



Introduction to Council of Somali Organisations

CSO is a national second tier organisation set up for the Somali Voluntary and Community Sectors to assist as an umbrella organisation. It aims to provide a collective voice for the Somali Community in the UK in areas of Health & Wellbeing, Criminal Justice, Education, Poverty Reduction and Economic empowerment.

We were set up by Somali community leaders in 2011 with the support of City Bridge Trust and Trust for London, to address the specific and varied needs of the Somali diaspora and organisations working with this much misunderstood community.

Our primary aims are to: improve the quality of services provided by member VCOs, through capacity building support, including via training and business surgeries; to provide a true picture of the diverse Somali community, its needs, aspirations and achievements, through publication of research; to influence policy so as to ensure the voice and interests of Somalis are represented, through campaign and policy work. We also provide leadership training to help address the deficit and to ensure Somalis take up places around decision-making tables, influence policy and laws.

The CSO's Board as result of the Members Needs Assessment conducted in 2019 and a review of CSO's objectives has identified that the 3 major strategic themes for the next 3 years are;

- *Education;*
- *Employment;*
- *Health and*

Wellbeing;

- *and with the overarching theme of Criminal Justice across .*

Somalis in theUK

There has been a Somali presence in the United Kingdom for over two hundred years. The first Somalis to arrive in Britain were economic migrants. Merchant seamen settled in cities including Cardiff, Liverpool, and London. There are records of British Somalis in London dating back to 1914 when they were recruited to fight in the First World War and then subsequently settled there. In the 1990s civil war in Somali forced another wave of migration to Britain. Since 2006, secondary migration from the EU meant that Somalis in the UK can be found in all major metropolitan towns of Milton Keynes, Birmingham, Leicester, Bristol, Cardiff, Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and Glasgow.

It is estimated that there are 350,000-500,000 people of Somali origin in the UK based on local statistics. The 2011 census data account only for 108,000 Somali-born immigrants and does not capture those born in the U.K or those with settled status or those who migrated from the EU since (ONS, 2018).