



Working together to strengthen London's voluntary and community sector

## EQUALITIES IN LONDON: WHAT NEXT FOR FUNDERS?

6 December 2007, at Amnesty Human Rights Centre, London

### A London Funders members' meeting

Participating organisations and speakers' biographies are at the end of this report. Each speaker's presentation is on the London Funders website ([www.londonfunders.org.uk](http://www.londonfunders.org.uk))

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Sara Llewellyn, Chair of London Funders

Sara welcomed everyone and explained that the meeting had been arranged in response to questions and concerns about changes in the structure and nature of support for equalities work, especially with the creation of the new Equality and Human Rights Commission. She welcomed and introduced the three speakers and noted that this topic had attracted great interest - evidenced by well over 50 people attending.

She also introduced Gaynor Humphreys, attending her first members' meeting since taking up the appointment of Director of London Funders.

### INTEGRATION AND COHESION

James Kingston, Cohesion and Faiths Unit, Department of Communities and Local Government

James explained and analysed the recommendations of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion and described how his Department was responding to them. He reminded the audience of the policy context, going back to disturbances in the north of England in 2001 and 2005. Since then Government attention had been directed to understanding and fostering cohesion. In terms of whether people of different backgrounds get on well together, looking at communities defined as people living within 15-20 minutes walking distance of each other. While 80% of communities score positively on this measure there is concern about 40-50 local authority areas where a much more negative view is expressed. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion was charged with deepening the Government's understanding of the concepts of "integration" and "cohesion". Its report, Our Shared Future ([www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/Our\\_final\\_report.aspx](http://www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/Our_final_report.aspx)), offered insights into the mix of rights and responsibilities they believe should become more widely understood, confirmed a commitment to equality and social justice and identified areas for action in schools, neighbourhoods, workplaces and in the areas of sports and culture.

**"A quarterly citizenship survey measures people's sense of cohesiveness in their own communities"**

There has been concern among front-line equalities groups, second tier organisations and funders, that the report proposed that only those projects and services which span multiple ethnic groups and equalities groups should normally be given financial support and that CLG's

endorsement of the report reinforces this. James Kingston explained that this is an over-simplification of his Department's position but confirmed that it is intended to give priority to activities which promote "bridging social capital"; that focus is principally on the activity being funded rather than the organisation delivering it; and that such guidance should apply to mainstream funding. In this new regime, it is recommended that a series of questions be asked by funders before they support single groups: is there a clear case for the activity to be funded even though it only assists one single group or community? Is there scope to contribute to integration and cohesion through the support offered? Can a single group be encouraged to get involved in work which lets its members interact with other groups? How does their activity fit into a broader community cohesion strategy?

There was a lot of discussion about this area and some criticism of the Commission's work in that it focused considerably on race and faith issues, reflecting Government perceptions of the causes of public disorder. Many funders, however, see the causes of community stress differently, for example in intergenerational conflict and in the increasing disparities between rich and poor, and urban and rural. A focus on funding to promote community cohesion also clouds the continued need for support of vulnerable groups.

CLG has held some round table events to follow up the Commission's report and some funders have been involved in these, but James confirmed his interest in widening the discussion to a broader range of funders for fuller feedback. He also confirmed that there is awareness within CLG that it is essential to maintain certain areas of single group funding such as gender specific support in relation to domestic violence.

**"A focus on funding to promote community cohesion also clouds the continued need for support of vulnerable groups"**

The focus on funding activities rather than groups was also challenged. A group might spring from one single need but be open to working more broadly: it was important to understand the nature of the group as well as the purpose of a particular application. James agreed that this was an area where the Government's current statements might need to be reviewed: he

believed this point was understood, but that the particular wording employed might not convey the sense sufficiently. A further point noted how challenging it can be for groups to make the transition from a single focus to work on a broader front - needing time and good support both from funders and infrastructure agencies. The negative outcome of denying funding to single groups or pushing groups to change too quickly could be to drive them to the margins and unintentionally exacerbate problems and divisiveness.

