



**Building East End
LGBT life**

3 Birkbeck Street
London E2 6JY

Chief Executive's Office:

Mobile: 07719 378143

Email: jack@rainbowhamlets.org

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Sir Ken Knight
Chief Commissioner, DCLG
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London E14 2BG
c/o matthew.mannion@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Dear Sir Ken,

**Submission in relation to the Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting
Wednesday, 22nd April, 2015 6.30 p.m.**

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Trustee Directors of Rainbow Hamlets (RH) with questions and concerns about the equality impact of the proposed Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience Mainstream Grant Programme.

Foremost amongst them, we are concerned that the proposed new arrangements are structured in such a way as to preclude an application to continue the essential work funded in the last round in relation to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) people. This equality impact has not been documented.

LGB&T people are as diverse as the wider community; intersectional identity in which sexual or gender identity is combined with other protected characteristics is extremely common in Tower Hamlets. Unlike characteristics transmitted through families, there are two types of cohesion challenges in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.

- 1) Intra-community cohesion – building understanding and good relations within the LGB&T population. Historically there has been no investment or support for LGB&T community infrastructure, bringing together LGB&T people from different backgrounds or generations. The engagement work funded by the C&EE MSG grant includes face to face/events, online, in print and via partners to begin to address this. It is an essential prerequisite to delivering inter-community work.
- 2) Inter-community cohesion – building understanding and good relations between LGB&T people and other populations/communities. Looking at learning across the UK, LGBT organisations run 'by and for' the community is the most successful model to develop effective engagement, cohesion and resilience work. Individuals work within such structures, not as isolated 'leaders'. Whilst inter-community relations between faith communities and/or BME communities are generally uncontroversial amongst the mainstream, the same cannot be said in relation to LGB&T community relations. We recognise, as was discussed at the Community Cohesion Contingency Planning and Tension Monitoring Group (CCCPTMG)

held after the recent Paris events, that such inter-community cohesion work is a medium and long term project. In Tower Hamlets, Muslim-LGBT relations requires a strategic approach over several years; as recognised in that meeting no local Muslim faith-based organisations would sign up publicly to direct LGBT engagement right now, whatever private conversations may or may not be happening. Rainbow Hamlets is one of the most adept agencies in this field within Britain, with a record of innovation. The CEO has over 25 years experience of leading work on faith and sexuality. Much work needs to be done to address homophobic slurs, and both violent and non violent attacks/extremism that result. Tower Hamlets is identified by the Metropolitan Police Service as one the three areas of London (alongside Soho/Westminster and Vauxhall/Lambeth) where hate incidents have very high community impact amongst LGB&T people across the Capital.

Rainbow Hamlets was awarded £40,000 over two years from the Community and Economic Engagement Strand in the last MSG round. During this period we transitioned from a voluntary to a professionalised agency and have outstripped every KPI. We have a well-respected reputation for the way we address sensitive and complex cohesion and equality issues, often involving faith and sexuality. This includes extensive participation in No Place For Hate, CCCPTMG and a wide array of other structures in which we advocate for LGBT inclusion, and wider equalities and diversity awareness. The grant has enabled RH to develop new casework roles, models and functions, well-integrated in both pan London LGBT structures, and local public and third sector networks. We participate in the Hate Incident Panel and MARAC, and DV Forum and have established with the local police case management and advisory functions that identify critical incidents, establish reassurance processes and enable better service. We also provide cultural competency advice to other agencies. Our expertise has been recognised by a capacity building award from MOPAC and in a wider role evaluating police work on LGBT-related hate crime at New Scotland Yard.

LGB&T council tax payers benefit very little from programmes funded by Mainstream Grant. Many delivery agencies in the C&EE programme identified no or very few LGB&T beneficiaries. A previously published impact assessment for related economic development programmes have had LGBT participation at less than one half of one per cent.

The local authority and the wider strategic partnership needs a partner with which to work in order to fulfil its public sector equality duty. This grant enabled Rainbow Hamlets to advocate for the needs and experiences of LGB&T people and for wider equalities concerns which otherwise would have no voice.

