



A London-wide Organisation of Disabled and Deaf People

Final Report – Easy Read Version

A report of work done between September 2007 and January
2008

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Equal Ability CIC

Most Pictures from Change Picture Bank

Who wrote this Report



This is the Final Report of work that a group of Deaf and disabled people and their organisations did between September 2007 and January 2008.

A Team including Equal Ability CIC, and NCIL (National Centre for Independent Living), Dominic Church and his Associates Laura Bryant-Smith and Penny Beschizza did the work.



This Final Report with the Specification was written by Equal Ability CIC and its Managing Director, Sue Maynard Campbell who led the Team.



All the Team are grateful to the Project Board, Steering Group, and all the many groups, organisations and individuals who have contributed their time and expertise along the way, often against the background of our very tight timetable.

30 January 2008

London-wide Support Organisation

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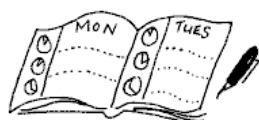
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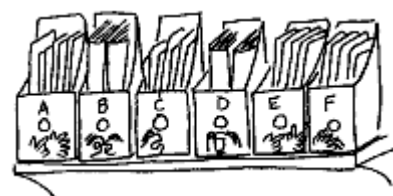
About this Report



London Councils, The City Bridge Trust and City Parochial Foundation have supported this work. It suggests what an organisation able to represent and support disabled and Deaf people in London through their organisations might look like.

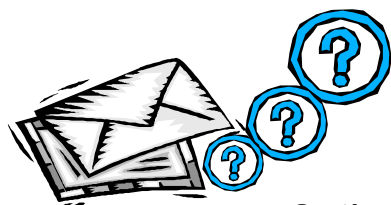


We asked groups in December 2007 to tell us what they thought about their proposals for the new organisation. They asked 14 questions.



This Report adds to what we said in December and we will try not to go over the same ground to make sure this Report is easy to read.

The Report contains:



1. a short summary of **answers to the questions** asked by the consultants

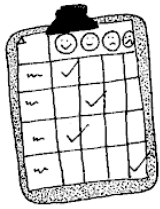


2. the **Specification** for the new organisation that the consultants are recommending. That includes:

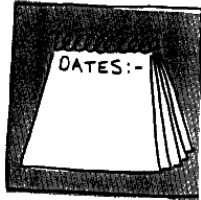
- **its Vision** and what the new organisation will be there to do
- how it will get **its money**
- where it will have **its offices**
- **its staff** and how it will find them
- **its legal structure and Board**
- **its accountability** to Deaf and disabled people's groups in London



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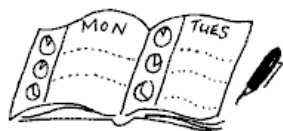
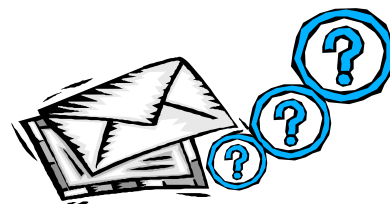
3. an **Action Plan** for the development of new organisation



4. a **Timetable For Development**

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Answers to the questions



A number of organisations said that the Consultation Report went out with a very short time to respond in. We agree but this was because we did not have much time for the whole project.



12 responses were received from or for organisations of disabled and/or Deaf people. 4 of the groups responding were Borough-wide groups intending to serve all disabled and Deaf people in their Borough. 1 response was from



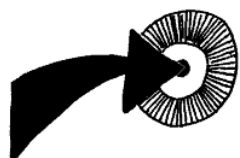
a grouping of smaller groups. 5 were from what we believe to be single interest or specific impairment groups.

We received 3 responses from individuals not clearly link to any Deaf/disabled led group.



Only one group who replied answered the questions we asked. The rest answered some together or even none directly. It is therefore impossible to give an accurate analysis of the responses. All we can do is give a short summary under each subject.

Its Vision



There was little disagreement with the Vision and some enthusiastic support. Where there was disagreement it related to the choice of the community interest company and its being a business.

