

CES celebrates 20 years at the heart of the voluntary sector

On the 15th September, Charities Evaluation Services celebrated its 20th anniversary with an evening reception at the Saddlers' Hall in the heart of the City of London. To mark the occasion CES received over 100 friends and figures from the sector to thank all those who have helped make CES such an immense contributor to the voluntary sector since 1990.

Saddlers' Hall provided a lavish backdrop to the evening's celebrations. As guests entered they were treated to choral music from Diversity Choir as they networked in an atmosphere enjoyed by all. With the current uncertainty in the sector, the event was welcomed as an opportunity to enjoy success and make connections.

The highlights of the evening were the keynote speeches from Hon Nick Hurd MP, Minister for Civil Society, and new Chief Executive of CES, Andy Gregg's first speech of an evening that celebrated and reflected on 20 successful years in the sector.

CES' Chair, Ros Oakley's speech paid thanks to the key people and organisations that have supported CES over the years including: Government – for helping to set CES up in 1990; key funders; trustees; staff and all of CES' clients and sector colleagues. A special thank you went to Zurich Insurance, as the anniversary partner, and CCLA who part-sponsored the event.

Nick Hurd's speech praised highly CES' work over the past 2 decades and emphasized the tough times that lie ahead for the sector:

“As a result of your work, there is quality in the system that wasn't there before. There is a great deal of pressure on the sector to communicate more effectively its impact, which is where you come in. I'm afraid the future is going to demand more than anecdotal evidence and this poses great challenges, particularly for smaller organisations that don't have the resources to develop complex methodologies to articulate social return. This is the future and the importance of what you do and the importance that we attach to encouraging people to connect with you and embrace what you're trying to encourage in the sector, and we ask ourselves the simple question – how can we help?”

CES' new Chief Executive, Andy Gregg, followed by speaking on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead: “As the sector evolves in the coming years, CES will be at the vanguard of shaping what that future looks like for the thousands of organisations. As funding pressures grow, there is an even greater



Hon Nick Hurd MP



Andy Gregg, CEO

need for charities to evidence the quality and impact of their work and CES will continue to support charities to do that.”

Andy took the opportunity to reveal plans for CES' new initiative: the *Learning and Innovation Prize*, which is aimed at highlighting the contribution evaluation makes to improving service delivery, not just accountability, and rewarding organisations who make the best use of evaluation. The panel, chaired by Prof Nicholas Deakin includes Prof Jenny Harrow of the Cass Business School, Prof Helen Simons of Southampton University, and George Parry-Crook of London Metropolitan University.

'The quality of work that is done by the sector and how they are able to evaluate and provide evidence of what they achieve is absolutely key to us, so the excellent work CES does very much mirrors what we are trying to achieve ourselves as funders.' Ian Redding, London Councils

'CES really helps charities develop the confidence in what they are doing to improve their performance. It is a great thing to celebrate this almost unique charity that's doing something really important for the whole of society.' Robert Dufton, Paul Hamlyn Foundation

'It is incredibly important to know that what we are doing works... you want to know you are making the biggest difference you possibly can...for me that's where CES comes in and what we're all about.' Ros Oakley, CES Chair

'[We] value CES' work and consider the work very useful for voluntary sector organisations, which is why we highlighted it in our Voluntary Sector Resilience conference as a way for these organisations to get their act together.' Christopher Blythe, Wandsworth Borough Council



CES' delicious celebratory cake was cut by Ros Oakley, Chair, surrounded by Nick Hurd and CES staff.