The Change Ahead

Creating a new future for civil society in London

Summary of literature review

Introduction

London Funders, working alongside Greater London Volunteering and the London Voluntary Service Council commissioned a Review of the Future of Civil Society Support in September 2015. The Review was funded by the City of London Corporation's charity, the City Bridge Trust. The work was carried out by Srabani Sen OBE & Associates.

Stage 1 of the Review involved conducting research to establish the context and the issues facing civil society and their support organisations. This research was published in *The Change Ahead* in December 2015. A central part of this research was an extensive literature review, which was carried out between September and November 2015. This briefing paper summarises the key themes from this literature review, the implications of these themes and lists the reports that were examined.

NOTE: Throughout this briefing we use the term "civil society support" to refer to what is often known as "infrastructure" support.

The literature review looked at:

- The nature of the civil society sector in London, its size, structure and support needs (see page 3)

- The nature of civil society support in London as it is currently configured (see page 5)

- Issues affecting volunteers and volunteering (see page 8)

- Issues affecting funders and funding as this relates to civil society support (see page 10)

- The needs of service users and beneficiaries as this relates to support that frontline organisations might need (see page 13)

- Issues affecting frontline organisations (see page 14)

- Issues related to voice, campaigning, influencing and building a narrative for the civil society sector (see page 17)

- What was missing from the literature reviewed (see page 19)

This summary highlights the core themes that appear repeatedly, drawing mainly on the most recent, relevant research and reports, though in carrying out the literature review a wide range of earlier research was examined.

Further details are to be found in *The Change Ahead*, a report published in December 2015, setting out the emerging findings of the Review of the Future of Civil Society Support in London. *The Change Ahead* is available from at http://londonfunders.org.uk/what-we-do/london-funders-projects/review-londons-civil-society-support/emerging-findings-report

Backdrop to this review

Through discussions across the sector and the various reviews that have taken place over the last five to ten years, a number of themes recur again and again:

- Austerity, and the fact that funding is likely to continue to reduce

- The pace of change in the environment continues to be fast

- Demand for frontline services is growing

- Needs of service users are increasingly complex

- Frontline organisations' need for support has never been greater:

    o To support their survival and resilience
    o To support working together better
    o To give voice to the sector

- There is little acknowledged impact data for civil society support, with repeated calls for support organisations to get better at demonstrating

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their value and the difference they make; frontline organisations also struggle to measure outcomes

- The sector is dealing with increased competition at all levels:

  o Between frontline organisations to win contracts, with some small local providers being nudged out of the market by larger civil society organisations
  o Between frontline organisations and support bodies who are competing for the same funds
  o Between frontline organisations and large private sector providers

- Increased emphasis on volunteers and volunteering, both by government for reasons of ideology and by frontline organisations as a solution to dwindling resources and reducing numbers of paid staff

- Calls on funders to work more strategically

Estimated size and structure of London's civil society sector

Summary of themes from the literature review

There are widely different interpretations and measurements of the size of the civil society sector in London. How much of this is due to difficulties in collecting data and how much due to the changing face of the civil society sector is unclear. This may also reflect difficulties in establishing a consistent definition of what constitutes the civil society sector.

The figure used most consistently is 60,000 civil society organisations in London. Frontline organisations are not evenly distributed across boroughs, although there is no data to illuminate whether this is due to a response to the varying levels of need in different areas of the Capital, or whether this is driven by factors such as the availability of funding and local political commitment to the civil society sector.

Whilst data exists about the size and structure of the sector, it is scattered across different reports and set out in different formats. It is therefore difficult to establish a consistent picture that is agreed across the sector. No data was found correlating the size of the civil society sector in each London Borough

with the size and capacity of its local support organisation(s), or between inner and outer London.

What is clear is that there are tens of thousands of civil society organisations working to improve the lives of Londoners. There is also an active community of volunteers supported by a range of organisations. There is clear evidence of the commitment by London's business community to volunteering, a concomitant growth in volunteering brokerage, but a lack of data to inform priorities and activity undertaken.

Implications of these themes

Lack of consistent data about frontline organisations - who they are, where they are based and what they deliver – poses challenges to thinking about how to evolve the system that exists to support them.

