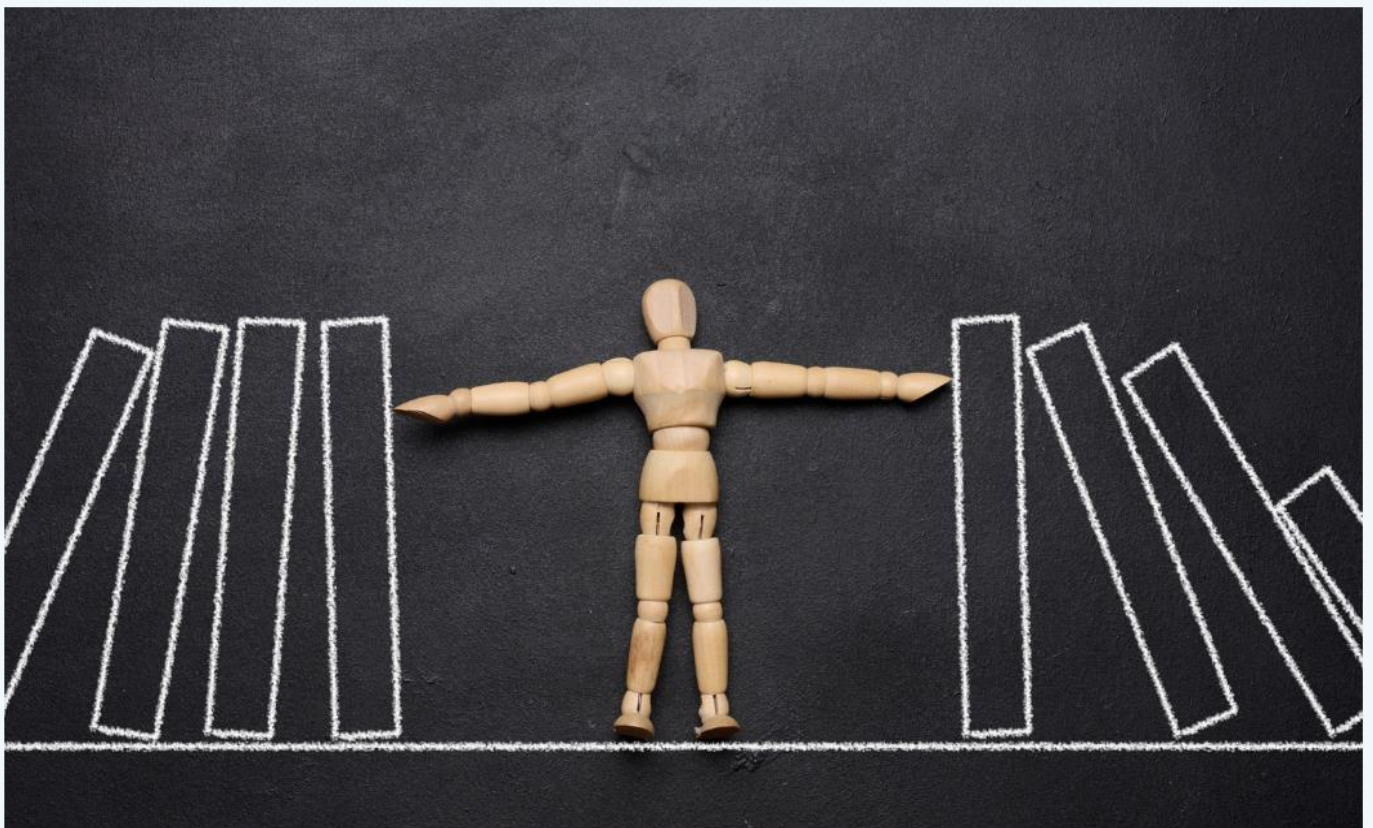


GLA Community Resilience Equalities Engagement Report



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List of Abbreviations	
BRF	Borough Resilience Forum
CVS	Councils for Voluntary Service
DDPO	Deaf and Disabled Peoples Organisation
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
GLA	Greater London Authority
LCEP	London Communities Emergencies Partnership
LRF	London Resilience Forum
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector

1. Introduction

This report has been written for the GLA City Resilience Team by Paul Bragman and Kim Donahue as part of a commissioned project to facilitate strategic engagement on community resilience with ten equality partner organisations in London. It reviews the context, describes the methods used for engagement, summarises the findings from engagement and provides key recommendations and conclusions.

This project has worked to the following aims:

- Understand how to sustain engagement of equality organisations in resilience.
- Strengthen partnerships by supporting equality partners to be around the table for resilience.
- Building knowledge and understanding of resilience with equality partners.
- Building strategic understanding of equality partner needs and capacity within the London Communities Emergencies Partnership (LCEP) and more widely for the London Resilience Forum (LRF).

The project worked with ten equality partner organisations:

- Action for Race Equality
- Asian Women's Resource Centre
- Consortium of LGBT+ Organisations
- HEAR Equality Network
- Inclusion London
- London Age Friendly Forum
- London Gypsy and Traveller Forum
- Southeast and East Asian Centre
- Ubele Initiative
- Women's Resource Centre

Additionally, the project worked closely with LCEP to understand their aims, plans and current ways of working.

1.1. Context

This project was developed as part of the effort to strengthen community resilience practice across London. The aim of community resilience is to establish a participatory approach to emergency management, as set out in the [national community resilience development framework](#). Community resilience includes working with civil society (in all its forms and including the voluntary and community sector or VCS) to co-create a more resilient capital city. This work grew out of the new [UK Government Resilience Framework](#) which put an emphasis on a 'whole of society' approach to resilience in the UK.

Community resilience sits as part of wider resilience building through the [London Resilience Partnership](#), which is a partnership of institutions and organisations that help coordinate response and recovery to emergencies in London. At present there

is limited engagement from equality organisations in resilience and emergency planning through the [London Resilience Forum](#), which sets the strategy and workplan of the London Resilience Partnership.

The newly established [LCEP](#) aims to bring together Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), alongside the faith sector, in the resilience space. This includes helping coordinate VCS partners in response to emergencies, providing input into training, and supporting the sector's capabilities for resilience. There is a need for further support for LCEP to establish good engagement with equality organisations.

Systemically marginalised groups are often found to have higher vulnerability to emergencies. Longstanding structural inequalities can affect the way people in society have access to information, guidance, and support for resilience. During the Covid pandemic this was evident in the disproportionate impact the pandemic had on systemically marginalised communities, including those from the global majority, disabled people, older people, and others.