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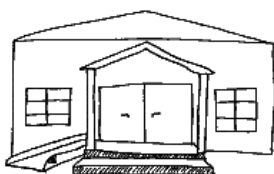
Its Location



There were a wide range of responses to these questions and no real agreement. Some said that it should not share with another organisation, others that it should, or perhaps might have to.



There was no agreement on whether it should share with an existing disability organisation or a wider voluntary sector organisation like the local CVS. Arguments for and against were put, sometimes by the same responding group.



However, one thing that came out of the replies was a feeling that a sub-regional office was not necessarily expected provided a strong and supportive sub-regional presence was achieved.



In relation to the regions and how they should be defined, few people answered and there was no clear agreement. Two sub-regions to start with and allowing them to grow as they are needed by the groups in each area, was supported.

One Borough organisation on the edges of London asked for consideration to be given to how easy it would be for groups in all areas to get to the main office and for electronic networking to perhaps be more used.

Its Staff



There was general support for the proposed staffing structure and responsibilities. There was some response on the coverage of minority groups within the Deaf and disabled community but no major disagreement.

Independent living was the policy area people mentioned most as a priority as well as regeneration. But most people thought the new organisation should not decide what to do now, but work them out once it is set up.



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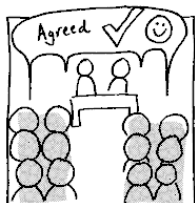


It should make alliances and work with disabled people's organisations already active in the area like NCIL for independent living.

Its Legal Structure



This was the question to which there were the strongest answers.



Less than one third of people disagreed with the proposal to move to a community interest company structure and also away from a membership organisation, and some very strongly agreed.



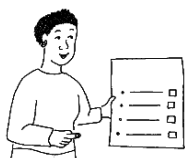
The Board size should be about 8 most thought. Some people were worried about bringing in non-disabled Board members if Deaf or disabled people did not apply who had the right skills.

But even here it was acknowledged that financial expertise might be in short supply in the Deaf and disabled communities.



People agreed the Board needed the right skills and suggested how to develop Deaf and disabled people's skills.

Its Accountability

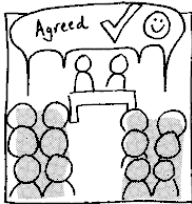


The idea of Forums did not satisfy a small number of people who were concerned about it not being a membership organisation.

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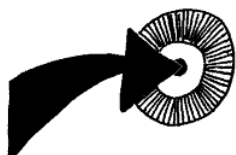
Overall there was support for this proposal, although some concern about whether groups had the capacity for even that level of involvement and whether they might become dominated by stronger groups.



If the right support, incentives and communication was in place it was felt people would stand for the Board and attend the AGM.

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Specification for a new London-wide support organisation for Deaf and disabled people's groups (LSO)



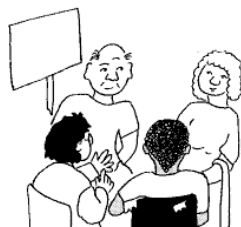
Its Vision and Purpose - what the new organisation (LSO) is and what it will be there to do



The LSO will be a company within the voluntary sector with a clear business focus. It will provide a first class support service to groups of Deaf and disabled people in London, and through them the wider Deaf and disabled community in London. It will also try to stimulate an enterprise culture within the Deaf and disabled community when looking to meet their needs.

The LSO will need two distinct but interlinked lines of work.

These are:



- Work amongst Deaf and disabled people's groups
- Work with those who have power to influence or control the services and other facilities that Deaf and disabled people want to use on equal terms, most importantly, but not exclusively the GLA and its group - the LDA (London Development Agency), TfL (Transport for London), The Metropolitan Police Authority, and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Organisation; London Councils; and NHS London.



