



May 2024 London Specialist Advice Forum

Last month's London Specialist Advice Forum was an interactive session, supported by facilitators to explore key questions such as the following:

1. How does the sector respond to unprecedented needs to proactively survive?
2. How can the sector collaborate, and work in partnership?
3. How can the sector best learn from each other?

Following on from the roundtable discussions, here are some suggestions on what the next steps should be for the sector in responding to unprecedented needs and working collaboratively. These next steps included potential action points for **funders**, **advice agencies**, and **wider voluntary sector organisations**.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Action points for Funders: Enhance collaboration, openness, and accountability in funding practices 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster a culture of openness to both wins and losses: Encourage a culture of celebrating efforts and learning, rather than just outcomes, and establish regular meetings with grantees to discuss failures without fear of repercussions. 2. Share funder best practices: Host quarterly webinars or in-person sessions where funders share their best practices and develop best practice guidelines. 3. Reduce competition on funding opportunities: Encourage consortium and partnership working where appropriate, being mindful of the most suitable conditions for grantees. 4. Funders maintain accountability: Ensure all funding processes and criteria are aligned with IVAR's best practice principles.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Action points for advice agencies: Enhance peer support and learning in the sector 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in peer support across the sector: Participate in learning events, workshops, and seminars that allow professionals to share experiences and knowledge (such as Network for Justice and London Legal Support Trust- London Specialist Advice Forum). Try and build in dedicated time for networking and learning events into job roles and funding applications to enable this participation.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Share learning on client and sector needs: Contribute to group discussions to derive common strategies and best practices. Implement effective systems to gather and analyse client feedback regularly and highlight innovative approaches. 3. Share learning from successes and failures: embrace a healthy approach to evaluation and learning and share these with the wider sector to improve best practice approaches.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action points for wider voluntary sector organisations: Strengthening collaboration, and partnerships 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiate face-to-face collaboration and partnerships: Plan and conduct workshops with potential partners to develop joint projects and funding bids. 2. Develop strategic partnerships with stakeholders: Identify local organisations, businesses, and community groups that align with key strategic objectives, identify relevant stakeholders by stakeholder mapping, and establish communication with the wider sector. 3. Project development with local health and school services: Involving advice agencies early in the project planning process to ensure they are included in key decisions making. Ensure clear communication lines and transparency in the co-design process.