Globally there have been recent incidents, including terrorist attacks and targeting people based on their identity. In London, attacks of this nature have taken place before, including the 1999 nail bombings targeting London's LGBTQ+ and black and Bengali communities.

Equality organisations bring specific knowledge, skills, and experience to support robust incident response and recovery, often including information not held by other agencies. Equality infrastructure organisations routinely support grassroots community-led equity groups across London and are a key component of effective community resilience.

Sitting within this context is also the current cost of living crisis, the climate emergency, deep structural inequalities, institutional racism, ableism, homophobia, and misogyny – all of which are experienced by communities in London daily.

The VCS, the organisations that support communities, are facing unprecedented challenges¹, including increased demand for services within current crises and, for the first time in a decade, overall sector income has declined, an impact which has a disproportionate effect on smaller organisations, of which equality organisations are generally included. Small charities also face an increased risk of closure and are increasingly dependent on public funding. Levels of formal (meaning through an organisation) regular volunteering have been declining since 2020 and remain well below pre-pandemic levels.

VCS organisations often highlight that they are filling gaps in public sector services (for example NHS mental health services regularly referring patients to Samaritans) and this is sometimes related to a lack of trust within communities that have been particularly impacted by racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia and ableist attitudes.

¹ From NCVOs Voluntary Sector Almanac data, 2023

2. Methods

This project began with an initial scoping of background information and key documents, followed by recruitment of the ten equality partner organisations noted above (in this report, equality partner organisations or equality partners, refers specifically to these ten organisations). Initial scoping discussions began in August 2023 with an online discussion between our team and a representative from each organisation, followed by one-to-one online interviews and two in-depth workshops with partners in November 2023. Analysis of interviews and workshop feedback took place, the findings from this can be found in section three.

All ten equality partners were asked to participate in one online interview (on Zoom), lasting 60-90 minutes and to attend two half day follow up workshops (one at City Hall and one online). Participants received a small stipend for their involvement after attending the workshops. All interviews were recorded with consent and participation was completely voluntary. Informed consent was discussed and good practice in research ethics was followed throughout the project, including around confidentiality, data protection and limited anonymity.

The working definitions described below have been used in this project and within the report.

Resilience is an enabler which helps London to survive and prosper. It is the ability of institutions and communities to work together to prevent, handle, then recover and learn from disruption, and adapt to change. An emergency is defined as ‘an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place...’. The aims of community resilience are about taking ‘a participatory approach to managing emergencies’. Resilience to emergencies is about ‘the community being aware of risks that might impact them.... and taking action to plan and prepare, respond, and recover from the emergencies’².

We use the term ‘global majority’ to refer to all ethnic groups except white British and other white groups, including white minorities. We have taken an intersectional approach to this project, recognising the need of people and organisations to discuss these issues through the lens of multiple identities and that many of the people we spoke to do not view themselves as belonging solely to one identity. Our approach also accepts the social model of disability in relation to disabled people and related issues.

We refer in this report to ‘equality partners’ as the ten organisations that were engaged as part of this research and ‘equality organisations’ is used to refer to the wider category of equality organisations operating in the London VCS. The VCS is distinct from the public and private sectors and refers to organisations who operate for the benefit of the community, such as charities, community interest companies or faith-based organisations. Infrastructure organisations and equality infrastructure

² From the Cabinet Office Community Resilience Development Framework (2019) page two, accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-resilience-development-framework>.

refers to the physical facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge, and skills that exist to support and develop, coordinate, represent and promote front-line VCS organisations to help them deliver their aims more effectively.

There are inevitably limitations to every project and this one is no different. Limitations include that we worked with a small number of equality partners in the interviews and workshops and the time span was quite short, potentially limiting the scope and reach of our analysis and conclusions.

Throughout this document, quotes from equality partners are used to illustrate key points, these are noted in italics and centred. All quotes are anonymous but are exclusively from equality partner participants in the project.

3. Findings

3.1. Emerging Themes

This section provides an overarching summary of the themes from both workshops and interviews.

Community Resilience Ecosystem

A recurring theme throughout the interviews and workshop discussions was the necessity for clarity and a collective understanding of community resilience. This was particularly concerning for systemically marginalised groups as they see a large proportion of their work centred around building resilience to social, economic, and environmental shocks and their work appears disconnected from the current resilience structures and work.

A lack of consensus around the definition of community resilience and what it includes creates a significant challenge, especially when diverse statutory and VCS organisations are actively involved within the resilience structures, each with varying capabilities, skills, and capacities. Despite their dedicated efforts, the absence of a shared definition impedes the possibility of a unified, collaborative approach.

In addition to this, the complex resilience structures in London further complicate a broad understanding of current activities and approaches within community resilience. This impacts on the ability for equality organisations to engage. Decision-making processes around resilience lack clarity for equality partners, making it challenging to navigate the range of roles and responsibilities among organisations involved in the resilience structures.

Although LCEP sits within the London Resilience Forum and wider community resilience ecosystem, its structures, purposes, aims, and membership remain unclear to equality partners. This is highlighted by feedback from equality partners who reported that they are confused about how they can engage, influence, or fit into the LCEP framework. However, the relatively new and evolving nature of LCEP presents an opportunity, as it is responsive, adaptable, and open to change. This will allow for it to make adjustments to better meet the needs of its members.

There is a need to simplify resilience language and clarify decision-making processes within resilience structures. This then needs clear communication and messaging underpinned by a shared understanding of the objectives of the resilience structures and LCEP. Establishing a clear purpose and structure for LCEP will ensure its member organisations understand their roles and ability to influence and engage with LCEP. It is also important for LCEP to clarify how it meets the needs of its members. This is essential to foster more effective collaboration and support among equality organisations. Simplifying and streamlining the language and clarifying resilience structures could significantly enhance accessibility and understanding.

Ultimately, a more cohesive approach, built upon a shared understanding of community resilience and clarified structures, has the potential to amplify the impact of VCS organisations and specifically to widen access to equality organisations. It would allow for more effective coordination, resource allocation, and support for systemically marginalised communities, fostering a stronger, more resilient London.

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

Equality organisations are a key part of the wider London VCS that plays a vital role in its direct work with communities around community resilience. The sector is built on relationships and trust and is driven by strong values and an approach that is often embedded in communities. Across equality organisations, groups are involved in ongoing resilience work responding to community need, such as the Cost of Living crisis or working to avert the climate emergency. The VCS is very good at supporting communities and engaging in long term support, this offers the opportunity to potentially compliment short-term crisis intervention work by emergency responders. Moreover, equality organisations in particular hold invaluable insights into community needs, offering a wealth of information to resilience partners that could be incredibly useful in planning responses to emergencies and prevention strategies.

