



Civil Society Alliance

Terms of Reference and objectives

1. Civil Society Alliance objectives

1.1 The overarching aim of the Civil Society Alliance is to empower civil society organisations from across the UK to scrutinise and influence constitutional, administrative and legal changes to the UK policy landscape.

1.2 The Civil Society Alliance will work towards these objectives:

Open and accountable Law-making. Legislating must respect the democratic processes, including the devolved nature of the UK constitution. There must be clear limits and safeguards on executive power. There must be robust parliamentary scrutiny at all levels with appropriate transparency and debate.

A high standards UK. Standards within the UK should not be diminished or undermined, with best practice for rights and standards being maintained or developed and associated policies and funding provided to underpin them. Constitutional or legislative change should not mean weaker standards, fewer rights, or loss of funding. This includes the protection of standards and ensuring that no governance gaps are created following the UK's exit from the EU.

A strong civil society voice from across the UK. The civic space for civil society organisations to be active advocates in the public sphere should be protected and advanced. A culture of government engagement with civil society should be enabled which is collaborative, consistent, open, effective, and accountable. Civil society bridges the gap between citizens and the state and ensures that views, interests, and evidence from the population as a whole are heard by government.

2. Terms of Reference

2.1 The Civil Society Alliance provides a resource to build capacity, facilitate and coordinate the sharing of information, expertise, and concerns across UK civil society.

2.2 The Alliance will prioritise its activities to ensure they add value to our members and avoid duplication of their work. Those activities may include:

- The coordination of the civil society voices across the UK, exploring current, anticipated, and evolving policy developments.
- The facilitation of physical and virtual events for the purposes of sharing information, views, education, and expertise.
- The provision of platforms for civil society voices within Westminster, including providing evidence to Select Committees; meetings with MPs; and briefing events.
- The collection, dissemination and exchange of Alliance generated and/or members' research and relevant information, with and between members and, where appropriate, other bodies having similar objectives.
- The coordination of joint campaigns and lobbying efforts where appropriate.

3. Membership

3.1 Any civil society organisation or group which is non-statutory, not for profit, non-party political and that subscribes to the objectives of the Civil Society Alliance may become a member.

3.2 Affiliate membership is open at the Alliance's discretion for participation in specific meetings, roundtables, and other events by invitation. This may include individuals or organisations who have relevant expertise to contribute.

3.3 Members are encouraged to contribute to the collective civil society voice, where appropriate, including by:

- Sharing information, knowledge and expertise on specific issues that are likely to be of interest to the wider membership, including upcoming Parliamentary debates; draft Bills of concern; consultations requiring response; and upcoming EU legislation of relevance to UK civil society.
- Highlighting opportunities for coordination of communications and collaborative research, including case studies that illustrate the practical implications of policy developments on civil society organisations.
- Supporting and participating in shared campaigns or initiatives directed towards the realisation of Alliance objectives and principles.

4. Shaping the agenda

4.1 The primary role of the Civil Society Alliance is to act as a capacity builder, facilitator, and enabler. The Alliance will focus on the issues of concern identified by civil society groups provided the Alliance can add value and avoids duplication of members' own work.

4.2 To promote the voices of civil society from across the UK in Westminster, the Alliance will, where appropriate¹, assist members with the coordination of joint campaigning and lobbying.

4.3 In deciding where interventions are appropriate, the Alliance will first consider if the intervention will directly contribute towards achieving its core objectives. The Alliance will also consider a range of factors, including:

- the percentage of the membership served.

¹ Subject to current Charity Commission guidance for England and Wales (section 2.4) 2008

- the added value of the Alliance's potential activity.
- whether there would be replication/duplication of individual member action.
- whether the issue is UK wide.
- whether the issue is sufficiently overarching enough.
- whether the issue is sufficiently cross sector.

4.4 In order to ensure the effectiveness and timeliness of such interventions, the Civil Society Alliance will adopt the following approach to decision making:

- The Civil Society Alliance will alert members to proposed interventions, including publications, consultation responses, and briefing notes.
- A draft text associated with a proposed intervention will be circulated to members, who can decide at that point whether they wish to be included/'opt in' to the proposed activity as a signatory.
- No member organisation's name will be attributed to the initiative or text in question unless they have 'opted in'.
- Civil Society Alliance staff will ensure that a full list of signatory organisations is included with any publication, where appropriate.
- If an Alliance member/s choose not to 'opt in' to a text or position, this will not restrict such an initiative from proceeding.
- The situation may also arise, where it is appropriate, for the Alliance to make submissions or interventions in its own right.² This may include the publishing of data, research reports or any other relevant material. In such instances, the Alliance will make clear, if appropriate, that these are not initiatives where Alliance members were asked to be signatories.

4.5 There may be specific issues for which members wish to develop subgroups. Such subgroups will be open to any Alliance member organisation. The sub-groups may be tasked with developing approaches or responses to issues that are likely to meet with membership support and be in line with the Alliance's principles and objectives. Any sub-group will be required to report back to the full membership, consider any

² Interventions including activities and communications will be subject to a written disclaimer explaining that the views expressed by the Alliance do not necessarily reflect the views of the membership.

suggested edits or revisions that may be suggested and help move towards a final draft. Membership support for any such final draft will be subject to the decision-making process outlined in point 4.4 above. Sub-groups may also play an active role in updating findings and consideration of evolving issues to keep members informed of any new developments and proposed changes to the underlying position/red lines.

5. Relationships with other civil society organisations

5.1 The Alliance will seek to enable and engage with organisations who are less-heard in UK policy developments and aim for strong geographic representation and engagement around organisations that are not London-based.

5.2 A Project Advisory Group (PAG) comprising the Human Rights Consortium (Northern Ireland), Human Rights Consortium Scotland, and the Wales Civil Society Forum on Brexit will support the Civil Society Alliance in its strategic planning, reviews and ensuring adherence with ongoing funding commitments.

5.3 The Alliance project staff will be employed by the Human Rights Consortium (Northern Ireland) for the initial development of the project between 2022-2024.

5.4 The commitments outlined in points 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 will not divert from the central and equal role that each member will play in shaping the Alliance approach to delivering on its objectives and principles.

6. Funding

6.1 The Legal Education Foundation (LEF) currently provides grant support for the delivery of the CSA project between 2022 – 2024. We are very grateful for their support and the project will actively seek other funding and sources of support on an ongoing basis in order to further enhance our activities and impact.