



Christina Schwabenland, Director of London Voluntary Service Council, looks at the issues that will influence voluntary bodies over the next Quinquennium

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What are the significant developments that are likely to affect the voluntary sector over the next five years?

We now have a second term of a Labour government and a new tier of regional government in London, the GLA. These two developments are unlocking a stream of new thinking, new initiatives, new policies (such as Sure Start, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Best Value, New Deal for Communities, Local Strategic Partnerships) and in all of these the voluntary sector is regarded as a critical partner.

marginalised and dispossessed and to stimulate new thinking and new solutions to seemingly intractable urban social problems.

Paradoxically, all of these valuable attributes are at risk if the sector becomes over-bureaucratised and over-regulated, and if its independence and advocacy role are not respected. The current enthusiasm, in social policy circles, for valuing only that which can be measured and counted, for respecting consistency (Emerson's 'hobgoblin of little minds') above creativity, reliability over risk and innovation, is a real danger.

Looking forward: the next five years

There is still a really significant role for funders such as City Parochial Foundation to support experimentation, to risk failure, to fund small-scale new ideas, difference, creativity.

There are enormous opportunities for the voluntary sector but also risks. The sector is seen as having a critical role to play in delivering these new initiatives. The debate about the delivery of public services, the role of the sector in influencing policy formation, the sector as catalyst and animator in regeneration and renewal are all creating a new discourse about the nature of a just and equitable society in London. In order to contribute in any meaningful way, many voluntary organisations need support in making sense of these new initiatives, in interpreting them and in seeing where their contribution can be most effective.

The current enthusiasm for partnership, collaboration and cross-sectoral working arrangements also offers opportunities and risks. While recognising that we have much in common with other sectors and with like-minded institutions we must also safeguard our uniqueness and our separate identity. City Parochial Foundation's willingness to support advocacy and policy change makes it one of the most valuable funders in London.

What are the risks? The voluntary sector is valued because it is independent, flexible, innovative, able to reach into the heart of communities, break down isolation, foster social cohesion, speak up for the

The two most important issues that must concern all Londoners are the still-widening gap between rich and poor and the oppression, marginalisation and isolation still experienced by far too many people because of ethnicity, lack of opportunity or limited expectations.

We need new thinking and new approaches, and, most importantly, we need to value the experience and knowledge of people themselves. We need to develop better

understanding of what creates social change and social cohesion and how to support it.

We also need to understand what creates social exclusion, violence and crime and how to combat it. City Parochial Foundation's emphasis on violence and hate crimes is very welcome as is its interest in developing cohesion through sharing learning and expertise, supporting infrastructure and collaborative working.

For all Londoners, whether they work in the voluntary, public, or private sector, or in no sector at all, the virtual presence of the e-world will create rapid and far-reaching change. The internet democratises knowledge and power and creates new – and previously unthought-of – connections between people, and in the process is establishing new concepts of community. Simultaneously, a new generation of exclusion is emerging; exclusion based on lack of technical understanding and skills, and an inability to cope with the bewildering rapidity of change. There are enormous challenges for the voluntary sector here in its traditional role of tapping new potential while speaking up for those who are excluded from it.

The only thing we know for certain about the next five years is that we know nothing for certain. But Rajesh Tandon, chief executive of PRIA, in Delhi, (and a noted figure in international development) has commented that 'VDOs [voluntary development organisations] are about disturbing the present'. City Parochial Foundation has never shrunk from supporting the sector in carrying out that role.

November 1999

300 displaced people attend the Employability Forum held at the Commonwealth Institute to meet potential employers. Guest speaker is Margaret Hodge, junior Employment Department Minister.

April 2000

First London Voluntary Sector Almanac is published by NCVO. It reveals that the sector contributes £2.6 billion to GDP. There are 18,000 active charities in the capital providing 105,000 Londoners with jobs. One-in-five residents are from a minority ethnic group: they account for 27% of the work force but half of the unemployed.

The issue of street violence in deprived areas of the city hits the headlines when ten-year-old Nigerian schoolboy Damilola Taylor is found bleeding to death in Peckham. Just a month before a 17 year-old boy Andre Drummond who had been excluded from school had been stabbed to death in a nearby road. Media investigation reveals drug dealing and gang cultures, involving very young youths, are rife in the area.

May 2000

Ken Livingstone becomes the first directly-elected Mayor for London, along with 25 members of the Greater London Assembly.

May 2001

Labour government is re-elected

August 2001

Youth Programme report Capital Youth is launched at an event held at Ocean in Hackney.

October 2001

Volunteering Code is published as part of the compact between the government and volunteers.

November 2001

CPF and TfL Grant Guidelines detailing policies, priorities and procedures for 2002-2006 is launched at an event which also marked the relaunch of the Resource Centre in Holloway Road. Guest speaker is former Secretary of State Chris Smith MP.



South east London-based Midi Music provides a range of music and music technology education programmes for 16-25 year old young people who are either unemployed, homeless, in care, abused or at risk of offending. It has developed a number of innovative projects including an LWT television talent challenge, a part-time foundation course in creative music and an NVQ course. Among its aims are to create equality of opportunity for young women

to develop technical skills, and to combat racism through positive learning in mixed groups.

Midi Music has received European Social Fund and Single Regeneration Budget funding, as well as support from London Borough Grants and the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust. City Parochial Foundation has provided £50,000 towards salary costs in two grants over three years.