Several points were raised by local authority representatives, for example that the CLG outline expression of intentions does not reflect local authorities' considerable body of knowledge which informs their strategy, nor does it recognise how varied priority concerns can be from one authority to another - an example given was from Bromley where intergenerational issues are primary.

The discussion ended very positively with James Kingston noting many of the points raised and expressing interest in pursuing discussion, and Sara offering on behalf of all present any assistance which individual funders, or London Funders as a group, might offer to him as he drafts the Cohesion Guidance for Funders to which the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government referred in her letter to the Chair of the Commission, Darra Singh. (That letter of 6 October 2007 is on the Department's website and was included in participants' packs for this meeting).

## OLU ALAKE

### Head of Funding, Equality and Human Rights Commission

Olu began with an overview of the new Commission, operational only for a few months and building on the former three commissions relating to race equality, gender issues and disability but adding to these equality in age, sexual orientation and religion or belief, as well as a new focus on human rights. His presentation, which gives more detail of the Commission's structure and mission, can be found on [www.londonfunders.org.uk](http://www.londonfunders.org.uk).

Section 10 of the Equalities Act 2006 charges the Commission with fostering good relations within and between groups in all of the equalities areas covered by their mandate. Their funding priorities will refer to cohesion and conflict resolution and will want to promote good relations within and between groups in local areas, especially work which links different equalities issues but they intend also to leave room for applications from single groups.

In terms of its grantmaking capacity, the Commission has interim functions in relation to former Commission for Racial Equality funding but is gradually shifting to grantmaking which reflects its new core purposes. For 2008-09 they plan to run an open application grants programme and to route funding for capacity development through their regional offices. The emphasis there is on capacity development, not capacity building, especially in enhancing the ability to deliver small-scale projects and improve skills in areas of need which the EHRC will identify in local consultation. They plan to conduct a consultation exercise before embarking on this funding so as to ensure that their funding is as effective as possible for the Commission but also develops synergies with other funders' practice. A second area for funding will promote human rights very broadly: Olu felt this would give the EHRC a chance "to ask old questions differently". The budget for next year is £10 million and the following year will see fuller development of the Commission's strategy in its grantmaking.

The Commission is keen to work with other funders, sharing intelligence and overcoming what they see as a current lack of synergy.

In answer to questions, Olu explained that the allocation of money between the two programme elements and across regions will be demand-led. They are still exploring how to expand their expertise in funding across the whole range of issues. The experienced funders in the audience offered assistance in such discussion and emphasised the vital importance of consultation with other funders to maximise the Commission's relatively limited resources.

**"The Commission is keen to work with other funders, sharing intelligence and overcoming what they see as a current lack of synergy"**

## VIVIENNE HAYES

### Vice-Chair, HEAR, (formerly the Equalities and Human Rights Sub-group), and Director of the Women's Resource Centre

Viv had stepped in at short notice as Dinah Cox, the Chair of HEAR, was unwell - her help in this was appreciated.

Viv considered London's diversity and the nature of its inequality. Despite London's prosperity, many of its communities experience high levels of disadvantage and she quoted statistics to demonstrate gross inequality in educational achievement in London for Traveller children; the low levels of job opportunities for disabled women in inner London; high levels of domestic violence and homophobic crimes; and the considerably higher proportions of children and older people in poverty in inner London compared with the rest of the country.

