we-are	LGBT	National	£338.9K	N/A
Surrey and London Association of Gay Organisations	http://www.slogo.org.uk/	LGBT	South West London	N/A	
Women's Resource Centre	https://www.wrc.org.uk/	Gender	National	£654k	10
National Alliance of Women's Organisations	https://nawo.org.uk/	Gender	National	£3628	
Equally Ours (formerly Equality and Diversity Forum)	https://www.equallyours.org.uk/about-us/	Cross-cutting	National	£357.7k	7
HEAR	https://hearequality.org.uk/about-hear/	Cross-cutting	London wide	£91k	N/A
Turn2us	https://www.turn2us.org.uk/About-Us	Cross-cutting	National	£30.46M	795
Advice UK	https://www.adviceuk.org.uk/about/	Cross-cutting	National	£2.45M	13
Faith Forum London	http://faithsforum.com/	Faith	London	£243k	
London Borough Faith Network	https://lbfn.org/	Faith	London	N/A	
The Interfaith network	https://www.interfaith.org.uk/members/list	Faith	National	N/A	