



## **THE EAST LONDON CVS NETWORK:**

### **A MANIFESTO FOR DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES IN LONDON THAMES GATEWAY**

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## **The East London CVS Network**

### **Manifesto for Developing Sustainable Communities in East London:**

The documents “A Strategy for Building a World-Class Third Sector in London Thames Gateway” and “Building a World-Class Third Sector Workforce in East London” were launched in November 2006 by Third Sector Minister, Ed Miliband MP.

The reports highlighted the vital roles of the Third Sector as:

- Strategic advisor
- Deliverer of public services
- Advocate and promoter of community cohesion and civil society

The East London CVS Network [ELN] endorses the recommendations within these reports and has produced this manifesto as a way of highlighting 4 issues which we feel are most pressing for the third sector.

The East London CVS Network [ELN] was set up in 2004 to develop a coherent and organised voice for the Third sector in the sub-region. It is a membership organisations of 10 CVS<sup>1</sup>, which themselves represent over 10,000 third sector organisations working across East London.

ELN believes that by placing the third sector at the heart of East London we can create an inclusive and vibrant sub-region with a high quality of life for all. ELN supports, develops and advocates for a third sector that is increasingly effective, influential, healthy and connected as this is key for the development of sustainable communities.

The following four areas have been identified as priorities, and need be delivered taking full account of existing activities and initiatives:-

### **ELN Priorities for Developing Sustainable Communities in London Thames Gateway:**

#### **1. Engagement**

For many existing communities, the ‘Thames Gateway’ development is an artificial creation which is being done *to* them. If community cohesion is to be a reality then we need to ensure that existing communities are involved with the regeneration across the sub-region. The East London CVS Network is uniquely positioned to work with those communities, having active links with over 10,000 third sector organisations working across 9 boroughs and the City.

ELN is able to advocate the needs of diverse communities to policy makers because of the contacts and links which member CVS have at a local borough and neighbourhood level. The third sectors’ ability to reach marginalised and often excluded communities means that it is delivering services that will help ensure cohesion between the new and existing communities in the Gateway, as well as contributing to their longer-term sustainability. Ensuring that these communities have opportunities to be actively involved in developments is crucial in order to build sustainable communities.

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<sup>1</sup> The East London CVS Network membership comprises the CVS from Greenwich, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Redbridge, Havering, Barking & Dagenham, Bexley, Lewisham and the City.

## 2. Community Development

The recent Local Government White Paper presents real opportunities for communities to become more involved in decision-making and includes an expectation that each local authority will develop a community engagement strategy. However, making these opportunities a reality will require both a culture shift within some local authorities, and practical guidance on implementation. Community development doesn't just happen ~ it requires staff with a specific set of skills, and it is time intensive.

ELN welcomes the White Papers' call for local authorities to set out charters detailing the service standards that communities can expect. "Firm Foundations", the Government's community capacity building strategy, recommends long-term community development as the guiding principle of building communities' ability to engage in decision making.

There are a number of Community Development training and qualification programmes in East London available to community development workers and activists, but this is not a consistent picture. This creates a situation where those expected to become involved with different initiatives are not able to access the tools, learning or support to be effective.

There is currently no NVQ assessment centre for Community Development within London.

There is little awareness of National Occupational Standards for Community Development Work.

ELN recommends:

- a coordinated approach to community development
- that partners work together to link initiatives across London to promote the skills and resources required

Clearly, community organisations need support in setting up, involving local people, securing resources and project development. This includes the development of social enterprise and developing business models and marketing.

## 3. Premises

The delivery of services provided by third sector organisations generally requires a physical location, either as an office base for the co-ordination and management of service delivery, or for the actual delivery of services themselves. Across London Thames Gateway the lack of appropriate premises has been identified through mapping undertaken by the local ChangeUp consortia. There are two main Issues:

- The lack of suitable premises available to the third sector. This may be because of suitable premises being in unsuitable locations or because of affordability. This latter issue is likely to become an increasing problem as property prices increase in the run-up to 2012 and as a result of other regeneration initiatives.
- The lack of suitable legal support available to the third sector. This is necessary to ensure that organisations negotiate favourable lease agreements.

ELN recommends that:

- Local authorities invest in the skills and processes required to build, transfer and manage community-owned assets, including hubs or 'anchor' organisations around which to develop community-based services.
- Models for shared ownership of community buildings are actively considered.

Quality premises for the third sector are essential for building sustainable communities. Existing communities need to see tangible results: multi-resource buildings in each borough would be a clear public gain. The physical regeneration of London Thames Gateway provides an ideal opportunity to take the needs of both new and existing communities into account. Building-in community space is essential if we are to build thriving community rather than dormitory towns.

#### 4. Skills Development

ELN has three clear goals:

- To ensure that people in East London have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce, able to take advantage of the opportunities available in the London Thames Gateway.
- To ensure that the workforce within the third sector has the knowledge and skills to ensure the delivery of quality services to communities across the London Thames Gateway.
- To ensure the development of a world-class third-sector workforce.

ELN is addressing these issues in a number of ways and is working to implement the recommendations contained within the Workforce Development Strategy “Building a World-class Third Sector Workforce in East London” [Nov 06]:

- Developing a Brokerage Project to ensure that appropriate **Workforce Data** is collated and used to make strategic decisions on skills development; and to ensure that **effective brokerage** brings together employer need, learning provision and funding streams.
- Working with the LDA to ensure that third sector organisations are able to play their role in developing new ways to tackle worklessness via the **City Strategy**.
- Working with **accredited learning providers** to ensure that they are able to bid for mainstream contracts, thereby ensuring that more marginalised communities are reached and have access to quality training opportunities.

ELN recommends:

- The development of mechanisms to enable the third sector engage more directly with appropriate sector skills councils
- The development of an East London Learning Consortium
- The resourcing of a Workforce Development Co-ordinator in order to implement the Workforce Development Strategy

The ODPM document “Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future” promotes a vision of high quality homes, an attractive public realm and well-run services reaching all parts of the community. This can only be achieved by private, public and third sector agencies working together to address the challenges faced by such an ambitious programme in the London Thames Gateway.

In the words of the “Strategy for Building a World-class Third Sector in the London Thames Gateway”, “Growth alone is not delivering economic benefits widely enough across the London Thames Gateway ... for the regeneration process to benefit existing areas and communities, as well as new developments and residents, it will require a carefully orchestrated programme of spatial planning combined with community economic development and business support. The challenges of achieving a sustainable community in the London Thames Gateway are encapsulated by the simple ambition of:

**Making the area a place where people want to live and work, both now and in the future”.**

A well-resourced third sector will be key to making this ambition a reality.

**For more information on the East London CVS Network, or to obtain the contact details for the borough-based CVS in East London visit our website:**

[www.elcvnetwork.org.uk](http://www.elcvnetwork.org.uk)

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