They will, wherever possible, do this by facilitating activity rather than doing things itself. This means that the LSO will need to:

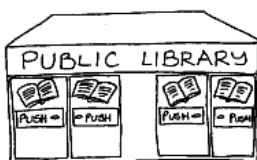
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In relation to work with groups

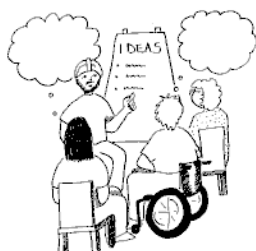


- understand what is going on across London and in specific sub regions, which can support Deaf and disabled people's groups

- understand what Deaf and disabled people's groups in different areas across London need to support and develop their work



- work with mainstream services to help them remove barriers to their providing equal service to Deaf and disabled people's groups

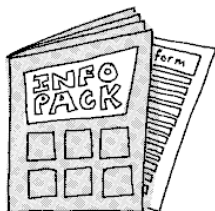


- identify, or facilitate the development of, services that Deaf and disabled people's groups need especially through facilitating links and networks with other Deaf and disabled people's groups who may have developed the necessary skill or services

and can perhaps train or mentor other groups for instance in making funding applications or dealing with staff issues

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In relation to work with those in positions of power



- understand what work is already going on to promote the interests of disabled and Deaf people in the capital and where appropriate develop links and possibly ways to support existing groups working on a particular issue
- understand the priorities from Deaf and disabled people across London through working with their groups
- understand the structures of the organisations who have power over the lives of Deaf and disabled people in London and built relationships with key organisations, departments and individuals
- gather and co-ordinate the Voice of Deaf and disabled people across London, and put their collective views to other bodies including government, public authorities, funders, and the voluntary sector
- maintain robust and effective feedback mechanisms to encourage Deaf and disabled people's groups to continue contributing to the Voice.

All that the LSO does will be based on the Social Model of Disability and Cultural Model of Deafness and will promote equality and human rights for Deaf and disabled people. It must also be a model of good practice in relation to access for everyone.

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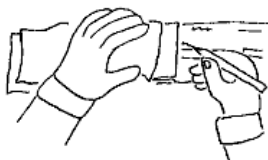
In this way it will respond to what groups told us because it will:

- have a very clear purpose to focus on which should help prevent it being distracted by others
- not compete with the groups it is set up to support
- add value for its stakeholders, and not duplicate the work of others
- make sure that all it does is accessible

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Its money - how it will get it

Grants



At the beginning the LSO will be funded in ways which the voluntary sector has always been funded. It will apply to grant making bodies, such as City Parochial Foundation, City Bridge Trust and London Councils, for specific money to set up and build the organisation, and then to begin to develop its two streams of work.

As soon as it can the LSO should try to get its money in other ways and leave more funding for those it is there to support.

Sponsorship



It will create partnerships, mainly with public and private sector organisations which recognise the value of the work it does and who are willing to sponsor the LSO to continue its work. These might include the GLA Group and London Councils.

Research and Consultancy Contracts



It will become recognised as a provider of high level strategic resources through its access to Deaf and disabled people in London. As such it would expect to develop a client base of organisations in any sector wanting research or consultancy undertaken. Clients might include NHS London, Jobcentre Plus or the Employers Forum on Disability.



The LSO's purpose makes it clear that in developing this work, it will expect to deliver its work through existing Deaf and disabled people's groups and businesses wherever it can.



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In this way it will respond to what groups told us because it will not rely on short-term funding from a small number of public funders, but be **flexible and commercial**, adapting to changes in the funding environment.

Its Offices - where the organisation (LSO) will be



The LSO may eventually be based sub regionally in four or five different locations spread across London but this was not a high priority for Deaf and disabled people's groups. They recognised that resources were limited.

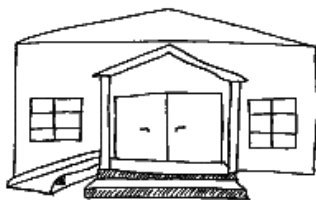


What the LSO must do to succeed is to work locally, even if it doesn't have local offices. We recommend the LSO starts with two sub Regions, one north of the River Thames and one south, so that they can be divided to meet the needs of specific areas.



The new organisation must create an excellent, straightforward, system of web and email based links which can easily also be sent in other formats to meet specific access needs, will be essential.

As will appropriate and effective use of telephone communications including text and conferencing.



The LSO will start with a small central London office, which may need to be the best that can be achieved in a short timescale. Its permanent home will not be large, but must be chosen for its accessibility in all senses of the word. So the building and the area around it needs to have excellent access and public transport connections. Its geographic

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location needs to take into account transport routes from all parts of the capital.



