

Consultation

In 1987 a brief public statement which outlined the nature of the new Trust was circulated to all councils for voluntary service (CVS) or their equivalent and to all the main pan-London voluntary organisations. The Trust's wish to have meetings and seminars about its work was clearly expressed both in the written statement and through individual discussions.

As a parallel initiative, two major exercises were undertaken to seek the views of black and minority ethnic organisations and of women's organisations. The former was carried out by the then Organisations Development Unit (Ethnic Minorities) at NCVO; the latter was carried out by Dr Angela Richardson.

It was made clear from the outset that, because funds were limited, the Trust intended to direct resources to small locally-based community groups with charitable purposes. Grants to individual organisations would not exceed £5,000 in any one year.

Responses to consultation were in sharp contrast: either enthusiastic and lively or non-existent. In the 32 Boroughs only 10 CVSs took up the invitation to hold any form of meeting about the Trust for London. Seven pan-London bodies held seminars providing an opportunity to meet with some of their members. One other, the Greater London Association of Alcohol Services (GLAAS) undertook a detailed survey, by questionnaire, of its members.

These exercises were extremely informative. Hundreds of small organisations were contacted. The consultation with the women's groups was done by questionnaire, follow-up telephone calls and a limited number of meetings. The initiative with minority ethnic groups was

PROFILE

JAMAIT-AL-NISSA

(Formerly Haringey Muslim Women's Council)

Jamait-Al-Nissa is a registered charity which was originally established with the name Haringey Muslim Women's Council. It began operations in January 1988.

The organisation aims to improve the living conditions of women by providing suitable training to increase their opportunities for employment. The group operates from large double fronted premises rented from the London Borough of Haringey. The office is open five days a week. Current activities include advice and information sessions, running workshops on fabric printing and traditional crafts, sewing, and English language and communication classes.

The organisation first received a grant of £4,940 from the Trust for London in December 1988, towards the running costs of the group and for the cost of classes in English, Arabic and Urdu. At the time the grant was made the group's total income over the previous six months had been £191.90.

Ten years later Jamait-Al-Nissa has received a grant from the National Lottery Charities Board amounting to £185,769 and, in addition, has received funds from the local Task Force, the Local Authority, the European Social Fund, and a contribution from the North London Training and Enterprise Council. The organisation received a further grant from the Trust for London in November 1996.

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undertaken via two major all-day meetings.

Concerns

A number of factors which emerged strongly from the consultations had to be addressed.

They were:

- There was virtually unanimous support for directing resources to small organisations or projects but it was essential to define small.
- As small groups were often not on the



Asian Parents Association for Special Educational Needs in Tower Hamlets

APASENTH is a Bangladeshi group providing help and advice to parents of children with special educational needs. The group was established in 1984 and has received grants from the Trust for London on three occasions.

usual networks for information every effort had to be made to reach them.

- The amount of money that per year was available in total (about £600,000) was small compared to needs and likely requests so clear priorities and comprehensible and accessible procedures were needed.
- Staffing needed to be adequate to provide a good service including assisting small organisations to apply.
- The Trust needed to have a 'sharpness' in policies and priorities that enabled it to be seen as different from other trusts.
- Local networks needed to be involved in discussing local needs.
- Without some form of targeting, groups in the outer boroughs would be missed.

- Many statutory authorities did not understand the Trust's role.
- Monitoring was important no matter what the size of grant.
- It was necessary to develop equal opportunity policies.

Conflicting demands

The demands made on the Trust were not all compatible with each other. It is valuable to state the key conflicts:

- The funding of modest revenue costs for at least two years was often stated as a priority yet such a policy could result in very little new money being available in the second year.
- Money for new initiatives was welcomed yet many existing groups were struggling and needed an injection of money to continue.
- Starting up new groups was valued yet the folly of generating new schemes that are not later supported by other sources was also recognised.
- The need where possible to link with the local authority was recognised yet it was vital not to be too bound by it, given the attitudes of some local authorities to the voluntary sector.
- Some saw £5,000 as far too low a ceiling for grants, especially where salaries were a priority, whilst others saw the ceiling as too high for it might discourage small groups from applying for much needed sums of, say, £250.

