
Powerful People, Responsible Society

The report of the Commission on Big Society

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Introduction



Lord Rennard,
Chair of the Commission on Big Society

There is much cynicism about the phrase 'Big Society'. It is clear that it is actually undermining of the Big Society concept for anyone to imply that it is new, or that its origins are with a certain type of political thinker or that any sense of overall responsibility for it might lie with any level of government, any particular politician or any political party and its programme. David Cameron certainly did not claim ownership of the concept when he made his first speech as Prime Minister on the subject of the Big Society in Liverpool almost exactly a year ago.

Many people considering what the Big Society may be about point to the role that voluntary organisations already play in Britain. There are an estimated 900,000 voluntary sector organisations (that is charities, social enterprises, housing associations, mutuals, research organisations, co-operatives and other not-for-profit organisations). They already help to provide much of the structure for social action.

Some people will point to a history of charitable giving in this country that goes back to Elizabethan times, the middle ages or even earlier. Others will point to the co-operative movement in the middle of the 19th century and previous government initiatives to give much more support to the voluntary sector. The church has a strong claim to say that the 'Big Society' is at least partly what it has been about for 2000 years. And faith is certainly the basis of many people's commitment to what might be called Big Society principles.

ACEVO set up the "Commission on the Big Society" in order to help the third sector leaders that it represents help to define a vision of what the Big Society should mean. Our aim was to recommend practical steps that government (at all levels), third sector organisations and others need to take to make that vision a reality.

We did not want to be hung up on labels and we wanted to be clearly focussed on helping to define what we think are the values of the Big Society, identifying barriers to achieving that vision and recommending steps that the voluntary sector itself and government at all levels can undertake to empower individuals and communities.

I am very grateful to all members of the Commission for their contributions to our work, to the very many voluntary organisations that gave evidence to us and to the staff at ACEVO and Ralph Michell, in particular, who was our secretary.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Rennard".

Chris Rennard
May 2011

The Commission on Big Society

The Commission on Big Society was set up by ACEVO with terms of reference to articulate a vision of what needs to be achieved through the Big Society agenda, and to recommend practical steps that government at all levels, third sector organisations, businesses and others need to take to make that vision a reality.

Membership:

- Lord Rennard (Chair)
- Hilary Belcher (Mosaic Clubhouse)
- Lord Boateng
- Nick Boles MP
- Phil Collins (*The Times*)
- The Bishop of London
- Matt Hyde (NUS)
- Peter McGurn (Goodwin Centre)
- Michael Quicke (CCLA)
- Srabani Sen (Contact a Family)
- Jane Slowey (Foyer Federation)
- Dame Clare Tickell (Action for Children)
- Ralph Michell (Secretary)
- Adam Leach (Stakeholder engagement)

The Commission took evidence from a wide range of voluntary organisations, private businesses, national and local government representatives, think tanks and others between January and April 2011.

Full details on the Commission are available in the Appendix.

Executive summary

Chapter 1 – More definition

People are not clear on what the big society is. Our polling found that 78% of adults in the UK believe the Government has failed to give people a clear idea of what the big society is. Our survey suggested that over 30% of voluntary sector CEOs say they are unclear. The result of the Government's failure to communicate its own big society vision clearly, consistently and compellingly has fuelled high levels of cynicism and we believe that it has meant inconsistent policy-making. We believe the Government should articulate a clearer definition of what it is that it is trying to achieve. Our own vision is a society in which power and responsibility have shifted: one in which, at every level in our national life, individuals and communities have more aspiration, power and capacity to take decisions and solve problems themselves, and where all of us take greater responsibility for ourselves, our communities and one another. We are clear, however, that this vision should not be equated with reducing the size of the state, or lead to the state abdicating its responsibilities, particularly with regard to the most vulnerable.

Chapter 2 – Better partnership with the voluntary sector

Our view is that the big society agenda is about shifts in power and responsibility, and is not synonymous with the promotion of the voluntary sector. However it is clear that voluntary organisations will act as crucial vehicles for people, individually and collectively, to take more power over their lives and to take responsibility for the world around them. If the big society is to be a success, the Government will need to ensure that it protects and promotes this sector – and does not allow over-rapid and poorly-managed public spending cuts to damage it disproportionately and irrevocably. Government will also need to ensure that it works in partnership with voluntary organisations, rallying them to a common cause. The Government risks doing the opposite and alienating the voluntary sector through the way in which some parts of Government speak to the sector. Only 8% of voluntary sector CEOs believe the Government has a good understanding of the voluntary sector, and only 25% believe the Government respects and values the sector as a partner. At the core of our recommendations is a belief that Government needs to adopt a consistent and supportive attitude to the voluntary sector that recognises the need for partnership and respect, including for appropriate professional roles within the sector.

We recognise that the voluntary sector itself will also need to change if it is to continue, and grow, its role in empowering individuals and communities and acting as a vehicle for people to take responsibility for the world around them. It will need to be self-critical as to the degree to which it is genuinely empowering people rather than encouraging dependency. It needs to become more transparent and accountable to the public and become more efficient in a time of austerity. It also needs to adapt to generational change and its implications for how people will increasingly view and interact with the voluntary sector.

We recommend that umbrella bodies in the voluntary sector such as ACEVO and NCVO take a lead in promoting these changes, and that Government implement the EU directive on VAT which would make it easier for voluntary organisations to collaborate in seeking efficiencies, without facing financial penalties for doing so.

Chapter 3 – More statecraft

We agree with the Prime Minister that “we need a government that actually helps to build up the Big Society.” In playing that role, we believe the Government needs to show more statecraft (understood as the art of conducting state affairs).

To date there has been insufficient coordination across Whitehall, with insufficient definition of, measurement of and accountability for success or failure in fostering the big society. We also believe that Government could better align and target resources towards this agenda.

We make recommendations to the Cabinet Office’s Behavioural Insight Team, the Prime Minister, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and the National Audit Office on issues relating to definition of, measurement of, and accountability for success in fostering the big society. We also recommend a new, reformulated, big-society focused version of the Invest to Save Budget to invest in ground-breaking big society-related initiatives.

National government and local government also need to be consistent. The effect of the way in which many local councils are cutting spending on the voluntary sector threatens to undermine big society principles.

To counter this danger, we recommend an amendment to the Public Services (Social Enterprise and Social Value) Bill, the urgent adoption of guidance to avoid disproportionate local government cuts to the voluntary sector, and measures to improve transparency on local government funding for the voluntary sector. We believe that if it chooses to provide many services directly rather than via external providers, local government must be required to demonstrate reasons for doing so relating to public interest or long-term value for money.

In addition, building the big society (and the shifts in power and responsibility which we consider to be at the heart of that agenda) will not just require state action to be coordinated, with Whitehall departments and local councils pulling in the same direction. It will also require a different kind of state – people working in the public sector having different attitudes and skills, public sector assets being used to provide a platform for social action, and public services acting to empower and to promote social responsibility. The Government has embarked on an enormous public sector reform programme – but we fear that it risks missing the opportunity to put the big society at its heart.

To seize that opportunity, we recommend a programme to support culture change and workforce training in local government, a new focus for the Government’s £10 million support programme for new mutuals, a cross-government strategy led by DCLG, Cabinet Office and Treasury on use of public sector assets, and that the big society be put centre-stage in the upcoming Public Service Reform White Paper.

Finally, some communities will be better placed than others to make the big society vision a reality. The Government lacks a credible plan for addressing this problem. It needs to find one.

In the short term, we recommend that the Government repeat, for March 2012, the £100 million Transition Fund but target it at the most deprived communities. In the longer term we recommend that the Government formulate a comprehensive strategy for ensuring that all communities, of place and of interest, have the capacity to achieve the Government’s big society vision. We set out some of what that strategy needs to cover.

Chapter 4 – Harnessing the power of the private sector

It is clear to us that it is not just from individuals and communities that we should be asking for greater social responsibility, but from businesses too. We see enormous potential for businesses to empower people and support them to take responsibility for the world around them, and we see some examples of excellent practice. But we also see too much ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ (CSR) which is tokenistic, more about marketing than making a difference. Much of business’s potential to contribute to the big society agenda remains untapped. We make a series of recommendations to the Government, the CBI, IoD and Business in the Community to work together to catalyse a sea change in business leadership.

We also fear that changing patterns of working hours risk depriving a significant proportion of the population of the time and opportunity to have a ‘community life’ – i.e. time and opportunities to engage with and contribute to the communities they live in.

We recommend that rather than launching a ‘national day to celebrate and encourage social action,’¹ the Government amend the Employment Rights Act 1996 to extend employees’ existing right to take reasonable time off for certain public duties (e.g. to serve as magistrates, councillors or on the governing bodies of schools) to enable them to take reasonable time off, with the permission of their employers, to serve a voluntary organisation. We also recommend that brokerage between business and voluntary organisations be scaled-up, and that Government incentivise employers to encourage and facilitate employee engagement with charitable giving.

Finally, we see a special role for the banking sector in acting as the ‘engine for social action’. Currently, too many individuals and voluntary organisations are poorly served by the UK’s financial services. The banks need to reconnect with the communities they operate in, rely on, and, in theory, serve. The Project Merlin talks were a historic opportunity for the banks to do that on a voluntary basis – but they did not take it. Their failure to do so is particularly disappointing given the vast sums of public money that have been spent on keeping them afloat.

We recommend that the Government introduce a UK version of the American Community Reinvestment Act, using transparency to promote responsible lending to the financially excluded and voluntary organisations, and that the Treasury introduce new tax incentives to encourage such ‘social investment’. We also call on all UK banks to commit to reinvesting 1% or more of their pre-tax profits for social benefit.

¹ HM Government, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (2010)



1



Chapter One

More definition



Chapter One

More definition

1.1 People are not clear what the big society is

Much has been written and said about the big society. Yet many people are unclear as to what it is. A poll we commissioned from YouGov found that 78% of adults in the UK believe the Government has failed to give people a clear idea of what the big society is about,² and even amongst people significantly more exposed to the agenda there is confusion as to what it means. Comments such as the following were typical at the discussion sessions we had around the country with charity leaders: “There’s lots of rhetoric, lots of speeches about big society, but I’m struggling to see what it means”; “I’m more and more confused and coming to think it’s just a smokescreen for cuts”; “I can’t tell whether this is a brave new world or a return to nineteenth-century philanthropy.” When we polled charity chief executives and asked them to what extent they agreed with the statement “I have a clear understanding of what the big society means,” just over 58% agreed or strongly agreed, while just over 30% disagreed or strongly disagreed.³

1.2 Why aren’t they clear?

On a number of occasions, the Prime Minister has described the big society agenda as consisting of three ‘strands’:

“Social action.” “The success of the Big Society will depend on the daily decisions of millions of people – on them giving their time, effort, even money, to causes around them. So government ... must foster and support a new culture of voluntarism, philanthropy, social action.”

“Public service reform.” “We’ve got to get rid of the centralised bureaucracy that wastes money and undermines morale. And in its place we’ve got to give professionals much more freedom, and open up public services to new providers like charities, social enterprises and private companies so we get more innovation, diversity and responsiveness to public need.”

