



Supporting the  
children and families'  
voluntary sector



## Data and civil society

### About our programme

The First Steps programme is delivering a range of activities to support the sustainability and infrastructure of London voluntary and community organisations working with children, young people and families. Full details about the programme on offer can be obtained via the website <http://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/project/first-steps-funded-by-city-bridge-trust/>

### Introduction

The Way Ahead outlines how civil society made up of 'individuals, organisations and communities', can work together to improve the lives of Londoners. One core aspect is that '*civil society support, independent funders and the local public sector should share data gleaned through coproducing a shared understanding of need, and information on policy developments and best practice*'. A focus on data is often associated with communication and digitalisation. This briefing will focus on data, primarily digital, to consider issues that affect data usage and sharing for civil society.

### Data usage for civil society

Data has a number of uses to support civil society in their activities. Data offers insight into behaviours and experiences, and can be used to develop and deliver services to local communities.

It provides information about civil society organisations, such as that provided by NCVO through the almanac; activities provided by these organisations; and information about need for the communities they work with.

Data used effectively can demonstrate what impact the activities of an organisation is making to local communities and to wider public policies. Sharing such data can assist when looking to address needs across geographical areas, or neighbouring boroughs. It may also be useful for benchmarking with other similar organisations. A good strategy and process for collating, analysing and using data can also help with fundraising.



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## The Way Ahead

The Way Ahead (TWA) is a vision for the future sustainability for civil society. Data is highlighted in two of the core elements of the overall vision. That is: *Civil society support, independent funders and the local public sector should share data gleaned through co-producing a shared understanding of need, and information on policy developments and best practice.* Also that *The GLA should collate, analyse and provide data on civil society and communities' needs* (The Way Ahead, 2016)

A recent work stream on data for TWA notes that data is a priority for voluntary and community sector organisations, but also identifies the need for data to be accessible. Further that it needs to be clear why the data is being collected; that the data is understood; is of good quality and, can be used to measure impact amongst other considerations. The 'orientation to data sharing task and finish group' work noted how communications and digitalisation are interlinked in any conversation about data sharing. Some of the issues raised by the participants of this task and finish group include a need for a range of support and information:

- a regularly updated directory (database) of civil society organisations;
- improvement of data quality and knowledge about data quality issues;
- increased knowledge and understanding of useful, open-data and quality research sources;
- help teaching individuals and communities about how and why to use data;
- data management and governance assistance

(White, and Webb, 2017)

## Policies and practice

There are a number of policies and guidance on data and data sharing.

### **GLA and data sharing**

The Greater London Authority (GLA) promotes better use of data and in its response to a government consultation on data use identified how data usage can help organisations to 'make better decisions and operate more efficiently' as well as help 'public bodies to design better policy' (GLAEconomics, 2016). The London City Data Strategy talks about using data as an 'agent for change' (GLA, 2016). The GLA regularly publishes London specific data on the GLA data store available for everyone to use including civil society, be it individuals or organisations.

### **Digitalisation**

The Mayor stated his intention to improve digital inclusion across London firstly in the draft Vision for a Diverse and Inclusive City (2017a), and more recently with the announcement of a Digital Inclusion Strategy for London (2015). The Digital Inclusion Strategy builds on the Digital Inclusion Charter, which aims to get everyone, who wants to be online, online by 2020. To advance digital inclusion, the draft Diverse and Inclusive City strategy proposes:



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- piloting projects to support people to get online and get the basic digital skills they need
- working with central government, local boroughs and civil society organisations to help get all Londoners online
- advocating for faster and better connectivity for all parts of London especially in poor areas

Current work includes a Mi Wi-Fi pilot to lend tablets which are Wi-Fi enabled through libraries and community centres to increase basic digital skills training; knowledge and support; and reduce digital exclusion amongst disadvantaged groups. The results from the pilots will be published in April 2018.

The draft London Plan mentions the need for better digital connectivity with the intention of better access and increased broadband speed for Londoners to access digital information (Mayor of London, 2017c)

### **General Data Protection Regulation**

From 25 May 2018 a new regulation will lead to improvements in how data is collected and used by charities. The background premise is that these changes will lead to more transparency; create an evidence base to be able to assess areas of strengths and weaknesses in the sector; and make charities more accountable for their decisions

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will replace the existing Data Protection Act 1998 and contains a set of requirements for organisations to handle personal data in compliance with the law.

The Information Commissioner defines personal data as any information that relates to 'an identifiable person who can be directly or indirectly identified in particular by reference to an identifier' (ICO, undated). Under the GDPR, organisations must appoint a Data Protection Officer if they:

- Are a public authority (except for courts that act in their judicial capacity)
- Implement large scale systematic monitoring of individuals
- Process large amount of special categories of data and data relating to criminal convictions and offences

Whilst many civil society organisations may not fit under this criteria, many may wish to appoint a Data Protection Officer so they consider the impact and implications of how any data they collect in everyday activities is stored and used. For example, in considering 'consent' there must be clear statements to demonstrate acceptance and consent to the use of personal data.

### **Challenges to data for civil society**



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Digitalisation is a mechanism for collecting, collating and using data. Whilst digitalisation is useful in a number of areas including future planning of organisations; there are issues relating to digital literacy and effective usage within civil society.

