



LVSC

London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC)

2016



# The **BIG** Ask

Manifesto for the Mayor of London





# London Voluntary Service Council Manifesto 2016

LVSC is the collaborative leader of London's voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE). Since we were founded in 1910, LVSC has championed the VCSE sector and sought to enable a co-ordinated voice to influence policy makers.

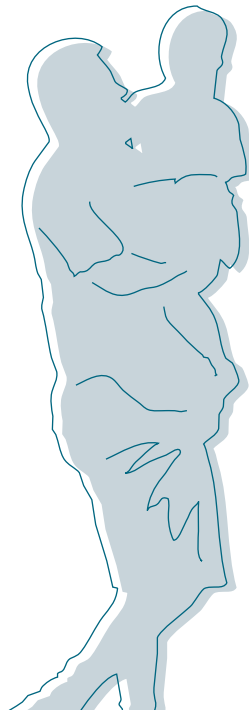
We support London's 60,000 voluntary and community organisations who provide a range of services and support to London's diverse communities and empower the lives of Londoners. [www.lvsc.org.uk](http://www.lvsc.org.uk)

## Our vision

LVSC's vision is of a vibrant and sustainable city where the lives of Londoners are enhanced through voluntary and community action.

## Our aims

- To be a central resource for knowledge and policy for the London VCSE sector
- To act as a collaborative leader for London's VCSE sector
- To enable the VCSE sector to best deliver for Londoners.



## The role of our sector

The VCSE sector adds extraordinary value to Londoners, but this public good which enriches so many lives is only achieving a fraction of its potential.

In a recent report by the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts (RSA) the argument was made that by putting in place a managed approach, it is possible to unleash far greater returns on existing community activity, in order to bring about great social, economic and personal benefits.

A flourishing VCSE sector enables positive contagion to ripple out to achieve the following outcomes: healthier, happier citizens; a stronger democracy; more resilient, better targeted services; and sizeable economic savings.

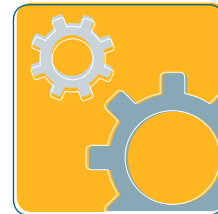
This finding is supported by a report from the Community Development Foundation (2014) that the VCSE sector makes an invaluable contribution 'to people's lives and society by building safer communities, improving the physical environment, enhancing health and wellbeing and supporting local economies'.

However the sector is at a crossroads, with funding being squeezed and independence threatened. The right measures undertaken by elected politicians and public policy makers will enable the VCSE sector to support Londoners to thrive in spite of the challenges of austerity.

## The role of the Mayor

The next London Mayor must grasp this opportunity. For London to lock in and leverage these economic, social and personal benefits the VCSE sector needs the new Mayor to:

- Ensure that the VCSE sector is recognised and included in GLA policy and delivery
- Co-produce a London VCSE strategy
- Collaborate on the implementation of equalities practice
- Innovate GLA commissioning and procurement
- Facilitate private sector donations to VCSE groups
- Embed the benefits of digital technology.





## Ensuring that the VCSE sector is recognised and included in GLA policy and delivery

### The need:

LVSC estimate that there at least 60,000 active VCSE organisations, all of whom contribute to the wellbeing, citizenship, capacity and economic vitality of London. Yet only a fraction of this vast reservoir of largely unfunded local initiatives feature in GLA policy and delivery programmes. At a time of austerity, when every service is under pressure, the ability to understand the scale of the VCSE sector contribution and put in place the means to harness it must become an urgent priority.