Other influencing factors

Other important influences needed to be taken into account in determining the shape of the Trust for London:

- The Trust should have an initiating role and not simply await applications.
- The Trust should be distinctive and not become 'just another trust' to which all charitable bodies apply in their search for funds.
- As the money was limited efforts

should be made to have an impact with its use.

What overwhelmed people at all the meetings were the immense needs across London and the relatively small amount of money available from the Trust. The frustration about this low level of income was coupled with a wish to make the best use of it and for its use to be effective.

Inevitably, such a wide ranging consultation produced far too many priorities. Further, what is a priority in, for example, Kingston is less so in Camden because of the differences in local populations and the funding policies of the respective local authorities.

In many instances it became clear that hard decisions about priorities could only be made when a particular area of need or an area of London was allocated an overall sum of money.

Groups expressed concern about the need for and the current difficulties of obtaining funds for broad matters such as:

- start up costs
- basic running costs
- training for staff and committee members
- part-time administrators or the equivalent.

The funding needs identified from the survey of womens' groups were salaries for administrative, development, outreach and fieldwork posts; safe and accessible premises; and materials for information, communication and campaigning such as leaflets, posters and newsletters. Groups facing particular funding problems were minority ethnic women's groups, especially for Asian women's work, and lesbian groups. In the consultation with a large number of minority ethnic organisations the needs were overwhelming, ranging from major issues such as unemployment to quite specific concerns such as mother tongue classes.

The disability groups were particularly

concerned about the small self help groups, the young disabled and disabled women. Those working on housing estates argued that very small grants for tenants' groups' basic costs could be immensely valuable, freeing them from financial anxiety, and enabling them to work on the estates' problems.

Advice services were negligible in the outer boroughs; and pockets of need in otherwise affluent areas suffered as a result. For many of these groups, campaigning was an issue for which only modest funding was often needed but rarely obtained.

It was especially difficult to identify gaps, that is, the problems no one was addressing. The survey of women's work, for example, was not able to find any agency working with black women in prison, or young prostitutes. It served as an essential reminder that not all needs are being met and that initiatives may have to be taken to find and respond to them.

The most valuable view that came out of all the discussions on priorities was the acceptance and indeed urging of the need to have clear priorities, even as to certain geographical areas. Without priorities, it was argued the money would lose its impact and small groups would not know whether it was really worth applying.

Women's groups, for example, were wary of applying to trusts on the off-chance, as the effort involved was too frequently disproportionate to the outcome. Most thought that targeting would enable groups to be reached and needs met, provided that over time a wide range of areas and organisations was encompassed.

Particular attention, it was suggested, should be paid to larger grants being used in an enabling way for a number of smaller organisations. For example, in one outer borough what was required was a local hall to be repaired at a cost of £20,000 which would then provide a much-needed facility for all groups.

Another example pressed strongly by

some minority ethnic groups was the value of funding 'enablers' who could explore funding opportunities at all levels for a whole range of groups.

The aim would be to use the Trust's money as a catalyst to open up more permanent sources currently unknown to or inaccessible to the smaller groups. One outer borough advocated this for all the groups in the borough so that a salary of, say, £15,000 for a funding advice officer would actually have a borough-wide impact.

Finally, the importance of all applicants

having, or working seriously towards, an equal opportunity policy was emphasised. Thus it had to be part of the Trust's approach to assist organisations develop such policies and for the difficulties in implementing them effectively, to be recognised.

Response

After very careful consideration of the possible responses to the issues emerging from the consultations it was decided that the Trust should have a system of establishing general priorities, earmarking money accordingly, and then working in the area of those concerns to draw out the applications for consideration.

Such a response entailed targeting the Trust's resources whilst not having to handle too many applications. It also offered the opportunity to meet needs that were shaped locally.

There would be a clear timetable with four grants committee meetings a year with money broadly allocated equally in each quarter.

This approach was not completely straightforward and may have seemed lengthy, but it did have many advantages and possibilities. It could mean, for example, that certain sums were earmarked for needs across London, such as those of minority ethnic groups, while sums could also be allocated for a limited number of boroughs in inner and outer London.

