

Shaping the London Hub for civil society

June 2017

Overview

This paper tries to bring together the many reports, recommendations and discussions into a short document that highlights: the key elements of the London Hub's proposed purpose; some suggestions on how it be organised in terms of membership, governance and staffing; and how it would work in practice to achieve positive change for Londoners, an agile team that invests in and works with and through civil society support groups and other stakeholders.

This document is intended to act as a springboard for discussion by all stakeholders at the event on 22 June 2017 to help inform the further development of this work as we look to have the basis of the London Hub in place by October 2017.

Background

Through the development of the recommendations of *The Way Ahead*, people gave input on what they needed at a regional level to support an effective civil society, with all sectors engaged in focus groups and surveys, and a comprehensive literature review related to the sector – some of the findings of the initial research (published in a report titled [The Change Ahead](#)) reflect this:

Focus group attendees [engaged as part of this process] from local and specialist civil society support organisations discussed the role of regional civil society support. Local support organisations wanted to work more effectively and have better interaction with regional civil society support organisations. They also called for regional civil society support organisations to work more effectively in influencing at a pan-London level, and to open doors for local organisations to influence London-wide decision makers. Both specialist and local civil society support organisations felt that regional bodies could do more to share best practice and to promote the value of civil society support. There were also calls for regional civil society support bodies to: develop a common, London-wide outcomes framework for the civil society support sector; and prioritise London campaigning.

[In relation to giving voice to civil society] attendees at the local and specialist civil society support organisations' focus groups felt that there was a particular role to be played at the regional level to: develop a co-ordinated approach to communicating at a pan-London level; work more effectively in influencing decisions taken at a regional level; promote the value and impact of civil society support; prioritise London campaigning issues, agree messages and provide a single regional voice for the sector

Alongside these extracts were many findings from feedback and research that civil society needed a voice and coordination at a regional level (including from colleagues involved in regional government, who found existing structures difficult to navigate and lacking in clarity about where the voice for the sector sat), that there were some issues that would best be dealt with regionally, and that the current arrangements

were not likely to lead to success in bringing about the change needed. This became one of the recommendations of the report, to establish a 'London Hub' for civil society, working alongside a vibrant community of effective local and specialist support organisations.

The Way Ahead report tasked Greater London Volunteering (GLV) and London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC) with taking forward the recommendations around a London Hub. Both organisations convened meetings of local and specialist support organisations, as well as engaging with stakeholders from other groups, to give some shape to what this Hub should look like. This work was enhanced by an intensive research and recommendation exercise completed by independent sector consultant Steve Wyler, which further engaged with stakeholder groups and led to a [report in March 2017](#) with a clear vision and focus for the Hub that had been driven by the input of these diverse stakeholders.