Recognising and connecting to this ongoing resilience work within communities by the VCS is crucial. There is a need to bridge the gap between existing community resilience support provided by equalities organisations and more formalised resilience strategies and support led by the statutory sector; valuing and acknowledging the existing work already taking place.

There are challenges of engaging equality organisations within resilience structures. Resource constraints and capacity limitations pose significant difficulties for VCS organisations generally and more acutely for equality organisations. Equality partners consistently spoke about the challenges they face around capacity and this has become more difficult since Covid with increasing demands and complex needs matched with shrinking public resources. Equality partners feel that they are often left to pick up the pieces with little or no acknowledgement or support. Therefore, issues such as funding (or lack of) to engage and lack of perceived incentives to influence decision makers hinder their active involvement in resilience structures.

There is a need to acknowledge this barrier in the first instance and explore ways to allocate resources to facilitate engagement. Ensuring that everyone can contribute to

resilience efforts will build a stronger structure overall. Addressing these concerns and finding ways to integrate equality organisations effectively into the broader resilience framework is essential.

Despite these challenges, the VCS remains an active participant in emergency planning and resilience work. Their continuous engagement within communities, addressing various ongoing needs, forms the backbone of community resilience. Leveraging their expertise, insights, and deep-rooted connections within these communities is necessary to bolstering overall resilience initiatives.

In essence, the VCS commitment to values, sustained community engagement, and a deep understanding of local needs make it an indispensable asset in nurturing and building community resilience. Recognising, supporting, and integrating equality organisations into formal resilience structures would greatly enhance the collective capacity to tackle challenges and build stronger, more resilient communities.

Public Sector

The public sector, with their legal duties and statutory drivers as outlined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, plays a key role in building resilience across London. More recently, there has been greater recognition that VCS organisations, including equality groups, are an important partner in this work.

Interviews and workshop discussions highlighted several barriers faced by equality partners that hinder access to resilience structures. The use of jargon is a key barrier. Another barrier is clarity about roles and responsibilities in the realm of resilience and who the decision-makers are and where power resides.

It is important that the statutory sector does not take an extractive approach to working with equality organisations but instead invites organisations to collaborate on a more equal and respectful footing.

The need to learn from past events is clear, this is exemplified by the lessons drawn from the Grenfell Tower Fire tragedy, emphasizing the need to capture and integrate learnings into future resilience work. There is a clear need for a long-term approach and commitment to support the community in as effective recovery as possible. This support should focus on key partners in the recovery process, particularly governments (central and local), statutory agencies, VCS organisations and funders. Alongside this should be a commitment to approach resilience efforts with compassion, sensitivity, empowerment, and transparency. It should also be recognised that there will be setbacks and that people will have different journeys to recovery³.

True engagement means co-production, not a tick box exercise.

³ From Lessons for the Grenfell Tower Fire Disaster Recovery: Learning from previous disasters (2018), accessed at: [Journey of Recovery: Supporting health & wellbeing for the communities impacted by the Grenfell Tower tragedy | Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(jsna.info\)](https://jsna.info/journal/2018/04/20/journey-of-recovery-supporting-health-wellbeing-for-the-communities-impacted-by-the-grenfell-tower-tragedy/).

Many people in our communities, particularly those in the global majority, will not go to the police or to doctors – there is fear and a lack of trust.

3.2. Interviews

The section below summarises the findings from one-to-one interviews, reporting on questions in the order that they were asked and providing a summary of responses with quotes (in italics) as appropriate.

3.2.1. What are equality partners currently doing in relation to community resilience?

Interviewees were engaged in a wide variety of activities that reflect their organisations individual visions and missions and while most of these activities were not directly related to community resilience, there were numerous areas of work that clearly link to community resilience priorities in London. These are summarised below in no particular order:

- A. Fire safety and personal safety education about potential hazards was taking place within disabled people's organisations and the traveller/gypsy community. It was noted that there is a lack of fire prevention equipment within traveller/gypsy sites and inadequate response from officials which some organisations were advocating around. There is exclusion due to a lack of a permanent address.

There are many fire risks on traveller sites and often overcrowding, fire hoses have been removed by the Local Authority or not provided, these are sites built in the 70's and 80's and are quite hazardous.

- B. Working to get ambulances better access to traveller sites.
- C. Supporting communities with issues resulting from the Cost of Living crisis, such as advice provision, housing, employment rights and support, English as a second language and debt support.
- D. Supporting communities and providing leadership related to 'post Covid' issues. This included being in a grant giving role, creating toolkits, research, advocating and lobbying decision-makers, promoting vaccination, health equity work, webinars, and networking.

We don't see ourselves operating in the resilience sector. But we have had to support organisations cope with emergencies like the cost of living and Covid.

- E. Immigration work related to refugees and asylum-seekers, specifically around protected characteristics.

Is this a crisis? We have a human rights situation with this issue, just because it is not geographic based doesn't mean it isn't a crisis. People are refugees based on their community of interest.

Sometimes it's about facilitating one set of organisations to get in touch with another, for example, the Refugee Council wanted to give some money to community groups

in London that were giving direct support to Ukrainian people over here, so we did some linking up, to help them distribute that money. We also do a lot of work around disabled people who have been put in hotel accommodation on the waiting list for asylum claims to be met.

F. Work to build climate resilience; for example, supporting cool places during heat waves, heat maps, community gardens and flood action groups.

A lot can be done without a huge amount of resources – looking at what is already out there that can be built on and strengthened. We need to recognize that communities have something to offer and can be part of the solution.

G. Capacity building and support for smaller organisations as well as playing a communicator and connector role to signpost in emergencies and grant giving roles.

We are building stronger organisations and communities which helps resilience, when organisations are strong and resilient, they will be able to withstand crisis better, they will be more robust.

H. Leadership and engagement in the violence against women and girls (VAWG) coalition.

I. Supporting organisations to access funding and changing the approach for funders, as well as community wealth building and supporting self-reliance at the local level.

Resilience is about resources and enabling communities to access that.

J. Supporting marginalised people in crisis and doing crisis prevention work within specific communities, including mental health support.

I think that we often in the women's sector say that we're the fourth emergency service. That's the way that we describe ourselves. So, we're working alongside the police and the emergency services because we're saving lives, the preventative work that we're doing is literally saving lives.