Viv went on to consider the essential role frontline equality organisations play in responding to inequality and strengthening community cohesion. They

- Provide services to meet needs that mainstream service providers are unaware of, do not understand and do not address. There is plenty of evidence to show how they reach people who would otherwise not receive support. The services delivered by frontline equality organisations are more demand-led and holistic because they are centred on the needs, experiences, aspirations and rights of their community members.
- Provide safe space where vulnerable members of their community can feel psychologically and physically secure and in doing so give them confidence and begin to reverse the impact of exclusion and inequality.
- Provide value for money. The economic benefits of frontline equality organisations are likely to be significant, for example through improving the health and employment prospects of individuals in their communities.
- Provide information about the needs and aspirations of their communities. With their intimate knowledge of their communities, frontline equality organisations could play a key role in overcoming the information deficit on many equality communities which hampers effective public decision-making and the design and monitoring of public services.
- Reach marginalised and isolated communities in a way that mainstream organisations cannot, and engage them in wider public and civic life, for example in neighbourhood renewal and other local programmes.
- Strengthen cohesion. By strengthening their communities they give them the confidence to mix locally with other communities and thus they play a role in strengthening community cohesion.
- Bring about social change through campaigning and lobbying. For example, through its activism, the women's sector has been responsible for a great deal of the change in policy and public perceptions that have resulted in gender equality changes in legislation (from safe and legal abortion, to rape in marriage, to female genital mutilation),

The assets, expertise and commitment of frontline equality organisations cannot easily be replicated by organisations that aim to offer services to all but which cannot hope to cater for the needs of all the different groups as effectively as organisations set up with specific targets.

Despite their assets, frontline equality organisations are marginalised, misunderstood and undervalued within the third sector: they are under-represented on many ChangeUp Consortia and in democratic processes such as within Local Area Agreements; they are under-funded; and they do not receive adequate infrastructure support. This makes it difficult for them to play their full role in addressing inequality and strengthening cohesion.

Viv's closing emphasis was on the essential importance of targeting support to help specific communities overcome disadvantage. Equality of opportunity depends not only on measures that others take on behalf of marginalised communities, but also, crucially on their own action and collective voice through their own organisations. For the effective addressing of inequality and to strengthen links between marginalised and other communities therefore, frontline equality organisations should be fostered not weakened.

**“frontline equality organisations are marginalised, misunderstood and undervalued within the third sector”**

## WORKSHOPS

Participants each chose one of three workshops and feedback from each was briefly shared in a closing plenary session.

### WORKSHOP 1: EQUALITIES FUNDING

Facilitator: Sandra Jones, London Borough of Lewisham

A workshop exploring future funding of Racial Equality Councils and other equality bodies. Are funders more likely to go for a single equalities funding process? How do we ensure all equalities issues are covered adequately in each borough? What recommendations can funders in London make on future guidelines?

#### FEEDBACK

- Current policy and practice are disjointed.
- Better communication and shared best practice between local funders and EHRC will lead to better funding.
- Have we got the mapping right to ensure clarity of expectations and provision at local, regional and sub-regional levels?
- Continued dialogue should resolve issues and increase trust.

"Better communication and shared best practice between local funders and EHRC will lead to better funding"

### WORKSHOP 2: SINGLE GROUP FUNDING

Facilitator: Lisa Greensill, Government Office for London

A workshop exploring the arguments for and against single group funding. In what circumstances is it appropriate? Are the findings of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion in "Our Shared Future" borne out by the experience of funders in London? What recommendations can funders in London make on future guidelines?

#### FEEDBACK

Three points:

- the evidence base must be there for guidance and decision-making
- bonding and bridging are not mutually exclusive
- self-determination must be respected. Single equality groups will have ideas and knowledge about their own needs AND CLG has a Race Equality Duty.

More fully:

- Despite a variety of perspectives and views, the workshop agreed that single group funding is important and progress need not always be measured in a group's willingness to blend its purposes with a broader community. "Case by case" judgement is needed on the merits of single group funding not a blanket, one size fits all approach with either preference. Bonding and bridging social capital are not mutually exclusive.
- Local sensitivities, even within a local authority, can vary hugely and should be taken into account.
- Funders need guidance on relative need and how to handle this to make the most difference. (London Councils has information on this).