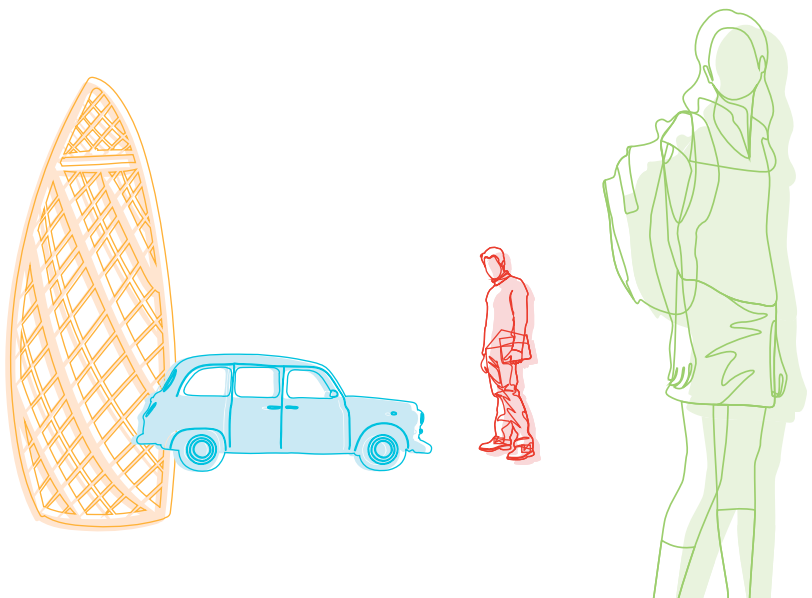
*In a period of austerity, people in these communities are facing greater pressures on their time and capacity - they are 'focusing on just getting by day-to-day with no time or energy to connect with others or take local action'*

**Community Development Foundation**

Ensure that the VCSE sector is recognised and included in GLA policy and delivery

### We ask the new Mayor to:

- Commission a thorough review of the social impact of the VCSE's activity
- Oversee and promote strategic GLA engagement with the entire sector on future delivery of services



# Co-producing a London VCSE Strategy



## The need:

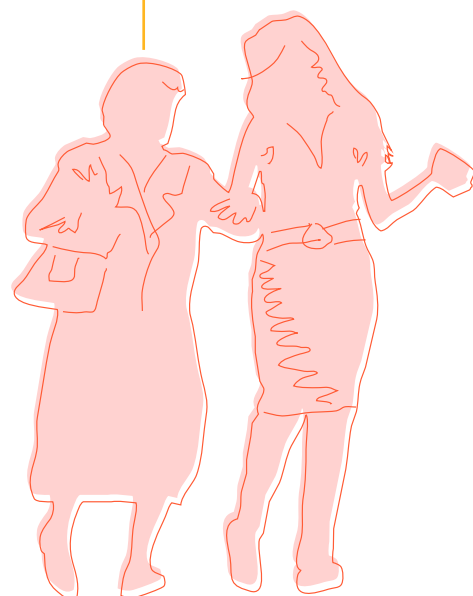
It is vital that the GLA engages with the VCSE sector in a co-ordinated, long term and strategic way. A strategic plan would provide the fundamental building block needed to sequence and harness the fullest possible benefits of VCSE sector activity. It is equally important that a future plan be co-produced, as a shared initiative and reflect the grassroots nature and diversity of the VCSE sector. There is a window of opportunity to rectify the absence of a GLA VCSE plan that must be grasped within the first one hundred days of a new Mayor taking office.

*More human government needs  
one more thing: everyone's engagement*  
**Steve Hilton**

London VCSE  
sector strategy

## We ask the new Mayor to:

- work with us to develop and prioritise sector engagement
- produce a viable VCSE strategy within the first year of office/ by May 2017
- host an annual London VCSE Awards ceremony
- actively promote the recognition and celebration of good practice in the capital





## Collaborating on implementation of equalities practice

### The need:

London has become a more unequal city in recent years and the effects of widening inequality has had a negative impact on all Londoners, contributing to a more stressful and unhealthy environment. Studies have demonstrated that the greater the levels of inequality, the higher the crime rate. LVSC calls on the next Mayor to honour and uphold the rights and freedoms of each individual, based on the core principles of dignity, equality and respect; and for the GLA to move beyond mere compliance to a more collaborative approach with the sector on this issue.

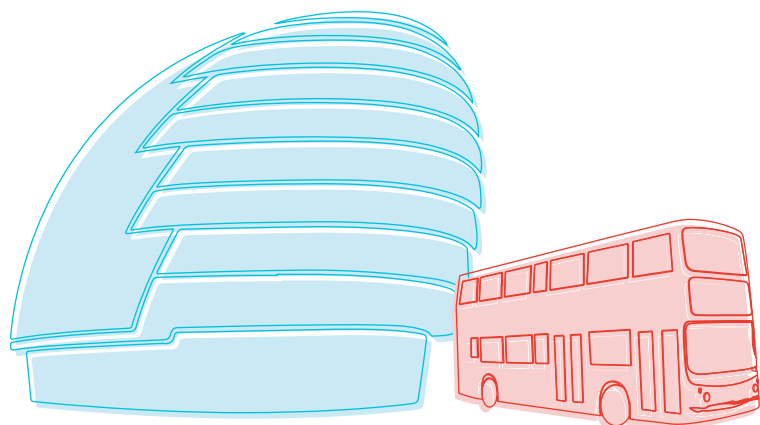
*27% of Londoners live in poverty after housing costs are taken into account, compared with 20% in the rest of England*  
**London Poverty Profile 2015**