There is no easily accessible data which maps the current and evolving needs of Londoners against the nature and location of frontline organisations. Therefore it is not possible to draw conclusions about whether frontline organisations are prioritising the right needs in the right places, let alone in the right way. With diminishing resources, it becomes even more important to examine this issue if London's civil society is to be able to make strategic choices about how best to invest its dwindling resources, and the public sector is able to make effective funding decisions.

The role of civil society support in this debate will be crucial and could mean the difference between the civil society sector in London being buffeted by the environment and it taking control of its own destiny. Civil society support has the potential to take this strategic overview and inform hard choices about how London's resources are invested.

Considering the data that does exist, over the last decade, at a top level it seems that the size of the sector in London has remained largely the same, and indeed may have grown. Interestingly, the top level figures are somewhat at odds with perceptions of closures of frontline civil society organisations, particularly prevalent in the recent past, including the view that some groups are more vulnerable than others and may have been disproportionately affected. This emphasises even more, the need for systematic, robust data on which civil society support can draw to plan how it can best support the sector.

Civil society support

Summary of themes from literature review

The literature outlines very mixed opinions about the quality of civil society support in London, and states that provision is patchy. Nevertheless, there remains significant support for targeted capacity building work that is effective and affordable. Not only is there a mismatch between the number and type of frontline organisations needing help compared to the support available, there is a lack of tailored provision for frontline organisations at different stages of their development. The literature claims that generally small groups benefit more than medium sized groups, but there is a lack of clarity about the level and nature of support available.

That said, frontline organisations say they need support from skilled and informed bodies which build a trusting and sustained relationship with them, provided they are not competing for funding or giving grants, thus compromising their impartiality. The literature highlights that local generalist support bodies are overloaded, and in some places overwhelmed by demand. An area of concern raised by frontline organisations is that staff of support organisations can lack relevant and senior experience at the level they require.

Most reports make long lists of recommendations for support bodies. These include the need to clarify their role, measure their impact, lobby and provide a voice. However none of the reports attempt to prioritise their extensive recommendations. There is no indication of the extent to which the recommendations from these reports have been followed up, or indeed, implemented.

There is some debate about the future role of the two most prominent London based regional support organisations: Greater London Volunteering (GLV) and the London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC). Recommendations about their future include extensive lists of what these bodies should do but little if any acknowledgement in the research about whether these organisations have the capacity and resources to deliver what is being asked of them, and no attempt to prioritise.

One emerging theme is that support bodies should consider prioritising which organisations they help, targeting those that can demonstrate impact.

NCVO evidence, produced for this Review shows a complex picture in terms of the funding of local civil society support organisations. Some have

succeeded in maintaining funding levels and some have faced reduced income. The turnover and therefore the size of local support organisations varies a great deal. There are significant variations in local authority funding. The importance of independent funders in the funding mix which support organisations rely on is key. Many support organisations are relying on multiple funders and therefore presumably having to report to several different funding bodies in several different ways.

Civil society support organisations are struggling to take a strategic approach to their work for a number of reasons:

- there is no clear and succinct definition of what their role should be

- the lack of capacity and funding

- high demands on their services

- there appears to be a lack of sufficient impact data on which to base a truly strategic plan

The reports highlight issues around civil society support organisations' representational and voice roles, including:

- conflicts of interest with frontline organisations with which some support organisations are competing for funding

- questions about how support organisations are hearing from frontline organisations and gathering needs data

- challenges for support organisations around reaching the full breadth of the communities they serve

Other issues include challenges around support organisations charging for services to develop new income streams and the consequent potential exclusion of "micro" frontline organisations from access to support. There is also a recurrent theme in the literature around the need for support organisations to improve significantly their ability to demonstrate impact.

The literature reviewed failed to find a single pithy, compelling and consistently used definition or description of civil society support, something that would seem to be a pre-requisite to making a case for why it matters.

There was very little debate in the literature about the nature, scale and role of specialist civil society support organisations, which given their importance is a notable absence.

Implications

Funding decisions at local level vary from area to area, and appear to be on the basis of the perceived importance of civil society support in amongst other funding priorities rather than on the basis of frontline organisations' need. This is likely to have ramifications for local areas' ability to meet the needs of their citizens.