“Community empowerment.” “We need to create communities with oomph – neighbourhoods who are in charge of their own destiny, who feel if they club together and get involved they can shape the world around them.”⁴

However, a number of factors have made it difficult for the Government to communicate this definition effectively.

Firstly, different ministers and different parts of Government have spoken about the ‘big society’ in different ways. Whilst some have referred to it as a policy “programme”⁵, others have described it as “a state of mind”.⁶ And whilst the Prime

2 YouGov poll for the Commission on Big Society, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

3 Poll of ACEVO members, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

4 David Cameron, speech July 2010,

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/big-society-speech-53572>

5 E.g. <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/latest-news/2010/05/big-society-50248>

6 E.g. Paul Burstow, speech to Department of Health voluntary sector board (2010)

Minister has repeatedly used the three-stranded definition above, other departments have strayed from it – for instance, the first paragraph of the Department of Health's White Paper on NHS reform states, “we believe that the NHS is an integral part of a Big Society, reflecting the social solidarity of shared access to collective healthcare, and a shared responsibility to use resources effectively to deliver better health.”⁷ We believe that the NHS, social solidarity through shared access to collective healthcare, and responsible use of resources to deliver better health, are all good things which the Government is right to protect and pursue. But that does not mean they form part of the big society agenda, and it is this kind of blurring of boundaries that has allowed some to portray the ‘big society’ as a vague catch-all.

Secondly, the Government has struggled to thread together the three strands of the Prime Minister's definition above with a clear narrative, one that supports and explains an agenda ranging from encouraging philanthropy to greater diversity of supply in public services to community empowerment. The Government has tended, instead, to list the constituent policy strands of its big society agenda (as per the above). When it has sought to outline a narrative, it remains unclear. In a speech in July 2010, the Prime Minister said: “You can call it liberalism. You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility. I call it the Big Society.”⁸ In his maiden speech to the Lords, the Government's adviser on Big Society said that big society is a society “in which government, business and the voluntary sector help to support and empower citizens so that they no longer feel small.”⁹ In a speech in February 2011, the Prime Minister said: “To me, there's one word at the heart of all this, and that is responsibility. We need people to take more responsibility. We need people to act more responsibly. ... responsibility is the absolute key.”¹⁰ He then went on to say: “So, what this is all about is giving people more power and control to improve their lives and their communities. That, in a nutshell, is what it is all about.”¹¹

As a result of the Government never quite expressing a sufficiently compelling narrative around the Big Society, there has been a proliferation of different interpretations and definitions, and narratives not necessarily conducive to the success of the project have become dominant. Many now paint the big society agenda as a ‘cover for cuts’, or over-emphasise a particular strand of the agenda (“it's all about volunteering”).

Finally, and related to the lack of clarity on the narrative, the Government is pursuing this agenda at the same time as significantly cutting public spending. It has also sometimes defined big society in opposition to the state or to Whitehall (‘big government’). Eric Pickles, for example, told the LGA, “we could replace big government with the Big Society”¹². Taken together, this has allowed people to see the whole agenda as a cover for cuts.

7 DH, *Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS* (2010)

8 David Cameron, speech July 2010, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/big-society-speech-53572>

9 Lord Wei, speech to Lords, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101005-0001.htm#10100520000462>

10 David Cameron, speech February 2011, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2011/02/pms-speech-on-big-society-60563>

11 David Cameron, speech February 2011, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2011/02/pms-speech-on-big-society-60563>

12 Eric Pickles, speech to LGA in July 2010, <http://www.edenarts.co.uk/big-society-eric-pickles-speech-at-the-lga-conference/>

1.3 Why does it matter?

Does this matter? Some have argued that the result is greater debate about the big society, greater interest, more people talking about it. But our sense is that this is because people are interested in what they believe to be at the heart of the concept, rather than because people are interested in it because they don't understand it. Typical responses were those of a third sector chief executive ("the big society does resonate, there's something strong there") or of a left-of-centre think tank ("the Government is definitely onto something").¹³ Despite high levels of confusion amongst the public on what the big society stands for, a sizeable 39% believe that "the big society is a good idea and everyone should get behind it", as against 35% disagreeing and 26% answering "don't know".¹⁴ Our poll of voluntary sector chief executives found that just over 63% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "the big society agenda is fundamentally a good thing", with just under 19% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing and just under 18% answering "don't know".¹⁵

Rather than generating interest, the lack of clarity and consistency around the big society is in danger of generating inaction or cynicism, or of allowing decisions to be taken which run contrary to the vision. It empowers the cynics, takes the wind out of the sails of the enthusiasts, encourages people who do not understand the vision to believe that if they carry on as usual in the end all the talk about 'big society' will go away, and pushes potential allies into thinking that the agenda is simply an ideological attack on the size and role of the state. It enables a disparate range of ideas and schemes to be labelled as 'big society', diluting and distorting the concept. Finally, it enables stakeholders across Government and other sectors to take decisions which might ultimately undermine the big society agenda.

We do not believe that the Government should produce a tightly-defined blueprint for what the Big Society will look like and how it is going to 'implement' it. The Government has been rightly reticent about being too instructive or leaving nothing to be shaped by others. We do, however, believe that for the reasons outlined above, the Government needs to be clearer and more consistent in defining, and constructing a narrative around, the big society vision.

1.4 What would a clearer definition of the big society look like?

At the core of what the Prime Minister and others have said on big society, we see a proposition upon which there is a significant degree of consensus across the political spectrum, in Westminster and beyond: namely for a shift of power and responsibility in our society.

Our definition of the big society as a vision for us to aim for would therefore be as follows:

A society in which power and responsibility have shifted: one in which, at every level in our national life, individuals and communities have more aspiration, power and capacity to take decisions and solve problems themselves, and where all of us take greater responsibility for ourselves, our communities and one another.

¹³ Oral evidence to Commission on Big Society

¹⁴ YouGov poll for the Commission on Big Society, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

¹⁵ Poll of ACEVO members, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

Our definition intentionally does not cover the role or size of the state. We are clear that our aim should be to empower individuals and communities and to promote social responsibility – not the reduction of the state per se, however desirable that may or may not be as a separate objective. The means to achieving the empowerment and social responsibility we seek might, in some cases, be for the state to ‘get out of the way’ and do less, but it might in others be for the state to do or invest in more. And we are clear that greater empowerment and more social responsibility should not mean the state abdicating its responsibilities, particularly with regards to the most vulnerable. For instance, we should strive to build a more empowered citizenry and a more responsible society in parallel to, rather than as a replacement of, the state’s duty of care for vulnerable groups such as neglected or disabled children. We explore these issues in more detail in Chapter 3.

If this is the vision that animates the Government, then it is one we welcome. We do so partly out of moral imperative – a belief that a good society is one in which, as far as possible, individuals and communities determine their own futures, and in which we all (individually and collectively) take responsibility for ourselves and the communities around us. But partly too we do so because the nature and the scale of many of the public policy challenges we face (tackling climate change, the consequences of an ageing population, the provision of public services in a highly diverse consumer society) means that those challenges cannot be addressed purely through the assumption of responsibility and exercise of power by the state – they require others to take responsibility, and to have the power to do so.

We believe these shifts in power and responsibility are present in (and core to) David Cameron’s three pillars of social action, public service reform and ‘communities with oomph’. For instance, a greater culture of philanthropy and volunteering would be a sign of individuals and businesses taking greater responsibility for the society around them. Public service reform can mean, as with the introduction of individual budgets in social care, people taking both greater responsibility and greater power and control over their own lives. But the shifts in power and responsibility are often not spelt out explicitly enough when the Government talks about ‘big society’.

We believe that a clearer definition along these lines should make it easier for the Government to build much wider support around its vision, and make it easier to formulate, and ensure the implementation of, coherent policy around the Big Society agenda.

1.5 From definition to action

Our vision is for a redistribution of power and responsibility, so that at every level in our national life, individuals and communities have more power to take decisions and solve problems themselves, and where all of us take greater responsibility for ourselves and for one another:

Clearly, realising that vision will require action from across our society, from Government to the voluntary sector to business.

In the rest of this report we focus on key actions to enable each sector to play its part in making the big society vision a reality.



Chapter Two

Better partnership with the voluntary sector



Chapter Two

Better partnership with the voluntary sector

The big society is not synonymous with promotion of the voluntary sector – but the voluntary sector will be crucial to making the big society vision a reality. The Government therefore needs to engage with the sector as a partner, and voluntary organisations themselves need to ensure they continue to adapt to the changing environment they operate in.

2.1 The voluntary sector: organised social action

We want individuals, communities and businesses to take greater social responsibility, and want them to have the power to do so. We want them to be able to do so not just through the framework of the state (paying taxes, electing governments, and letting government act to solve problems) but alongside that framework too. That, as we have set out in Chapter 1, is essentially what the big society agenda is.

To some degree, that will involve individuals acting alone – helping friends or neighbours, looking after their own health, taking responsibility for their children. But there are clearly limits to what such individual acts can achieve. People will need, too, to be able to act in association with others, and we will need social action to be organised – volunteers to be trained, the donations of the many managed and channelled to their most effective use, and so on. In other words, what we need is not just social action, but organised social action.

That, essentially, is what the voluntary sector is – organised social action. Voluntary organisations enable people to take power and responsibility. They encourage and enable people to take power – raising the aspirations of individuals and communities, giving them the sense of ‘can do’, building their capacity to act, or they constitute the means by which people come together to take power over their own lives or change the world for people they care about, as illustrated by the boxes on the work of Thames Reach and Mencap.

Voluntary organisations also act as a vehicle for people to take responsibility, individually or collectively – giving people the training and support to volunteer; raising and channelling individual giving to good causes, and pushing issues up the agenda to push us – individually and as a society – to take responsibility for problems, as illustrated by the boxes on VSO and the campaign to abolish the slave trade.

Thames Reach – supporting people to regain control over their lives

In one year alone, the staff and volunteers of London-based homelessness charity Thames Reach helped 8,908 people to regain control over their lives, including by helping 993 rough sleepers off the streets, providing help to 120 homeless people using buses as a refuge from the street, and helping over 600 rough sleepers to return to their homeland where they could receive support from families and services. At any one time 150 former homeless people will be staying at the charity's hostels where they receive support with skills, addictions and health problems with the aim being to support them to escape from the destructive cycle of homelessness and to get their lives back on track. As a result of the charity's work, people who spent nearly 20 years on the street are living in accommodation, people with long-standing addictions have come off drugs, people formerly living a life of rough sleeping and begging have found jobs, and people whose families thought they had died have been reunited with them – in other words, thousands of people have been supported along the road to regaining power and control over their own lives.