K. Supporting communities experiencing racism post Black Lives Matter and engagement in the global anti-racism movement.

L. Working to eradicate digital poverty and digital exclusion.

M. Providing inclusive and accessible information to people who are in a variety of situations that have created vulnerabilities (such as people experiencing poverty, disabled people, or people experiencing domestic violence).

N. Supporting people from specific communities of identity to engage in volunteering and for their engagement/role to be seen as a practical resource for emergencies.

A lot of older people are involved in volunteering – an under used resource in thinking about practical responses in times of difficulty.

- O. Work to eliminate hate crimes and support victims, including race-based, gender-based, and disabled people.

Building peoples safety is supporting them to be more resilient.

3.2.2. What are current organisational priorities for community resilience?

The following priorities were identified by interviewees as currently related to community resilience, in no particular order.

- A. Building and supporting stronger organisations and communities, which in turn helps build community resilience.
- B. Cost of living response and support.
- C. Working with funders, particularly London funders, to have a racial equity lens when awarding funds and helping funders to be more flexible and to look at different ways of assessing risks so as to reduce barriers for global majority led organisations. In some cases, this also includes a secondary grant giving role.
- D. Supporting communities in the uptake of income support and wider benefits, working to increase individual resilience.
- E. Advocacy and policy influence on behalf of communities.
- F. Fire safety.
- G. Climate issues, including:
 - 1. Supporting older people and vulnerable people.
 - 2. Local flood groups.
 - 3. Heat and cold issues and energy.
 - 4. Air quality issues and environmental justice.
- H. Supporting communities in recovery from the Covid pandemic.
- I. Communication to vulnerable people and communities around emergency preparation and response.
- J. Refugees, asylum-seekers and immigration support.
- K. Hate crime awareness and response.
- L. Health and well-being promotion in communities.
- M. Access to food, food aid and food security.

3.2.3. What is the level of understanding of LCEP and the community resilience ecosystem?

Many of the interviewees did not have an extensive or thorough understanding of resilience structures or partnerships in London or of LCEP and its role. However,

through the course of the project understanding of LCEP by equality partners grew as a result of engagement in discussions, resources and workshops. A few interviewees had engaged with the London Resilience Forum previously. Additional points are summarised below:

- A. There are generally low levels of understanding about the resilience ecosystem. Interviews also found a lack of clarity regarding how LCEP works, its purpose, plans and decision making although some interviewees are LCEP members and have attended some of the meetings.

I don't know if it's just me but I didn't know about LCEP. We've never been connected.

I don't have the structure around how they interrelate and where the power lies – where the decision making of each is and which one reports to which?

- B. Knowledge about LCEP was limited, but some strengths and weaknesses were noted as follows:

Strengths

- Being a connector, linking role, networking.
- Variety and range of organisations engaged.
- Scenario planning – this refers to a recent LCEP meeting that was dedicated to looking at how LCEP members would respond to an event or shock.

Weaknesses

- Lack of clarity about role and structure.
- How engagement can happen when everyone is already overstretched.

- C. There was some discussion about how emergencies or crises are perceived and defined by the London Resilience Forum and London Resilience Partnership, if it would be considered a resilience issue if it affects a large group of people over a period of time. For example, some of the interviewees noted the situation of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, disabled asylum seekers and violence against women and girls, all of which are crises, but because they are consistently happening from multiple places or individuals, it is not seen as a crisis for resilience structures to engage.

For example, male violence against women and girls is actually a pandemic but is not seen as an emergency by the state.

- D. Building leadership with young people was seen as resilience to some, as was entrepreneurship. For example, how to communicate and deescalate tense and potentially violent situations in London as resilience.

- E. The London emergency services (especially the police and fire) were seen by equality partners as needing to address their own institutional and structural inequalities. There was a question about how lack of acknowledgement by emergency services of their own institutional inequality impacts on community resilience work.

3.2.4. What can stakeholders contribute to LCEP?

Interviewees had numerous ideas about what they might be able to contribute as members of LCEP or working in collaboration. Much of these contributions, it was noted, have resource implications and would not be possible without funding, as most of these organisations are very small and already lack capacity.

- A. Helping LCEP to reach the communities we work with and support in London.

What we do is we are in touch with the needs of the women, the needs of our community and not a lot of people have that and I think that's one of our strengths, whether it's working with women of African heritage or Middle Eastern women, Latin American women, Southeast Asian women. We have that knowledge and that experience around engaging with those communities and ensuring that they are connected to the statutory services, that they are aware of their rights.

Connecting LCEP with LGBT+ organisations and bringing them in as needed. Could we broaden the understanding of LGBT+ identities within community resilience work or rethink how we connect with and think about communities in a crisis or in emergencies, so as to include LGBT+ people and communities? We still don't have enough data on our communities, we are not always counted, we are often invisible and that makes this work harder, it is a challenge. How do we make the less visible more visible? Increasing awareness is important here.

- B. Helping to make LCEP more accessible to disabled people and Deaf and Disabled Peoples Organisations (DDPOs); reducing jargon, communication and messages getting out and more planned communications, using the social model of disability in their approach.
- C. Helping LCEP to be more accessible to global majority communities, to interpret and translate information into local languages and improving awareness and understanding within our communities.
- D. Helping LCEP to understand the context that we are working within and the community perspective.

The value of us being involved would be bringing older people's perspective into thinking and planning.

- E. Critical friend role, challenging thinking and bringing in the voice of black and brown people.
- F. Access to networks and convening conversations and spaces.

What is the ask from LCEP? It would be helpful to understand what the need is.

It depends on the strategic aims of this work and how that fits with our priorities.

3.2.5. What capabilities and resources are you able to bring to resilience work?

Interviewees were asked about what their organisation, network or community can bring to community resilience work. Equality partners were happy to note their capabilities, but everyone was very clear that the sector is experiencing pressures like never before and everyone is under-resourced and lacking capacity. Therefore it is important for capabilities to be viewed within this framework of limited resources, growing and more complex community needs, funding and threats to organisational survival.

- A. Women and older people make up the majority of volunteers in the UK and volunteers are a great resource mentioned by most of the interviewees.
- B. Equality organisations hold trust among the communities they serve, in this case, incredibly diverse communities, and organisations can act in a bridging role with the public sector.
- C. It is important to recognize the resources that already exist within the VCS and build on them to take an asset-based approach as well as a hyper local approach.
- D. Some of the interviewees noted the possibility of a cascading role with their members, member organisations and networks.
- E. Equality organisations are deeply rooted in their communities, with vast knowledge of those communities and an evidence base for needs of the communities they work with that are needed and useful by emergency planners.
- F. Access to local and community networks for day-to-day crisis response in community.
- G. Holding spaces to have wider conversations, gathering evidence and refining responses to an issue or topic.
- H. There is a lot of lived experience among equality partner staff and their members and communities.
- I. Equality organisations are normally quite small, so they are good at working in partnerships and collaborating to maximise the resources available; this is an important strength they bring.