Expectations on support organisations bear little relation to the reality of what they have the capacity to deliver. These expectations are fuelled by the numerous reports that set out their recommendations that don't always take into account the day to day struggles of running and maintaining a support service.

There is an inability in the literature to shape an argument in favour of civil society support in terms which are compelling to those in power. The reports are very much framed in terms that the sector would understand, thus missing the opportunity to exert genuine influence on those who have the power to make a real difference to the future of civil society support.

Few reports recognise the full range of support that frontline organisations are currently and increasingly drawing on, outside of the traditional support sector. Failing to acknowledge this wider support at best weakens support organisations' ability to argue a case for itself to funders and at worst could make it appear out of touch and therefore less relevant to the future of civil society in London.

Ultimately it is frontline organisations and the Londoners they serve who will suffer if there continues to be an unconnected, unsystematic approach which fails to connect the range of support whether it be from public, civil society or private sector sources. Until these varying sources of support, including specialist, are mapped and co-ordinated, gaps will never be effectively identified or duplications avoided and frontline organisations will continue to waste time and effort trying to identify the right source of support for them.

There is a disconnect between the debate around the future of civil society support and the needs of the people of London who rely on the services of

frontline organisations needing support. Yet it is a connection with the needs of Londoners that will provide the most compelling argument for the future funding of support in these continued cash strapped times.

Volunteers and volunteering

Summary of themes from literature review

Much of the literature cites an increase in the number of volunteers, though that picture isn't consistent. Whilst data about volunteering is extensive when it comes to numbers, from the literature reviewed it was difficult to get a deeper understanding of who volunteers and in which geographical and "sector" areas. Such data would be invaluable to any future volunteering strategy.

The nature of volunteers and volunteering is shifting. The literature highlights two distinct groups of volunteer – the well-qualified, including increasing numbers from business – and those who see volunteering as a way of boosting their skills, creating a route back to work. These groups have diverse needs, which is putting increasing strain on the capacity of frontline organisations to recruit, manage, train and support them at a time when their own resources are shrinking. The literature describes how the nature of volunteering activity has become diverse with more short term and event related opportunities.

Whilst considerable effort has been put in recent years into inspiring people to volunteer, there has been little debate evident from the literature about the needs of frontline organisations in terms of their mission and goals, and how volunteering can help. The response of the civil society sector to increased interest in volunteering does not appear to be systematically thought out, thus limiting its impact.

The impact of new technology in volunteering features as a key issue, with implications for the recruitment and support of volunteers. The impact of new technology also means that volunteering opportunities now no longer have to be local.

Whilst there are some outcomes data relating to the health and wellbeing benefits of volunteering to volunteers, no data was found about the impact of volunteers on the organisations that engage them or the service users and beneficiaries of these organisations.

The literature reflects increased business involvement which is becoming more organised through the use of volunteering brokers. Businesses see benefits from volunteering, however, their focus can sometimes be on issues perceived to be "attractive", rather than be based on actual need.

Implications

It is often said by civil society organisations that volunteers are "not a free resource", yet whether through reasons of government policy or economic necessity, frontline organisations are increasingly expected to or are seeking to take on volunteers as a means of addressing issues of their shrinking capacity.

The increased diversity of volunteers ranging from the highly skilled to those looking to develop their skills presents enormous challenges to the capacity of civil society organisations to support them. One size simply doesn't fit all, yet tailoring support to the individual needs of volunteers is tough at a time when civil society organisations' capacity is under such pressure. The only solution offered to meet this challenge is the increased use of digital solutions, yet there appears to be little acknowledgement of the implications of this, both positive and negative.

There are real implications for civil society support organisations in terms of how they respond to changes in volunteering given their own shrinking resources. For example, in a digital world, how do local support organisations respond to the fact that opportunities and training no longer have to be local, and how does this play out for those volunteering support organisations funded by local authorities who only want to invest in initiatives in their local area?

There is an assumption in the literature that if volunteers come forward they should be accommodated for their own sake. But within a world of diminishing resources, when frontline organisations are struggling to meet the demands of those they exist to serve, how do we balance the needs of vulnerable Londoners with the ambition, interests and availability of volunteers?