Judy Fryd and Mencap – parents coming together to empower their families

In 1938, Judy Fryd noticed that her young daughter Felicity was not using language as fluently as her peers, but searched in vain for help and advice. Felicity was rejected from her primary school after only half a day for being disruptive. Within 24 hours of her arriving at a school for children with Down's syndrome, Felicity's parents received a telegram from the school that said "Felicity not suitable. Must be removed at once." At the age of 12 she was institutionalised in a psychiatric hospital. Felicity was described by a doctor as "a child with no mind" - today we would recognise her condition as autism. The way her daughter was treated, the prejudice she came across, and her family's powerlessness against it, led Judy Fryd to channel her anger through the letters page of Nursery World magazine. Within a month more than a thousand parents had been in touch, and a group of parents in a similar situation banded together with Fryd to form the Association of Parents of Backward Children (now Mencap) in an effort to confront the way their children were treated. Today Mencap is a significant force in supporting people with learning difficulties to live independent, fulfilling lives, providing nurseries, training colleges for around 250 students, support with employment to almost 5,000 people, helplines accessed approximately 33,000 times a year and a wide variety of other services. It has a proud history of campaigns which have significantly changed the law regarding the treatment of people with learning disabilities and their families, such as the 1971 Education (Handicapped Children) Act, which sought to ensure that children with learning disabilities received an education, their having previously been considered 'ineducable'. Thanks in no small part to the way Judy Fryd and other parents banded together, and thanks to the service provision and campaigning of the charity they formed as a vehicle to do so, the powerlessness and poor services Judy Fryd and her family faced in the 1940s and 50s are significantly reduced today – even if Mencap and other charities continue to face, and struggle against, significant challenges for people with learning disabilities.

VSO – a vehicle for social responsibility

At any given time, VSO has an average of 1,520 volunteers overseas working on what are predominantly long-term volunteering placements. Volunteers with significant skills and experience are recruited to work on high-impact projects – one volunteer is helping to improve teaching methods in 76 schools across the south of Rwanda; another is working to strengthen self-help groups for people with HIV in Vietnam, who often suffer discrimination; yet another is helping to get a new centre for children with special educational needs off the ground on the Thai-Burma border, where provision for children with SEN is highly limited. These projects rely on individual volunteers and their sense of responsibility for the world around them – but VSO acts as the vehicle for translating that sense of responsibility into impact, coordinating the placements, funding and arranging work permits, visas, accommodation, travel and other logistics.

The Committee of the Society for the Purpose of Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade – a vehicle for social responsibility through campaigning

In 1787, twelve men met in a London bookstore and printing shop. What united them, and what had brought them together that day, was outrage at the injustice and immorality of the slave trade. Around the table of the bookstore, they formed one of history's most famous voluntary organisations – the Committee of the Society for the Purpose of Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade. In the first year of their operation, they raised £2,760.2s.7d, the equivalent of approximately £290,000 in today's terms, which they spent on a wide-ranging campaign to shift public opinion, and that of Parliament, against the slave trade. They carried out and disseminated research on the slave trade, detailing how slaves were treated. They distributed more than 80,000 pamphlets and books. They produced medallions which could be worn or displayed in order to indicate sympathy with their cause – and thousands of copies were made of a now-famous seal designed by Josiah Wedgwood, showing a slave kneeling in chains with the motto 'Am I not a man and a brother?'. They produced more than 8,000 copies of a poster outlining the design of small slave ships into which 482 slaves could be crammed. They helped to organise petitions to Parliament, and in early 1788 petitions were sent to Parliament calling for abolition with a total of 60,000 – 100,000 signatures, a very large number by the standards of the day. They sent speakers to audiences in town halls, guild halls, music halls and churches – the tours of one such speaker covered 35,000 miles between 1787 and 1794. In 1807 the campaign got what it wanted – Parliament abolished the slave trade, and from then on the power of Britain's empire and Royal Navy would be directed not at protecting, but at eradicating, a trade in human beings. As William Hague concludes, this success 'could not have been achieved' without the campaign orchestrated by voluntary bodies such as the Committee. And as Hague also concludes, if campaigns by voluntary organisations were an effective way for people to shoulder responsibility and come together to change the world for the better in the eighteenth-century, they remain so today, with voluntary organisations, charities and community groups 'leading the way' in fighting against human trafficking in the twenty-first century.¹⁶

¹⁶ W. Hague, *William Wilberforce* (2008)

If voluntary organisations constitute the infrastructure for social action, we are fortunate to have such a vibrant voluntary sector in this country – one that is the envy of much of the rest of the world. Unlike many countries, we have a voluntary sector which is highly diverse, rich and mature, one that has grown up over hundreds of years. There are 900,000 voluntary sector organisations (by which we mean charities, social enterprises, housing associations, mutuals, research organisations, co-operatives and other not-for-profit organisations) in the UK, with a combined annual turnover of £157 billion, a workforce of 1,600,000, combined assets of £244 billion, the capacity to mobilise millions of volunteers, and the ability to campaign and bring together coalitions for change.¹⁷ The result is that in England over a quarter of the population volunteers at least once a month, and over half volunteers at least once a year (compared to significantly lower figures for much of the rest of the world¹⁸); that this country is the second most generous in the world in terms of charitable giving;¹⁹ that active membership of charitable/humanitarian organisations in Britain is the highest in the world (at 21% of the population)²⁰ and that ultimately millions of people are able to realise their aspirations for themselves and for their communities who could not otherwise.

2.2 Implications for government: the need for partnership

If the Government is to succeed in its ambition to build a big society, then it will need to work in partnership with the voluntary sector – seeing it as one of the UK’s great national assets which it needs to mobilise to help make the big society happen – and local government will need to be part of this partnership too.

That will include recognising the need for the voluntary sector as an ‘infrastructure’ for social action. We need to recognise that if we want people to take more responsibility rather than saying ‘not my problem, the state should sort it out’, then we will need to give them the encouragement and the vehicles to do so. We need to recognise that if we want people to have the will, the power and the capacity to realise their individual and collective aspirations themselves, rather than relying on the state, we will need organised efforts to encourage and enable them to do so. And we need to recognise, without calling for an enormous bureaucracy, that this does not come free – that even organisations whose whole model of working is based on volunteer action still need to train, support and manage them, and that this costs money.

Given that a large proportion of the voluntary sector’s income now comes from public sector sources, there are clear implications here for how the Government tries to manage public spending cuts in such a way as to avoid causing unnecessary damage to the voluntary sector. Many voluntary organisations have expressed their fears that poorly managed cuts to the voluntary sector are undermining the Government’s big society vision, as is illustrated by the case of People First Lambeth (see page 20). Cuts to public spending need to be made, but they must be properly managed with a view to real long-term consequences for public spending and the Government’s objectives such as fostering a big society. As one charity leader said to us, “it will be harder to rebuild what we lose than it will be to build on what we’ve got.” We explore this issue further in Chapter 3.

17 NCVO, *The UK Civil Society Almanac 2010* (2010)

18 CAF, *World Giving Index* (2010)

19 (After the US). See CAF, *CAF International Comparisons* (2006)

20 See World Values Survey, Britain comes in joint first position with Canada
<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.

People First Lambeth – how cuts can undermine efforts to give people control over their lives

People First Lambeth is a self-advocacy organisation that supports people with learning difficulties (mental health problems, autism, physical impairments, people who are unable to communicate by speaking) to speak up for themselves and have choice, control and power over what happens in their lives. It is run by a management committee of people with learning difficulties who oversee the staff (some of whom also have learning difficulties).

The organisation works to shape social services in Lambeth and also nationally through collaboration with the Social Care Institute for Excellence, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Shaping Our Lives and Valuing People. It trains doctors, social care and public sector professionals in how to work with people with learning difficulties. It also supports its members to deal with issues such as abuse, bullying, being a parent with learning difficulties, receiving poor health care, and finding employment. Its members say that People First Lambeth has also helped them to develop a sense of pride in themselves as people with learning difficulties, and given them greater control over their lives.

Lambeth Council, however, has chosen not to renew any of its contracts with People First Lambeth (worth more than £115,000 p.a. and more than 90% of the organisation's funding). As a result, after 25 years of work empowering disabled people in Lambeth and elsewhere, the organisation stopped delivering services on 31 March 2011 and is currently winding down.

Government's role is not, however, simply to act as a funder. Part of the Government's role in helping to foster the big society must be one of acting as partner, catalyst and mobiliser. Here the Government has had some success – many of those we spoke to told us the Prime Minister's emphasis on building a big society had led to internal debates within organisations, with people reappraising what they do and asking how they could do things differently or what more they could do. We believe that being clearer in defining the big society, as we have attempted to do in Chapter 1, should help the Government here by providing it with a more compelling narrative capable of calling people across the sectors to action.

But the Government's role here consists not just of issuing a call to action, but also of creating the atmosphere in which people (and key stakeholders such as voluntary organisations in particular) feel encouraged to respond to it – creating the right 'mood music', as one group put it to us.

Various religious groups put it to us that under the last Government, the 'mood music' was sometimes a barrier, rather than an enabler, to their getting involved in the Government's agenda. Without necessarily erecting any specific barriers in terms of policy or implementation, they said that the previous Government somehow fostered a sense that it was not entirely comfortable with religious feeling as an impetus to action, with the result, we heard, that people felt inhibited from getting involved or taking social action which would ultimately have contributed to the Government's objectives.

To its credit, the current Government has shifted here. Religious groups told us the ‘mood music’ had changed. But some of the respondents we spoke to feared the Government is in danger now of making a similar mistake elsewhere, in its relationship with the wider voluntary sector. Whilst most ministers have been extremely positive about the voluntary sector, there have been a variety of negative statements (by ministers, advisers or backbench MPs and Peers) on big charities, on charity campaigning, and on charities ‘dependent’ on the state. For instance, one suggested that the Government strip charitable status from organisations receiving a high proportion of their funding from the state.²¹ Another said that some charities “can have a damaging effect on civil society... we must guard against them. One way is having a mindset of ‘big charity.’”²² Yet another complained about charitable campaigning as “running round advertising and talking” rather than “actually helping people.”²³

These are spurious arguments. Voluntary organisations exist to fulfil a mission. Operating at scale, campaigning, and delivering public services using state funding will, for some organisations, be the most effective way to fulfil their missions. Thanks largely to investment from statutory funding, over the past ten years Action for Children has doubled its reach to the most vulnerable children and young people across the UK – a further 100,000 people are now able to access their services addressing issues such as relationship breakdown, domestic violence, and drug or alcohol misuse who would not have been able to do so ten years ago.

We would surely be the poorer for it if charities did not engage in activity such as this. Operating at scale has enabled charities such as RNIB and RNID to invest in hi-tech innovations such as ReceiverMix (providing additional audio commentary for blind people watching television) and the ScreenPhone (a telephone that converts a caller’s speech into text on a screen in real time), and enables charities to invest billions into good causes – four large health charities alone (Macmillan, Marie Curie, CRUK and the British Heart Foundation) commit around £1 billion per year into the health of the nation. Again, we would surely be poorer without these large charities.

Meanwhile charity campaigning has played a crucial role in bringing about change for the better for centuries, from the abolition of the slave trade (see box on page 18) to better treatment of children with learning disabilities (see box on Judy Fryd and Mencap on page 17), and has always been a key strand in the DNA of the UK’s charity sector. Few would wish those campaigns hadn’t happened, or accuse the voluntary organisations at the centre of them of “running round advertising and talking”.