The first year of funding for the LSO is estimated to be £266,092. This is made up as follows:

Capital costs	£4,800
Staff costs	£178,884
Access costs including interpreters	£10,000
Premises and IT equipment	£44,438
Set up costs	£12,500
Administration expenses	£15,470



In this way it will respond to what groups told us because it will begin work as a **small, efficient and business-like** organisation, able to respond quickly, effectively and appropriately to the needs of groups of disabled and Deaf Londoners.

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Its Staff and how it will find them



The LSO will have a comparatively small staff but they will be high level and flexible. They will be able to operate effectively when working with staff at senior levels within public sector bodies and so on.



The LSO should try to employ Deaf and disabled people, but must recruit on the basis of the skills needed for the job. It should develop systems for growing talent within the Deaf and disabled community such as secondment, work placement, shadowing and mentoring. It should also explore filling its skills gaps without long term commitment by secondment from an outside organisation whose staff will also benefit from this experience.



Working within the Social Model of Disability and Cultural Model of Deafness, good and open communication with colleagues and others, and working in a fully inclusive and accessible way, should be in each member of staff's personal objectives.



The LSO will be led by a **Chief Executive Officer**, who will have appropriate administrative support for their role. The Chief Executive Officer's role would be:

- Leadership
- External Relations with key organisations such as GLA and London Councils
- Strategic direction implementation
- Financial Strategy and Stability
- Board relations

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- Media and public relations



The remainder of the Staff Team will have a clear facilitating role, rather than actual delivery of day-to-day frontline services. The roles the Team will need to fulfil will be:



a. To facilitate the development of local groups of Deaf and disabled people and the building of sustainable community and social enterprise



b. To facilitate the development of an effective Voice of Deaf and disabled people within each sub Region to make sure the difference in issues across London comes out.



c. To facilitate the inclusion of the Voice of under-represented sections of the Deaf and disabled community within pan-impairment groups or through their own groups where appropriate. These sections include people who are covered by the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) but

do not self identify as disabled people most of whom will not be aware of the Social Model of Disability or Cultural Model of Deafness. Those Deaf and disabled people who may not readily associate themselves with the LSO's work but who it will need to make sure it does work with include:

- People who experience mental distress or illness
- BAME Deaf and disabled people including asylum seekers and refugees
- Neuro-diverse people and people with learning difficulties
- The Deaf community
- Young Deaf and disabled people
- Older Deaf and disabled people

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- Deaf and disabled people in the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community
- People with long term medical conditions who do not consider themselves disabled



d. To cover policy in things affecting our lives, to do research, and to help Deaf and disabled people's groups reply to consultations. Policy areas could include:

- Private sector service provision
- Public sector services such as the justice system
- Education
- Employment
- Health
- Independent living
- Transport
- Leisure
- Housing
- Access
- Regeneration



In this way it will respond to what groups told us because:

- It will provide strong leadership with clear objectives
- Staff will be high quality, skilled and qualified - 'The right person for the right issues'
- It will welcome staff who are Deaf, disabled or experience other barriers to participation
- Staff should provide a role model for other organisations in how they work

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Its Legal Structure and Board



The LSO will be a CIC or community interest company and a company limited by guarantee. This not for profit structure has been designed to help communities wanting to do things to help themselves. Any money made from what the LSO does, which is left after all the costs of running the LSO, will go back in to the work of the organisation or benefit the wider Deaf and disabled community in London. The LSO will be a social enterprise.

We have two main reasons for this recommendation.



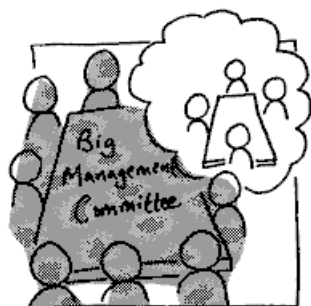
Attracting skilled people We believe Deaf and disabled people should be paid for their skills. Those on the Board should be paid fairly, in the same way that members of a hospital board are paid. This should help the LSO to attract and keep the skilled people it needs to run it and to assist in the development of Deaf and disabled people's groups in London. The consultation made it clear that this was expected.



