

LONDON **COMMUNITIES** **COMMISSION**



Recommendations for Action by the Mayor of London 2016

Paper 1, Jan 2016

Foreword

This is the first of a series of short reports and recommendations from the London Communities Commission. This independent Commission was set up in September 2015, with eleven Commissioners from the private, public and voluntary sectors, convened by the Paddington Development Trust and supported by London Funders and City Bridge.

Its task is to look into how citizens and communities in London's most deprived areas might be strengthened and supported in these times of austerity.

This is in response to growing concerns that, without such support and the active engagement of local people, the quality of life there may continue to deteriorate to levels that not only destroy the well-being of tens of thousands of citizens, but pose a threat to the social and economic sustainability of the whole capital.

We have amassed a wealth of evidence and are in a position to make recommendations to various bodies and institutions to tackle priority unmet needs and disadvantage in London's most stressed neighbourhoods.

I am extremely grateful to all those who gave their time by submitting evidence and sharing such impressive ideas with us. Looking back at what we have achieved so far, I believe that we still need additional evidence on some of the imaginative approaches that are currently being taken by businesses in London. We aim to fill that gap shortly.

The proposed actions in this first paper are directed at the Mayor of London - other papers will follow over the coming weeks. We are inviting all Mayoral candidates to discuss our proposals and to commit to implementing them should they become Mayor.

I will then formally invite the newly elected Mayor to adopt these recommendations and to work with the Commission and others to implement them fully over their coming term of office.

Sir Stephen O'Brien
Chair of the London Communities Commission

The Commission's Approach

We were very conscious of the wealth of data already available and the huge number of initiatives already under way to tackle disadvantage in London. We wanted to ensure that our work was complementary to other exemplary initiatives, but we also wanted a fresh and focussed approach - one that brought together the private, public, health and voluntary and community sectors genuinely working with common aims to an agreed, shared programme and one which started from the citizen rather than institutions.

Our immediate task was to decide on the areas and issues which we thought were the most critical, which would have the greatest impact and which would be manageable in terms of creating tangible improvements through targeted changes across the sectors. In developing this approach, three ideas have remained central:

- First, recognising that it would be impractical to examine needs across the whole of London in any meaningful timescale, we decided to concentrate initially on a few selected pilot areas where there were known concentrations of deprivation and known support networks.
- Second, within these areas some sense of priority was necessary. We therefore agreed that there should be a focus on "priority unmet needs" - as defined, not by us, but by people in the areas concerned - so that relevant programmes for action and outcomes could be drawn up and agreed.
- Third, funding is increasingly an issue - both in terms of the inappropriateness of some approaches to funding for these communities (e.g. commissioning) and in an absolute sense - there is not enough funding available to enable citizens and communities to access the local support services that they need.

The Evidence

It was obvious to us that the starting point should be to assemble first hand evidence about the key current issues before turning to examining fresh solutions and actions - always conscious of the difficult economic and social climate. It was equally obvious that we should first look at individuals and organisations that were already acting as leaders, making significant impacts in the communities concerned, and see whether such experience could be successfully replicated elsewhere - and to see what else may be needed.

We therefore sent out a call for evidence in September, contacting all the relevant sectors as well as academics and practitioners. This resulted in a large body of data and analysis, which we broadened by inviting individuals and organisations to a series of Hearings in October and November. The evidence and reports on the Hearings can be found on our website <https://londoncommunities.wordpress.com/> . We are about to publish our Report of Evidence; it is from this evidence that we will be publishing a series of reports for action. This is the first such report and it is being given priority due to the imminence of the Mayoral elections.

Our findings

Based on the evidence, we found that an area-based approach had demonstrably worked well and there were many pointers to what created success. These included new ways of working which allowed residents to define the outcomes, a genuine cross-sector approach, individual and organisational leadership from a core voluntary sector body, a local focus, the inclusion of smaller groups who had the ear of the local community, and clear accountability. These, and other criteria, are expanded upon in our full Report of Evidence and will be developed further in future reports.

We conclude that three strategic actions are now critical to drive a fresh approach.

1. Identifying Community Action Neighbourhoods. Our pilot areas each had a sense of cohesion (albeit spanning considerable differences, based on communities of interest and identity within spatially cohesive neighbourhoods) and were manageable from a practical sense. We recommend that other such Community Action Areas (CAN) should be identified across London (building on the existing local community bases) by conducting an all-London analysis of the most deprived areas, using existing GLA data. Our initial sense is that there may be between 12 and 20 such areas. In the pilot areas there were many examples of good practice which could helpfully be shared and built upon, but the detailed proposals for each area would have to start from the local base and be specific to them.

