

London Citizens

[London Citizens](#) is the largest broad-based community alliance in Britain, bringing together over 100 religious and civic institutions in the city's poorest neighbourhoods, to act together for social change.

The issues on which the alliance acts are determined by its member organisations – which include Anglican parishes in Plaistow, Shadwell, Hackney, Brixton and Southall. They emerge



from thousands of 'one-to-one' relational meetings within and across the membership. These meetings identify both **winnable issues** (on which a diverse range of local groups have the beliefs and motivations to act together) and **local leaders** (people in the community who can motivate and develop those around them).

The communities in London Citizens pay membership dues – which enables the alliance to employ professional community organisers to mentor and train local leaders in running campaigns, and to identify and recruit new communities into the alliance. As well as Anglican Churches, the founding members of London Citizens include East London Mosque, London Buddhist Centre and Roman Catholic, Methodist and Pentecostal Churches, along with schools and trade and student unions.

The greatest benefit of London Citizens is that people who would otherwise not come together have come together. Different people come together (Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Muslim, atheist, communist) and work together for the common good. What we would miss the most if this didn't exist is meeting people from different cultures and working together with other people. (Parishioner from St Matthew's Anglican Church, Brixton)

The alliance has a mix of campaigns – some very local (ending emissions from a cat food factory in Canning Town, 'Binning the Rats' in Southall, improving toilet facilities in Brixton) and some more strategic. The alliance has won over £25 million for low-paid workers through its Living wage Campaign, and at an assembly with the three national party leaders before the General Election (pictured) it won commitments from the successful parties to a Community Land Trust on the site of the 2012 Olympics and an end to the detention of children seeking sanctuary.

Members join London Citizens for different reasons. , The doctrine of the Trinity – the belief that there is mutuality at the heart of God, and that we reflect the divine image in our common life as well as our individual lives, is an important motivation for Christian involvement. The emphasis on building the power of the poorest communities puts into practice a vision spelt out in many parts of the Bible – perhaps most clearly in the *Magnificat*, which Anglicans recite at Evening Prayer each day

In 2005, Christians involved in TELCO founded the [Contextual Theology Centre](#). As well as promoting Christian engagement in the alliance, and offering residential [Jellicoe Internships](#) to students, the Centre enables Christians to set their engagement in this broad-based alliance in a wider context. Community organising deliberately avoids the 'wedge issues' on which its diverse membership might disagree with one another. Acting on the issues where we are of one mind is often a good starting-point for relationships. However, a point comes when trust and friendship are deep enough for conversations on the more controversial issues. The Centre is working to facilitate these deeper conversations, so that they complement the growing and successful range of actions on issues of common concern.

*If TELCO didn't exist, it would strip people of their voices. [...]
We are a big voice when we speak together. [...] We can express what we need as a community, safe environment, affordable housing.
(Parishioner from
St Margaret's
Catholic Church, Canning Town)*

Angus Ritchie

Stories of local engagement in London Citizens:

St Matthews Brixton and the Living Wage Campaign

St John at Hackney - Local Accountability Assembly
Hosting a London Citizens assembly with Hackney's Mayoral candidates

Parish of the Divine Compassion – Newham Healthcare Campaign
Working across faiths for dignity in healthcare

[The above stories are all available as pdfs on the PEN website](#)

St Paul's Shadwell – Acting together with faith
An evangelical church reflects on co-operation with the East London Mosque

[This story is told in a video with Revd Adam Atkinson and Ghazal Tipu](#)