Of course the picture is complicated by the fact that increasing numbers of vulnerable Londoners, such as those coping within unemployment, are themselves turning to volunteering as a way of developing skills and confidence. In other words the distinctions between traditional beneficiaries and volunteers are not always as clear as they might at first appear. Similarly

business interests in volunteering are not always targeted most effectively and there is a danger that volunteering sometimes benefits business employees who volunteer more than those they help. The concept of an Investors in Community kitemark has been floated, which might address this issue but it would need funding and promotion. Consideration is needed of how using civil society organisations' resources to support volunteers links with these organisations' missions and goals, and if they don't, what should be done to ensure the relationship between volunteers and the civil society organisations they engage with are mutually beneficial.

Funders and funding

Summary of themes from literature review

A key aspect of the context for the Review of the Future of Civil Society Support is London Council's Review of its civil society sector funding priorities. This, within a context of continuing cuts to public sector funding, some of which were announced in the 2015 Budget, with further substantial cuts in the Comprehensive Spending Review in November 2015.

Trends in funding go beyond the narrative of cuts. Fewer funders are willing to fund core costs and many are more interested in funding projects, particularly those classed as "innovative", with innovation often taking priority over tried and tested ways of working. Some organisations are more vulnerable because of their dependence on a single or small number of funders. There continues to be an emphasis from funders on demonstrating impact, though some of the reports highlight civil society organisations' struggles to fully understand or adopt such methodology.

There have been many changes in commissioning, one aspect of which is a move from grants to contracts and the management challenges this brings for civil society organisations. Evidence was found of more co-ordinated funding for example across national grant giving foundations to support early action, and some local authorities which have encouraged cross borough funding support for systems change.

Frontline organisations are turning to other forms of income generation such as individual giving and are being encouraged to explore social investment and social enterprise models. The backdrop to this is one of increased scrutiny of civil society sector fundraising, stemming from recent high profile negative publicity, coupled with government commitments to address actual and perceived weaknesses within the sector.

Several reports have called on funders to take a more strategic approach to their funding programmes and decisions. This approach should include:

- working collaboratively with other funders to target resources

- working collaboratively with those they fund, for example to "problem solve"

- provide longer term funding including resources to support civil society organisations to take a strategic approach to their own development and sustainability

- sharing knowledge and intelligence across funders

There is a clear call in the literature for funders to resource civil society support. There is also a call for funders to understand and address the implications of the way they provide funding, for example the move away from core grants to greater use of restricted project grants is eroding civil society organisations' sustainability and resilience. Some respondents to the London Councils consultation called for more selective funding targeting funds where concrete plans exist and there is evidence of delivery. Others urged more recognition of the 'value' of the knowledge support organisations can bring.

Implications

Much of the literature describes funders as if they are a homogenous group. None of the literature acknowledges the political realities surrounding public funding such as the local focus of many politicians and officers in local authorities which can act as a barrier to working strategically with other funders, and the difficult choices the public sector is having to make in terms of what they fund with their diminishing resources, of which the civil society sector is only part.

In relation to independent funders, there are again a wealth of recommendations about how they could improve the way they work. As with public funders, there is no understanding demonstrated within the reports that independent funders have their own priorities and lines of accountability which might act as barriers to them working in the way that the reports' authors think they should. The dates of these reports stretch across nearly ten years, yet there is no sense in the later reports that the recommendations of earlier reports have been acted on or even followed up.

There is little acknowledgment in the literature of the fact that many civil society organisations are relying on multiple sources of grants and contracts, with each funder having a different take on outcomes and reporting requirements. How should funders align their outcomes frameworks? And to what extent do funders themselves have a clear understanding of outcomes, let alone what is involved in delivering and measuring them? The literature shows no evidence of how funders are taking account of the increased administrative burden of reporting against outcomes by, for example, increasing funding for evaluation.