3.2.6. What are the barriers, vulnerabilities, and challenges?

Interviewees talked about barriers they faced in engaging with resilience, LCEP and the London Resilience Forum and ideas about how these barriers could be tackled in future. Key barriers were related to capacity and limited resources and include:

- A. There is a systemic crisis in public services where equality organisations are increasingly filling the gaps of statutory services because the welfare system is often inaccessible, under resourced and in constant crisis. At the same time, VCS organisations across the board are competing for dwindling resources while demand increases which contributes to a disproportionate lack of capacity within equality organisations, who are already smaller and less well-resourced by comparison. Equality organisations are consequently in a position of having to do more with less and meeting growing community needs that are ever more complex and multi-faceted, increasing the pressure on their organisations.

Pay for the time and expertise and capacity, that is the only way we can get that in, we are in a deficit position, it is impossible to do more work that we are not being paid for.

- B. Distrust, fear and discrimination, for example by women's organisations of the state due to experiences of misogyny and racism.
- C. Intersectionality exacerbates inequality, vulnerability, and the ability of communities to engage.
- D. Covid and cost of living impact on systemically marginalised communities disproportionately and this impacts on their ability to engage.
- E. State services are not meeting the needs of communities, resulting in a lack of engagement.
- F. Equality organisations are not 'representatives', but often people with lived experience who need to engage their members if a wider view is needed.
- G. Entering non-LGBTQ+ spaces for LGBTQ+ communities can be challenging, as they don't always know if these are safe spaces. There is often a lack of awareness from others, which is a barrier. Homophobia and transphobia are not always seen to be taken as seriously as other issues. There is a need for robust ground rules and facilitation to ensure everyone feels fully able to contribute, be seen and respected.
- H. The link between the emergency services (and their own institutional racism) and their lack of acknowledgment about how this inevitably impacts community resilience in the communities that are both hardest hit by this and disproportionately impacted by emergencies.
- I. Knowledge (or lack of) and understanding about existing resilience structures.

- J. Good (or lack of) accessible communication tools to reach into communities that include visuals.
- K. Robust mechanisms to capture data.
- L. There is not enough VCS infrastructure support across London to build the capacity of smaller organisations and community groups.

There is no infrastructure that links with us, no vehicle or lead. Maybe we need a think about who should be in this space and who should play a lead role.

- M. People sharing lived experience is not always taken on board by professionals.
- N. There is a need for less jargon, particularly from public sector spaces that we engage in, lack of accessible language is a barrier.

3.2.7. What suggestions do you have about how to get voices and needs heard from communities?

Interviewees were asked for suggestions about how the voices and needs of marginalised communities could be heard and integrated into community resilience planning. The following suggestions were made:

- A. Acknowledge systemic inequality issues and structural and institutional racism, misogyny, and homophobia.
- B. Equality impact assessments could be shared from key services or government departments.
- C. Accessible communications and infographics from resilience partners.
- D. Support for community wealth building⁴ approaches to create self-reliant communities that are hyper local.
- E. More opportunities to cascade information and engagement in an accessible way.

In terms of cascading, I'm definitely thinking the public sector, which has not just a role, but also the muscle, but also the ability to invest in the sector. I'm also thinking about the equalities groups right across and making sure it's not just the big organisations, but all the small ones that also have a voice there. Obviously not going to have everybody at the table represented, but there has to be a process, that

⁴ Community wealth building is a progressive approach to economics and economic development. It seeks to change the way that economies have come to function by aiming to retain more wealth and opportunity for the benefit of local people. This is in contrast to the predominant economic model, whereby wealth is created by property ownership, it achieves its aims by harnessing the economic and social power of locally rooted institutions. The VCS plays a fundamental role, by using its local intelligence and influence as a conduit for change and as an important part of the generative local economy in its own right. For more information, see [What is community wealth building? | CLES](#).

information is spread and stuff is got from the ground up. So there has to be a two-way process. And that's a clear role for the voluntary sector in my view, given the connection and local knowledge and the sector has whatever space.

- F. A need for preventative strategies to build relationships between disconnected communities to prevent conflicts and hate crimes (e.g. LGBTQ+ community to have discussions with Afro/Caribbean groups).
- G. The Deputy Mayor convening roundtable discussions on resilience, strategic meetings, and input with race equality and global majority organisations could be helpful once or twice a year.
- H. The Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) networks⁵ (as key VCS infrastructure organisations in London) could do more to support resilience, for example identifying gaps locally.
- I. The GLA needs to link up and coordinate better internally within all their departments and structures.
- J. Building resilience by collaborating together, understanding the commonality, the themes and then actually putting our heads together in terms of what the solutions are.
- K. Better information about who LCEP is, who is on its membership, who is representing different communities would be helpful. LCEP being more proactive and inviting seldom heard voices around the table. Listen to voices of lived experience and act on suggestions.
- L. Give communities something that is practical and helpful (i.e. better ambulance response to traveller sites) to engage communities in the longer term.

3.2.8. How would stakeholders like to engage with the community resilience ecosystem?

Interviewees were asked specifically how they might like to engage with or connect to London resilience work. Most participants responded positively about wanting to be kept informed about LCEP and up to date about meetings and activities. Other suggestions included the following.

- A. Having a roundtable with LCEP to discuss community resilience with equality organisations, how this is being defined, if it works for those groups.
- B. A better understanding about LCEPs governance and points of influence and who holds the power. Any group or subgroup needs to have some power and understand the governance and where the power sits, it could

⁵ Councils for Voluntary Services and Volunteer Centres are the two main types of infrastructure support organisations that exist to support frontline voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors in London. See <https://londonplus.org/councils-for-voluntary-services-volunteer-centres> for more info.

be useful if it was resourced, the role could be one of scrutiny of their plans from an equalities point of view.