**“London is a different case and should be treated differently”**

- Need to take into account social and demographic change. Some older people want to stay in their own community - they find it a source of comfort and feel it is natural. As the new generations come through there may be more mixing in terms of shared facilities and activities.
- You can only exclude single groups from funding if everyone has equitable access to resources - clearly they have not.
- London is a different case and should be treated differently by CLG from other regions. It is very diverse and has different communities living alongside each other with no trouble. Separate guidance or discretion is needed: national guidance oversimplifies and misses crucial distinctions. There is good practice in London and a good evidence base.
- There are lessons from the experience of Northern Ireland and key one is that disadvantaged and marginalised groups need to feel safe together first before they can be secure in working with others - above all this takes time.
- Much could be achieved from funding more mainstream groups to deliver on equalities issues - ie support more “binding” activities.
- Who actually needs the capacity building to work with single equality groups - how are mainstream organisations addressing these needs?
- Funders make assumptions and encourage use of language for bids which does not necessarily reflect what is going on in reality.
- Different drivers of cohesion are applied in different contexts: concerns about young people can be shared across communities - but no-one suggests funders stop supporting youth groups.

**“There is good practice in London and a good evidence base”**

### **WORKSHOP 3: EQUALITIES INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Facilitator: Barbara Nea, HEAR**

The purpose of this workshop was to explore the role of funders in addressing priorities for infrastructure for London’s frontline equality organisations, ie the priorities for support services and structures which frontline organisations need to become more effective and to have a stronger voice.

Organisations that work directly with individuals and communities facing discrimination may not have overt objectives based on equality and diversity but often play a key role in addressing inequality and strengthening cohesion by responding to needs which arise or are left unmet as a result of inequality. The group agreed that there are big gaps in support for the voice and representation of equality communities, particularly at local level. An area of concern was the under-representation in democratic structures such as Local Strategic Partnerships of people and groups experiencing discrimination. Workshop participants felt setting up new structures (local equality networks) would not be sustainable and that existing structures should be built on where possible (eg broadening the remit of race equality bodies to represent all equality organisations).

All councils for voluntary service should be strongly encouraged to support frontline equality organisations and the development of their voice and representation and there was scope for much more collaborative working between existing equality networks and generic infrastructure providers. At borough level, even where there are obvious gaps in infrastructure support, a “jigsaw” of equality networks and support representation could be

put together: for example, there are black and minority ethnic networks in about two thirds of London boroughs and there are many local networks of disabled peoples' organisations.

The workshop participants discussed the need for support of work to improve representation, advocacy and "voice". Many smaller frontline equality organisations do not consider this area of work as important even though they are best placed to provide information about "hard-to-reach" communities. This emphasises the importance of representational infrastructure in ensuring the issues of such communities are expressed within Local Area Agreements, etc.

Three main conclusions from the workshop were:

- There is a need for funders and ChangeUp structures to share information more so that funding decisions and priorities can be better informed. The combined information held by funders and ChangeUp Consortia, including HEAR (the equality sub-group of the Regional ChangeUp Consortium) could offer a comprehensive picture of the needs and aspirations of equality communities and their organisations.
- Funders should place greater expectations on the organisations they fund to ensure equality and diversity is at the heart of their work and that their support benefits frontline equality organisations. Monitoring of grants could reflect this more strongly too. It was noted that Capacitybuilders has included more detailed equalities criteria in its next funding round.
- The value of infrastructure support should be more widely publicised. Funding for infrastructure support is being squeezed, particularly at local level, largely because of lack of awareness about its impact.

**"There is a need for funders and ChangeUp structures to share information more"**

## CLOSING PLENARY

In final discussion the point about London being different was taken up by Hugh Harris of London First on behalf of the business community as well as funders and the voluntary and community sector. All agreed it was good to have this opportunity not only to talk about the special challenges of diversity and inequality in London but to reinforce that national policies and generalised regional guidance will not answer the condition and experience of London's communities and neighbourhoods.