Across a series of reports, funders are exhorted to work more strategically, whether individually or working collaboratively with others. There is no evidence of these reports exploring:

- the barriers to working collaboratively

- the governance needs of independent charitable funders so that they are able to provide the requisite leadership

- how funders should acquire the knowledge they need to inform a more strategic approach to their funding

Many of the funding issues facing frontline organisations are also facing support organisations which are having to rethink their funding model. Support organisations have been criticised for competing with frontline organisations for funding but in an era where funding alternatives are limited, without a renewed commitment from funders to value and fund support, decisions to compete for funding are understandable, even though the flaws in this approach are evident. Linked to this, there is no evidence to suggest how funders are considering the impact of funding civil society support on Londoners or the services they rely on.

With little "public appeal or profile" for the work of support organisations, grant and contract funding and traded income seem the only obvious routes to sustainability. Charging for services, as the literature points out, would risk support organisations excluding the very small organisations and groups that might need them the most, unless as one report suggests, frontline organisations are given the funding to buy in the support they need.

The context of increased scrutiny of fundraising and the increasing attempts of frontline organisations to diversify their income have significant implications for the sophistication of the support offer that will have to be available. Some of the advice frontline organisations will require will be around funding strategy and risk management, and with the resources of support

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organisations under pressure, how can they afford staff who can advise and support with the expertise and level of seniority that many frontline organisations need?

At the heart of all of this is a key question: how do support organisations organise their offer in a way that is affordable and so utterly compelling that funders have to take note and fund them?

With greater emphasis on frontline organisations, not just as service deliverers, but as rejuvenators of communities and drivers of societal "self-reliance", none of the literature is naming the elephant in the room: the fact that none of this can happen without resource. There is no mention of the need to make hard choices, whereby funders work with civil society organisations in London to decide what needs matter most and therefore where resources are concentrated.

Finally, from the literature there is no evidence of a strategic, pan London approach to the public sector cuts in the funding of London's civil society sector, either from public funders or from the independent funders that form a key part of the "funding ecology". Which brings us full circle to one of the fundamental questions of this review: how do we ensure that frontline organisations are supported and have the capacity to grow into masters of their own destiny, thus ensuring that the Londoners they serve get the best services and support possible? Some emerging thinking refers to the potential of co-production as a means to access community assets.

People in need (service users, beneficiaries)

Summary of themes from literature review

In the literature that discusses the changing needs and nature of the civil society sector there is very little mention of service users and beneficiaries and how their changing needs should shape the evolution of the civil society sector that exists to support them. The link between the needs of services users and beneficiaries, and how these should shape the future of support organisations is also very thinly drawn and absent from most literature. Therefore the literature in this section is patchy and it is difficult to generate a coherent narrative about how the needs of services users and beneficiaries should influence the Review of the Future of Civil Society Support, based on the literature to date. Whilst local, regional and specialist support organisations state that they use local needs data to inform their strategies, as this data is unpublished it is difficult to understand how this data has

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influences decisions about services and indeed how robustly the data provides an accurate picture of local need.

What information exists in these reports points to unemployment, debt advice, poverty, housing, equality issues and mental health problems as themes and suggests that individuals' needs increasingly relate to a combination of these issues. There are also indications of rapid demographic and cultural change caused by migration and housing issues.

Implications

Much of the literature speaks to a focus on civil society organisations and how to ensure they survive and thrive. The absence of debate about how this connects to the needs of those whom frontline organisations exist to serve is troubling on the one hand and nonsensical on the other. Ensuring that the needs of services users and beneficiaries are hard wired into the DNA of organisations and drives their development is the most fundamental way in which frontline and support organisations can fulfil their "voice" role, win the support of decision makers and ensure a more sustainable future for themselves.

One of the key challenges is that needs change, and many in the civil society sector point to the fact that the people they serve are now often arriving at services with multiple and complex needs. How can organisations adapt in an effective and timely way?

Frontline organisations

Summary of themes from literature review

Cuts in funding are presenting a huge challenge at the same time as demand for frontline services is increasing. The literature states that within a context where change is the new constant, there is a need for frontline organisations to be clear about their mission and strategy, though this has to be balanced with the need to be agile in a fast changing environment.

There is a shift towards commissioning more generalist services, and a move away from specialist services. Competition is a key challenge, and can sometimes act as a "destructive force", the literature says.