- C. Develop or link to the Deaf and Disabled Peoples Organisation (DDPO) engagement forum.
- D. A space for equality groups to have their own discussions within the resilience space, that is issue based and member led but more fluid than a subgroup and not overly bureaucratic. This could be an equalities subgroup of the London Resilience Forum.
- E. Making this subgroup a platform for exchanging knowledge about different communities because there is so much diversity. There could be workshops or presentations about lived experiences or different communities' perspectives and needs.
- F. The value of being involved would bring older people's perspective into thinking and planning.
- G. Sharing information with our members and signposting.

Perhaps also just to raise the profile of these agendas, that's something that is a bit of what I can do.

3.3. Workshops

This section provides a summary of discussions from both workshops with quotes as appropriate from participants in italics.

3.3.1. Where do you see your priorities linking with community resilience priorities in London? How would you see that evolving to align with your work?

Key points from the conversation are summarised below:

Structural inequality is at the core of resilience.

- It starts with language, make it accessible and inclusive and this links to digital inclusion.

I would like to reiterate the vital importance of accessible communications and information, this applies across all communities and across all 'emergencies', in any situation communication and information is vital and people may be put at risk because communication is not accessible.

- Cost of living work – this links with energy and food poverty, supporting communities in heat and cold.
- Working with Local Authorities to bring together the VCS, a convening role to look at community resilience.

The language is really important and understanding what community resilience means and the need to understand the language will actually help the conversation. I think getting people together to talk about it is really important.

- There is a need to build up and support independent infrastructure organisations in London (such as LVSC, which no longer exists) to link with community resilience and to act as a bridge between the VCS (and specifically equality organisations) and the public sector and to build capacity to engage in resilience work.

There needs to be that connect there because we cannot always come to some groups but we could actually through a second-tier organisation provide a response through a meeting so we can then feed into the processes. It's been really interesting for me to hear about LCEPs work, but I think that we also probably need to have that more connectedness and not work so much in silos, which I think because we're on the coal face and we're having to deal with women approaching us with their bags, with nowhere to live with their children, and that is what our focus is. I would suggest at least those links, even if we couldn't come, then we as organisations pass information through our partnerships as well, so we can tell other organisations about what's happening, and so we can feed in and really get a deeper dive and deeper sense of some of the issues that are affecting us.

- Partnership working (i.e. with Thames Water) between public sector, VCS and the private sector.

It's about actually building the relationship, cross sector relationships. So quite a lot of the work then becomes easier when you have established connections. Obviously, that has to be through some kind of networking. I don't know how that will be provided, but without the investment in that thing that everybody is saying we need to come together.

- Migrant issues – prioritising those with the least access and rights and engaging with communities so they are not left out of the discussion.
- Personal emergencies evacuation plans, this could link to fire brigade plans and it would be helpful to understand what they are doing in regard to this.

We need to come up with a high-level set of recommendations and start campaigning around it. Governments cannot do what happened between 2008 and now to communities, cannot cut child benefits, cannot cut child credit. We need to be like other European countries and demand that these are basic things and whoever is in power should not be interfering with those. When you look at the state of crumbling buildings, it's schools, and all of the rest of the civil society, it's just not acceptable. And then we collaborate with the GLA and others. Actually, we want the GLA to step up the pressure on the government and supporting us to do that.

3.3.2. How could engagement within this space be of value to your organisation and the communities you work with?

The following discussion points were made:

- Sharing resources and networking between equality organisations.

Between the sector there's a huge amount of knowledge and reach and I absolutely agree that those organisations that aren't normally involved in discussions are on the

outskirts but nevertheless are really at the front face of managing and understanding different communities and recognizing the contribution they make because it's huge - they're maybe tiny but the contribution they make is massive. I think that part is really important and I don't think that takes a lot of resources to actually get people together.

- Facilitate conversations with people with lived experience in all the communities we work in, to properly listen and hear about their needs and facilitate co-production.
- Valuing time as a resource – acknowledging the value of volunteer run and led organisations such as mutual aid groups and improving volunteer management and engagement.

3.3.3. What would strengthen your organisation's ability to engage in community resilience work in London and what support might you need to engage?

Discussions included the following:

- Need better information about who's doing what, roles, aims, and benefits of our involvement.
- Bring together equality organisations several times a year to look at how we engage, what we need to engage and how to build on this work.
- Bringing in equality organisation members and networks to the conversations, planning and discussion.

One thing that could be useful out of this network is the potential to build a knowledge base between all our different struggles, knowing that you have all these groups that do different things and that we believe and support each other's struggles and can relay that into larger networks. I think a lot of that links into resilience at the end of the day when you look at structural inequality and systemic barriers.

- Support for income generation (capacity building) and grant writing collaboration, joint funding bids and funding partnerships for this work.

I just want to emphasise that user-led organisations are not there to be "used" by institutions, the objective doesn't have to be "extracting" information from user-led organisations but working together with us and listening to people's voices.

- Framing – an ability in London to manage what the state deems as emergencies – we need a context statement.
- Equality impact assessments and understanding how they can be helpful in protecting protected characteristics.
- Needs to be a recognition that there is not a level playing field of resilience – because of structural inequalities and the crises in society.
- Acknowledge the situation, we want action from institutions ignoring needs of communities.

- Resourcing and paying for our time and acknowledging the chronic under funding in the sector and that we are constantly asked to contribute without any resource.

The key issue is the resource that needs to be dealt with first. And when that's dealt with you would find the level of engagement and involvement in this really much stronger.

How and what can we do without any additional resources? There does not seem any chance that more resources are being back on the table with local authorities becoming bankrupt.

4. Conclusion

This section of the report provides concluding reflections and recommendations for next steps based on our analysis of the qualitative data. Reflections are structured thematically based on the original outcomes of the project.

4.1. Reflections

4.1.1. Increasing understanding of how to sustain engagement of equality organisations in resilience and to be around the table.

To sustain engagement of equality organisations it is important to support their wider organisational needs, particularly around building their capacity. This includes developing and strengthening skills, capabilities, processes, and resources that they need to survive, adapt, and thrive in a rapidly changing environment. As has already been highlighted, several equality organisations have small staff teams, large membership bases, and considerable policy and community issues to engage with.

Sustaining their engagement requires providing the resources to enable them to sit at the table and facilitate conversations with their communities through their networks. This would open new conversations and feed into the resilience work and plans. There is a need for this to be approached in a planned and coordinated way.

As part of sustaining engagement from equality organisations it is important to acknowledge, be open and transparent about power within existing resilience structures, where and how decisions are made. Equity, inequality, and dynamics are important considerations to equality partners. Equality partners consistently highlighted through this research the importance of resilience work using accessible language and demonstrating a commitment to being inclusive.

