



Brexit – exploring funder responses to support London’s communities

A briefing note for London Funders members, 20 November 2020

Context

During autumn 2020, London Funders convened five roundtable discussions on Brexit and the potential impact on London’s communities covering: food, community cohesion, structural funds, and citizens’ rights – as well as a civil society more generally.

These sessions were attended by over 100 London Funders members and served as a reminder that this still a ‘live’ issue that funders must consider when making decisions. These meetings followed up on previous sessions with similar themes which took place in autumn 2019 – [click here](#) for the original briefing note, and below are updates from colleagues across the sector.

Overview: Brexit Civil Society Alliance – Malene Bratlie (Co-ordinator)

- There are three possible scenarios that may occur following the end of the transition period on 31 December - no deal is agreed, a series of ‘mini-deals’ or extension to the transition period. All of these have potential negative implications for London’s communities.
- There are concerns among civil society groups that the lack of time left before December 31 to ratify a deal means that there will be a lack of scrutiny around workers’ rights, food standards and environmental laws especially.
- There are also concerns that service delivery charities will face extra pressure in the new year as a result of Brexit-related poverty – on top of having to deal with the consequences of ongoing pandemic.
- Civil society groups need to continue to campaign and make their voices heard, especially considering that Brexit will result in central government having more power over law-making, and therefore can have even more direct impact on the prosperity of communities.

Food: Trussell Trust - Garry Lemon (Director of Policy and Research)

- The coronavirus pandemic placed huge strain on the UK’s food supply chains and on a positive note it has now been proven that they can withstand huge pressures. Therefore, the Trussell Trust is now less concerned about ‘supply shocks’ happening as a result of Brexit.
- However, the Trussell Trust is increasingly concerned about poverty increasing, and tariffs causing an increase to the price of basic goods. With many families already on the breadline, even small increases can result in millions more people facing food poverty.
- In 2020 The Trussell Trust has experienced huge surges in demand for food banks (against a backdrop of increased use over the past decade) – so far they have been very generously supported by the general public, but there is no guarantee that this will be the case if we leave the European Union without a deal.
- The Trussell Trust has been working with other charities (most notably the Joseph Rowntree Foundation) to amplify their policy asks around poverty and covid-19. This has proven to be successful so far, and the organisation will be doing more of this in the future.



Community Cohesion: Migrants Organise - Zrinka Bralo (Chief Executive)

- Hate crime incidents were rising before the referendum, but have increased significantly since then. Between 2013-2018 the number of incidents doubled, and increased year-on-year. Hate crime also traditionally rises during times of economic turmoil – which we are likely to experience for the next couple of years.
- East Asian communities have experienced a sustained rise in hate crime during the pandemic, and there are concerns that European communities will suffer similarly targeted abuse when the UK fully leaves the European Union.
- To combat divisions, funders need to support cross-community dialogue and migrant access to public spaces/the public sphere. Examples include supporting access to doctors surgeries, voting and adult education. Without these, communities are more likely to feel excluded and marginalised. More broadly, media perceptions and anti-immigrant rhetoric should be challenged through campaigning and advocacy.
- Cross-sector working is also vital to supporting migrant communities and making them feel welcomed. A good example of this is Haringey Council's work with its local third sector on the 'Haringey Welcome Board'. The welcome board organises events and works with schools to raise awareness about issues that migrants face.

Structural funds: ERSA/Salvation Army – Annie Dell (Policy Analyst)

- Funders need to consider the impact of the pandemic on the employment market before thinking about how best to support communities post-Brexit. There needs to be significant investment in education and training, and debt management to support Londoners who have lost their jobs.
- There are many structural funds that are supported by the EU (many of which are co-funded by national government). The largest of these is ESF (European Social Fund) which supports employment initiatives. But it's important to remember that there are many smaller funds focusing on the environment, social cohesion, and culture. All of these will fall under the umbrella over an overarching UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- There are still more questions than answers about the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. It has been announced that the government will contribute £500m to the fund – however it is unclear over what time period, and which areas/demographics will be targeted.
- Funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund must be transparent, and work cohesively with other developing central government funding programmes such as the Stronger Towns Fund if it is to be successful in 'levelling up' the country.

Citizen's Rights: Greater London Authority - Bella Kosmala (Citizenship and Integration Adviser) and Elisabeth Pop (Democratic Engagement Adviser)

- In order to stay in the UK after Brexit, European Londoners are required to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme. Freedom of movement ends on 31 December and the deadline to apply for the scheme is 30 June 2021. Anyone who is required to apply under the scheme but fails to do so by this date may become undocumented.
- Recent research by the Migration Observatory finds that we simply do not know how many people are eligible to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme and estimates of the number of EU citizens living in the UK have important limitations, but many of those left to apply will be particularly complex cases.



- Funders need to support communities that are less likely to have applied to the Scheme, and this job has become more difficult because of the pandemic. Covid-19 has disrupted outreach and advice services as well as comms activity intended to support Europeans ahead of the end of free movement.
- In the years to come, nearly two million people will need to convert their temporary pre-Settled Status to the more permanent Settled Status to ensure their right to reside does not lapse. We will need sustained strategic investment into immigration advice and outreach services to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. The migration sector is small, and has been under-funded for many years, so capacity needs to increase not just within this sector but in the third sector.
- EU citizens also need to be supported in the medium and long term to ensure that they can fully participate in decisions impacting their communities and city, are represented in the democratic system and, thus, have a sense of belonging. These were strong themes in Danny Kruger's recommendations in 'Levelling Up our Communities' and during GLA's London Voter Registration Week 2020, the biggest civic and democratic participation project organised by a regional local authority with local councils and over 100 civil society organisations.

Next steps from London Funders

- We've added Brexit considerations to the guidance being used for the current round of the London Community Response.
- We'll keep an eye on policy developments in the above areas (and Brexit policy generally) and will brief our members through our Funder Five emails.
- We will also take action through our network groups to explore funder responses further as the situation develops.