

MEETING: 09/12/24

REF: 25061

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Anchor Programme**

<b>Disability Rights UK</b>	<b>Adv: Shegufta Slawther</b>
<b>Amount requested: £1,381,353</b>	<b>Base: Hackney</b>
<b>{Revised request amount: £1,403,253}</b>	<b>Benefit: London-wide</b>
<b>Amount recommended: £1,403,300</b>	

**Purpose of grant request:** To use core funding to expand capacity for second tier support for London's Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and work towards systems change.

**The Applicant**

Disability Rights UK (DRUK) is a registered charity (no. 1138585) based in Hackney but working nationally, with 30% of its work focused in London. As an infrastructure organisation, DRUK provide capacity building and sector-wide development initiatives for DPOs, supporting their connectivity, resilience, growth and collaboration. It also works with DPOs to campaign and influence national policy on independent living, benefits, education, employment, transport, human rights and other issues; shaping policy through direct experience and expertise. The charity also provides information, advice and support services for DPOs, Disabled people, families and carers, via helplines, guides and resources, such as the Disability Rights Handbook and DPO Support Hub. DRUK is a 'led by and for' organisation: 90% of its board are Disabled people, one is a parent of a Disabled child and three are from Black and Asian communities. In addition, 100% of the leadership team are Disabled, and 33% of the board and leadership identify as neurodivergent. The charity also has LGBTQIA+ representation, people of different religions (and no religion), as well as people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In May 2024, DRUK won a 2024 Charity Governance Award for Board Equity, Diversity and Inclusion<sup>1</sup>.

**Background and detail of proposal**

DRUK's vision is to work with the government to see the value of DPOs and reset the relationships between the DPO sector, government and wider civil society. Disabled people have access to better opportunities, information, advice and support, and are involved in designing and influencing their future. DPOs will be better supported with longer-term and secure funding, with resilience and capacity to support Disabled people in their community and spending less time firefighting and reacting to threats to the rights of Disabled people.

The Anchor funding would go towards a number of posts: Head of Engagement, Head of Policy, DPO Development Manager and Data and Insight Officer, all

<sup>1</sup> [Disability Rights UK - The Charity Governance Awards](#)

receiving a 25% contribution reflecting the proportion of DRUK's work that is London-specific and fully funding a new Engagement Officer who would be London-specific. The funding, and contributions to these roles specifically, will enable DRUK to support London-based DPOs in several ways. The DPO sector has been operating against continuous backdrops of financial pressures – Covid-19, lockdowns, austerity and continuing cost of living crisis, all of which have disproportionately affected Disabled people. The funding landscape is a challenge, with Local Authority budgets slashed by Central Government, resulting in the withdrawal of core funding for DPOs that was once encouraged. Specialist grant funds for DPOs are limited and often face competition from large disability charities that are not Disabled-led. DPOs are constantly firefighting, with limited capacity for strategic planning and building partnerships. The Anchor grant will provide much needed capacity development for individual DPOs, whilst supporting London's wider DPO ecosystem. This will be done by creating pathways for DPOs to develop partnerships and collaborations, peer advice and support, monitoring and promoting gaps and opportunities for partnership and service delivery, enhancing relationships and networking of intersectional DPOs, attracting and supporting the next generation of Disabled people into the DPO workforce and leadership, and gathering quantitative evidence about the sector, its strengths, gaps and opportunities. There will be a focus on supporting intersectional DPOs by ensuring their voices are heard across policy areas through panels and coalitions.

DRUK seeks to tackle the marginalisation of intersectional DPOs. The barriers that exist for these organisations within mainstream disability and DPO forums impede networking, connection, partnership and funding opportunities. Smaller and intersectional DPOs are often concerned with losing independence when collaborating, DRUK will work closely to support and build these opportunities, ensuring intersectionality is prioritised. The charity has done a lot of work with small intersectional DPOs in London, it has undergone a process by which it has given these organisations the space to explain their grievances, having historically been ignored and undervalued. Recognising the more established intersectional DPOs with experience, knowledge and traction of running an organisation, DRUK is also actively seeking to engage the newer, grassroots organisations only just launching. Within the Disability Justice Framework<sup>2</sup>, it is central that justice cannot be achieved without other communities, such as the trans and traveller communities, that have experiences to inform and enrich DRUK's policy work. As a delivery partner to Sport England's Together Fund, DRUK ensured 25% of its funding disbursed went to intersectional DPOs. Intersectionality is integrated within DRUK's strategic plans for an inclusive movement, and coproduce training on how to be intersectional with these organisations for the wider DPO sector.

DRUK convenes Our Voices, involving circa 200 DPOs, many London-based, to build capacity, gather concerns to promote awareness and national policy change. Examples include the Covid-19 Inquiry, Disability Poverty Campaign Group, and Intersectional DPO Forum. Borne out of these networks, DRUK campaigned on the issue of the lack of Disabled people represented amongst elected officials. It was

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<sup>2</sup> [Disability Justice — Baobab Foundation](#)

successful in securing support from the previous government in 2018 to launch The EnAble Fund, funded by the Government Equalities Office and working in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA). This fund was available to Disabled people standing in the 2019 English local council elections, and the 2020 local and Police and Crime Commissioner elections. Although the fund reached 41 individuals, the government decided to close the fund in April 2020, which meant candidates standing in the local and Police and Crime Commissioner elections would not have access to the funds as the elections were postponed by a year due to the pandemic. The fund was closed as the government of the day felt that this support should be provided by individual political parties. This is an issue the DRUK is looking to challenge with the new government.