The resilience ecosystem is not always joined up, particularly between equality organisations and the public sector. Joined up thinking and approaches would facilitate better partnership working in future. There is a potential role here for VCS infrastructure organisations, for a cascading and networking function.

4.1.2. Building knowledge and understanding of resilience with equality partners.

There is a need for greater clarity around what we mean by community resilience and where preventative work sits within this framework. This may be of particular

interest because equality partners are often involved with prevention work, additionally, there are different perceptions of resilience, including individual resilience (which many organisations are working on building within their communities), organisational resilience (which links back to capacity building and resources), and then community resilience (which is wider).

Some equality partners are clear about what community resilience means to their organisation and feel that this might be different to how the resilience bodies define community resilience.

There would be some value in having discussions about what community resilience looks like in systemically marginalised communities, identifying where there is synergy and if there are any conflicts between the definition in these communities. Some communities are in crisis every day and facing this is a priority.

4.1.3. Building strategic understanding of equality partner needs and capacity within LCEP and more widely for the LRF.

Strategic understanding of equality partners needs could be built with realistic expectations of their role and contribution. For example, it is unrealistic to have expectations of equality partners to make detailed responses to consultations within unrealistic timeframes. This is because while they have lived experience, they are not representative of their communities and often need time to engage their members to gather views. There is a need to ensure there is time to engage.

It is also important to consider ways to access existing engagement structures and forums supported by equality partners (e.g., the DDPO Engagement Forum in London is a good way to get experiences of Deaf and Disabled people).

It is important to consider intersectional needs and vulnerabilities in resilience. Strategic partners should recognise the importance of having an intersectional approach because the people equality partners work with have multiple identities and are often disproportionately impacted.

It is also important to recognise that the communities that equality organisations are working with are in perpetual crisis and this often prevents resilience being built. For example, women's organisations are on the front-line delivering services to women, even when the statutory sector fails to provide those services or fails women because they are not trusted or have actively discriminated against women in their services, but this sector also has not been resourced to step in when there is a need for them engage. Equality infrastructure should be resourced to enable that engagement.

There is a positive relationship between organisational capacity and community need which is exacerbated in communities experiencing high levels of deprivation and equality organisations on the front line. There is a need to influence policy and laws that undermine the livelihood and security of people related to jobs, benefits, and the economy – the poorest sections of the community are often the most highly impacted.

The link between the emergency services (and their own institutional inequality) and their lack of acknowledgment about their own failures inevitably impacts community resilience in the communities that are both hardest hit by this and disproportionately impacted by emergencies.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the feedback and data from this project and thematic analysis, a set of recommendations has been developed, as described below.

1. Support equality organisations to engage their members and networks in the London Resilience Forum.

1.1. The London Resilience Forum should establish an Equalities Sector Panel.

- The London Resilience Forum should establish an Equalities Sector Panel to feed in equality issues to London's resilience structures.
- This group should explore strategic involvement of equality partners, equality organisations and feeding equality issues into emergency planning in London.
- This Sector Panel could potentially play a wider influencing role across GLA policy teams (e.g., Communities and Social Policy Unit).

1.2. The GLA should resource the new Equality Sector Panel with a secretariat function and look at wider support.

- There should be support in place to make sure the adequate functioning of a new Equalities Sector Panel. The GLA should resource a partner organisation to act as secretariat for this panel.
- The GLA should consider how else to support the engagement of equality organisations in this work. LCEP should support this work.

1.3. Equality partners should engage in the new Equality Sector Panel and cascade key information about resilience work to their members and through their networks, supported by the London Resilience Forum and LCEP.

- Equality partners should actively participate in the new Equality Sector Panel and be supported to cascade and signpost information about resilience through their networks and engage their members as well as to create community bridge building. This role needs to be resourced.

1.4. The London Resilience Forum, GLA, Local Authorities and LCEP should all seek to deepen understanding of equality partners resilience work (individual, organisational and community).

- The resilience ecosystem should actively engage more with equality organisations by using the information collected from this research to explore ways to connect this to existing mechanisms and structures, for example around fire safety and advice.

2. Create more opportunities for joined up working and partnerships.

2.1. The GLA, LCEP and wider London Funders should support equality organisations to access resources and funding to enable them to effectively engage in resilience work.

- The GLA and LCEP should organise and run training workshops for equality organisations on community resilience to assist them to maximise the impact of their engagement.
- The GLA should support and encourage joint funding bids between equality organisations and public or private sector partners.
- London Funders should consider how to support wider community resilience funding across the funding sector.

2.2. The London Resilience Forum, Local Authorities and the GLA should explore how to connect resilience work in and across communities with emergency planning work at a local level.

- Local Authority emergency planning teams should invite local equality organisations to Borough Resilience Forums (BRFs).
- The London Resilience Forum and GLA should actively seek involvement of VCS and equality partner work in future work strands on improving local accountability and leadership on resilience. LCEP should support this work.

3. Develop a shared understanding of community resilience.

3.1. LCEP should develop a shared understanding and approach of what is meant by community resilience with the VCS.

- LCEP could use one of its forum meetings as a workshop to engage its members in developing a shared understanding of its working definition and approach to community resilience.

- LCEP should consider the existing resilience work of its members alongside the legal requirements of statutory partners engaged in current resilience work and structures in London.
- The London Resilience Forum and GLA should actively support LCEP in this endeavour to create a shared understanding of community resilience.

4. Clarify LCEPs aims, role and member engagement approach.

4.1. LCEP should clearly communicate to equality organisations its vision, aims and strategic outcomes as well as the wider London resilience structures and its role within them.

- Once a working definition of community resilience is agreed, LCEP should engage its members in clarifying its vision, aims and outcomes in relation to its resilience work in London.
- LCEP should clarify its role in the wider resilience structures, and where it plays an influencing role. It should then communicate this with equality organisations and across the VCS to widen access and understanding. The London Resilience Forum and GLA should support this work.

4.2. LCEP should clarify how equality organisations can engage in resilience structures by becoming an LCEP member.

- With its members, LCEP should clearly communicate how organisations, including equality partners, can become a member and get involved in its work, i.e., network meetings, subgroups, exercises, WhatsApp groups, etc. LCEP should clarify who is currently a member of LCEP and where there are gaps.
- LCEP should clarify any subgroups' purpose, accountability, membership, how to join them, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- LCEP should clarify the value of engaging for equality organisations and how the work of equality partners connects to LCEP and the wider resilience structures.

4.3. LCEP should strengthen coordination, communication, and trust across the wider London VCS by keeping organisations regularly informed and updated about LCEP's work and supporting them to cascade this information across their VCS networks.