*Health and social problems are worse in more unequal societies*  
**Wilkinson & Pickett: The Spirit Level**

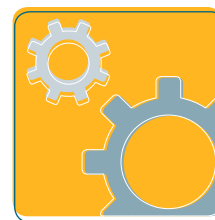
### Implementation of equalities practice

### We ask the new Mayor to:

- appoint task and finish groups to work with VCSE organisations
- mandate these groups to design and implement effective equalities practice
- help ensure the productive collation of results from equalities impact assessments
- oversee and rigorously monitor the translation of those results into delivery plans



# Innovating GLA commissioning and procurement



## The need:

The move to commissioning of services from VCSE organisations in preference to the giving of grants has excluded the sector from access to funds because of unsuitable commissioning models. The focus on competitive bidding and lowest cost has meant that larger providers, including global private companies, have an immediate advantage but that the social and economic value of VCSE activity is lost. Using contracting models and developmental processes that enable skilled VCSE organisations to collaborate, through alliances, consortiums and coalitions, it is possible to unleash levels of value hitherto untapped by commissioning processes.

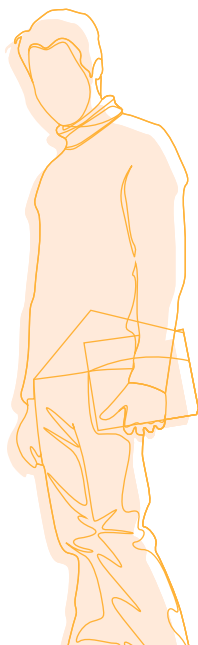
*Turning to the change in income from government over time, organisations based in London... saw the largest proportional falls in government income between 2011/12 and 2012/13.*

**National Council for Voluntary Organisations (2015)**  
**Civil Society Almanac**

## GLA commissioning and procurement

## We ask the new Mayor to:

- work with us to modernise GLA commissioning
- ensure a balance between contract models and developmental work with VCSE consortia





## Making it easier for the private sector to donate to VCSE groups

### The need:

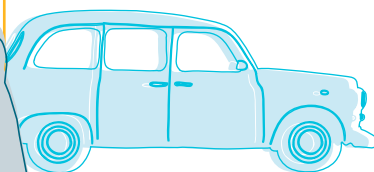
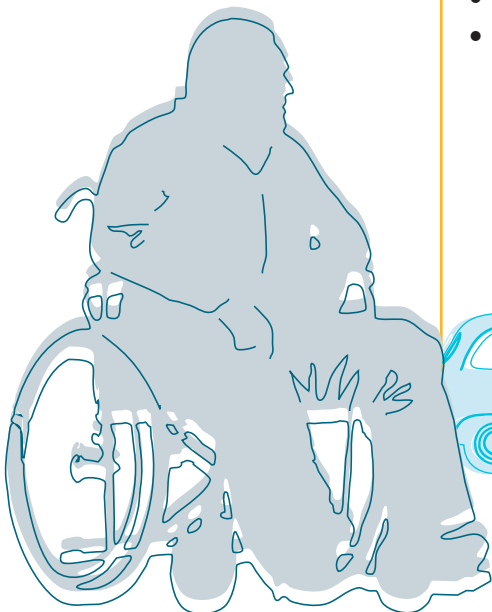
Recent Comprehensive Spending Reviews have seen a dramatic shortfall in funding to both public and VCSE sectors, whilst government has signalled the need for organisations to diversify their income streams to meet this challenge. The private sector is frequently identified as a potential supporter of VCSE activity. However the mechanisms and pathways to support this are relatively undeveloped. The current approach to private sector support relies on a few tried and tested formulas, such as corporate social responsibility programmes and pro bono work. This could be enhanced by empowering each private sector worker to make a more immediate and direct contribution via payroll giving and access to modern philanthropy.

