

## Closing Remarks

In her closing remarks, Helen Mathie expressed a sense of hope and encouragement, noting a significant shift in how the advice sector is now placing workforce issues at the centre of its conversations. She highlighted ongoing efforts to map funding for advice services across London and emphasized that creating good jobs is more important than simply focusing on retention. Helen underscored the importance of collective action among funders to address shared challenges, pointing to a report published in April on the PROPEL website. This report reflects on how funding practices need to evolve to better support long-term, systemic work in the advice sector.

She stressed the value of taking time to think strategically and build partnerships, noting that longer-term, multi-year funding can change how issues manifest and are addressed. Funders are increasingly interested in supporting leadership with the time and space for strategic thinking and organisational development, ideally through trust-based funding models. There's a growing appetite for funding that supports reflective practice, supervision, wellbeing, and peer networking, elements seen as essential to a thriving advice ecosystem.

Helen also acknowledged the diversity of the advice sector and the many organisations within it. Encouragingly, more funders are offering flexible, core funding. A report produced with the GLA last year showed that 59% of 175 funders now offer some form of core funding, though not all of their funding falls into this category. Funders are also looking to improve their processes, aiming to align better with grantees and reduce rigidity. There is a clear desire to fund long-term, systemic change. However, current data shows that only 26% of grants last longer than a year, and 77% of advice funding comes from just 20 funders, highlighting the sector's financial precarity. Helen called for more collaboration, smarter pooling of resources, and greater involvement from private foundations to make advice "everyone's business." She also mentioned the Collaboration Circle as a promising model for pooling funds and bringing equity partners into the process earlier. Campaigns and reports, such as one from Pragmatix, continue to demonstrate the tangible savings and life improvements that advice services deliver.

James and Nezahat closed the session by looking ahead. They proposed that workforce discussions could become an annual fixture and noted that promotional work is already underway. There is potential for a London Advice Workforce Hub, and efforts are being made to bring more funders into future events. While this year's gathering was sector-led, next year's could be more inclusive of funders. They emphasized that this is just the beginning, with further development planned toward a comprehensive London Advice Strategy and the creation of a skills hub. As the London Citizens Advice consortium put it, the sector is "more than the sum of its parts."