Such an approach;

- emphasised the pro-active style;
- clearly distinguished the Trust;
- avoided a 'free for all' style application process;
- offered real possibilities of reaching small groups;
- enabled positive action to be taken in favour of certain groups or certain areas;
- increased the chance to make an impact

PROFILE

AN VIET FOUNDATION

The An Viet Foundation is a voluntary organisation operating in Hackney, established in 1986 in order to improve the conditions of life of Vietnamese refugees. In particular, the organisation is concerned about the elderly, women and young people.

Ten years ago the organisation's activities included running classes in Vietnamese, Cantonese, maths and physics for young people up to 'A' level standard, running a youth club and self-defence class for young people once a week, providing welfare rights, education and housing advice for Vietnamese refugees, and running an enterprise and employment project for Vietnamese wishing to start their own businesses. The organisation was also setting up a housing scheme for elderly Vietnamese and single homeless Vietnamese.

At the time only sessional workers were employed and the majority of the work was carried out by volunteers.

The Trust for London made a grant of £5,000 to enable the organisation to employ a part-time Fundraiser for a limited period.

Ten years later the organisation has grown considerably. It is a registered charity undertaking a wide variety of activities such as a drop-in luncheon service for elderly people, English language training, welfare advice and employment training. It produces a quarterly magazine. The An Viet Foundation receives funds from the London Borough of Hackney, the local Training and Enterprise Council, and the European Social Fund.

The organisation has also received grants from charitable trusts including the City Parochial Foundation, the sister trust of the Trust for London. Some of the organisation's most successful ventures have now become independent of the An Viet Foundation and run as separate organisations. There is now a staff group of four and an active group of volunteers. The organisation's annual income last year amounted to over £50,000. The An Viet Foundation has become well established and is an important resource for the Vietnamese community in London.

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with the money available;

- offered opportunities to work with other funding bodies;
- enabled both the Trust and potential applicants to plan ahead as priorities would be known in advance;
- created a programme which enabled the Trust to consider carefully how best to use any unforeseen increase in income;
- reduced the pressure on organisations to get in an application but allowed more considered responses as money was earmarked and would not therefore be lost to some other area.

On the assumption that in a 12 month period the Trust would have an assured

grant income of nearly £600,000 the money was earmarked initially as follows:

	£
minority ethnic groups	100,000
women's groups	100,000
eight named boroughs	320,000
fund for small grants	50,000
	£570,000

In order for all the boroughs to have a fair share the eight targeted ones changed each year, producing in effect a four year programme.

In order to stay in touch with the patterns of need, and above all to engage the groups more consistently in the processes of the Trust, there was an important role for advisory groups for some areas of work. Minority ethnic issues was certainly one where a group

Tamil Action Committee (UK)

The Tamil Action Committee was established in 1962 to provide services to Tamil asylum seekers and refugees requiring advice and support. The organisation has remained small. It relies heavily on the work of its founder Sinappu Maharasingam (right) who is still very active within the group.

was needed whose primary role was to advise on needs and priorities.

A new trust inevitably arouses a great deal of interest. The Trust for London was no exception. The Trust knew that it was neither possible nor appropriate to deal with matters quietly. The consultations were part of a continuing and open process to try to make the Trust useful to the voluntary sector in London.

Staffing

With the experience of the consultation outcomes in mind it was possible to consider the staff required to implement the Trust's policies. Two vital decisions were made. Even though the grant income was only about £600,000 it was decided to have two grants staff as a considerable number of grants were likely to be made to small groups all over London.

Secondly it was readily agreed that the staff should reach out to small groups and they should not just wait to receive applications. They were to be 'field officers' not 'grants officers'.

All this now seems the obvious way to proceed, but in 1988 some of the larger charities and some local authorities were less than happy. Indeed one inner London borough told us there were no small groups in their borough!

The first two field officers, Alison Harker and Evelyn Oldfield, took up their posts in January 1988, and the first six grants totalling £6,700 were made at the Grants Committee meeting on 20 April 1988.

Grants Committee

The Grants Committee comprised five Trustees and up to three co-opted members drawn from the voluntary sector who have equal voting rights. From the outset it was felt that the input of co-opted members would strengthen the Committee's knowledge and understanding of the voluntary sector targeted by the Trust. So it turned out to be.