Frontline organisations understand the importance of measuring impact but struggle to find the resources to do it properly. There remains confusion about what impact and outcomes measurement actually is, with confusion about the terms and inconsistent use of language around impact measurement. There have been recent calls for a shared evaluation framework based on a common theory of change and readily usable by even the smallest organisations through which they could learn and improve. The London Councils review identified strong support for helping specific equalities groups, which were seen as effective but disproportionately affected by cuts, to share research and learning.

Whilst there are calls for greater collaboration, frontline providers need support to understand how to make this work. Partnerships seem to be being increasingly driven by funder "push" rather than organisational mission "pull", yet to be successful collaborations and mergers have to be driven by organisational mission and strategic imperatives. Some organisations are considering mergers though there is a recognition in the literature that mergers should be based on strategic choice rather than economic circumstances.

Technology and social media are increasingly important in the working environment and are often cited by commentators as areas on which there should be more focus, but frontline organisations' biggest need is for sustainable funding. There are long lists of frontline organisations' needs in the literature, although no sense of which are the most important to meet.

Some of the support that frontline civil society organisations say they need includes:

- Business expertise

- Help with campaigning and lobbying

- Support with securing sustainable funding

- Finding partners with whom to collaborate

- Training and support which meet their specific needs, beyond the "basic"

Implications

The push towards more generalist services and away from specialist services is particularly challenging at a time when demand is growing, and the experience of organisations at the coal face is that the needs with which service users are presenting are increasingly complex. This has implications for the "level", complexity and sophistication required of support organisations in services to help frontline organisations cope with these changes. It also has implications for support organisations' own ability to adapt, and at a time when their income and staffing are shrinking, support organisations are likely to need to prioritise ruthlessly what they do, for whom and why.

There is a disconnect in the literature between what the reports say frontline organisations want, e.g. one to one, bespoke support, and what support organisations have the resources to provide. This disconnect is passed over in most of the reports.

There is considerable debate about the sector's struggles to grasp how to demonstrate the outcomes they achieve and their overall impact. This debate is not new, yet little progress appears to have been made according to the literature. Why? Is it that the methodologies available are too complex? Are they too financially or "time" expensive to implement? Is it that funders have and impose different interpretations of outcomes measurement on those they fund, which diminishes frontline organisations' ability to develop a coherent framework that works for them? It is crucial in an era of competition and of reduced confidence in the work of charities, that frontline organisations are able to demonstrate the value of the work they do and therefore why they should be supported, financially and otherwise.

Nothing in the literature points to how frontline organisations should adapt to the changing needs of their service users and therefore how support organisations in turn should adapt themselves. This is a significant gap that needs to be addressed if frontline and support organisations are to reclaim some of the legitimacy it has lost due to the recent challenges to the sector's reputation.

Voice – building a narrative

Summary of themes from literature review

There is significant debate about the need for the sector to develop a narrative about itself and its value to society. This is particularly important as the sector looks to generate support from sectors such as business and the public sector to maintain income. It is particularly important in light of recent challenges to the reputation of the civil society sector.

The opacity of the language the civil society sector uses is identified as a barrier to its effectiveness as influencers. The fact that the sector sometimes uses multiple words to mean the same thing does not help. Language can disconnect the civil society sector from the public and make the role of civil society organisations seem opaque and confusing. Weaknesses were flagged in the sector's ability to communicate learning and opportunities, which added to difficulties in its contribution being recognised.

Campaigning and influencing those in power was felt to be a crucial role for the sector and for support bodies in particular. The importance of communication, to reach out to communities was also highlighted as crucial to frontline organisations' success. This was seen as particularly significant for groups which saw themselves as marginalised or overlooked.

Implications

This "inaccessibility" of the sector because of the language it uses and the way it chooses to communicate is a significant issue. A sector that can only be understood by itself, cannot survive in the modern world. How can we enable the sector to understand this, and to embrace the fact that how it says what it says is as important as the content of its message? If the sector is to make the biggest difference to Londoners and to the communities it serves, it has to find a way to address this issue.

It is also the case that within the sector itself people use words interchangeably to mean different things. Take the word "voice". For some people this means campaigning, for some people this means representing the views of service users, for some it means representing the views of frontline organisations, for some it means advocating on behalf of a particular group. The same could be said of the terms "impact" and "outcomes". People have very different understandings these terms, which is

particularly unhelpful in an environment within which the sector is being expected to get better at demonstrating impact and outcomes.

