

EVALUATION OF THE LONDON RECOVERY PROGRAMME

FINAL REPORT
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The London Recovery Programme and Recovery Board (now evolved and reformed as the ‘London Partnership Board’) were set up as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic to address the socio-economic challenges faced by London. PRD have been commissioned to qualitatively assess and evaluate the aims and activities of the board through engagement with key stakeholders, identifying the challenges and understanding lessons learned to help improve its role and function going forward.

Through the process of evaluation, PRD looked at the depth and value of the work undertaken by the board and its members, with a focus on understanding ways to improve its effectiveness. We have also proposed recommendations, reflecting on both what has worked well, and what could be improved. In developing these reflections, we recognise the immense challenge of developing a Recovery Programme of this scale and nature; especially within the context of the global pandemic, which must be recognised as an unprecedented, crisis that bore a period of sustained uncertainty and upheaval.

We hope this evaluation will support the London Partnership Board, and the agencies supporting it, to streamline and develop its future role and purpose as an important fulcrum and exemplar for cross-sectoral collaboration and partnership working.

Having agreed on a relevant list of stakeholders for discussion with the GLA client team, PRD carried out 11 in-depth one-to-one interviews, as well as 3 focus group sessions with the agreed sample of representatives involving 25 participants in total. The interviewees included board members, chairs of the taskforce and anchor institutions network. The focus group sessions were with Youth Recovery Board members, GLA officers and other stakeholders involved in the board and programme (see full participant list in the [appendix](#)).

These discussions focused on, and were evaluated against, four themes:

- **Governance:** Considering how the governance structure of the board influenced its clarity of the purpose, ways of working, representation, inclusivity, progress monitoring, and overall effectiveness in board meetings and decision making
- **Operational:** Understanding the role of sub-groups and working-group arrangements, as well as support, and co-ordination arrangements.
- **Away from meetings:** Ability of board members to influence change within their organisations, and the extent to which they could use the London Recovery Board (“LRB”) approach to meet their own organisational needs.
- **Future:** Views on the future functioning of the board, its aim and purpose going forward beyond recovery

The evaluation also recognises that many of the lessons learned and recommendations have been taken on board by the GLA and the move to the Partnership Board is an effective step in addressing some of the challenges. A summary of the main findings is detailed overleaf.



Main insights from the evaluation:

- The Recovery Board and its ways of working were considered overwhelmingly positive, adding real value to the work being done across London's key stakeholders. The board represents a **useful precedent for partnership working** in London and the UK, fostering pan-London partnerships and cross-sectoral ways of working. It helped different organisations to work across silos and be more proactive about new partnerships.
- The **convening power of GLA and London Councils** has been powerful in nurturing an active dialogue between key stakeholders and resulted in the new collaborative form of governance necessary to respond to the challenges created by the pandemic. It is important to maintain its position as a platform for two-way exchange, learning from the practices on the ground around London, and engaging with communities more broadly.
- The board provided a **useful platform and forum for the exchange of ideas, diversity of voices and opinions**. Continuing this forum for discussion and partnership working were positively regarded by many towards addressing future challenges, such as cost-of-living, climate emergency and structural inequalities. However, it requires exploring the intersectionality of interests to find alignments in thinking and having a shared purpose.
- The **collective presence of strong leadership** and the mix of powerful and diverse voices added to the strength and gravitas of the Recovery Board. The symbolic nature of the joint venture between the GLA and London Councils provided legitimacy and affirmed the importance of the board to London. However, it is important to also consider how communicating more widely about the work being done can ensure this partnered approach captures a wider, larger audience.
- The **programme of work** was well thought out and expansive, with the sub-groups providing an opportunity to allow for more in-depth conversations. However, the mission-based approach could be re-visited to improve and streamline the focus. There should also be a clearer focus on outcomes, delivery, and tangibility of actions. The evaluation of the **missions to streamline** and bring out the key objectives around them (being done as a separate programme by the GLA) will prove useful for this purpose. Fewer, more focussed missions were considered better if missions continue to be pursued.
- **Representation and inclusivity** of the board were largely deemed positive, with the valuable additions of the voluntary and community sector, and the youth representatives alongside key organisations with fiscal power noted as very important. However, more inclusivity and accessibility are essential to have diversity in opinions and outlooks. A right balance in size and diversity is crucial to have meaningful discussions. The future board should also consider having a more diverse platform by incorporating less-heard voices and marginalised communities at the forefront.
- The **Youth Recovery Board** was described as a successful and important addition both by the members of the board, as well as the members of the youth board themselves. The Youth Board brought in the voices of young people from London and provided them with an opportunity to interact with major decision-makers and stakeholders. It also resulted in bringing fresh and positively disruptive perspectives to the board that allowed for a broader understanding of the priorities of future generations. This model has the potential to become more pervasive alongside traditional governance structures.



- The **Anchor Institutions Network** was regarded as an important and successful development; fostering and strengthening useful partnerships with key institutions, supporting them to act collaboratively to address some of the biggest challenges faced by Londoners. The Anchor Institutions network was established through the board as an inherent part of the programme and grew into a separate impactful network of leading organisations across the public sector, businesses, trade unions and community groups.
- The board had clear structures in place which allowed for **efficient, effective working**. However, the interactions could be more fluid and informal to allow for more open and honest conversations. Given the public nature of the meetings, it was inevitable for the discussions to have reflected partisan lines at times, and this underlined the importance of having sub-groups where more open dialogue was possible.
- The board came together as a response to the pandemic and had a **real sense of shared purpose**. It is important to maintain this shared purpose going forward and align the thinking to continue with the legacy of the board. The work programme should articulate more clearly how partners will contribute to delivery. The future board presents the potential to carry forward the legacy and evolve it, by taking on some of the long-term structural challenges faced by Londoners.
- **Clarity and transparency around decision-making**, representation and involvement would allow a better understanding of processes and participation. The board was purposefully designed to be an advisory board and not a decision-making one, and this needs to be communicated to the members to allow for a deeper understanding of the purpose and role of the board and to manage expectations.
- The board was successful to some extent in allocating resources and capacity to address challenges such as digital exclusion (by arranging for laptops for home schooling where necessary) and community vaccination drives (through community and faith spaces) during the pandemic. However, further measures should be introduced **to build capacity amongst participants** representing organisations and groups that are traditionally less heard in top-down decision making. In particular, working more effectively with London's Voluntary & Community Sectors needs further consideration.



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