Sara thanked speakers and workshop facilitators. She especially acknowledged Lisa Greensill (Government Office for London) and Sandra Jones (London Borough of Lewisham) for working with the London Funders Secretariat in planning the event. Speakers' presentations and a note of the main points raised at the meeting would be put on London Funders' website ([www.londonfunders.org.uk](http://www.londonfunders.org.uk))

**"it was good to have this opportunity not only to talk about the special challenges of diversity and inequality in London but to reinforce that national policies and generalised regional guidance will not answer the condition and experience of London's communities"**

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For more information on our work log on to our website at [www.londonfunders.org.uk](http://www.londonfunders.org.uk)

## PARTICIPATION

55 people attended and the following organisations were represented

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| adviceUK                                       | Learning and Skills Council              |
| BBC Children in Need                           | London Borough of Bromley                |
| The Big Lottery Fund                           | London Borough of Greenwich              |
| British Council, China                         | London Borough of Hackney                |
| Capacity Builders                              | London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham |
| Capital Community Foundation                   | London Borough of Haringey               |
| Church Urban Fund                              | London Borough of Hillingdon             |
| The City Bridge Trust                          | London Borough of Hounslow               |
| City Parochial Foundation                      | London Borough of Lambeth                |
| Comic Relief                                   | London Borough of Merton                 |
| Department of Communities and Local Government | London Borough of Newham                 |
| Diocese of Southwark                           | London Borough of Wandsworth             |
| Equality and Human Rights Commission           | London Councils                          |
| Football Foundation                            | London Development Agency                |
| Government Office for London                   | London First                             |
| Groundswell UK                                 | London Probation                         |
| HEAR   | London Voluntary Service Council         |
| Interlink                                      | LORECA, London Development Agency        |
| Jack Petchey Foundation                        | St Katharine & Shadwell Trust            |
| King's Fund                                    | Save the Children                        |

## SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

**James Kingston** has been part of the Cohesion and Faiths Unit (first in the Home Office and then in Communities and Local Government (CLG) following machinery of Government changes in 2006) since June 2005 - joining the unit two weeks before the 7/7 London Bombings. Before that he worked on race equality and diversity in the Home Office, producing the Home Office's 2005 race equality scheme. Until recently he led the unit's team supporting colleagues in Government Offices for the regions and in local authorities to deal with cohesion challenges, and was responsible for assessing community tensions. Following the publication of 'Our Shared Future', the report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, this summer, and Hazel Blears' initial response in October, he now leads on the unit's interest in cohesion in Local Area Agreements and on cohesion guidance for funders.

**Olu Alake** is the Head of Funding for the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. Prior to this he was Director of English Regions at Commission for Racial Equality and has also been Head of Cultural Diversity at Arts Council England, as well as other roles across the public and third sectors. He is thus an experienced diversity and cultural policy manager, who has worked on international projects with various organisations such as the World Cultural Forum, UNESCO, InterArts Foundation, EuroAmerican Campus for Cultural Cooperation etc. Olu holds an M.Sc. in Race and Ethnic Studies (Birkbeck), Postgraduate Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) and B.Sc. (Hons) in Economics.

**Vivienne Hayes** is the Director of the Women's Resource Centre (WRC), the national umbrella body for the women's voluntary and community sector, providing capacity building services to member organisations working to improve the lives of women, and consulting on and responding to government policy affecting the sector. She studied sociology at Warwick University, Women's History at Essex University and more recently Management at Westminster University. Vivienne's first inspiration comes from her mother, a working class woman who left school in her early teens to work in a factory, but who impressed upon her children the importance of education and an open mind. Vivienne has spent the last 20 years working in the women's sector, both delivering and managing services. Her passion is to support and improve the life experiences of women and their children, and most of her work has focused on this. Having grown up during a time when feminism and equalities issues were firmly on the agenda, Vivienne recognises the need to continue to raise these issues now things seem to be slipping back in terms of progress for women and the whole equalities debate.