

Special Initiative:
**Safeguarding
Children's Rights**



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Introduction

Trust for London (TfL) and City Parochial Foundation (CPF) are collaborating to establish a new Special Initiative to fund community-based, preventive work to safeguard children. We have a long history of supporting black and minority ethnic community organisations and refugee community groups throughout London. Two years ago, African community groups brought to our attention their concerns about the problem of faith-based child abuse affecting members of their communities. The Trust and Foundation then held two seminars to enable community groups working to address this sensitive and difficult problem to come together to share their experiences and to identify possible ways forward. At the end of the second seminar, groups urged TfL and CPF to continue to engage with the issue and to consider supporting work addressing it. We then undertook a consultation exercise with relevant community groups and key agencies concerning a possible funding scheme. This new Special Initiative is the result of this process.

Background

The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have a right to be protected from all forms of abuse and exploitation and a right to be respected, cared for and guided by their parents/carers. All but two countries in the world have signed up to this Convention. A number of the key African community organisations working to tackle problems of faith-based child abuse in the UK cite the Convention as the basis for their work. In so doing, they make it clear that this issue transcends countries and cultures and is in fact about basic human rights. CPF and TfL stand with these groups, placing this Special Initiative firmly within the human rights framework.

The proposed funding scheme is designed to strengthen and develop the work of community groups addressing child abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession, and by so doing to contribute to the safety, quality of life and well-being of children and the promotion of children's rights. We expect much of the work to be preventive, designed to foster an environment in which child abuse cannot develop.

Defining the Problem

Faith-based child abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession refers to the abuse of children and young people who are believed to be taken over, or possessed, by an evil spirit. The scale of such abuse is not known, though the number of cases in the UK is increasing. The number of identified cases is small in comparison to the total number of incidences of all forms of child abuse. However the nature of the abuse is serious and disturbing and its impact on the child and the family can be devastating.

A study by the Department for Education and Skills, published in 2006, provides important details about the pattern of abuse:

- the majority of the cases studied occurred in London;
- children ranged in age from two to 14 years old;
- while the majority of the victims were from African communities, others affected were of South Asian, Caribbean and English origin;
- about half of the victims were born in the UK;
- boys and girls were equally at risk;
- schools appeared to be the main source of referrals of these cases; and
- children who were different in some way appeared more likely to be accused of being possessed and the most common form of 'difference' was a disability.

In 2000, Victoria Climbié was murdered by her great-aunt and her aunt's boyfriend because they believed she was possessed. Following this, the Government set up the Victoria Climbié Inquiry chaired by Lord Laming. The Inquiry looked particularly at the way in which local authorities, social services, health bodies and the police operated in this case and came up with 17 recommendations for improvements in the way statutory agencies should undertake their duties in relation to safeguarding children.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) then initiated a reform of its child protection investigation service and developed an initiative, called Project Violet, to improve trust and communication between the police and the community

Community-Based Work

Most of the initiatives following from the wide publicity of the Victoria Climbié case and the Laming Report are operating at inter-agency level. There has however, been little significant support for work at a local community level.

At the same time, there are a number of African community and church groups attempting to address this complex and difficult problem with limited or no financial resources. These groups are working competently and sensitively, most with no paid staff. The involvement of local community groups and initiatives is crucial to the effectiveness of a programme to protect children and to eliminate faith-related abuse in London. This Special Initiative is designed to help to develop and sustain the work of local community groups, and work which complements and enhances this work.

Is it just an African community issue?

There are examples of faith-based child abuse in a range of religions, cultures and countries throughout the world. However, African community groups and organisations have brought this issue to our attention as of serious concern, involving a minority of African churches, affecting their communities and requiring urgent attention. The DfES report indicates that the majority of cases which have come to light in the UK thus far involve victims from African communities. For these reasons, this Special Initiative will seek to support local community groups to address the problem of faith-based child abuse, safeguarding children in African communities living in London.

Programme Aim

To develop and strengthen community-based preventive work to protect the rights of children as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to ensure the safety, well-being and positive quality of life of African children living in London, with a particular focus on tackling faith-based child abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession.

Programme Objectives

- 1) **Work with Churches** - to increase the knowledge and implementation of child protection policies, safe recruitment procedures, good practice guidelines and children's rights legislation, and to increase the awareness of child development, among church leaders and members;
- 2) **Work with Families** -
 - to raise awareness of child protection issues, the needs of children, and positive approaches to parenting and discipline, among families, and to provide support as appropriate; and
 - to increase the accessibility and availability of information and support in relation to disabled children;
- 3) **Work with Children** - to strengthen the voice of children within local communities and encourage work that ensures children are listened to;
- 4) **Policy Work** - to assist community groups in raising awareness among statutory services and the large children's charities, concerning the needs of the community in relation to safeguarding children, and so to influence services.

Additional Criteria

We believe that African community groups have a key role to play in safeguarding children in their communities. We encourage applications from these groups. All applicants will need to demonstrate how the work proposed is integrated into the community and complements the efforts of community groups.

In addition, you will need to demonstrate the following when submitting your proposal:

- a) That the promotion of children's rights and the safeguarding and well-being of children is central to your work;
- b) That you have the experience, skills, capacity and sensitivity to deliver the work;
- c) That you have the ability to liaise constructively with statutory, voluntary and community sectors, as necessary in the context of your proposal;
- d) Your knowledge of child protection policies, good practice guidelines, and the relevant sections of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- e) Evidence of user involvement;
- f) If you are a children's organisation or working directly with children, that you comply with Government guidelines in relation to child protection and undertake appropriate criminal records checks;
- g) Your willingness to participate in external evaluation and to share and learn from the work;
- h) That you are a registered charity or a voluntary organisation engaged in charitable work in London.

Collaborative projects will be considered.

The Special Initiative will be externally evaluated to draw out the lessons learned and best practice so that these can be disseminated widely in order to influence and enhance future work.

Funding Available

We anticipate that a maximum of four or five projects will be funded as well as the external evaluation. A total of £450,000 is available for this Special Initiative over three years.

Application Process

There is no application form. Please submit a proposal outlining:

- What work you will undertake and how this will effectively meet the Programme Aim and at least one Programme Objective;
- Evidence of how the work will meet the Additional Criteria;
- Background information about your organisation;
- A budget for the work;
- Job descriptions, if your application involves salary costs;
- A copy of your constitution, most recent audited accounts and annual report.

Timetable	18 April	Information meeting with interested applicants (see below)
	9 May	Closing date for proposals
	May/June	Assessment visits for shortlisted applicants
	End July	Grants Committee awards grants

Please send your proposal to:

Ann Curno
Trust for London
6 Middle Street
London EC1A 7PH
Tel No. (020) 7606 6145
Website: www.cityparochial.org.uk

If you would like to discuss this Special Initiative in more detail please contact Ann Curno at the number above.

CLOSING DATE FOR PROPOSALS 9 May 2007

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR INTERESTED APPLICANTS

There will be an opportunity for you to find out more about the programme and to discuss any questions you may have at a special meeting on 18 April, 2007, 2:30-4:00pm, at our offices at 6 Middle Street, London EC1. If you would like to attend this meeting please contact Jaspal Babra at jbabra@cityparochial.org.uk or at the above number by 14th April 2007.



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