**The
Civil Society Group
Q&A**

1. **What is The Civil Society Group?**

It is an informal collaboration of infrastructure organisations who represent and support members and groups from across the charity sector and wider civil society.

1. **Where did it come from?**

A collaboration between charity representative and member organisations in civil society was formed in March 2020. Initially this was designed as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the knowledge that charities and wider civil society had a huge part to play and unique abilities in helping communities through it.

The group provides a “home” for many leaders across the sector - a weekly check-in where views can be shared safely, and mutual support could be offered to organisations and individuals across the sector, allowing them to deliver the best support to communities.

The pandemic poses some of the greatest challenges to our country and communities in its recent history. It was clear that working together and focusing our collective effort would help us get through the worst times. Leading representative bodies and membership organisations in the sector met to discuss how best to collaborate in order to best support the communities we serve and support the government in a time of national crisis.

This collaboration led to the launch in March 2020 of the #EveryDayCounts campaign, which unlocked a £750m package for charities in England in April. The group then developed the follow up #NeverMoreNeeded campaign, which included a five-point financial package aimed at providing much needed further support for the sector.

Charities and others in civil society play a huge role in the lives of people and communities across the UK. We saw the need for the sector to come together and efficiently deliver services across, helping to hold society together during the crisis and to build communities in areas where they hadn’t been before, while supporting varying needs and working with volunteers in different ways. We are continuing to see an increase in inequality, even after the changes in restrictions across the UK, and with less support from central government the need for effective and efficient delivery of charity services will continue to be vital for society.

1. **Why is the group being created now?**

We have collaborated to support our communities and the members and organisations in our networks throughout the pandemic. The benefits of this collaboration have been huge and as we move into a world left with the impacts of Covid, charities, social enterprise and volunteers have a continuing role to play in our recovery. That’s why this informal collaboration is now being further developed as The Civil Society Group.

1. **How will it operate?**

The Civil Society Group operates as an exchange of opinions, a place of safety to network and share ideas, and a space where policies of mutual interest can be developed and promoted, and intelligence shared.

The group has a strategic oversight group of 16 members who are meeting monthly. There will be three sub-groups with a focus across the objectives of the collaboration (influencing, policy and sharing information). One of the sub-groups currently consists of a diverse range of over 62 members, maximising the opportunity to share information across civil society. Further ‘task and finish’ sub-groups will be formed as required.

1. **Who is taking part and who can join?**

We believe it is vitally important for this collaboration to be non-exclusive and comprehensive in its nature. A wide variety of organisations are already involved. We have been able to access the wisdom and understanding of charities large and small in our networks, social enterprises and crucially funders and funding umbrella groups. But we want more member and representative organisations from across the sector to take part.

Collaboration is at the heart of what The Civil Society Group want to achieve for wider society. We believe that issues facing this country can only be involved when we include everybody whether that be faith groups, charity shops, local community operations or foodbanks. This group does not seek to be the sole representative voice for the sector. Through diversity of thought, ideas, and experiences we believe we can help civil society to deliver support for communities more efficiently.

Current membership of The Civil Society Group:

**\*** = member of strategic oversight group

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| ACEVO (Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations)**\*** | Lloyds Bank Foundation |
| ACF (Association of Charitable Foundations)**\*** | Locality |
| ACO (Association of Charitable Organisations) | London Funders |
| ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) | Masorti Judaism |
| AMRC (Association of Medical Research Charities) | Muslim Charities Forum |
| AOC (Association of Chairs)**\*** | National Voices |
| Bond | NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action)**\*** |
| Caritas | National Children’s Bureau (NCB) |
| Charity Finance Group (CFG)**\*** | NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations)**\*** |
| CharityComms**\*** | Neighbourly |
| Charity Retail Association**\*** | Neurological Alliance |
| Chartered Institute of Fundraising (CIOF)**\*** | NIVCA (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action) |
| Children England | Pilot Light**\*** |
| Clinks | Reach |
| Cranfield Trust | Richmond Group |
| Disability Rights UK | Royal Voluntary Service |
| DSC (Directory of Social Change)**\*** | Small Charities Coalition (SCC)**\*** |
| Eden Project Communities | Scouts |
| Equality Trust | Social Enterprise UK (SEUK)**\*** |
| Equally Ours**\*** | Sign Health**\*** |
| Girlguiding | UK Coop |
| GMCVO (Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation) | UK Youth |
| Homelesslink | VODG |
| InterFaith | Voice 4 Change England |
| Irish in Britain | Volunteering Matters |
| Jewish Leadership Council | WCVA / CGGC (Welsh Council for Voluntary Action / Cyngor Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Cymru)**\*** |
| Jewish Volunteering Network | Women’s Resource Centre (WRC) |
| LGBT Consortium |  |

1. **Where will this group sit in relation to other sector bodies and representative organisations?**

This group is not intended to supplant the work of any of the existing civil society representative organisations or membership bodies but to add to and accelerate their influence. The group’s constituency is much wider and the collaboration itself is not intended to provide specific services. The Civil Society Group is intended to operate on the basis of subsidiarity: in other words, the principle that a central structure should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level. It will, however, provide a more coordinated approach and unified voice for conversations between civil society and decision-makers, recognising this has historically been a challenge.

1. **When will it start work (and on what)?**

The work of The Civil Society Group has already begun, and members have started meeting, broadly monthly. Currently collaborating organisations have been working together on several priorities, including:

* Working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on four joint strategic priorities for civil society and the government:
	1. Cross-Whitehall relationships.
	2. Better data.
	3. Demonstrating impact and value.
	4. Commissioning and procurement.
* Creating a framework for coordinated action across the charity sector and wider civil society on improving race equity.
* Liaising with the Charity Commission to share information on what is happening across civil society and within the regulator.
* Developing new relationships with government and politicians and exploring how civil society can support the ‘levelling up’ of communities.
1. **Who can I contact if I want to get involved or find out more information?**

We want more member and representative organisations from across civil society to get involved.

For organisations and individuals who would like to become a member of The Civil Society Group or who have questions about the group, please contact collaboration@dsc.org.uk.

For media enquiries please contact press@ncvo.org.uk / 07852 721 478.