But these arguments about the nature of charity are not just spurious, they are also unhelpful for the Government as it seeks to build on its big society vision. If, as we have argued above, the voluntary sector is going to be a key player in making the big society a reality (including, under the Government’s agenda, playing a bigger role in public service provision and thereby receiving more income from the state), this is unhelpful ‘mood music’, encouraging potential allies to believe they are not understood or viewed with suspicion, and making it harder for them to respond to the Big Society as a call to action. Our poll of voluntary sector chief executives found

21 Richard Fuller MP (Con), House of Commons debate (28 February 2011)

22 Lord Wei (Con), House of Lords debate (5 October 2010)

23 Charlie Elphicke MP (Con), in oral evidence taken before the Public Administration Select Committee (18 January 2011)

that only 8% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “the Government has a good understanding of the voluntary sector” as against 89% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, whilst only 25% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “the Government respects and values the voluntary sector as a partner”, as against 70% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.²⁴

More fundamentally, the Government faces a basic challenge of turning a narrative developed for opposition into one for governing. Some ‘Big Society’ advocates developed their arguments as part and parcel of a critique (and rejection) of the past - of a Government, its policies and by implication those who helped to deliver them. Now, however, the Government needs to rally people around its vision for a big society, and in so doing needs to find a tone which is inclusive rather than oppositional, and one which embraces the past (and in particular the proud heritage we have in this country, outlined earlier in this report, of hundreds of years of voluntary action). The Government has not yet found that tone – as one charity chief executive told us, her volunteers with their many decades of social action currently feel “deeply excluded” by the tone of the big society narrative.

We recommend that the Government gives a consistent lead in recognising and valuing the voluntary sector as a respected partner, rallying voluntary organisations behind the big society rather than attacking or alienating them.

2.3 Implications for the voluntary sector: the need to adapt

If Government needs to act as a partner to the voluntary sector rather than crudely criticising it, the voluntary sector also needs to recognise the need to change.

Over the centuries that the sector has acted as the spine for what we might now call big society – channelling the efforts of people taking responsibility for problems in their communities, and empowering individuals and groups to have more control over their lives. In doing so, it has constantly adapted and changed – influenced by and drawing on religious change from the middle ages through Reformation to the current day; fostering the cooperative movement in the nineteenth century; taking on an increasingly strong campaigning role in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and becoming increasingly enterprising and professional over the last few decades as the pressure to maximise ‘bang for buck’ has intensified.

We believe the Government’s call to create a big society should encourage voluntary organisations to ask themselves a series of questions:

- **How clear are they that they genuinely empower people?** There is a fine line between giving a hand up and a hand out, a line which most voluntary organisations are highly conscious of. There are also times when dependence is the only option – when the job of a hospice, for instance, is to give dignity and the highest possible quality of care to people with complex needs in the last days of their lives. Many voluntary organisations will also work with people who are initially highly dependent, but who they work with over a long period to achieve greater independence. But it was put to us that some voluntary organisations risk encouraging dependence, rather than genuinely helping individuals and communities to take more control over their own lives. We believe organisations need constantly

²⁴ Poll of ACEVO members, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

to look hard at themselves to be sure that wherever possible, their work empowers rather than encourages dependence.

- **How well placed are they to thrive in the ‘information age’?** We live in an age increasingly characterised by the ability of individuals to transfer information freely, and to have instant access to knowledge that would have been difficult or impossible to find previously, as well as an age in which people are increasingly sceptical and questioning of professionals and institutions previously accorded significant public trust. Not only is this a trend across the board, as the voluntary sector’s role in our society and public services grows, it will – and should – be subjected to greater levels of public scrutiny. We therefore believe the voluntary sector as a whole needs a sea change in its attitude to managing the flow of information between organisations and the public if its credibility and currently high levels of public trust are to be maintained. It needs to articulate effectively:
 - what impact it has;
 - why campaigning can be a legitimate way to achieve change and improve people’s lives;
 - why the delivery of services, including through volunteers, costs money to manage and why it is worth paying for that management to be done by highly-skilled, experienced professionals.
- **How well placed are they to thrive in an ‘age of austerity’?** With public spending reducing for the next few years and increased competition for fundraising from a public still suffering the effects of recession, pressure on voluntary sector budgets is likely to be significant and long-lasting. We therefore believe voluntary organisations need to put a premium on efficiency (concentrating on outcomes and impact, rather than cost-cutting), and endorse the recommendations of the NCVO Funding Commission on how the voluntary sector can increase effectiveness, make better use of existing resources, and increase income.²⁵ We also believe that the pressure on the public purse, combined with changes in the way public services are commissioned (in some cases, increasingly at scale), will require significant change from many voluntary organisations who wish to continue delivering public services. Some will need to scale up, making the availability of investment (from social investors or mainstream banks) crucial. We explore access to finance in Chapters 3 and 4. Others will need to collaborate to an unprecedented degree, including through the building of consortia and mergers where appropriate.
- **How well placed are they to adapt to generational change?** Ipsos Mori have found that young people who have heard of Big Society tend to be more positive about it than older groups,²⁶ while research suggests that the decline in giving amongst younger age-groups between 1978 and 2002 appears to have been reversed in the period 2003-8,²⁷ suggesting a level of enthusiasm that voluntary organisations could help to tap. But we are seeing a generational shift in how people think of and engage with charities as a vehicle for social action.

25 NCVO Funding Commission, *Funding the Future: a 10-year framework for civil society* (2010)

26 Ipsos Mori polling (July 2010)

<http://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/July2010BigSocietybriefing.PDF>

27 University of Bristol, Cass Business School, Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy, CMPO, *The new state of donation: three decades of household giving to charity, 1978 – 2008* (2011)

For instance, polling we commissioned from YouGov found that young people are more likely to believe charities should be involved in delivering public services (18- to 24-year olds are 21 percentage points more likely to agree than people aged 55 and above).²⁸ They are also more likely to believe charities should spend money on demonstrating the difference they make (18- to 24-year olds are 22 percentage points more likely to agree than people aged 55 and above). And they are more likely to believe charities should undertake campaigning (18- to 24-year olds are 13 percentage points more likely to agree than people aged 55 and above).

Young people are increasingly 'digital natives', born into and fluent in the use of the internet and mobile technology. 70% of UK households have access to the internet, and 50% of consumers shop online (a number which is rising rapidly), yet just 2% of the £9.2 billion donated to charity every year in the UK is given online. One recent piece of research found that although the numbers of people visiting charity websites doubled between 2002 and 2007, in 2007 just 33% of charity websites covered by the research were able to accept online donations.

There are now 10 million more mobile phone connections than there are people in the United Kingdom, and there is clear potential for the growth in mobile usage to change giving behaviour. In 2004, 8% of donations to DEC's Asian tsunami appeal came via new media (over £1 million through texts and £300,000 online). By 2009/10 the equivalent proportion had risen to 18%. Research by the Charities Aid Foundation found that 58% of 18-24 year olds expressed interest in using text donations. Yet around 41% of charities do not use mobile phones in their communications or fundraising work in any way at all. Voluntary organisations need to ensure that they keep pace with this generational change, so that they can continue to channel and support the enthusiasm and energy of people of all ages to contribute.

We recommend umbrella bodies across the voluntary sector such as ACEVO, NCVO and the Institute of Fundraising, and at a local level Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs), take a lead in promoting these changes across the sector, including by facilitating the sharing of expertise between individual organisations.

There are also things that Government can do to help the voluntary sector make the changes we have outlined above. For instance, the tax system currently mitigates against charities coming together in partnership to increase their efficiency. According to European legislation (Principal VAT Directive), charities which decide to come together to form a cost-sharing members' group, where one charity provides back-office services such as IT or HR support to the others, should not be charged VAT on the shared services. However, HMRC has not implemented that directive in UK VAT law, meaning that charities who wish to collaborate in this way to increase their combined efficiency have to pay VAT on the services they share.

28 YouGov polling commissioned by ACEVO (2010)

29 All figures taken from Respublica, *Digital Giving: modernising Gift Aid; taking civil society into the digital age* (2010)

30 HM Treasury, Budget 2011 (2011)

This acts as a disincentive to such collaboration.

The Government is consulting on implementing a VAT exemption for services shared by VAT-exempt bodies, including charities. We urge it to implement such an exemption as a matter of urgency.

We recommend the Government implement a VAT exemption for services shared by charities.



What to do next

Please sign the declaration below and return the completed form to the address below.

I give my consent for the Supporting People Team and Income Section Team of Hertfordshire County Council to discuss my claim for Housing Benefit with my support provider and for the Housing Benefit Department of my district/borough council to disclose information regarding my claim for Supporting People Grant. I understand that this information will only be used in connection with my claim for Supporting People Grant. Any information disclosed may not be used in conjunction with any other matter.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please only sign the form if you are the service user or acting for the service user as one of the following:

* Appointee / Receiver / Power of Attorney / Enduring Power of Attorney (* Delete as necessary)

Please complete your name and address in block capitals if you are acting in an official capacity or assisting the service user with their financial affairs:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone number: _____

Where to return the form

Please return this form to:

Income Section
Hertfordshire County Council,
Adult Care Services,
Non-Residential Finance
1st Floor, Farrham House,
111, 113, 115, 117, 119, 121, 123, 125, 127, 129, 131, 133, 135, 137, 139, 141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 151, 153, 155, 157, 159, 161, 163, 165, 167, 169, 171, 173, 175, 177, 179, 181, 183, 185, 187, 189, 191, 193, 195, 197, 199, 201, 203, 205, 207, 209, 211, 213, 215, 217, 219, 221, 223, 225, 227, 229, 231, 233, 235, 237, 239, 241, 243, 245, 247, 249, 251, 253, 255, 257, 259, 261, 263, 265, 267, 269, 271, 273, 275, 277, 279, 281, 283, 285, 287, 289, 291, 293, 295, 297, 299, 301, 303, 305, 307, 309, 311, 313, 315, 317, 319, 321, 323, 325, 327, 329, 331, 333, 335, 337, 339, 341, 343, 345, 347, 349, 351, 353, 355, 357, 359, 361, 363, 365, 367, 369, 371, 373, 375, 377, 379, 381, 383, 385, 387, 389, 391, 393, 395, 397, 399, 401, 403, 405, 407, 409, 411, 413, 415, 417, 419, 421, 423, 425, 427, 429, 431, 433, 435, 437, 439, 441, 443, 445, 447, 449, 451, 453, 455, 457, 459, 461, 463, 465, 467, 469, 471, 473, 475, 477, 479, 481, 483, 485, 487, 489, 491, 493, 495, 497, 499, 501, 503, 505, 507, 509, 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1591, 1593, 1595, 1597, 1599, 1601, 1603, 1605, 1607, 1609, 1611, 1613, 1615, 1617, 1619, 1621, 1623, 1625, 1627, 1629, 1631, 1633, 1635, 1637, 1639, 1641, 1643, 1645, 1647, 1649, 1651, 1653, 1655, 1657, 1659, 1661, 1663, 1665, 1667, 1669, 1671, 1673, 1675, 1677, 1679, 1681, 1683, 1685, 1687, 1689, 1691, 1693, 1695, 1697, 1699, 1701, 1703, 1705, 1707, 1709, 1711, 1713, 1715, 1717, 1719, 1721, 1723, 1725, 1727, 1729, 1731, 1733, 1735, 1737, 1739, 1741, 1743, 1745, 1747, 1749, 1751, 1753, 1755, 1757, 1759, 1761, 1763, 1765, 1767, 1769, 1771, 1773, 1775, 1777, 1779, 1781, 1783, 1785, 1787, 1789, 1791, 1793, 1795, 1797, 1799, 1801, 1803, 1805, 1807, 1809, 1811, 1813, 1815, 1817, 1819, 1821, 1823, 1825, 1827, 1829, 1831, 1833, 1835, 1837, 1839, 1841, 1843, 1845, 1847, 1849, 1851, 1853, 1855, 1857, 1859, 1861, 1863, 1865, 1867, 1869, 1871, 1873, 1875, 1877, 1879, 1881, 1883, 1885, 1887, 1889, 1891, 1893, 1895, 1897, 1899, 1901, 1903, 1905, 1907, 1909, 1911, 1913, 1915, 1917, 1919, 1921, 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Chapter Three

More statecraft

3

Chapter Three

More statecraft

In this chapter, we argue that in its attempts to date to foster the big society, the Government has not sufficiently coordinated activity across Whitehall and has not prevented local councils 'looking after their own' rather than working to empower local people along the lines of the big society vision. It risks missing the opportunity to put big society centre-stage in its public sector reform programme, and lacks a credible plan to make big society work in more deprived communities. These omissions are reflected in the public's view of how the Government has managed the agenda: our public polling found that only 13% believe that the Government has a clear strategy in place to implement the big society programme.³¹ We therefore argue that making the big society happen will require more statecraft³² from Government.

