

## **Funding and Resources for Voice Workshop Report**

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022

**Time:** 14:00-16:00

**Location:** Zoom

### **Conference Facilitators:**

- Naomi Goldberg (NG) - METRO GAVS
- Andrew Kerr (AK) - METRO GAVS
- Pauline O'Hare (PO'H) - METRO GAVS
- Roy Gopaul (RO) - METRO GAVS
- Mutmahim Roaf (MR) - METRO GAVS

### **Groups and Organisations in Attendance:**

- Age UK Bromley and Greenwich
- African Smile
- BME Volunteers CIC (Black Major)
- Greenwich Clinical Commissioning Group
- Hamara Assra
- Kids Festival CIC
- Primrose Trust London CIC
- Smiley Ark Kids
- Royal Borough of Greenwich
  - Children's Services
  - Health and Adults Services
  - Housing
  - Public Health
- South East London Clinical Commissioning Group
- Oxleas
- The Design Charity
- YMCA Thames Gateway

### **Workshop Aim and Approach**

The Funding and Resources for Voice Workshop was the seventh workshop in the Greenwich Voice and Influence Programme, which began in July 2021. The event was the third workshop as part of the implementation phase of the programme, taking place between January and July 2022. The workshops aim to provide a safe space for Greenwich-based groups and organisations to explore experiences, barriers, and solutions to engaging with and influencing 'the system' and local decision-making structures about the issues that matter most to them and their service users. Building upon the workshops and conference in the consultation phase, the implementation phase is facilitating the statutory and voluntary sectors to discuss, design and develop methodologies for progressing the options for improvement agreed upon at the Voice and Influence Conference in December 2021, culminating in a Voice Charter and associated 'ways of working'

This Workshop specifically aimed to discuss and agree the principles and process of providing funding and resources for voice in the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made to hold the workshop virtually, with attendees registering with METRO GAVS. In total, 33 people registered to attend the event, with 22 attending on the day, 2 cancellations and 17 no-shows.

The structure of the workshop, designed and developed by METRO GAVS, was based around 2 activities to facilitate discussions on the principles and processes to providing funding and resources for voice. The workshop included 6 virtual breakout rooms (3 for Activity 1 and 3 for Activity 2).

### **Activity 1: Principles**

For the first activity, delegates were put into breakout rooms which were mixed by sector, with 3 in total. During the activity, delegates discussed the following two questions:

- Why is Funding and Resources Required for Voice?
- What Would Funding and Resources be Required for?

In general, all delegates agreed that funding and resources were required so that local communities, groups, and organisations could have a voice in the 'system'. This is especially important for small and non-commissioned groups and organisations who do not necessarily have the capacity to engage, due to financial limitations, but whose engagement and delivery is equally as important as larger, commissioned organisations. Such practices also ensure equity within and across the system, encourages local communities, groups, and organisations to participate, and demonstrate the voice of the Voluntary Sector in the borough has value. Providing funding and resources for voice can increase and expand current networks within and across the borough, and facilitate a culture of joint, partnership working between groups, organisations, and sectors, including information and knowledge sharing. From a commissioner's perspective, delegates identified that the encouragement and facilitation of voice through funding and resourcing can help them to understand what projects, programmes, services, and activities are required, how tender specifications should be developed to meet the needs of local communities, and directly contribute to strategic and policy developments. A number of examples of existing funded voice initiatives were provided

In relation to what funding and resources would be required for, delegates discussed ideas around communication, specifically diversifying methods of communication to ensure all local communities are heard. This includes investing in new methodologies for encouraging and facilitating voice within local communities. For example, not all groups and organisations have access to decision-makers so, although consultations can be carried out, communication approaches need to be diversified so that it can take place within local communities as and when required. Similarly, there is also a need around community spaces that support voice and representation of local communities. From a financial perspective, the majority delegates of delegates commented that funding is required to pay for the expertise which is being sought – local communities, groups and organisations should

not be expected to provide this for free, including taking part in any pieces of research and/or consultation. A shared approach needs to be taking about what specifically is compensated, with there needing to be due consideration paid to where the line is drawn between local communities, groups and organisations providing voice and when they are working as active citizens.

## **Activity 2: Process**

For the second activity of the workshop, delegates were put into breakout rooms which continued to be mixed by sector, with there again being three in total. During the activity, delegates discussed the following four questions:

- How should payments be made?
- How to review if the processes are working?
- What can be done if no funding is available?
- How can funding and resources for voice be built into projects?

Although it was agreed that the process for providing funding and resources for voice was a complex one, delegates commented that it was not impossible to build processes which can be simple yet successful. The current exploration of providing funding and resources for voice also represents a good opportunity to review current policies around remunerations, with one statutory organisation already exploring the development of a Reward and Recompense Policy. Moreover, there should be some consideration given to if and when individuals can be paid for their expertise, as well as the potential for payments to be made via a three-step process (i.e. before, during and after a piece of work is completed), although it is recognised that this would be on limited occasions and the actual amounts providing would not be a 'one-size-fits-all' model. Furthermore, resourcing does not always have to occur through a financial transaction as statutory organisations, and some larger voluntary ones, might be able to facilitate voice through the provision of space.

As part of the increasing of voice within the Royal Borough of Greenwich, the ongoing review of these processes is critical to their success to ensure they are working for all. Therefore, regular checks and balance should be built in to capture this information. Some examples which were provided by delegates included:

- An annual Voice and Influence Conference
- An annual feedback survey of groups and organisations
- Regular service user feedback

For the above to be deliverable, it is important that there is an understanding of what the 'system' is, including defining what do groups and organisations want to achieve. Once completed, it will be clearly to work out what review mechanisms are required and when.

Despite the current appetite for funding and resources for voice, it is recognised that funding might not always be available. Therefore, alternative incentives need to be considered and developed. These can include, but are not limited to:

- Provision of refreshments at in-person workshops, conferences, trainings, and networking sessions
- Creativity with current and future available funding
- Acquiring voice through opportunistic methods and contact points
- Collating feedback via social events where possible
- Recognition that, at times, there will be no immediate reward, but projects, programmes, services, and activities will improve in the longer term as a result of the engagement

In line with the above, it is paramount for the 'system' to understand how funding and resources for voice needs to be built into projects, programmes, services, and activities. Given this represents a change within how commissioning processes are carried out, the system needs to be open to having difficult conversations about how budgets are spent on the co-production and co-design of projects, programmes, services, and activities. This should involve an inclusion of social value practices which support the acquiring of voice, designed (or redesigning) or specifications so that they support voice, and providing a ring-fenced percentage of budgets for voice compensations. This will require the use of more qualitative methodologies in relation to key performance indicators and outcomes, but also some responsibility being placed on statutory sector and larger voluntary sector organisations.

### **Next Steps**

The Funding and Resources Workshop was the third planned event as part Implementation Phase of the Voice and Influence Programme being coordinated by METRO GAVS. An initial workshop on the Voice and Influence Charter took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022, with the second workshop on Definitions, Standards and Principles which support the Voice and Influence Charter taking place on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022. The two remaining events within the Implementation Phase include a training and networking session to learn about how the different elements of the 'system' works on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022, and the Voice and Influence Hub Co-Design Workshop on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022. Each workshop will continue to build upon the progress which has been achieved thus far, and the overall progression of the Options for Improvement which were agreed upon at the Voice and Influence Conference in December 2021.

For further information, please contact the following:

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