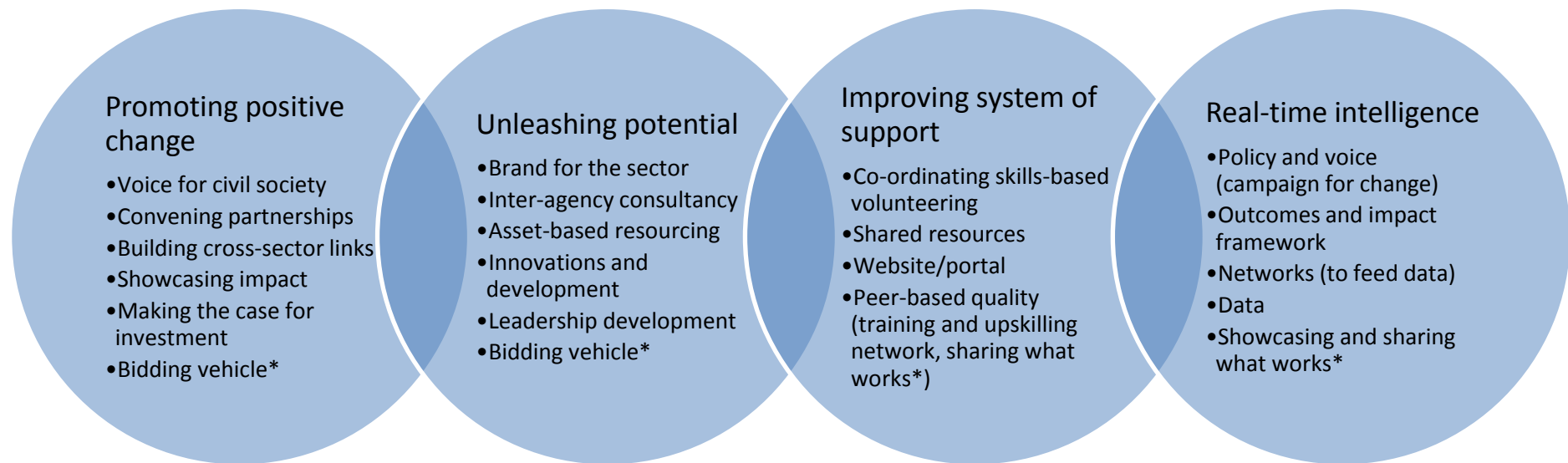
This work didn't, of course, happen in isolation – it has also been informed by the excellent work undertaken by the thematic groups looking at turning recommendations of *The Way Ahead* into action, which identified a range of functions for the Hub, as well as dedicated contributions from groups including the London CVS Directors which have helped to shape the debate about how we take the work forward.

An outline report on how this could all be brought together was discussed at the Systems Change Group, including highlights of the discussions between the Boards of GLV and LVSC about how action can be taken to start turning the recommendations into reality (with agreement that GLV will be the 'vehicle' for the Hub, changing its governing document to reflect the new way of working and becoming the Hub with a new name and new brand to reflect the change), and further ideas were contributed about the purpose and shape of what people were looking for from the Hub.

Purpose

We have reviewed all the feedback from consultation, recommendations and reports to produce a combined summary of the main areas of focus for the Hub identified in those documents and from the engagement of stakeholders, which are detailed in the diagram over the page.

Within each of the functions included in the diagram there is clearly much more that can be said – under “unleashing potential” there is a function around leadership development, for example, which needs to embrace the development of current leaders whilst also helping to grow the next generation of civil society leaders for London. It's also the case that some of the functions are shared with others in civil society, and so the Hub may have a connecting role in some areas rather than actively undertaking work – this will be about ensuring that resources are effectively deployed to harness the potential of everyone working together for civil society in London. More detail on all of the functions can be found in the reports referenced in the “background” section of this paper, though input on what the priorities should be within each section is welcomed from stakeholders attending the event on 22 June 2017.



** Note that some functions run across the objectives (such as being a bidding vehicle, and sharing what works).*

Governance

Membership – reflecting the aims of the Way Ahead, to put Londoners at the heart of everything, the suggestion is to make membership open to any individual or organisation based in London (from community activists to businesses interested in civil society and statutory bodies, as well as voluntary and community sector groups). How this translates into the governance of the charity is to be decided, as the right balance needs to be struck between having an engaged membership, and ensuring that decision-making is not limited by this (e.g. if the quorum for an AGM becomes difficult to achieve due to the high level of voting members).

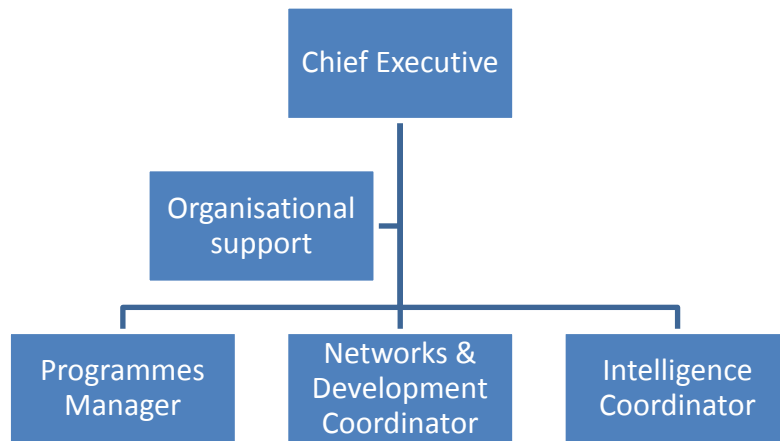
Trustee Board – to ensure that the Hub’s governance is manageable, it is suggested that the Board is a minimum of five people and a maximum of ten people, elected by the members. It is suggested that the Chair could be appointed through a selection process by the Board, similar to that adopted by NCVO, so that there can be a skilled or high profile person attracted to this position.