In making that argument, we start from the view, as expressed by the Prime Minister, that "we shouldn't be naïve enough to think that if the government rolls back and does less, then miraculously society will spring up and do more. The truth is that we need a government that actually helps to build up the Big Society."³³

However, we are categorically not arguing for the big society to be treated as a government 'programme' to be 'rolled out' from Whitehall or 'delivered' by the arms of the state. We are not calling for a 'state solution' to build the big society. Rather, we are arguing for more statecraft, not more state, calling on the Government to:

1. **Be more coordinated** – ensuring that the different departments of Whitehall and different levels of Government pull in the same direction in making the big society a reality.
2. **Reform the state** – so that it empowers individuals and communities and encourages them to take greater responsibility, rather than disempowering people and encouraging dependence.
3. **Target resources** – to ensure that what resources the state does have to spend are focused in an effective way on ensuring that more deprived communities are able to benefit from the big society vision.

3.1 Be more coordinated

3.1.1 Coordination in Whitehall

The Cabinet Office has said, "building this Big Society isn't just the responsibility of just one or two departments. It is the responsibility of every department of Government."³⁴

31 YouGov poll for the Commission on Big Society, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

32 Understood as the art of conducting state affairs

33 David Cameron, speech July 2010,

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/big-society-speech-53572>

34 Cabinet Office, *Building the Big Society* (2010)

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/building-big-society_0.pdf

It is not clear, however, that Whitehall departments share an understanding of what the big society agenda consists of, or that they all consider it equally 'their job'.

The Prime Minister defines big society as consisting of the promotion of social action, public service reform, and community empowerment. The Department of Health states that "the NHS is an integral part of a Big Society".³⁵ Elsewhere, the DWP is pursuing, through its welfare reform proposals, some of the most significant changes the Government is undertaking, with clear implications in terms of shifts of power and responsibility. It is also, through the Work Programme, overseeing one of the first practical manifestations of the Government's commitments to reform public services. But in the DWP White Paper on Welfare Reform, the prospectus and invitation to tender for the Work Programme, the Welfare Reform Bill and the explanatory notes thereto, there is not a single mention of 'big society'. Meanwhile our poll of voluntary sector leaders found that 60% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "the department(s)/public sector agencies I work most closely with consider the big society agenda a priority," as against only 25% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement.³⁶ This lack of join-up across Whitehall has the clear potential not just to result in confusing (or absent) rhetoric on the big society, but to have policy ramifications too. We believe this state of affairs needs to change.

Firstly, there needs to be more **definition**. The Government needs, as we have argued above, to set out a clearer definition of the Big Society. Making a shift of power and responsibility the clear and explicit goal of the big society agenda, as we argued for in Chapter 1, should help Government, in all its constituent parts, to self-critique, refine and build on its policy programme. For instance, if the 'big society test' is a slightly vague need for things to be done by 'not Whitehall' or can include any form of public service reform, then GP commissioning (transferring commissioning power from PCTs to GPs) and the Work Programme (outsourcing more welfare to work delivery to large private and third sector providers) clearly pass that test without further interrogation. But if the test is whether or not these policies empower individuals and communities and encourage and enable them to take greater responsibility, the conclusion is less clear, given the possibility that they might simply empower professionals over patients and very large providers over jobseekers or the community groups who might have supported them into work previously.

We recommend the Government set out a clear definition of the big society, adopting or incorporating the definition we set out in Chapter 1 based on a shift of power and responsibility, and make clear that it will interrogate the policies of different departments against that definition.

Secondly, there needs to be more **measurement**. The Government needs to set out how it will measure its progress in building the big society (i.e. in achieving the shifts in power and responsibility we outline in Chapter 1). It needs to find a metric or set of metrics for measuring success so that it can monitor the effectiveness of its own policies and implementation of those policies, and so that it can 'nail its colours to the mast' to be held accountable by civil society, the media and public opinion.

This will not be an easy task. The Government will need to choose the right indicators or metrics – ones which meaningfully relate to and demonstrate the shifts in power

35 DH, *Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS* (2010)

36 Poll of ACEVO members, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

and responsibility at the heart of the big society vision, and which enable comparisons across periods of time and across different communities of place and interest. It will also need to be careful what store it sets by them, so that the chosen metrics are viewed by departments and other stakeholders as necessarily imperfect measures of success, not an end in themselves with all the consequent unintended consequences of 'target culture'.

We recommend the Government task the Cabinet Office's Behavioural Insight Team with setting out such a measure, and in so doing consider whether aspects of the Citizenship Survey (currently undertaken by DCLG but about to be scrapped) would be usefully retained for this purpose.

There also needs to be more **accountability**. Whilst it is true that the Big Society cannot be the responsibility of Government alone, or the responsibility of a single Government department, it being the responsibility of all must not mean that none are held to account for achieving it. Different departments' responsibilities relating to the Big Society agenda need to be set out more clearly, and departments across Whitehall need to be held to account far more stringently for keeping to those responsibilities. There needs to be more discipline, coordination and drive across Whitehall in making a reality of what is a clearly-stated Prime Ministerial agenda, with both Number 10 and the Treasury pressing departments on the consistency of their plans with the Big Society agenda (i.e. realising a shift of power and responsibility as outlined in Chapter 1) and on the degree to which they are actively pursuing that agenda.

We recommend that:

- the Prime Minister, assisted by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, personally take a greater role in holding departments to account for progress on the big society, taking over the chairmanship of the Cabinet Subcommittee on the Big Society (currently shared between the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Minister for Civil Society), and meeting with individual Secretaries of State on a quarterly basis to take stock of departments' progress in helping to build the big society.
- the National Audit Office make it a high priority to monitor and report on Whitehall departments' success in pursuing the big society vision.

Finally, there needs to be better **alignment and targeting of resources**, overseen by the Treasury. We are not calling for the Government to spend more. We are conscious of the financial position the Government finds itself in. But if the big society is a key Government agenda, then the Government needs to ensure that the reduction in public spending is managed in such a way as not to undermine the big society, and that what money does remain available to the Government is used as effectively as possible in making the big society a reality. We believe that natural human and organisational behaviour; the cultures within different parts of the public sector and the incentives within the system will combine to mean that resources within the state are unlikely to flow of their own accord in such a way as to promote the individual and community empowerment at the heart of the big society vision. If we want that to happen, it will need to be driven, with the Treasury playing a key role.

We believe the Treasury can best perform this role by:

- supporting the Prime Minister in holding departments to account on the big society agenda (as per our recommendation above in this section)

- facilitating transparency on local government spending, so that local communities and civil society can hold local government to account (we explore this below, under section 3.1.2)
- targeting resources at communities (of place and interest) who currently lack the capacity to build the big society (we explore this below, under section 3.3)

But we also believe that even where agencies are held clearly to account on building the big society and where resources are targeted at where capacity to do so is weaker, work that could effectively empower individuals and communities and promote social responsibility is likely to be held back by the way in which resources flow across the public sector – too often in silos, too often risk-averse. Though the Government has taken the highly welcome step of attempting, in principle, to pay for services out of the savings they later achieve (for instance, through the Work Programme or in offender rehabilitation), the problems of funding silos and lack of investment for innovative, high-risk projects are likely to remain. We therefore believe there is also a role for the Treasury in allotting resources in such a way as to promote pioneering, scalable, cross-governmental, cross-sectoral collaboration on building the big society.

We recommend, as a vehicle for making that happen, that the Government reinstate a reformulated, big-society focused version of the Invest to Save Budget³⁷ formerly run by the Treasury and Cabinet Office, to invest in projects which:

- promote the big society
- require cross-governmental or cross-sectoral partnerships that would not otherwise happen
- test innovations which could then be applied elsewhere
- ultimately save the taxpayer money.

St Giles Trust – how big society approaches can save money

St Giles Trust is a charity working to break the cycle of reoffending and disadvantage. Through the Gates is one of the charity's services, aiming to reduce re-offending rates by providing (often through volunteers who were once offenders themselves) key services such as accommodation support (on or prior to release), support services (training & education, drugs and alcohol support), re-integrating offenders into the community and helping them to meet their licence restrictions. The project thereby draws on ex-offenders taking responsibility for addressing a social problem, and ultimately empowers those who are supported to escape the cycle of reoffending. It worked with over 1,500 prison leavers before being independently evaluated by Pro Bono Economics, and was found to reduce re-offending rates by 40% against the national average, with direct savings for the taxpayer (in terms of reduced spending on the criminal justice system and other areas) of between £10 and £34 for every pound invested.

37 The overall aim of the Invest to Save Budget (described as a 'venture capital fund' for public services) was to achieve long-term efficiencies in the delivery of public services through encouraging and enabling public sector organisations to be innovative, take risks and work together in partnership. Some of the bidding rounds focused on the theme of voluntary organisations delivering public services. The last of the 9 planned rounds of Invest to Save investments were made in 2009. More detail is available at <http://www.isb.gov.uk/hmt.isb.application.2/LEARNERS/ISB%20REVIEW%20240707%20final.pdf>

3.1.2 Coordination with local government

Given the Government's ambitions to decentralise power, it will be local government, as much as Whitehall, whose actions will either promote or detract from the building of a big society.