Paying Board members will also establish a clear expectation of commitment from them. It was also clear from the consultation that groups hoped that those running the organisation would be Deaf or disabled people. Those people within the community who have developed most of the skills the organisation need will have developed them through working or similar activities. They may still need to earn but have limited energy or capacity for voluntary work outside their paid employment or other commitments. Paying the Board may mean someone is able to take the job as one part of earning their living. It will widen the LSO's potential recruitment pool.

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We chose the CIC structure because charity trustees in general cannot be paid for being a trustee. The Charity Commission has been known to give permission for payment to people just for being a trustee, but these are rare and treated individually. It is very unlikely that more than a small minority of the Board would be allowed to be paid which could cause division.



Preventing division and tension between paid officers and an unpaid volunteer Board

Because of the way in which those on the Board of a charity are its trustees, paid staff do not join Boards. In most organisations they attend Board meetings but it can often be the case that their skills and expertise in running the organisation are not appropriately recognised by the Board. In a number of cases of which we are aware, highly skilled managers have been excluded from Board meetings while the Board tries to “manage” the organisation.

We chose the CIC structure because in a CIC executive directors (who are employed in the organisation) and non-executive directors (who come in from outside to contribute their skills and experience) sit side by side on the Board, working together as a Team to take forward the work.

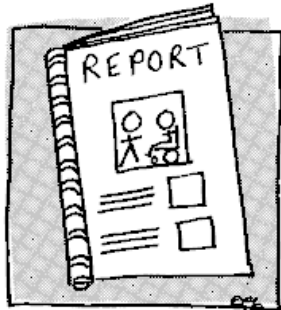


A CIC has a CIC Regulator, who is based at Companies House in Cardiff, who it has to answer to. The Regulator has stated:

“I want CICs to be able to attract high quality wealth creators as directors, paying them reasonable salaries, giving them immense job satisfaction, and the opportunity to put their talents to making profits for the public good.”

The Regulator can take action if they think Directors are being paid too much.

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A CIC has to produce an Annual Report which shows how it has benefitted its community over the last year. The Regulator keeps an eye on the annual accounts to check that everything is in order and money isn't obviously being spent on the wrong things. However, in the government's words, it is "light touch" regulation compared with charities. At the end of this Report there is more information on CICs (community interest companies).



The members of the CIC will be the Board. This will make sure the LSO can act quickly to respond to changing opportunities and challenges. It will also reduce the need for resources to service a membership that may well not be active.



The Board will be small. We suggest a Board size of 6-8 initially for reasons of cost and efficiency. Later it may need to be increased but we would recommend a maximum of 12. This includes a Non-Executive Chair, the Chief Executive Officer, group representatives from the Boroughs, non Executive Directors and co-opted members.



The Board will be chosen for their skills. We recommend that a non Executive Chair, who must be a Deaf or disabled person, is appointed. Deaf or disabled Board members representing borough wide organisations will have places but will need to bring appropriate skills, and dedicate time to the LSO. Depending on the available skill mix a number of specific non Executive Directors may be recruited for their skills, such as finance, human resources, and legal, who will, if possible, be Deaf or disabled.

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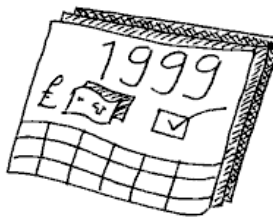
One role of the LSO must be to provide opportunities to ensure Deaf and disabled people who work within the Social Model of Disability can develop the necessary skills to be Board members. And also that Deaf and disabled people with the necessary skills can, if necessary, develop their understanding of the Social and Cultural Models.



The Board will also have the responsibility to co-opt if it is clear any key community interests are not represented through the Borough or other Board members.



We recommend that non staff appointments are for fixed terms with a rigorous process set up to assess recruitment which involves independent assessors external to the LSO.



As a CIC the LSO's Chief Executive Officer, and possibly other staff, will be on the Board. There will therefore need to be a Remuneration Committee, with external independent advice, to set senior staff salaries. Members of the Board, or their organisations, will be paid for the time they spend because being on the Board will be a part-time job to which they are contributing their skills. External assessment mechanisms will need to be in place to set levels of payment.



