


LVSC

Voluntary and
community action
for London

Annual review
of the year ending
31 March 2009



A strong, strategic
and independent
voice for London's
voluntary and
community sector

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Foreword

A thriving and booming city is one which embraces its people and communities, their aspirations, needs, hopes and fears. It provides a structure that utilises all of its assets and strengths and promotes the diversity of the economy and its people.

A successful city requires an effective and efficient infrastructure to support its people and their physical environment. There is clear recognition from leading political parties of the importance of infrastructure in supporting public investment programmes in rail, road, waterways and 2012.

Likewise, a city aiming to be the best in the world needs a vibrant voluntary and community sector to enhance the lives of its people. London's is admired world wide for its history, adaptability and innovation.

As London responds to the current economic downturn, there is no denying its adverse impact on people and organisations across the capital, not least the voluntary and community sector. Company closures, job reductions, mergers and reduced public expenditure have all become part of a common language and our daily news. Demands on voluntary and community sector services continue to increase. Yet the "never say die" spirit that exists in London is prevalent within our staff and volunteers and will undoubtedly place us in good stead for the future.

London Voluntary Service Council will provide strategic vision for the capital's voluntary and community sector, knowledge sharing and a learning environment that promotes good practice and improved quality. We will continue to work with local, regional and national government as well as voluntary and community organisations of all shapes and sizes to ensure that we identify areas of need, share and promote good practice and improve service delivery for London's people and communities.

Paul Butler, Chair

LVSC was set up almost 100 years ago to "work for the benefit of the community in London" and specifically for the "advancement of education, furtherance of health and relief of poverty".

Even without the recession these were still key areas of work for much of the voluntary and community sector in London. However the recession, impending public spending cuts and a general election around the corner have brought into sharp relief the need for LVSC to properly reconnect with these objectives.

Our Big Squeeze report showed how resourceful and flexible front line voluntary and community organisations have been in responding to increasing demands on their services. We are pleased that we were able to respond flexibly as well, and gain positive commitments from our partners to work together with the sector through the challenges we are all currently facing.

At the same time our core services have continued to serve the sector and its people, increasing the impact of the sector across London: over 1,000 individuals have been upskilled through our training, 1800 people benefit from our regular policy updates and our expert HR team, PEACe, has helped improve the strength of over 500 organisations through improving their HR, governance and employment practices.

We know hard times are ahead for many of us. But we also believe that LVSC, and the sector it serves, is up to the challenge.

Peter Lewis, Chief Executive

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About LVSC

LVSC works with London's voluntary and community sector to improve the lives of Londoners by influencing policy and improving services through expert support, assistance, training and advice.

What we do

LVSC brings London voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations together to learn and share best practice and to create a co-ordinated voice to influence policy makers.

We provide policy briefings, up-to-date information on management and funding, advice and support for voluntary and community groups, topical e-bulletins and learning opportunities for those working in the sector.

Members and affiliates

LVSC has wide reach into the London VCS:

- 200 members, most of which are second-tier non-profit organisations (such as Councils for Voluntary Service) with their own membership and networks of front line delivery organisations
- 1,900 subscribers to our monthly policy briefing
- 250 members of our policy network Third Sector Alliance (3SA), most of which also have their own members
- over 500 members of the Voluntary Sector Forum of organisations funded by London Councils
- over 300 members of STAN, our organisational development workers' network
- 106 members of Cascade, our information officers' network



Annual Conference 2008: Delegates and speakers discussed whether the independence of the VCS was under threat. Hackney Refugee Forum won our award for Success Story of the year.

Delivering efficient and effective services

Improving services to the VCS

In March 2009 we were judged fully compliant with Customer First – the national standard for customer service – and our accreditation was renewed for a further two years.

Key facts and figures

- PEACe, our employment advice service, responded to 501 enquiries
- Advice Line dealt with 142 cases
- 400 people attended 13 Cascade events on information provision
- 348 people came to nine STAN events for development workers
- 55 delegates attended our employment law conference
- 1,028 staff, volunteers and trustees attended LVSC short courses
- We ran 49 in-house training sessions

HR enquiries reflected the impact of the economic crisis, with a higher than usual number relating to redundancy, variation of employment contracts and reviewing terms and conditions.

More than half of all enquiries to the Advice Line were about funding, making it once again the most requested area for help.

STAN (Second Tier Advisors Network) events included sessions on the new Charities Act and on safeguarding vulnerable groups.

Cascade events included website development and communicating with young people.

Outreach visits to disabled people's organisations continued as part of the initiative to increase their access to LVSC services.

LVSC continued to offer a wide range of support to London's VCS to improve the reach and quality of services to Londoners.



Case study:
Advice was given by PEACe on managing a long-term sickness absence and potential redundancy due to a funding stream coming to an end.

“I would like, on behalf of our management committee and director to thank you for your patient advice. This gave us confidence in going ahead with the matter given that we have minimal financial resources to fall back on and limited expertise in this area of employment law. Your input is greatly appreciated.”

