

London Voluntary and Community Sector  
**premises research report**

Executive Summary

# Background

In 2007 the planning process for identifying the development needs of London's voluntary and community sector had been completed. Each Borough had an Infrastructure Development Plan and the need for premises for the sector had been identified as an important issue across the capital.

As part of the CapacityBuilders Premises Sub Group, the DTA commissioned research to investigate the issues associated with premises for the sector, what progress had been made in each borough, and the policy that was influencing practitioners on the ground. This resulted in a report outlining the situation in each borough and recommending future action by London Borough Councils, London Borough Councils of Voluntary Service and individual VCS groups.

The 2009 report is an update of the work done in 2007 and is contained in four related documents which are presented as a resource for use by local authorities, umbrella organisations in the voluntary and community sector and individual groups. It is hoped that they can be used to increase the already productive work going on in each borough and provide food for thought on the way that individual boroughs are approaching premises issues. The hope is that this will avoid re-inventions of the wheel and encourage learning across London.

## **The 2009 report**

This brings together the data from all the boroughs and draws out conclusions and recommendations.

## **Borough profiles**

This sets out, on a borough by borough basis, what the current policy position is in each borough and the main headlines of work and activity being undertaken by both councils and councils for voluntary service.

## **Bibliography**

This is a resource which references relevant documents for each borough that have been uncovered during the research process which took place from mid February to the start of April 2009. It includes Cabinet decisions and reports, information on specific projects and corporate plans and policies that relate to the provision of premises to the voluntary and community sector in each borough.

## **Borough contacts**

During the research process we spoke to officers in borough councils and CVS's about the issues. Where we could not speak to people we found out who has a remit to deal with the issues that the report covers. The contacts in this list are not always going to be able to answer questions about all the issues, but they are a starting point in each borough for a dialogue about the content of the report.

# Findings

The report sets out a number of changes since 2007 in the policy and practice environment to address the premises needs of the voluntary and community sector in London:

## **The support available to address premises issues in the sector**

Capital investment for improvement of VCS accommodation and community buildings has increased and there are now more services provided through outreach and on line to deal with premises issues for front line groups.

## **The policy environment**

More London boroughs are now reviewing or developing policy on premises issues for the sector covering the provision of premises and the terms on which they can be provided. This has been a significant area of activity since 2007 with specific policies being developed towards transfer of ownership interests as well as clarification of policies towards VCS tenants of local authority property in relation to rents, rates relief and allocation of property. There has also been an increase in the regularisation of procedures for selecting buildings to transfer out of borough council ownership and organisations that they could be transferred to.

## **Practice**

There are still some London boroughs where premises are not considered an issue at all and some boroughs where the voluntary and community sector does not have the capacity or resources to pursue them.

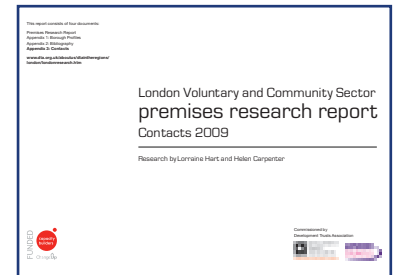
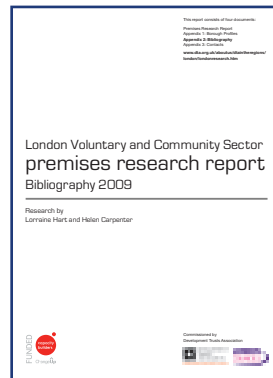
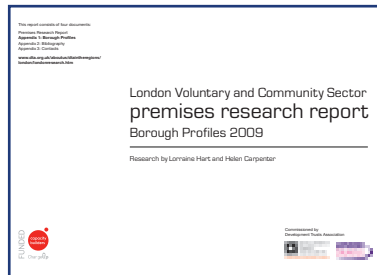
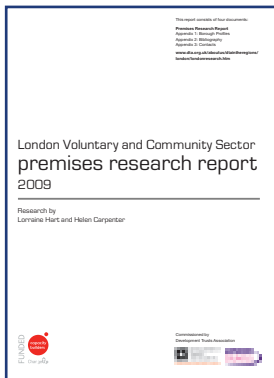
Practice is also highly contextual, with specific ways of addressing provision of accommodation driven by opportunities for co-location or existing partnerships between VCS organisations and local authorities on service provision. London borough councils also varied greatly in their approach to accommodating VCS premises needs through resource centres or other multi-purpose community buildings and the extent to which opportunities existed or were pursued to redevelop sites or individual buildings to include voluntary and community sector provision.

# Recommendations

Many of the recommendations in the 2007 report are now being addressed, although the 2009 work found that the following were still needed:

- A single point of contact for VCS groups to pursue within local authorities on premises issues.
- More shared information on the availability of premises on a borough by borough basis for the voluntary and community sector.
- More strategic involvement of the sector on the planning of new community buildings as part of local authorities asset management planning processes.

The research report and appendices can be downloaded from:  
[www.dta.org.uk/aboutus/dtaintheregions/london/londonresearch.htm](http://www.dta.org.uk/aboutus/dtaintheregions/london/londonresearch.htm)



## Recommendations

- A single point of contact for VCS groups to pursue within local authorities on premises issues.
- More shared information on the availability of premises on a borough by borough basis for the voluntary and community sector.
- More strategic involvement of the sector on the planning of new community buildings as part of local authorities asset management planning processes.