In this way it will respond to what groups told us because:

- It will be **transparent** about the way it is funded, about how decisions are made, and in the way that it works
- It will have **an appropriate structure** that makes sure it can keep going

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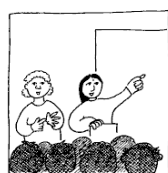
Its Accountability to Deaf and disabled people's groups in London



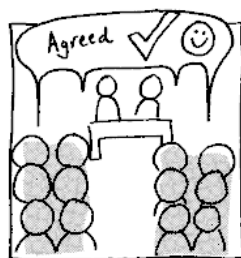
There will be sub regional forums for local Borough based groups to come together from across the sub region. How big these regions are will be worked out on the basis of local need and resources. One or more forums may also be set up for specific areas of interest that do not fit neatly in geographical boundaries – perhaps disabled women refugees, or LGBT groups. Again these will be dictated by need.



Forums will be facilitated by LSO staff responsible for that sub region and will meet regularly so people can plan their attendance.



Each sub Region forum can put forward a representative for the Board whose role will mainly be to make sure that their sub Region groups' specific interests are represented. They will however, need to demonstrate appropriate skills and accept the responsibilities of Board membership.



Once a year the LSO will be required to hold its Annual General Meeting in public and invite representatives of Deaf and disabled people's groups in London and other key stakeholders, such as partners and funders. The groups and other stakeholders will have the opportunity of speaking, in response to the Annual Report, about their views of the performance of the LSO, and the Board will be required to make an appropriate response which is recorded and made public.

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Although it will not be a membership organisation, the success of the LSO will depend on having a reputation for being in touch with the Deaf and disabled people of London. If it does not have the confidence of the community it serves they will not involve themselves with it and it will be unable to “sell” its services. In many ways the LSO will need to be more in tune with, and responsive to, the community it serves, than if it had a membership list it could point to as its support, however unhappy that membership might be.



In this way it will respond to what groups told us because it will be **accountable** to groups of disabled and Deaf Londoners.

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Action Plan for the development of new organisation

Those who responded to the consultation were, almost without exception, anxious that something happened quickly. The Project Board have indicated that they would hope the LSO would be ready to begin work early in the summer of 2008.



We have therefore looked at a number of ways in which this could be achieved. We called them Options and worked through them to see how quickly the LSO could be set up. The only one that had a chance of getting the LSO working, for Deaf and disabled people's groups across London, quickly is the one we now put forward.

The Way Forward



London Councils should undertake to organise the setting up of the LSO and the appointment of an interim Chair and CEO and initial Board members

What needs to be done now



A decision must be made on the way the initial development work will be done



Funding for, or the resourcing of, initial development work will need to be secured



Identifying senior figure to assist in recruitment

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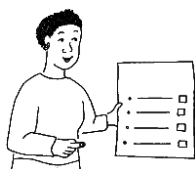


Details of the CIC Memorandum and Articles of Association (constitution) need to be worked out

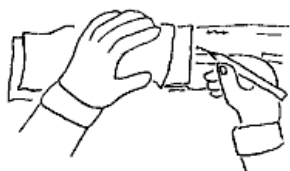


COMMUNITY
INTEREST
COMPANIES

The company needs to be formed and registered both at Companies House and with the CIC Regulator



Initial Business Plan to support funding applications needs to be written



Funding for start up and initial running costs needs to be secured



Remuneration (salaries and so on) needs to be set through an external mechanism



Additional funding (sponsorship) needs to be secured for Non-Executive payments



Recruitment arrangements for Chair and CEO (Chief Executive Officer) including job description and person specification need to be agreed



Premises need to be identified and secured



External assessment of recruitment process needs to be secured

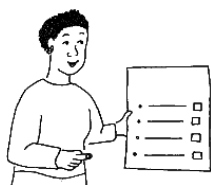
London-wide Support Organisation



A Non- Executive Chair needs to be recruited



The CEO needs to be recruited



Initial Business Plan will need to be reviewed to make sure it is fit for purpose for delivery by the CEO



The Board needs to be recruited

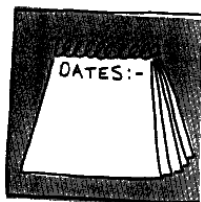


Board need to approve the revised Business Plan



Decision-making process moves to the Board

Timetable



All this could take about 17 weeks.