**Why 2022 is an important year for democratic engagement: Funders Insight Meeting**

26 January 2022 9.30am – 10.30am

**Overview of London Funders’ insight meetings**

To ensure that our members are informed about how current events, demographic trends and policy decisions affect the lives of the communities we serve, London Funders host monthly member-exclusive insight meetings. Keep an eye on our website for [upcoming events](https://londonfunders.org.uk/latest/events).

We host meetings at the last Wednesday of every month. Topics will be announced at the beginning of every month via Funder Five and on our website.

**Democratic Engagement – insight meetings for funders**

On the 26th January, we were delighted to be joined by **Dr Alexandra Bulat,** Young Europeans Network Co-Manager, the3Million and author of London Voices report, **Fiona Weir,** Chief Executive of Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust and **Dr Elisabeth Pop**, Lead Officer for Active Citizenship and Democratic Participation, GLA.

**Summary of the meeting**

The meeting began with a group poll to set the scene asking attendees:

1. **Does charitable law allow democratic engagement?**

70% said yes, whereas the remaining 30% did not know

1. **How comfortable do you feel funding democracy-related work?**

50% said they were very comfortable funding democracy-related work whilst 30% said they were not very comfortable. The remaining 20% were neither comfortable or uncomfortable.

Fiona spoke of the challenges of democratic engagement and a deep global malaise. The Election Bill will contribute to the decline in standards of conduct and freedom of information and result in a shifting of power towards ministers, thus contributing to an evasion of scrutiny. Democracy is not in good shape.

The UK democracy fund was set up by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust in 2019 and aims to deliver one million new voters from under-represented groups at the anticipated 2024 General Election. The pandemic has deepened political inequality and the fund aims to get disengaged Londoners involved.

Dr Alexandra Bulat talked through the finding of the London Voices report. The main points she raised were:

* The survey conducted for the report highlighted the barriers to participation and societal perceptions of government-led policies.
* It found that the largest barrier to participation was a lack of knowledge, and secondly a lack of trust.
* The majority said no to bringing in voter ID, which was the largest opinion particularly in marginalised groups.
* It suggested voting rights for all Londoners regardless of nationality and automatic vote registration would help raise engagement and the majority of participants would be interested in joining a London democratic network.
* An overall sense of a need to implement sustainable funding and support small and new organisations through grant applications and sharing best practice was also highlighted. A centralised funding platform is needed.
* There were a lot of ideas around empowering civil society including mentorship, an annual event and other ways of knowledge sharing.
* The importance civil organisations, who know how to increase participation, was clear with over 60% of these organisations being led by volunteers.

Dr Elisabeth Pop then rounded off to talk about how we address the effects or charitable and electoral law, how we support sustainable and representative civic engagement. She also encouraged funders to engage with the Voter Registration Week, an initiative she has developed to increase voter participation in London.

All resources from the event are available [here](https://londonfunders.org.uk/latest/events/insight-meeting-why-2022-important-year-democratic-engagement).

**Further Reading and Resources**

**London Voices**

[www.londonvoices.co.uk](http://www.londonvoices.co.uk)

**London Voices: the journey to full participation**, Trust for London

<https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/london-voices-the-journey-to-full-participation/>

**Our Home Our Vote campaign**, the3million Young Europeans Network

[www.ourhomeourvote.co.uk](http://www.ourhomeourvote.co.uk/)

**UK Democracy Fund**, Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust

*Fiona particularly highlights Closing the Gap, which has quite a lot of details on voter participation interventions*

https://www.jrrt.org.u k/what-we-do/the-uk-democracy-fund/events-and-publications/

**London Voter Registration Week**, Greater London Authority

<https://registertovote.london/>

**Building Strong Communities Fund**, Greater London Authority

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/apply-building-strong-communities-fund>

**How to be a Change Maker Toolkit**, Lloyds Bank Foundation

<https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/we-develop/useful-resources/supporting-charities-to-influence#Changemaker>

**Centre for Democracy**

*For those looking to join forces with others or learn from / build on what’s gone before, the Centre for Democracy offers a centralised place for democracy-related resources and fortnightly bulletins*

<https://centrefordemocracy.org.uk/>

**Elections Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3020>

**Liberty**

<https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/>

**Liberty’s view on voter ID** - <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/issue/libertys-view-on-voter-id-plans-opportunistic-divisive-and-undemocratic/>

**GDWe: A spotlight on democratic wellbeing**

<https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/gdwe-a-spotlight-on-democratic-wellbeing/>

**Annual member audit**, London Funders

<https://londonfunders.org.uk/latest/news/findings-our-member-audit>

**Five things we have learnt about England’s voter ID trials in the 2019 local elections**, London School of Economics – <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/five-things-we-have-learnt-about-englands-voter-id-trials-in-the-2019-local-elections/>

**Electoral Reform Society** - <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/campaigns/upgrading-our-democracy/voter-id/>

**The Future of Political Campaigning**, ICO - <https://ico.org.uk/media/2259365/the-future-of-political-campaigning.pdf>

**What does voter ID mean for voters?**, The Big Issue - <https://www.bigissue.com/news/politics/voter-id-what-does-the-new-plan-mean-for-voters/>

**A spotlight on democratic engagement**, Carnegie Trust - <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/gdwe-a-spotlight-on-democratic-wellbeing/>