This inability to communicate with the public and with decision makers in ways that they understand is potentially dangerous, given the recent damage done to the reputation of the sector on issues such as fundraising practice and the closure of Kids Company. No longer can frontline or support organisations rely on an assumption that people will believe "charity is good, therefore should be supported". If the sector cannot communicate intelligibly, how is trust to be won back?

Much of the civil society sector prides itself on "speaking truth to power" and holding decision makers, particularly politicians, to account for the choices they make and the impact of these choices on local communities. In these cash strapped times, when the reputation of the sector has been tarnished, the need to hold *itself* to account and tell a clear story of its worth will be crucial to the civil society sector. This links straight back to frontline and support organisations being able to prove the difference they make, and then tell their stakeholders about it. The political environment in which the civil society sector now operates is certainly more combative, and the best weapon is to prove its worth in a way that generates the support of Londoners, so that communities stand by the sector's side.

For support organisations, effective campaigning is also a key source of their legitimacy with frontline organisations. Support organisations need to be able to be clear about how this work is adding value to frontline organisations and the communities they serve.

What appears absent from the debate is whether the sector has the right skills to provide an effective voice for vulnerable Londoners or the frontline organisations that serve them. The nature of campaigning and influencing has changed substantially in recent years. It is a professional skill that has to be learned in the same way as any other professional skill. If frontline organisations are relying on support organisations to learn how to develop this evolving skill, who is training and supporting support organisations in this?

The expression "seek first to understand, then to be understood" does not seem to figure prominently in thinking on voice, communications and campaigning. Yet without this understanding, all the sector can hope to do is to talk *at* those it seeks to influence, achieving little real change in the minds and actions of decision makers. This observation also applies to many of the reports reviewed as part of this project. Many of the recommendations aimed at bodies outside the civil society sector lack an understanding of how

these bodies work, the challenges they face and where the needs of the civil society sector sit within these bodies' priorities.

What's missing?

In the context of this Review Srabani Sen OBE & Associates expected to find more on the following areas:

- Governance and leadership, including the role of trustees

- The voice of volunteers in the debate about the future of civil society

- Risk – "transference" and how to manage risk

- How (changing) service user needs links with/ should drive reshaping of support and frontline organisations

- How frontline organisations map against communities' needs

- Planning for devolution

- Insight about those who don't use support organisations and why

Documents and websites reviewed

Baring Foundation

Changing communities: Supporting voluntary and community organisations to adapt to local demographic and cultural change, Baring Foundation, 2015

Making Good: the future of the voluntary and civil society sector, Civil Exchange supported by the Baring Foundation, edited by Caroline Slocock, 2014

Speaking Truth to Power, Baring Foundation, 2000

Big Lottery Fund

Final Evaluation of the Supporting Change and Impact Fund, Rocket Science for Big Lottery Fund, 2014

Notes from 24 Aug 2015 BLF round table: Local infrastructure for the future,

Collaborate

Supporting Social Change: a new funding ecology for social change, Collaborate, 2015

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Giving back going forwards, June 2015

Clinks

Independent review of voluntary and civil society sector infrastructure in the Criminal Justice System, Critical Friends, Clinks, 2015

DEMOS

Inside out: Rethinking inclusive communities, Demos report supported by Barrow Cadbury Trust, 2003

The other invisible hand: remaking charity for the 21st century, Demos, 1995.

GLA

Go local and do something great for your city, Team London service plan, 2013

Greater London Volunteering

A GLV/LSVC survey of infrastructure bodies, June, 2015

London 2012: a lasting legacy for volunteering, a summary of a Masters dissertation by a GLV trustee (CEO of Greenwich VC) Michelle Martin, 2014

Making the case to local authorities, a summary by GLV of the data collected from volunteering infrastructure organisations, presented at the Big Volunteering Event, 26/09/2013

Options appraisal report in relation to Regional Collaboration, Peach Consultancy, 2014

HEAR

The impact of funders' processes and practices on voluntary organisations' equality work in London, HEAR, London Councils Inclusion London et all, 2015

Heart of the City

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