Case study:
Sri K Sangarappillai, Chair of Helping Hands for Refugees and Disabled, was given support with governance policies and procedures, volunteering and project planning.

“I feel privileged to have been mentored by Karin (Karin Podschun, LVSC’s Organisational Development Advisor) as she has a great deal of valuable knowledge and skills. We were able to identify the needs of our service users and now run a befriending and mentoring programme for local communities which will help elderly and disabled people to overcome isolation and hardship. The project will have 24 direct beneficiaries and will indirectly benefit 36 or more carers and family members.”

Community leadership development

This service provided development opportunities for leaders and potential leaders from Black and Minority Ethnic communities in partnership with the School for Social Entrepreneurs, the Scarman Trust, Race on the Agenda and Migrant Organisations Development Agency.

Participants in the 2008-9 programme included an unemployed and homeless individual who wanted to help adult survivors of sexual abuse from African and African Caribbean descent.

Since then she – a survivor herself – has set up an organisation with a constitution and an active management committee. She is running the second pilot of a self-help group funded by Groundswell and works in partnership with other organisations such as Samaritans, Women’s Aid and Victim Support.

Learning and skills

LVSC is committed to developing the skills of people working and volunteering in London’s VCS. We offer a range of learning opportunities including short training courses, accreditation, qualifications and awards, a new e-learning facility and monthly e-bulletins about new developments.

An independent review of our learning service found that:

- 93% of learners said LVSC short courses met their learning objectives
- 90% reported that LVSC training made them more competent
- 80% said they were able to apply what they learned in their work
- 85% were able to provide examples of how they would do things differently as a result of the learning

“These are short, effective courses, and I refreshed knowledge on many subjects.”

“All aspects of the courses were very helpful. The courses were flexible and LVSC staff have been very helpful and tried to accommodate all my needs.”

Case study
Ten years ago the Roma Support Group was the barely conceived dream and vision of a few committed activists. Today, it works with around 800 Roma refugee and migrant families.

Sylvia Ingmire, the Group’s co-ordinator, says, “Thanks to LVSC services, the dream became reality. LVSC’s free support and mentoring gave us a firm understanding of how to start our journey.”

The Group continues to access LVSC services and has recently joined the new LVSC-hosted network of children’s and young people’s groups funded by London Councils.



Policy and influence

Website

The LVSC website continues to be a very popular resource for London's VCS. More and more organisations are advertising their events, training and jobs on the site and it is seen as one of the main resources within the sector to disseminate information and to conduct wide-ranging consultation on policy issues.

During 2008-9 there were over half a million visits to the site and almost two million downloads.

Distinct visits to site	519,459
Page Views	3,447,567
Hits	8,276,332
Total downloads	1,952,523

Staff development

In December 2008, LVSC was awarded Investor in People accreditation.

Staff in our organisational support teams were given specialist communications training to help improve the reach of our services to disabled people. We will be following this up with monitoring to make sure that disabled people are increasingly represented amongst our service users.



Delegates at a Train to Gain information day in March 2009 carry out group exercises to identify staff training needs.

Key facts and figures

LVSC provided formal responses to eight statutory consultations: five to central government departments, two on Mayoral initiatives and one for a national grant-making body.

Our work had a significant impact on London Development Agency's investment strategy, with continuing dialogue on key areas such as commissioning.

We wrote 14 briefings on issues such as the Community Empowerment White Paper, Equality Bill, Comprehensive Area Assessment and Third Sector (Recession) Action Plan.

LVSC was a partner in running the first London Health Commission awards for community development activity that improved health and well-being.

We produced a report on Local Involvement Network (LINKs) host organisations across London, showing how few local VCS infrastructure organisations have won the contracts supposedly targeted at them.

LVSC represented the VCS on the following boards:

- London Strategic Migration Partnership (formerly the Board for Refugee and Asylum Seeker Integration in London)
- London Health Commission
- London Skills and Employment Board
- London Child Poverty Delivery Group

Significant policy work was carried out on the impact of the recession, single group funding, community cohesion and issues facing disabled people's organisations.



Melba Wilson, the national head of Delivering Race Equality in Mental Health, and LVSC Chief Executive Peter Lewis at an LVSC campaigning roadshow on 20 March 2009

Case study:

In 2008-09 Capacitybuilders, in responding to the recession, made a quick decision to release a series of resilience grants to all consortia in London. Acting on behalf of the LRC, LVSC was able to rapidly co-ordinate and draw down grants to service the work of five areas of LRC activity – premises, ICT, The Big Opportunity (Olympics 2012), workforce development and the recession.

The Big Opportunity sub-group used its grant to broker new relationships with the private sector to identify funding opportunities for front line groups. They targeted 20 Black and Minority Ethnic organisations to access London Development Agency contracts.

LVSC successfully managed the distribution, governance and monitoring of the grant in a total turnaround time of six weeks. The entire grant went directly to activity designed to support front line VCS groups.

“In such times, the public sector needs to reaffirm its support to the voluntary and community sector which helps provide vital local services.”