Process – work will commence on revising GLV’s governing documents to reflect the functions and purpose of the new Hub, and once the new organisation structure is established, and within 18 months, there would be an AGM/election to the new Board.

Patron – alongside the governance arrangements, it is suggested that a patron be identified who can act as an ambassador and champion for the organisation and help to promote its work. Such a person would be identified through the initial phases of development of the Hub.

Staffing

Reflecting the feedback from multiple stakeholders, and the recommendations of the various reports, the aim is to keep the staff team of the Hub small so that the organisation can be agile and responsive (with the aim that some posts to deliver specific areas of work are based within sector organisations under the Hub's brand and using its reach, rather than seeking to grow the Hub organisation itself). The suggested structure for the staff team includes:



The posts in this structure may need further work on their job titles, but are presented here to show how the team could look and the level of job we suggest may be required for each area. The specific roles would be:

- Chief Executive, leading on work under the “promoting positive change” objective (also taking on the “channelling voice” elements from the “real time intelligence” area), as well as being the leader of the organisation;
- Programmes Manager, leading on the “unleashing potential” objective (as well as supporting the Chief Executive with elements from “promoting positive change” that link to innovation, partnership and channelling resources into the sector), acting as the effective deputy to the Chief Executive;
- Networks & Development Coordinator, leading on the “improving system of support” objective;
- Intelligence Coordinator, leading on the “real-time intelligence” objective; and
- Organisational Support, providing the administration, finance, communications, governance and systems support to the organisation.

The organisation will need to develop over time, and it is not envisaged that the entire team would be in place on day one – the work will need to be phased to ensure the organisation is fully operational by April 2018, and feedback on what functions should be prioritised in the early phases will be welcomed from stakeholders at the event on 22 June 2017 as we look to develop a workplan for this implementation period.

Delivery

There are clearly many functions, ideas and aspirations for the Hub that could not be delivered by a small staff and volunteer team – our suggested ambition is that the Hub seeks to deliver such work with and through other civil society groups, rather than seek to expand the central team. For example, there is no reason the Hub should have specialist staff looking at policy development related to young Londoners (when there are other organisations better-placed to deliver this work using their existing expertise), or to deliver work at a grassroots level to engage volunteers and civil society groups (when there are borough-based and community-specific civil society support organisations much better placed and networked to achieve this change) – in these cases, where regional money was available to support such projects, the Hub would seek to pass this funding on to appropriate specialist or local civil society support organisations who could deliver this work in partnership. This would ensure that expertise is best engaged at the right level, as well as helping to push more resources into local and specialist support providers.

This model has been effective at GLV since its change of strategy five years ago – the central team is just over one full-time-equivalent post, but bids have been submitted for projects that need a regional contract-holder, and then funding has been passed on to the network of Volunteer Centres and specialist volunteering agencies to actually deliver the work. GLV has passed on around £1million to local and specialist providers through this strategy, without needing to grow the central team. This is one funding model we will be actively exploring for the future.

Next steps

To take this work forward, it is suggested that:

- Feedback is sought from the wider stakeholder group at the conference event on 22 June 2017;
- An advisory group comprising relevant stakeholders is formed to help give guidance on the shape of the Hub (with the ambition that every stakeholder group in the systems change diagram of *The Way Ahead* report is included); and
- This work supports the Boards of GLV and LVSC in seeking to have the Hub established (in outline at the very least) by October 2017.