2. Establishing Joint Action Boards. We also recommend setting up a local Joint Action Board (JAB) in each of these priority neighbourhoods, with representatives from local community organisations (including a key infrastructure organisation), local businesses, the local authority, health, police and education services. These cross sector Boards would be focussed on the specific outcomes and actions necessary to address the priority unmet needs identified by the local residents. Their task would be to agree who was going to do what about those needs over a defined period - say 5 to 7 years. Again, there are useful examples from our pilot areas as to how such Boards may best work, including the essential role of leadership.

3. Reviewing Funding. We recommend that some changes are needed to existing sources of funding. For example:

- The different public and private agencies involved in the JABs would be expected to commit so far as possible to addressing the priority needs through their own programmes and activities - thus starting to focus coordinated local effort for maximum impact.
- Our evidence will also enable us to make recommendations (in a separate paper) for improvements to and expansion of funding - including the further replication of schemes such as Islington Giving elsewhere in London (in the JAB areas in particular)
- Similarly, in a future paper, we will be recommending fundamental changes to aspects of the practice of commissioning, including new alternative approaches.
- We will be also be proposing a far deeper and more co-ordinated relationship with the private sector and philanthropic givers, helping to define specific projects that match priority needs with clear delivery routes and defined outcomes.
- Similarly, we will be recommending a more holistic approach to devising major schemes under existing funding streams (Big Lottery etc) that would impact through the JABs on the priority issues.

Issues for the Mayor

We start by positioning our proposals in the wider strategic context that will face the incoming Mayor. Despite this being an uncertain world, three certainties will dominate the coming years in London. They will be the things that drive change specifically in London and on which the Mayor's response will define their term of office. First, London's population will continue to grow. Second, it will continue to age. Third, it follows irrevocably that needs will grow in absolute terms. There is of course a fourth practical certainty, namely that the resources available to the public sector to address these needs will continue to shrink over the next four years, dramatically.

These forces - growing needs and reducing resources - will clash fatally for London unless the Mayor takes up the challenge to put them at the forefront of his/her agenda. Central government has a programme to drastically reduce the role of the state. Within London the Mayor needs to find new ways, within and beyond the state, to build the maximum possible programme to provide housing security and to maintain the health, education, employability and safety of all London's citizens if London is to maintain its role as a sustainable, attractive and viable city, both for its residents and competitive businesses.

The challenge for the Mayor is clear; tackling the effects of the reduced state to the greatest extent possible, is essential. How, and in what ways, the gaps in services and infrastructure can be best filled (both by the private sector in a different role and by civil society including the voluntary and community sector) needs to be led by the Mayor. It will not solve all the problems, but it is an essential and major step.

Draft recommendations for Action by the Mayor of London.

We therefore envisage a role for the new Mayor of London where s/he steps up to meet this challenge as a champion of a better London for all its residents and its workforce, despite times of austerity. In order to make this a practical possibility rather than an empty aspiration, we believe that this role needs to include a call to action to London's business community, London's civil society (including faith communities) and borough leadership to join with the Mayor in fulfilling that vision.

Specifically, within the field covered by the London Communities Commission, the Mayor should:

1. Set out a clear vision, a sense of direction and ambition for the future of London which shows how the Mayor will work with partners and lead on tackling poverty, deprivation, poor health and the increasing polarisation that threatens London's sustainability.
2. Define a number of priority areas on the basis of need (our Community Action Neighbourhoods). In each of these to assist the local community in establishing a citizen-led local Joint Action Board (JAB) with partners from the statutory services, the private sector, academia, funders and trusts. This board, based on local knowledge, would agree the local priority unmet needs together with the actions and outcomes to be achieved over a 5-7 year programme; it would administer, deliver, monitor and be publicly accountable for the programme in a way that ensured the involvement of smaller voluntary organisations. Thus, whilst the areas themselves would be set strategically, the programmes, actions and outcomes would be determined locally and would lever in both independent money and the knowledge, time and skills of local communities.

3. Realise new and imaginative funding mechanisms to support this new approach, alongside other resources. Experience indicates that an annual programme of about £3 million a year in each of the deprived areas should enable real change to start to be achieved. This regional funding could help unlock or leverage other forms of financial support (from trusts and foundations, local statutory partners, businesses etc).
4. Examine the most appropriate sources of Mayoral funding, including dormant Oyster card accounts, plastic bag charges, and possible new money through a precept.
5. Work with the wider Funding Community to determine the most effective delivery vehicle/s to enable the resources to reach the communities in the most straightforward way. One such possibility would be for the Mayor's Fund for London to take responsibility for managing the new funds and to expand its objectives accordingly.
6. Encourage central government to back the initiative and provide match funding.

We believe that these actions could bring fundamental and long-lasting improvements to London's most stressed communities, thereby helping to tackle unacceptable polarisation and its unsustainable effects, from the bottom up. We look forward to discussing our recommendations with the Mayoral candidates and to winning their commitment.

London Communities Commission; January 2016