*We must encourage greater philanthropy. Social responsibility from businesses needs to be the norm, so it is not seen as a 'philanthropic act' but as normal practice*  
**Bharat Mehta, Chief Executive Trust for London**

Facilitate private sector donations to VCSE groups

### We ask the new Mayor to:

- open a dialogue between LVSC and leading private sector partners
- widen and facilitate opportunities for engagement
- increase access to philanthropists, guilds and related associations





# Spreading the benefits of digital technology



## The need:

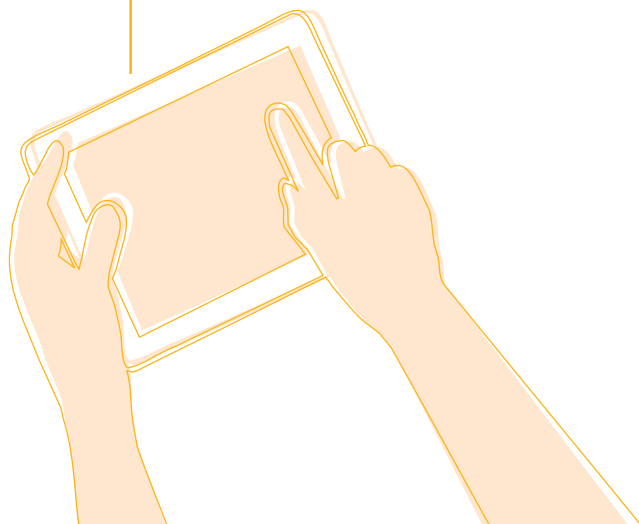
The evidence has long pointed to the benefits of VCSE activity in building social capital and quality public services in the locality but studies have also shown the VCSE sector is a late adopter of digital technology. The fact that the majority of VCSE organisations have not grasped the full benefits of digital technology affects their delivery. By putting in place measures to bridge this gap, the wider social value and impact of VCSE sector work can be safeguarded and maximised.

*The number of charities with basic digital skills has dropped from 45 to 42 per cent from a year ago... showing a continued lack of digital adoption... The overall limited progress in developing digital skills, reflects the fact that there is no increase in the amount of investment organisations are making to develop these skills, with three quarters (75 per cent) investing no money at all*  
**Lloyds Digital Index 2015**

Embed the benefits of digital technology

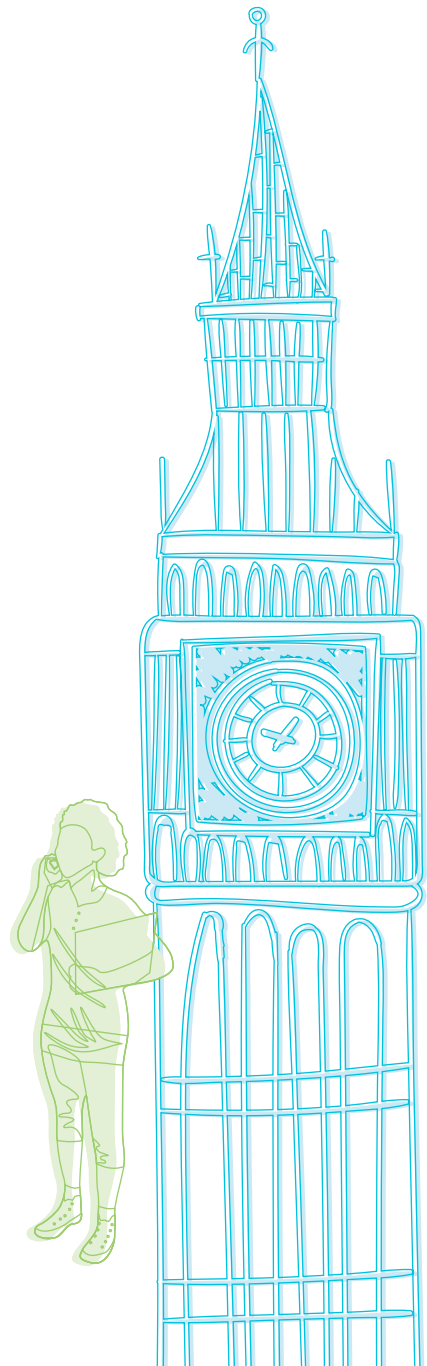
## We ask the new Mayor to:

- broaden and extend the GLA's digital inclusion strategy
- help ensure VCSE organisations are better connected
- Use new digital tools and apps to support the engagement and mapping of VCSE networks



## A call to action:

In recent years London has struggled with increased inequality under the weight of austerity. Time and again VCSE organisations have acted as a safety net. In the face of adversity the VCSE sector has enabled thousands of people to overcome the odds and to be resilient. By enacting the proposals in this manifesto, we can transform our city so that it becomes a place where our most vulnerable citizens not only survive but thrive.