## **Organisations**

In the current climate, the use of technology is expected within organisations. Social media is regularly used for digital engagement to establish relationships between civil society organisations (CSO) and users, and for fundraising. It would therefore be expected that most organisations would have a digital strategy. However, in a recent survey of charities, some 58% did not have a digital strategy or basic digital skills (TechTrust, 2017). Of the 1,261 charities who took part in the survey, some 92% who had a digital strategy expected measurable improvement in their impact in 2018.

- 17% felt a better understanding of technology would help to achieve their strategic goals; yet most of this 17% had no plans to invest in digital training
- 53% of charities had no paid staff using IT but relied on volunteers
- 45% of charities were confident in their ability to protect their data

One participant suggested that *'Charities need to start investing in the digital skills of everyone from volunteers to trustees in order to provide better services to beneficiaries, scale up impact and help their organisations remain relevant...'*

Whilst it is evident from this report that two thirds of charities expect to increase their digital competence through digital training for staff and increase IT infrastructure, a lack of time and money however, are cited as reasons why digital competence has not improved. Tech Trust makes a number of suggestions for charities to make digitalisation and the data embedded within it work for them in delivering their objectives.

## **Individuals**

In 2017, the highest use of internet access was found in London and the South East (ONS, 2017). But the picture is somewhat complicated. Whilst internet access has increased and more use of this via mobile devices, digital exclusion is associated with wider social and economic exclusion; with 90% of non-users being classed as disadvantaged (ONS, 2017). Digital exclusion is experienced more by disabled and older people; women, those on low incomes and many from London's black and minority ethnic communities who might have never used the internet, are not online, nor have the skills or access to benefit from digital inclusion (GLA, 2017a).

Findings from the Real Digital Divide research reinforce this, where non users were found to be retired (some 61%) or not working (around 21%) (Good Things Foundation, 2017).

There is variability in access to digital data across London. 2015 data show that boroughs such as Barnet, Enfield, Lambeth and Lewisham had high internet usage amongst their population of (92%,96%, 96%, 96% respectively) compared to Croydon, Barking and Dagenham, Haringey and Redbridge (88%, 85%, 80%, 86%). With regards to ethnicity the



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lowest usage was in the Indian and Bangladeshi communities as shown in the following table. With the highest usage amongst those of professional occupations.

2015					
London					
Ethnicity	Ever used		Never used		
	number	per cent	number	per cent	
White	3,840,400	92	340,900	8	
Mixed/multiple ethnic background	162,000	99	2,300	1	
Indian	479,900	88	62,600	12	
Pakistani	150,500	91	14,600	9	
Bangladeshi	158,700	90	18,200	10	
Chinese	64,700	92	6,000	8	
Other Asian background	237,600	92	20,100	8	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	791,900	92	66,500	8	
Other ethnic group	348,800	90	38,700	10	
<i>BAME</i>	<i>2,394,100</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>229,000</i>	<i>9</i>	
Total	6,234,500	92	570,000	8	

Data are for adults 16+

**Source: LFS 2011 - 2015 Q3**

(London Datastore, 2016)

Moreover, whilst initiatives, such as the Mi Wi-Fi pilot mentioned above, aim to increase digital literacy, use and understanding of data, the closure of libraries, and time limits on computers, are still proving barriers to access to digital data.

### Support to use data better

There is no doubt that data has a number of benefits including identifying needs to assist in developing policy and being used to demonstrate impact. A number of mechanisms should be in place for good governance on data. This can include: making a digital strategy; upskilling staff and volunteers' digital skills; adherence to the GDPR and having the right IT infrastructure.

The Information Commissioners Office produce a range of materials on data and data sharing.

A checklist to inform data sharing include questions about:



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Whether data sharing is justified?

- What is the sharing meant to achieve?
- Have you assessed the potential benefits and risks to individuals and/or society of sharing or not sharing?
- Is the sharing proportionate to the issue you are addressing?

Do you have the power to share?

- The type of organisation you work for
- Any relevant functions or powers of your organisation.
- The nature of the information you have been asked to

Other points to consider include:

- Whether you have a data sharing agreement
- What information needs to be shared?
- What you need to tell people about the data sharing and how you will communicate that information.
- What arrangements need to be in place to provide individuals with access to their personal data if they request it?

(Information Commissioners Office, undated)

Civil society should consider these and other organisational issues to ensure they make effective use of data and when sharing data.

## Summary

Data offers a range of possibilities in terms of user insight, evaluation, planning and fundraising activities for CSOs. However, there are some challenges which impact on access and usage by civil society. Furthermore civil society need to ensure that the way data is managed and shared has good governance and is within required regulation. Nevertheless, managing and using data effectively will be advantageous for civil society organisations in delivering their own organisational objectives and in progressing The Way Ahead.

## Resources

Digital inclusion charter <https://doteveryone.org.uk/digital-skills/digital-skills-framework/>

Guidance for charities <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/charity/>

Measuring impact <https://knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact>

Information Commissioner's Office [data sharing web pages](#)

NCVO, almanac <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/>



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