However, we have heard from voluntary groups that some councils are responding to spending cuts by 'looking after their own' and passing on disproportionate cuts to the voluntary sector and community groups, reducing community capacity to build the big society as outlined in Chapter 2. It is difficult to ascertain a council's total funding to voluntary organisations, because most councils do not monitor or publish such information. But if we use councils' voluntary sector grants budgets as an indicator, we are aware of changes between financial year 2010/11 and 2011/12 varying from -56% in some local authority areas³⁸ to +40% in others.³⁹

We recognise that local councils are under significant pressure, required to cut services that they would like not to, and with many of their staff operating under considerable strain. We recognise too that the Government's decision effectively to front-load budget cuts, and to require local authorities to account for redundancy costs rapidly rather than spreading the cost of re-organisation over several years, has made it harder for councils to cut spending whilst seeking to protect local civil society. Nevertheless, the disproportionate cuts to voluntary organisations of the type outlined above are not an inevitable result of the budget cuts local government is facing – they are a choice which some councils have made and others have not. This is a choice which is grounded in what is in many ways understandable human behaviour – it is superficially much easier and less painful, in the short term, to cut the funding of a local social enterprise than it is to go about making people in your own organisation redundant. But it is also a choice which directly contravenes the objectives of the big society, as it threatens to reduce the capacity of civil society. Its net effect will be a shift of power upwards from civil society to local state – a relatively bigger state and smaller society. And it risks putting the short-term interests of public sector agencies above those of the communities they exist to serve.

Government, then, needs to find a way of genuinely transferring power from Whitehall to town hall whilst simultaneously promoting or requiring behaviour from local councils and other statutory agencies that is conducive to building the big society (empowering individuals and communities and promoting social responsibility). We believe it is entirely consistent with the decentralisation agenda for Government to set 'rules of the road' so that local public sector agencies in turn empower local communities.

The Government has already done this to an extent (for instance, by requiring councils to publish spending data, or legislating for community 'rights' vis-à-vis local councils in the Localism Bill). We also welcome the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government's recent publication of a consultation on statutory guidance for local councils intended to prevent them from cutting voluntary sector organisations disproportionately.

38 Nottinghamshire County Council voluntary sector grants budget, drop from £3.2 million in 2010/11 to £1.4 million in 2011/12

39 Newcastle City Council voluntary sector grants budget, rise from £2.5 million in 2010/11 to £3.5 million in 2011/12

But we believe Government needs to go further in setting the parameters in which councils exercise their new-found additional power. In doing so, Government would have clear popular support: our public polling found that 67% of UK adults believe that local councils should not be allowed to make more cuts to voluntary sector organisations than they make to their own council-run services, as against 15% disagreeing and 17% answering 'don't know'.⁴⁰

We recommend:

- That the Government amend the Public Services (Social Enterprise and Social Value) Bill so that it requires commissioners to consider not just the full social, environmental and economic impact of their decisions in awarding contracts to different potential providers, as it does currently, but also explicitly to consider the impact of their decisions on individual and community empowerment, and to do so when decommissioning or cutting a service as well as when commissioning one.
- Given the exceptional circumstances, and the urgency of the situation facing many voluntary organisations at risk from local council cuts, that the Government shorten its consultation period and make its proposed guidance on local government avoiding disproportionate cuts to the voluntary sector statutory with immediate effect.
- That the Government require local councils to publish their spending on the voluntary sector, as the Minister for Decentralisation has previously called for, and that the Treasury collate, quality-assure and publish the information, so that councils can be held to account by civil society groups and public scrutiny.

3.2 Reform the state

Building the big society – more empowered, responsible citizens and communities – will not just require state action to be coordinated, with Whitehall departments and local councils pulling in the same direction. It will require a different kind of state.

As the Prime Minister has said, “we need a thoughtful re-imagination of the role, as well as the size, of the state.... the re-imagined state should not stop at creating opportunities for people to take control of their lives. It must actively help people take advantage of this new freedom. This means a new role for the state: actively helping to create the big society; directly agitating for, catalysing and galvanising social renewal.”⁴¹

The Government has not yet articulated what this re-imagined state would look like, and how exactly it would ‘agitate for, catalyse and galvanise social renewal.’ And yet it has embarked on an enormous programme of public sector reform, driven by a variety of cross-governmental and individual departmental aims. It needs now to ensure that its plans for public services, public sector assets and the public sector workforce are driven by, and wholly consistent with, the Prime Minister’s vision for a new kind of state capable of helping to build the big society.

40 YouGov poll for the Commission on Big Society, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

41 David Cameron MP, Hugo Young lecture (10 November 2009)

3.2.1 People

If we are to build a big society where individuals and communities have more power over their lives and where we all take more responsibility for ourselves and one another, we will need a state whose many thousands of officials and elected representatives have the desire and the skills to work with communities to make that happen.

These building blocks are simply not present in many local public agencies currently. The culture and skills of public service professionals are not only commonly cited by public service users as high on the list of what can make interacting with those services disempowering,⁴² they also number amongst the major barriers to efforts to reform public services so as to shift power to individuals and communities (for instance, through personal budgets or similar mechanisms).⁴³ In places (as with the Compact, governing relationships between the public sector and the voluntary sector) there is a clear, long-standing consensus on how cultures and ways of working need to change – but we heard a clear message from voluntary groups that the challenge remains to embed these principles in practice. Our poll of voluntary sector leaders found that 69% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “the attitudes of people working in the public sector, and the culture of public sector agencies, will be barriers to any attempts to give individuals and communities more power over their lives,” as against 21% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.⁴⁴

It would be naïve to underestimate the degree to which these workforce-related problems will constitute a block to realising the Government's Big Society vision. We therefore do not believe that central Government's role in working with local government to build a big society can be reduced simply to setting ‘rules of the road’, essential though those rules are. Nor do we believe that we can rely on giving communities new rights ‘versus’ local public agencies (such as the Government's ‘right to challenge’ or ‘right to buy’) or setting new rules for statutory agencies, when in many cases successful community empowerment and promotion of social responsibility will require partnership between local state and community groups. Central Government will need actively to promote culture change, spread best practice and support local public agencies and professionals to ensure that they have the skills, culture and capacities necessary to empower individuals and communities and promote social responsibility.

We recommend the Government set out a substantive programme to support culture change and workforce training in local government, so that local elected representatives and public servants (including commissioners) have the inclination and the capacity to work with local communities, empower them, and encourage them to take greater social responsibility.

42 To illustrate this point, a survey of 600 family carers of disabled children by Contact a Family found that 62% do not feel listened to by professionals; and a 2011 Ofsted analysis of serious case reviews found that professionals did not listen to children enough or ask them about their views and feelings, and that agencies did not listen to adults who tried to speak on behalf of the child. Whereas mental health charities told us that professional attitudes remain a significant disempowering issue for the people they work with, research by the National Mental Health Development Unit and the NHS Confederation's Mental Health Network found that mental health professionals are generally satisfied with the extent to which service users are involved in healthcare decisions already.

43 See e.g. National Mental Health Development Unit & NHS Confederation, *Facing up to the challenge of personal health budgets* (2011)

44 Poll of ACEVO members, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

The challenge of supporting people in the public sector to play their part in helping to foster more powerful and responsible individuals and communities is made more pressing by the Government's plans to empower public sector professionals themselves. Depending on whether the professionals to whom Government devolves power have the attitudes and skills necessary to empower people and promote individual and community responsibility, it could either set progress on these fronts back by many years or accelerate it significantly.

The Government has launched a programme to encourage public sector workers to 'spin out' of the state and form new, independent mutuals or social enterprises. The Minister for the Cabinet Office has said his ambition is for 1 in 6 public sector workers to spin out by the end of the parliament.⁴⁵ We welcome the potential for these reforms to result in public service staff having more flexibility to respond to, and innovate for, the real needs of service users. The risk, however, is that the new mutuals, rather than resulting in different models of service, in fact 'lock in' old ways of working and old ways of delivering services, and in particular, a 'professional knows best' attitude that disempowers the individuals and communities who use public services.

We recommend that in the Government's £10 million support programme for new mutuals there should be a central focus on supporting these organisations, and the professionals within them, to work with local communities, empower them, and encourage them to take greater social responsibility, drawing on best practice in the voluntary sector in particular.

3.2.2 Assets

The lack or availability of access to assets (to operate out of, or use to generate sustainable income) can be amongst the most significant barriers or enablers of community action. We therefore need a state that uses its assets as an enabling platform for social action.

In many areas, the state is and will continue to be amongst the major local property and land owners, with significant ability to provide platforms for people to come together and act on issues of shared concern.

Elsewhere, we are about to see an immense divestment of property and land assets from the state. The recent public debate around the sale of forests has to date been the most high-profile example of this, but with many public agencies being abolished or their powers transferred, billions of pounds worth of buildings and land will be on the move. For instance, the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) about to be abolished need to dispose of around £500 million worth of physical assets; the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) about to be abolished hold about £6 billion worth; and some local authorities will likely sell some assets to plug budget gaps. That shift of assets implies an equally significant shift of power. The question is who benefits from the power shift.

It could be the Big Society – individuals and communities acquiring more assets which will help them to address problems themselves and to realise their aspirations themselves. As an illustration of the kind of change possible, 80% of local authorities are currently in the process of transferring assets at less than market value, with 1,000 local authority asset transfers to communities underway now.⁴⁶ The potential results are illustrated by the case of the Burton Street Project in Sheffield (see box), and it is this kind of result that the Government is rightly trying to foster through the 'right to buy' in the Localism Bill.

⁴⁵ Interview with *Public Finance*, published 24 February 2011

⁴⁶ DCLG figures

The Burton Street Project – how local government can use assets to build big society

The Burton Street Project in Sheffield clearly demonstrates the positive impact that community ownership can have on the local area. In 1994 local people set out to turn a disused Victorian school into community buildings, from which they would generate income by renting out space at affordable prices to local groups. The centre now provides a home for 100 groups and over 1,500 people use the centre each week. The organisation also uses the building for its own regeneration work and for delivering services: skills training, assisting people into employment, social enterprise development, family support, services for people with learning difficulties and mental health problems and arts, sports and recreational activities. The Burton Street Project initially moved into the property rent free from the Local Authority in lieu of improvements to the building. Over time the people running the organisation realised that purchasing the building would enable them to put their services on a more sustainable footing and, working closely with the regeneration team in Sheffield City Council, managed to buy the premises for £130,000 (approximately £320,000 below market value). Through the services it provides the Burton Street Project is making a valuable contribution to the economic regeneration of the city.

But the beneficiaries of the huge shift in assets could also be other parts of the state (e.g. local government), new quangos or quango-like partnerships (e.g. LEPs), professionals (e.g. GPs taking on PCT assets, or public sector professionals empowered through their new mutuals), or the private sector (for instance, the RDAs' current proposals for disposing of their £500 million-worth of assets include selling off large proportions at market value, and we see little evidence to suggest that the Government has given serious consideration to how the asset disposal could be used to promote the big society).

We welcome the Government's proposed 'right to buy' in the Localism Bill, which would enable voluntary groups to acquire assets at below-market prices. But we believe that the Government needs to go further if it is to seize the significant opportunity we see here.

We recommend that the Department for Communities and Local Government, Cabinet Office and Treasury work together to set out a cross-government strategy to maximise the degree to which public sector assets (both those that stay within the public sector and those that are divested over the course of the parliament) are used to promote community action, building on learning from the capital and assets pathfinder programme and elsewhere.