# Equality

It is the people who have direct experience of inequality and discrimination who are best placed to develop strategies to achieve equality.

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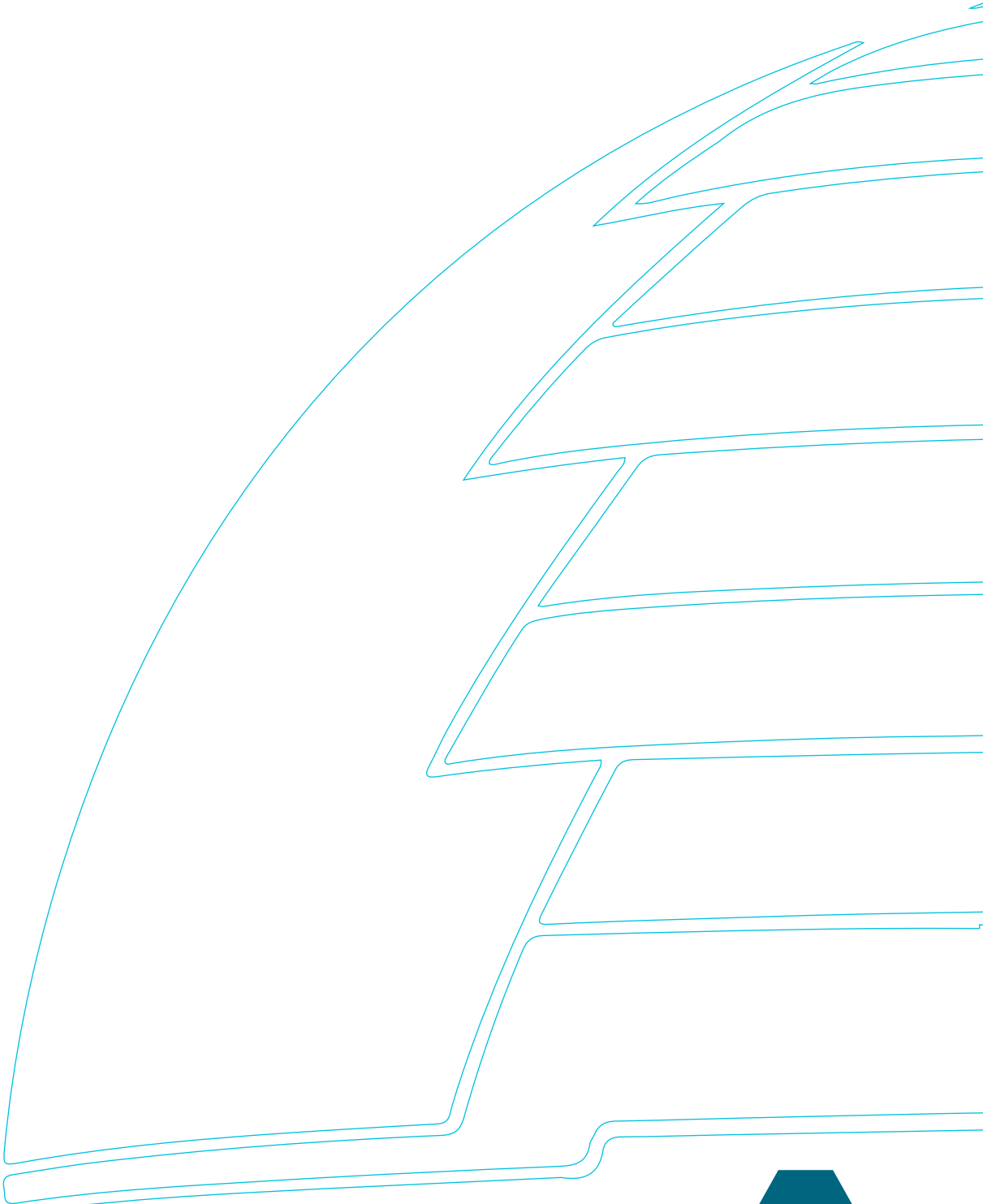
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