



PRESS RELEASE
20 July 2012
EMBARGOED until: 0800 Friday 20 July 2012

Barely surviving: Cuts to voluntary and community organisations are hurting the most vulnerable

Now with year-by-year trend analysis, London Voluntary Service Council's (LVSC) fourth annual Big Squeeze survey paints a picture of a sector painfully focused on survival in the struggle to meet dramatically increased levels of need with vastly reduced resources.

41% of voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations closed services in the last year, and a further 29% expect to make closures in the year to come. Survey respondents made it clear that government policies, including public sector cuts and welfare reforms, have had direct negative effects on Londoners who face rising poverty and growing inequalities.

The most vulnerable Londoners are most affected: families facing job losses and homelessness; older people at risk of isolation and in need of specialist care; disabled people threatened by cuts to benefits and support; refugees and asylum seekers; and children with special educational needs and their families. London's VCS organisations offer lifelines to these and many other communities in need. The closure of services entails a tragic loss of support and voice for some of Britain's most vulnerable citizens.

And there are increasing pressures on those which remain. "Waiting times for outreach services have grown," says Ruth Hayes of Islington Law Centre, "Our reception staff report that more people are in evident mental distress when they are in the waiting area. We have had to make direct provision for emergency needs of some of the young people that we work with for the first time."

Yet this sector would not be what it is without its dedication to improving the lives of society's most vulnerable, and with no choice but to adapt or die, the levels of resourcefulness and innovation in London's VCS groups are the highest yet recorded. 60% are working proactively to improve their fundraising and seek more diverse sources of income; 90% have changed their working practices to respond to increased needs; 95% are collaborating with VCS partners to make a difference.

"This is a time when more services are needed as communities are under more stress," says Ranjit Dhillon of the Addiction Support and Care Agency. "There are more people coming forward with addictions, mental health problems, stress and eating disorders. We are now opening early mornings and late evenings, and have taken on more volunteers. Our capacity is fully stretched."

More Big Squeeze respondents than in previous years say that they will be able to meet the increases in demand, but a worrying 50% still say that they will not be able to. And this is from the organisations with the resilience to survive the recession thus far.

Unfortunately, right now, the future does not look brighter. Cuts in support to VCS groups have the potential to affect those most in need for generations. "Many black, Asian and minority organisations are having to close," says Rahana Mohammed of Race on the Agenda (ROTA). "These communities are more likely to be affected by unemployment and redundancy and with cuts in benefits and housing due in 2013, the impact will be massive."

LVSC Chief Executive Lin Gillians says, "It's good to see that many VCS organisations are coming up with new ways to deliver services to support Londoners in this difficult economic climate. However, our report suggests that poverty and inequality are increasing in the capital so the high number of organisations reporting service closures over the last two years is alarming. The higher proportion of preventative and specialist services closed suggests that we may be building up long-term social problems that will take much more money to address in the future. "

To download a copy of the Big Squeeze report visit www.lvsc.org.uk/.

ENDS

Editors notes

- Contact information for images, interviews and further information:
Keely Khoury, LVSC
T: 020 8709 9770 E: keely@lvsc.org.uk
- London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC) is a strategic and independent voice for London's voluntary and community sector. We support London's voluntary and community organisations to improve the lives of Londoners. <http://www.lvsc.org.uk/>

Key information about LVSC's Big Squeeze survey:

- The Big Squeeze survey was open to London's voluntary and community sector during May and June 2012. It represents an up-to-date snapshot of the impact of the economic climate and recent policy changes on Londoners and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) that serves them
- 252 organisations (representing many services) responded to the survey
- The 2012 survey was conducted in partnership with London Funders; LASA; Women's Resource Centre; Trust for London; City Bridge Trust; False Economy; NAVCA; Greater London Volunteering; London Community Resource Network; Stonewall Housing; London Civic Forum; ROTA; Children England; London Community Foundation and Ethical Property Foundation
- Download the Big Squeeze survey summary and full report from [our website](#), available on 20.07.12.