3.2.3 Services

We need a state that uses the provision of public services as a means of empowering individuals and communities and encouraging them to take responsibility. Currently, too often they disempower or promote dependence, and too much power lies with the producers of public services, too little with their consumers. We need a clear shift in ambition for what public services should aim to achieve (namely, enabling individuals and communities to take power and responsibility over their lives), and a shift of power within the welfare state from producers to citizens and communities.

The Government's current plans to reform public services address these issues to varying degrees. Some of the Government's reforms are clearly at the very least intended to empower the users of public services (for instance, the expansion of personal budgets in social care, enabling parents to set up free schools, the Department of Health's principle "no decision about me without me"). But it is less clear that empowerment of individuals or communities has been central to the Government's thinking in other areas, where the major shifts in power look likely to be to professionals (for instance, under GP commissioning) or to large public service providers (for instance, under the DWP Work Programme). Our poll of voluntary sector chief executives found them split over the degree to which the Government's reform agenda would result in empowerment: 26% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "the Government's public service reform agenda will give the users of public services more power and control over their lives," as against 51% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing and 22% answering "don't know".⁴⁷

There are enormous opportunities for public service reform to empower individuals and communities, and to foster individual and collective responsibility – in other words, to contribute to the big society vision. The result – 'co-produced' public services – would be entirely consistent with, and arguably should be central to, the Government's other major policy objective of reducing the deficit. We believe the Government needs to reassert the centrality of big society principles in its public service reform plans, and interrogate departmental reforms against those principles.

We recommend that the Government use its upcoming Public Service Reform White Paper as an opportunity to put big society at the heart of individual departmental and cross-governmental public service reform plans (along the lines of the big society vision that we outlined on page 12)

As a starting point to making such shifts in power and responsibility possible, we believe that as far as possible, the Government should seek to ensure that the commissioning of public services is driven not by producer interests but by the interests and aspirations of service users – with the expertise of public service professionals at the heart of the process but as the servant of individual and community aspiration.

In order to maximise the power of individuals and communities in the commissioning process, and to minimise the degree to which commissioning decisions are determined by producer interests, we recommend:

- Where it results in individual empowerment, a devolution of budgetary control to or towards individuals (e.g. through an expansion of personal budgets in and beyond social care – see box on individual budgets). Here the government needs to be certain, however, that it matches an expansion in the use of personal budgets with ensuring it has the policies and the support in place to ensure it is putting real power in people's hands, not just a budget and greater responsibility.
- A step change in service-user involvement in commissioning, including through voluntary organisations acting as facilitators, giving individuals and communities greater power over what services they receive and how they receive them

47 Poll of ACEVO members, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

- Slowly but surely, and with a clear timetable for change set out over the parliament, separation of the commissioning function from provision, with local authorities and other statutory agencies becoming primarily commissioning organisations rather than provider organisations, entirely focused on the interests of taxpayers and service users rather than the providers of those services, and sourcing services from a market of voluntary and private organisations. To catalyse a step-change here, and given the significant variation in the degree to which local government agencies commission services or provide them themselves,⁴⁸ we recommend that the Government require local authorities to make public the degree to which they commission services from external providers or deliver them in-house, and where they have chosen to deliver them in-house, to explain the rationale behind their decision in terms of public benefit or long-term value for money.
- Removal of key structural distortions to a level playing field in the provision of public services, so that the providers of services are those best placed to deliver, not those with an inbuilt advantage over others. In particular, we recommend that the Government reform ‘Fair Deal’ guidance on treatment of public sector pensions when services are outsourced from the public sector to voluntary or private providers, so that staff delivering public services continue to get decent pensions but without public sector pensions regulations constituting such a significant barrier to service reform.
- A variety of measures to increase the availability of investment to voluntary organisations to enable them to play a growing role in public service delivery. We outline some suggested measures in Chapter 4.

Individual budgets – a vehicle for greater control in life

Jonathan is a disabled teenager whose quality of life has been transformed since he left school in July 2008 with an Individual Budget. Now he and his family can decide what he should do, when he should do it and who should support him. Jonathan’s complex health condition means multiple budgets are spent on his care and education. Putting the different funds together has enabled Jonathan to employ one full time personal assistant (PA) and two part time PAs for activities in the evenings and weekends. In addition, his learning needs are fully taken care of. His week – tailor-made for him – allows many opportunities for developing his independent life skills, his interest in computers and multi-media, and individual tuition. Jonathan’s mother reports an “amazing improvement in his quality of life. ...It has given him so much more freedom to explore life. Without this Individual Budget he would not have been able to do anything like the things he can do now. It is encouraging Jonathan to have a bit of an independent life style...and Jonathan can’t stop smiling!”⁴⁹

48 BERR, *Public services industry review* (2008)

49 www.in-control.org.uk

3.3 Target resources at the most deprived communities

If a shift of power and responsibility is what lies at the heart of the big society agenda, then the Government needs to base its policies on a fundamental fact: that different individuals and different communities have different capacities to take power and responsibility. To take a few illustrations of this phenomenon:

- there is a clear direct relationship between volunteering rates and levels of deprivation – the less well-off an area, the less likely people are to be volunteering⁵⁰
- people with a degree are twice as likely to volunteer than those with no qualifications⁵¹
- people in the ‘civic core’ that accounts for the majority of voluntary activity (31% of the population provides nearly 90% of volunteer hours, just under 80% of charitable giving, and around 70% of civic participation) are more likely to have higher education qualifications, be middle-aged, be owner occupiers, actively practise their religion, and have lived in the same neighbourhood for at least 10 years.⁵²
- some parts of the country have a much richer associational life than others – excluding central London boroughs, where many national organisations are based, the number of voluntary organisations per thousand people ranges from 0.9 in some local authority areas to 7.7 in others, almost an eight-fold variation.⁵³

Not only does community capacity to deliver the big society vary, that variation is likely to be exacerbated by spending cuts, given the fact that in more deprived areas, that capacity is likely to be more dependent on the state resourcing it. The capacity of individuals to contribute to their communities is likely to be more dependent on the state supporting them to do so (supporting them to have the health, skills, and financial security that enables them to contribute to community life), while research suggests that similarly civil society organisations in poorer areas are likely to receive more of their funding from the public sector than those in richer areas.⁵⁴ This may not be how the Government would like things to be, but it is how things are at the moment. And it is clear that this causes concern amongst both the public and voluntary sector leaders: our poll of voluntary sector CEOs found that 83% worry that as it stands, the Government’s big society agenda will work less well for deprived communities,⁵⁵ whilst 59% of UK adults believe the big society will not work as well in poorer communities as it will in better off areas, as against 19% disagreeing and 22% answering ‘don’t know’.⁵⁶

The Government needs to recognise that this is a problem for its big society vision, and one that needs to be addressed.

If the capacity to build a big society is weaker in more deprived communities, the Government needs to understand how that capacity (understood as a mix of aspiration, attitudes, skills, space, resources) can be built, and then proactively set about putting that understanding into practice.

50 Ipsos Mori research presented to Commission on Big Society

51 DCLG, *Citizenship Survey* (2009)

52 J. Mohan, *What do volunteering statistics tell us about the prospects for the Big Society?* (2010)

53 NCVO, *The UK Civil Society Almanac 2010* (2010)

54 D. Clifford, F. Geyne Rayme & J. Mohan, *How dependent is the third sector on public funding? Evidence from the National Survey of Third Sector Organisations* (2010)

55 Poll of ACEVO members, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

56 YouGov poll for the Commission on Big Society, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

In so doing, it also needs to articulate the role of the state in ensuring communities have the aspiration and the means to taking greater power and responsibility. If the big society is about reducing 'big government', then clearly the state is the problem. But if, as we have argued above, the big society is about empowering people and communities and encouraging people to take greater responsibility for the society around them, then sometimes the state will be the barrier (for instance, by discouraging people from getting involved through over-regulation; state monopolies). But sometimes the barriers may be elsewhere (for instance, research⁵⁷ has consistently found that a key barrier to more volunteering is people spending too much time at work, i.e. a barrier of the market rather than the state); and sometimes the state may be an enabler rather than a barrier to people taking greater control over their lives (as it was, for instance, when it funded People First Lambeth – see box on page 20). As David Cameron has said, we need to 'reimagine' the state, rather than seeing it as the problem per se. "I believe that in general, a simplistic retrenchment of the state which assumes that better alternatives to state action will just spring to life unbidden is wrong. Instead we need a thoughtful re-imagination of the role, as well as the size, of the state.... the re-imagined state should not stop at creating opportunities for people to take control of their lives. It must actively help people take advantage of this new freedom. This means a new role for the state: actively helping to create the big society; directly agitating for, catalysing and galvanising social renewal. So yes, in the fight against poverty, inequality, social breakdown and injustice I do want to move from state action to social action. But I see a powerful role for government in helping to engineer that shift."⁵⁸

The Government now needs to build a more detailed understanding of what role David Cameron's 'reimagined state' would play in building community capacity (understood as a mix of aspiration, attitudes, skills, space, resources) where currently it is lacking - 'agitating for, catalysing and galvanising social renewal', as the Prime Minister has put it. It needs to articulate exactly what that intervention would look like, and what role businesses and others might play. It needs a sophisticated plan for putting that understanding into action. And it needs to back that plan up with the requisite resources. In other words, the Government needs a strategy to ensure that the community capacity necessary to build the big society exists across the country, including in the most deprived communities, and not just in some areas. At present we do not see one.

Finally, we believe that in seeking to build community capacity to foster the big society, Government needs to start from a clear position that the state is not and should not be abdicating its ultimate responsibilities, particularly to the most vulnerable. The state will and should retain its responsibilities to ensure appropriate services or protection for such groups, even if it does not directly provide those services itself.

In the short term, we recommend that the Government repeat, for March 2012, the £100 million Transition Fund to support voluntary organisations providing high-quality public services but at risk from spending cuts. However, we recommend that the Fund be targeted at voluntary organisations working with the most deprived communities (of place and of interest) in the country.

57 E.g. Cabinet Office, *Helping Out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving* (2007)

58 David Cameron MP, Hugo Young lecture, (10 November 2009)

In the longer term but starting immediately, we recommend that the Government formulate a comprehensive strategy for ensuring that all communities, of place and of interest, have the capacity to achieve the Government's big society vision. That strategy should cover:

- clarity on which communities (of place and of interest) are less likely to be able to respond to the Government's big society vision
- a better understanding of what 'community capacity' to build a big society consists of (i.e. what combination of aspiration, attitudes, leadership, skills, organisations, partnerships and resources are necessary), and how it can be fostered
- clarity on who is responsible for building that community capacity where it is lacking (i.e. who at what layer of Government or elsewhere is to be held to account for success or failure in undertaking which roles)
- the requisite resources to be put behind this strategy to make it a success



Chapter Four

Harnessing the power of the private sector

4

Chapter Four

Harnessing the power of the private sector

In chapter 1 we defined big society as “a society in which power and responsibility have shifted: one in which, at every level in our national life, individuals and communities have more aspiration, power and capacity to take decisions and solve problems themselves, and where all of us take greater responsibility for ourselves, our communities and one another.”