If the old programme enabled applications of up to £20,000 per annum, the new proposal states in the main report (item 5.1):

3.43.5 Theme 5 - Community Engagement Cohesion and Resilience

This theme will seek to:

- promote community leadership and engagement, supporting projects where local residents and community groups seek to develop activities and services to address locally identified needs; and
- support projects which promote community cohesions, through bringing groups and individuals from different cultures together in an integrated manner, based on our Community Cohesion toolkit model

The service specification will draw on lessons from the Community Cohesion and Neighbourhood Agreements toolkits, One Tower Hamlets and Public Health Can Do

funded projects, in terms of what has worked well and on other ideas that will emerge from discussions with community groups on the Empowering Residents and Building Resilience priority proposed in the revised Community Plan.

Projects will mainly be funded by way of smaller grants with a life of around 12 months. Scope for rationalising grant streams through combining the One Tower Hamlets and Can Do grants into a single pot with this MSG stream is being explored. {Our emphasis}

As a participant in the MSG Review process on behalf of the Third Sector, I heard on many occasions an assurance that the new programmes would be strategic grants, not small grants.

REQUEST ONE We ask you to consider whether the current proposal is indeed a strategic grants programme.

The Equality Impacts of the changes are addressed in document 5.1k.

It says:

1.4 Arguably the former Community Economic Engagement Services theme was also targeted at promoting cohesion within the borough, yet the entirety of the budget (0.300) is now allocated to Jobs Skills and Prosperity. However, it is not thought that this will adversely impact organisations or groups focused on improving cohesion within the borough given there is now a specific focus via the Cohesion Engagement Cohesion and Resilience theme. Whilst the budget and proportion of funding for this theme is small (0.080), there were very few 'cohesion' projects within the previous theme. Therefore the impact may be greater.

We wish to seek your views on two matters in relation to this:

- 1) The analysis fails to recognise the difference between a programme that enabled agencies to bid for grants of up to £20,000 a year over several years, and one that offers small grants of 5-10k for work over 12 months and on a one-off basis. Whatever the merits of any future bid, this is a structural change that by its nature excludes the kind of innovative extended work undertaken on behalf of LGB&T people over several years in the last programme from the terms of the new one. This is an equality impact on two protected characteristics: sexual orientation and gender identity. **REQUEST TWO** We formally request you review whether or not the engagement, cohesion and resilience needs of LGB&T people as we have set out, can continue to be addressed as effectively by 'smaller grants with a life of around 12 months'. We ask you to ensure this is documented, so that officers can consider how to address it.
- 2) The paragraph also records that not a single penny of the previous C&EE budget is being allocated into the Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience theme. **REQUEST THREE** We ask you to consider whether or not this is an appropriate allocation of resource and whether some funds be transferred across to enable a more strategic grant programme in the new theme.

Referring now to the full specifications in 5.1g. There it states that the One Tower Hamlets Fund was meant to be merged with this programme (last paragraph Section 1). Yet it has recently been opened as a discrete grant programme. It would be appropriate to retain the Mayor's One Tower Hamlets Fund if the MSG programme was at the strategic grant level. However if this MSG strand is also a small grants programme, with very similar aims and purposes, it is hard for agencies to understand the distinction between the two. **REQUEST FOUR** Could you clarify

why two over-lapping small grants programmes are on the table and no strategic level grant programme?

Finally, we wish to draw your attention to The Cohesion Tool Kit also known as [Getting Along Together](#). In both this MSG programme and the One Tower Hamlets Fund, it is seen as a key statement of bid criteria. It was written before the Equality Act, and refers to documents which the agencies responsible have updated many times. Yet it has never been updated or consulted upon. It is focussed on models of community organisation involving individual leaders that best suits faith and established BME communities. The document does not once address directly the sensitive and complex cohesion challenges in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity in this borough. There is no recognition of intra-community cohesion challenges, of the need to build relations within as well as between, of complications that arise from intersectionality, of building understanding with reluctant partners. We would question whether it incorporates learning from many of the challenges addressed by the CCCPTMG in recent years.

REQUEST FIVE Please consider whether this needs to be reviewed/revised as a matter of urgency to incorporate cohesion and resilience needs of disabled, LGBT and new migrant communities. In the meantime, we ask you consider its role in grant giving.

We thank you for your attention on this matter. As ever we remain committed to working in partnership with all officers in the excellent work they do in this field, notwithstanding our comments on these proposals.

Yours sincerely,



Jack Gilbert
Chief Executive
Rainbow Hamlets
3 Birkbeck St
London E2