5. Communicate about resilience in an inclusive and accessible way.

5.1. The London Resilience Forum, the GLA and Local Authorities should ensure information on resilience structures, responsibilities and decision making is jargon free and accessible.

- The language and jargon within the resilience ecosystem is not always accessible to everyone involved and can create a barrier to engagement. Organisations providing secretariat roles to pan London Resilience groups and forums should therefore ensure they have the support to make information jargon free and accessible, including providing easy read formats when applicable.

6. Understanding capabilities, sharing data and capturing learning.

6.1. The London Resilience Forum and LCEP should include the capabilities of equality organisations in the next update of the London Voluntary Sector Response Capabilities Framework.

- The London Resilience Forum and LCEP should work together to understand the capabilities of equalities organisations and include this in an updated London Voluntary Sector Response Capabilities Framework.
- LCEP could choose to commission mapping across boroughs to understand regional and local equality organisations, their needs, and capabilities.

6.2. LCEP should explore ways to share data and information across LCEP members, including equality organisations.

- LCEP should explore with its members how best to share data (e.g., a data sharing agreement) to enable LCEP partners to share information about needs, mapping, and evidence.

6.3. The London Resilience Forum should ensure risk communication is accessible and learning from past incidents is shared across VCS and equality organisations.

- The London Resilience Forum should make sure that when communicating London's risks, information is accessible to communities and equality organisations.
- It should also make sure it has captured learnings from past shocks and crises and that these are transparent and accessible to equality partners and the wider VCS.

- It should be made explicit how lessons and learning should be put into practice and embedded in resilience planning going forward.

4.3. Wider Reflections

This section explores wider issues that have come out of discussions that are beyond the remit of community resilience and would need to be addressed at a higher level. While some stakeholders may need to focus on their statutory duties, it may be helpful for the GLA to consider some of these wider issues within strategic conversations about resilience.

The Equalities Sector Panel has a potential influencing role across the GLA policy teams, particularly within the Communities and Social Policy Unit and there is potential for this to have a wider impact on policy and practice. Further clarity is needed on how this could potentially link with the GLA's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group and the EDI Strategy.

There is potential to further engage equality partners to cascade and engage their members and networks. Further resources would be needed to action this but for example, there is a potential role for Hear Equality Network to facilitate this. It is important for this discussion and development to consider a co-production approach rather than just signposting information.

5. Appendix

The appendices in this report include questions asked of interviewees and the questioning format of the workshops.

5.1. Appendix A - Interview questions

Your organisation, experience and priorities

1. Tell me a bit about your organisation (in summary) and your role in the organisation and how long you have been involved. What specific communities or audiences are you working with?
2. Has your organisation had any experience of supporting community resilience work– i.e., COVID, cost of living, heatwaves, floods, refugees, etc...?
3. How would you describe your organisations' current community resilience priorities within your work?
4. What expertise/capabilities/resources does, or can your organisation/network/community bring to community resilience work? Resources include volunteers, intelligence or data about potential threats, the needs of specific communities in a crisis, etc.
- 4a. What, if anything, do you feel your organisation could contribute to LCEP?
5. Can you give any specific (or further) examples of work that you have done or are doing to build the resilience (and address vulnerabilities experienced) within the communities you work with?

Your understanding and engagement

6. How extensive is your understanding of the community resilience structures and partnerships in London?
7. Has your organisation attended any LCEP meetings and would you consider your organisation a member of LCEP? Have you engaged in any other resilience work locally, regionally or nationally? If so, please describe.
- 7a. If engaged with LCEP, what are the strengths and weaknesses of that partnership?
- 7.b If engaged with London Resilience Forum (or any of its subgroups), what are the strengths and weaknesses of that forum?

Inclusion and barriers

8. What, if any, challenges, or barriers have you faced in engaging with LCEP or London Resilience Forum and how do you think these could be removed in the future?

9. In what ways would you suggest that the voices and needs of marginalised communities could be heard and integrated into community resilience planning in London?
10. How specifically would your organisation like to be connected to or engaged in the London resilience work (for example, through a theme group in the London Resilience Forum, an LCEP equalities subgroup, creating more opportunities for collaboration or something else)? Would you like to be kept up to date with newsletters and meeting invitations from LCEP?
11. How can LCEP and the London Resilience Forum ensure that its community resilience work is inclusive and does not perpetuate inequality, discrimination or exclusion?

Looking to the future

12. Are there any other ways the GLA City Resilience Team and London Resilience Group can strengthen and build its relationship with your organisation and community?
13. From your perspective, what should the priorities be for Community Resilience planning in London over the next 3-5 years?
14. Is there anything else you think would be useful for us to know?

5.2. Appendix B – Workshop format

The purpose of workshop 1 was as follows:

- To explore shared community resilience priorities and areas of interest.
- To discuss the value of engaging in the community resilience space for equality organisations.
- To explore how organisations might want to connect to community resilience partnerships and networks and any support required to engage.
- To share and discuss the emerging themes from this work to date.

Time	Activity
9.45am	Arrive & welcome
10:00am	Welcome & introductions Icebreaker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go around – everyone to introduce their organisation– what makes your organisation special to you? • Share one key area of activity related to community resilience you are most proud of.

	Scene setting
	Presentation on findings to date
	Summary of key themes What are your community resilience priorities in the next year?
	Small group discussion a) Where do you see your priorities linking with community resilience priorities in London? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you see that evolving to align with your work? a) How could engagement within this space be of value to your organisation and the communities you work with? b) What would strengthen your organisations' ability to engage in community resilience work in London and what support might you need to engage? Feedback and group reflection
	Plan for next steps
12noon	Thank you and close

The purpose of workshop 2 was:

- Continue our discussions from the first workshop;
- Discuss practical follow up for engagement in community resilience networks in London;
- Discuss recommendations for community resilience structures in London and practical implementation.

Time	Activity
9.50am	Waiting room
10:00am	Welcome and introductions
	Scene setting – recap, revisit and build on first workshop
	Reflection and discussion
	Presentation on emerging recommendations
	Discussion and brainstorming
	SHORT BREAK

	<p>Groupwork – How to sustain engagement in resilience and strengthen partnerships going forward:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What needs to happen to sustain engagement in resilience among equalities organisations and networks? 2. How to strengthen the role of equalities organisations/networks in resilience partnerships in London? <p>Feedback and group reflection</p>
	<p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting • Payments • Evaluation
12noon	Thank you and close

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