DRUK will continue to champion the DPO sector through its State of Sector reports, but also challenging and removing barriers to funding, including working with government to reset the relationship between DPOs and statutory bodies.

### **London's Disability sector**

Based on The Census 2021, across London, 13.2% of people are Disabled, using the definition under the Equality Act 2010. In London overall, families that include a Disabled person are more likely to be in poverty than families without a Disabled person<sup>3</sup>. There is also a clear trend between the level of deprivation in a neighbourhood and the proportion of the population that is Disabled. Among London's 10% most deprived neighbourhoods, the average proportion of the population who are Disabled is 15.5%. Only four neighbourhoods in the whole of London have a population of more than 20% Disabled people, all four of these are in the most deprived category. By contrast, in the 10% least deprived neighbourhoods on London, Disabled people make up an average of 11.7% of the population.

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was ratified in the UK in 2009<sup>4</sup>. As part of this, the UK agreed to protect and promote the human rights of Disabled people, including eliminating disability discrimination, enabling Disabled people to live independently in the community, ensuring an inclusive education system, ensuring Disabled people are protected from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse. The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>5</sup> is a body of independent experts which monitors implementation of the Convention by State Parties. An investigation by the Committee in 2016 found that "some violations were grave, some others were systemic, and some were both: grave and systemic<sup>6</sup>" due to welfare reforms in the UK since 2010. The UK was the first country to be investigated by the UN due to these violations. In August 2023, the UK Government was invited to a hearing to report to the UN Committee on any advancement made on the UN's recommendations following its investigation, but the Government did not attend, nor provide a reason for their absence. Numerous DPOs

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<sup>3</sup> [Poverty and disability | Trust for London](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: UK implementation - House of Commons Library](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | OHCHR](#)

<sup>6</sup> [CRPD.C.15.R.2.Rev.1-ENG.doc](#)

(including DRUK, which secured funding specifically for this purpose for itself and other DPOs) attended in Geneva and gave evidence and testimonies of the significant and negative impact of government policies on Disabled communities. In March 2024, the UK Government was again invited to the UN Committee, which it did attend. In response to the investigation's findings, which included the regression of Disabled people's rights, the Government's response focussed on its Disability Action Plan and Disability Strategy. However, DPO's have reported that both lack transformative changes. DRUK has been a key player in seeking to address these issues, ensuring that its members are heard on a global platform. It seeks to work with the new Government to ensure accountable implementation of the Equality Act and UNCRPD across the board.

## Financial Information

Year end as at 31 March	2023	2024	2025
	Signed Accounts	Draft Accounts	Forecast
	£	£	£
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	1,626,546	1,725,341	2,338,395
Expenditure	(1,607,603)	(1,724,705)	(2,328,008)
<b>Surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>18,943</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>10,387</b>
<b>Reserves:</b>			
Total restricted	57,695	26,860	5,458
Total unrestricted	275,463	306,934	338,724
<b>Total reserves</b>	<b>333,158</b>	<b>333,794</b>	<b>344,182</b>
Of which: free unrestricted	238,035	278,633	310,423
Reserves policy target	280,000	330,000	330,000
Free reserves over/(under) target	(41,965)	(51,367)	(19,577)

DRUK have had financial stability for a number of years, including throughout the Covid pandemic. There is a significant projected increase in income for 2025, £300k of which is for a new income target for 'new initiatives'. The Head of Partnerships is spearheading various fundraising activities to meet this new target. If this ambitious target is not met, the charity should still be fine operating with a lower income level. This is specific to 2025 and the charity does not expect the budget for 2026 to be at this high level. The 2025 budget also includes the Anchor grant.

The reserves policy is to hold three months' core costs and is forecast to be within policy by 2026. Whilst set at a fixed level of £330k, the charity reports that the Finance Committee of its Board regularly considers the reserves position. At its last meeting, it was agreed to keep the reserves target at three months' core costs for 2025, as the increase in costs for this year are not directly relevant to overheads. Much of it is project delivery linked to an equivalent increase income, and project costs such as these are not considered when calculating the reserves level.

## Funding History

The charity has received several grants from CBF in the past, including one current Bridging Divides grant to support the London element of its Independent Living Helpline and Members' Advice Line. Reporting to date indicates that over the lifetime

of this five-year grant, the organisation has undergone strategic change with a renewed focus on campaigning, coalition building, and supporting other smaller DPOs. Whilst the Helpline and Advice Line have been valuable to the DPO sector, through this service the charity is recording the increasing need to build and support movements to achieve policy change. This grant is due to end in March 2025. There is no duplication of costs or activities between this proposal and its Bridging Divides funded activities.

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>
25/03/2021	LCR Wave 5 Aligned. £18,750 towards the salary costs over 12 months for two core salaries, as detailed in the application, together with a contribution towards running cost30/
30/01/2020	£175,000 over five years (5 x £35,000) towards the salaries, operating and management costs of the London element of the Independent Living Helpline and Members' Advice Line.
16/07/2014	£80,000 over two years (2 x £40,000) towards a quarter of the total salary and related running costs of information and advice services, in order to benefit disabled Londoners.

### **The Recommendation**

***£1,403,300 over 10 years (£127,000; £125,500; £132,700; £138,000; £143,700; £142,700; £148,900; £148,500; £147,900, £148,400) in core funding for DRUK's London-specific second-tier and systems change work, including 0.25 FTE contributions towards Head of Engagement, Head of Policy, DPO Development Manager, Data and Insight Officer, and a new FT Engagement Officer, and other associated costs.***