(The Mayor’s Economic Recovery Action Plan, December 2008)

Recession and the Big Squeeze

LVSC’s Big Squeeze campaign highlighted the effect of the recession on London’s communities and the voluntary and community groups that serve them. A short survey gathered evidence which LVSC has used to ask partners to reaffirm their support for the sector at a time when Londoners need our services more than ever.

The campaign led to:

- London Councils and Big Lottery Fund committing to constructive discussions with grant holders experiencing changes in demand for their services
- The Mayor urging public sector partners to reaffirm their commitment to the sector

London Regional Consortium

LVSC provides the secretariat for the London Regional Consortium (LRC) – a high-level multi-sector forum joining up thinking and action around the infrastructure and support needs of VCS groups in London.

We act as the accountable body for the investment Capacitybuilders makes in the LRC, working with eight thematic LRC sub-groups tackling a range of support needs including workforce development, volunteering and governance, premises, ICT and neighbourhoods.

Putting equalities at the heart of what we do

We continue to incorporate the recommendations of an equalities audit into our work programmes.

We’ve been sharing our experiences of this with six other organisations through a National Equality Partnership peer learning project.

Our staff have been working with Deaf and disabled people’s organisations to raise awareness with key stakeholders of the crisis in finding and keeping accessible and affordable office premises.

We commissioned case studies to demonstrate the benefit of single group funding in order to successfully challenge draft Communities and Local Government guidance on this issue.

LVSC sits on HEAR, the London VCS equalities network, the advisory group for the British Institute of Human Rights “Principles to Practice” project and the advisory group for Shine at Galop, the trans development project.



Paul Butler, LVSC Chair, presents early findings from the Big Squeeze at The Recession: We’re All in it Together, the first pan-London recession event in February 2009 organised by LVSC, London Funders, London Regional Consortium and The Young Foundation.

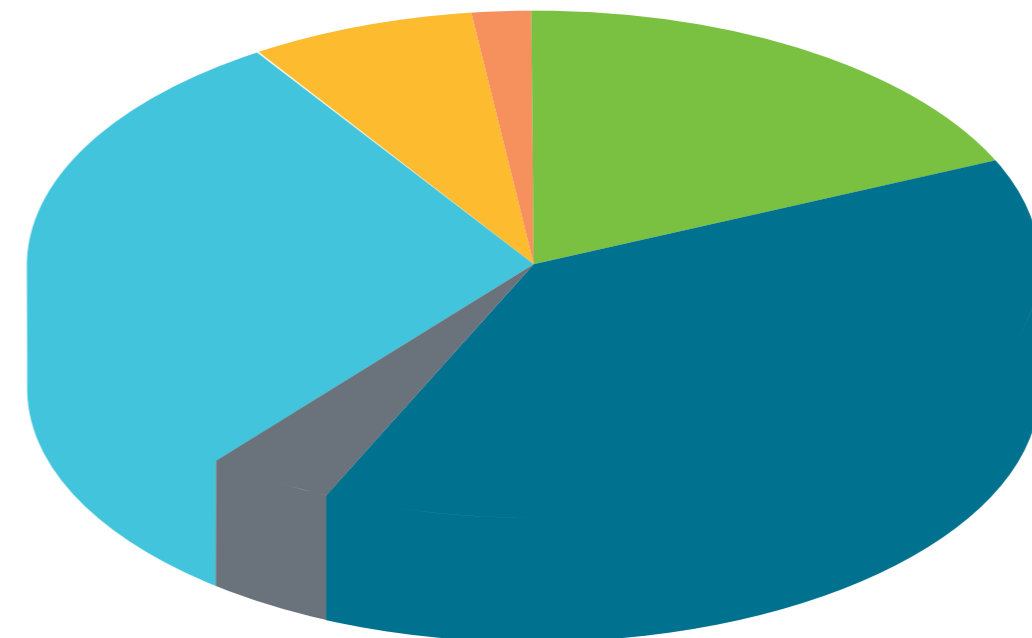
By bringing funders and commissioners together with a range of VCS organisations, the day provided a crucial opportunity to develop mutually agreed strategies.

Finances

Summary financial information for year ended 31 March 2009

	2008-9 £000s	2007-8 £000s
Money in		
Grants and donations	1,465	1,628
Investment income	21	25
Training, publications and other activities	278	331
TOTAL	1,764	1,984
Money out		
Charitable activities:		
Organisational support services	947	638
Networks, policy and strategy	397	222
Training	323.5	368
ChangeUp/Capacitybuilders work	85	448
Publications	0.5	5
Governance	41	36
TOTAL	1,794	1,717
Total assets	519	548

Our funders



-  London Councils
-  London Development Agency
-  Home Office
-  Big Lottery Fund
-  ChangeUp/Capacitybuilders
-  City Bridge Trust

To receive a copy of our full audited accounts please visit our website, email info@lvsc.org.uk or write to LVSC, 4th Floor, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9HU.

LVSC is a reassuring backbone of the sector in London

An inclusive and collaborative leader

Contributing to the development of vibrant and effective organisations

LVSC

Voluntary and community action for London

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