It is clear that business has a huge potential role in this agenda, and that it is not just from individuals and communities that we should be asking for greater social responsibility, but from businesses too. Businesses can empower people and support them to take responsibility, and they can act corporately to take greater responsibility for the communities around them (see box on Linklaters).

Linklaters ‘Linking Work with Learning’ – responsible business, empowered community

Linking Work with Learning (LWWL) is a three-year partnership between Linklaters LLP, The Learning Trust (LEA), Inspire! and schools in the London borough of Hackney, providing support for pupils with reading, writing, debating, enterprise and work-related activities, as well as offering mentoring schemes, work experience, careers and enterprise events and professional development opportunities for teachers. Of the Linklaters LLP employees engaged in volunteering through the programme, 71% saw a development in their job satisfaction and 76% a development in their commitment to the company. Of the children surveyed by the University of Warwick as part of its evaluation of the project, 70% said it had ‘definitely or strongly helped’ them improve their interpersonal skills and 88% said it had ‘definitely or strongly’ improved their attitudes.

Part of the impetus to this kind of good corporate citizenship lies in the fact that research increasingly suggests it is good for business,⁵⁹ and an absence of community engagement increasingly bad for business (in our discussions with business leaders we heard of examples of companies losing multi-million-pound contracts purely on the basis of their inability to articulate how they would engage with local communities).

But there is also a moral imperative behind businesses acting as good corporate citizens and enabling their employees to be more socially engaged. 64% of people believe companies have a ‘duty’ to give something back to their local communities, and 54% believe companies also have a duty to make it easy for their employees to do the same.⁶⁰ As one business woman told us, “businesses need to stop being presented with social or environmental issues and saying it’s someone else’s problem; it is our problem.” And in the words of another business leader, “businesses make money out of a community, it seems to me totally legitimate to ask then what businesses do for a community.”⁶¹

59 See e.g. http://www.bitc.org.uk/resources/publications/the_value_of.html

60 Bell Pottinger, *Big Society & Harnessing the Power of the UK* (2011)

61 Oral evidence to the Commission on Big Society

If it is clear that up and down the country, businesses are already contributing significantly to community life, it is also clear that there is huge untapped potential. In the words of one business leader, “the principle that business can and should do more is just so obvious.”⁶²

In this chapter we call for that potential to be realised through:

1. **Socially responsible business leadership**
2. **Ensuring employees have time for a ‘community life’**
3. **Banking reform to help capitalise the big society**

4.1 Socially responsible business leadership

Realising business’ potential to contribute to big society will partly rely on a significant culture shift. We heard that for many businesses, ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ (CSR) remains something of an add-on or an afterthought, rather than core to what they do or how they do it, and more of a tick-box marketing exercise than a genuinely useful attempt to take social action. It is an increasing phenomenon, but still relatively few companies put their ‘core strengths’ to social good (an accountancy firm providing pro-bono accountancy rather than a troupe of volunteer accountants to paint a community centre), and even fewer ‘act to create the sustainable market their futures depend on’, as one business leader put it to us. Recent YouGov polling found that whilst 7 out of 10 shoppers say they like shopping with companies who ‘visibly give something back to society’, and that half of UK consumers say they would like to buy from companies that have a strong CSR programme in place, 61% of consumers say they hear a lot about CSR but ‘nothing of any substance’.⁶³

Even within the boundaries of traditional CSR, significant benefit would be realised by the ‘poor performers’ catching up with the best. Of the top 300 corporate donors, two companies gave away 48 per cent and 40 per cent of their pre-tax profit in 2008/09 but most firms in most industries gave much less. Pharmaceutical firms gave an average six per cent of their pre tax profit (including product donations), but in 56 out of 69 industries the average was less than one per cent. Variation within industries is large. For example, giving in the food retailing industry ranges from £49,600 to £1,600 per £1 million of pre-tax profit.⁶⁴

We heard from both community groups and business that making these shifts happen will depend on business leadership – ‘more Jamie Olivers’, as business leaders put it to us, or ‘twenty-first-century Chamberlains,’ as community leaders in Birmingham described it.⁶⁵ There is clearly scope for a step change in such leadership - research by Business in the Community found that 77% of business leaders think they could do more to scale up strategic support for communities across their business, while 80% felt they could do more to engage other businesses to scale up their support.⁶⁶ Meanwhile our public polling found that 66% of UK adults believe business leaders should do more for the communities they serve, for instance by donating more of their profits or allowing staff to use paid time for voluntary work, as against 18% disagreeing.⁶⁷

62 Oral evidence to the Commission on Big Society

63 YouGov research, 2010, <http://today.yougov.co.uk/consumer/ethical-shopping>

64 Cabinet Office analysis based on C. Pharoah, *Charity Market Monitor 2010* (2010)

65 Oral evidence to the Commission on Big Society

66 *Business in the Community, Transforming Business, Transforming Communities* (2010)

67 YouGov poll for the Commission on Big Society, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown

We recommend that Government seek to catalyse a culture shift in business leadership, working with organisations such as Business in the Community, the CBI and IoD to bring people together, using the ‘bully pulpit’ to bring public attention to the issue, and giving public recognition to socially responsible business leadership (e.g. through the honours system).

4.2 Having time for a ‘community life’: the role for business

There has been much public debate about the need for people to strike a good ‘work-life balance’, and a growing awareness of the importance of employees having time for ‘family life’ – a shift in attitudes increasingly mirrored in public policy with the extension of rights to leave and flexible working for parents.

We believe we should also be concerned to ensure that people have the time and opportunities to have a ‘community life’. In the UK employees not only work longer hours than in other European countries, the trend appears to be for more and more of our time to be taken up with work: full-time workers in Britain put in the longest hours in Europe, at an average 43.6 hours per week, while the number of people working over 48 hours has more than doubled since 1998, from 10% of employees to 26%.⁶⁸

We need to be wary that changing work patterns do not add barriers to people having a ‘community life’ – the time and opportunity to engage with and contribute to the communities they live in. Lack of spare time is commonly cited as a barrier to more volunteering: the Government’s Citizenship Survey for 2008/9 showed that the top three barriers to volunteering were work commitments (cited by 55% of those who did not volunteer), family responsibilities (30%) and lack of spare time (26%).⁶⁹

We believe that there is a role for business in enabling people to contribute to their communities, without the need to turn back the clock on changing work patterns – but it is clear that currently not all businesses are taking up that opportunity. A recent survey of over 2,000 people found that 31% don’t know how their company would feel about them getting involved in activity benefiting society or the community during work time, while 23% said their company does not offer opportunities for them to get involved.⁷⁰ Cabinet Office research recently found that half of employees would like to see a volunteering or giving scheme established by their employer where they one doesn’t currently exist.⁷¹

The Government is clearly aware of the potential for hard-working employees to contribute to their communities if businesses can become enablers of such social action. For instance, the Government has proposed launching ‘a national day to celebrate and encourage social action’,⁷² partly with the intention of addressing some of the barriers relating to lack of time outlined above. However, we fear that creating a new public holiday loosely connected to voluntary activity would probably offer poor improvements in levels of participation, and that there is a danger it would

68 M. Bunting, *Willing Slaves: How the Overwork Culture is Ruling Our Lives* (2004)

69 DCLG, *Citizenship Survey* (2009)

70 Bell Pottinger, *Big Society & Harnessing the Power of the UK* (2011)

71 Cabinet Office, *Helping Out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving* (2007)

72 HM Government, *The Coalition: our programme for government* (2010)

simply lead to tokenism. Instead the Government should seek to reduce the degree to which time spent at work acts as a barrier to employees making regular, substantive contributions to their communities which make the best of their skills.

We recommend that rather than launching a 'national day to celebrate and encourage social action', the Government amend the Employment Rights Act 1996 to extend employees' existing right to take reasonable time off for certain public duties (e.g. to serve as magistrates, councillors or on the governing bodies of schools) to enable them to take reasonable time off, with the permission of their employers, to serve a voluntary organisation.

Our public polling found that only 5% of UK adults say they would be very likely, and 15% fairly likely, to use an extra bank holiday intended to celebrate and encourage social action to do voluntary work – and many of these people do not work in any case, either by virtue of their age or due to unemployment. By contrast, 9% of employed UK adults (2.6 million people) say they would be very likely, and 28% (8.2 million people) fairly likely, to take up extended rights to take reasonable time off work to do voluntary work.⁷³ In other words, our recommendation would involve fewer people taking time off work than would be the case with a bank holiday, but with greater social impact. By extending the 1996 Act, with its provisions on what constitutes reasonable time off and employers' right to refuse, the Government would be providing a 'nudge' to socially-responsible behaviour rather than imposing a regulatory requirement on business. It would likely lead to more meaningful use, and development, of employees' skills, and would spread community engagement over the course of a year rather than requiring whole companies to close for a day. Given all of the above, we estimate the costs to business would be significantly lower than an extra bank holiday and would likely have significant benefits in terms of workforce development.

However, even if more people were able to give more to their communities, we heard from some businesses that they find it difficult to know where to direct that resource as they find it hard to build a good understanding of the different needs of the range of community organisations operating in the areas they work in. We therefore welcome the efforts of Business in the Community to establish business-led brokerage between local businesses (large and small) and voluntary organisations in local areas, particularly the most deprived.

We recommend that Government, umbrella organisations in the voluntary sector, Business in the Community and business groups such as the CBI, Federation of Small Businesses and British Chambers of Commerce work together to scale up Business in the Community's Business Connector programme.

Finally, we believe there is significant scope for businesses to enable or 'nudge' their employees towards giving to good causes. The Cabinet Office research mentioned above, which found that half of employees would like to see a giving or volunteering scheme established by their employer where they don't currently exist, suggests an appetite for such action.⁷⁴ And yet the primary vehicle currently used by businesses to enable their employees to give money to good causes (payroll giving schemes)

73 YouGov poll for the Commission on Big Society, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown. Absolute number are based ONS employment figures for the quarter to February 2011

74 Cabinet Office, *Helping Out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving* (2007)

produce relatively poor results: payroll giving currently accounts for only 1% of total giving, and only 3% of donors give in this way.⁷⁵ Amongst the series of measures to promote charitable giving announced in the 2011 Budget, which we welcome, was a commitment to explore ways to increase take-up of payroll giving.⁷⁶ We see huge potential here.

We recommend that the Government seek to incentivise employers to encourage and facilitate employee engagement with charitable giving, for instance by increasing take-up of payroll giving. We look forward to the recommendations of the Philanthropy Review on how that might be achieved, and recommend that on receipt of the Review's recommendations the Government set out a clear timetable for formulating and implementing measures in this area.

4.3 Banking reform: helping to capitalise the big society

Financial services are often described as the engine of the economy, enabling business to start up, take risks and grow. But they have traditionally not acted as the engine of social action, enabling people to start up, take risks for, or grow activities that benefit society or particular communities.

Rather than empowering individuals to do more with their lives, the shape of financial services in this country too often disempowers them. Financial exclusion (i.e. the inability, difficulty or reluctance to access appropriate, mainstream financial services) remains a significant problem, with 4% of households in the UK still 'unbanked' (i.e. without access to a transactional bank account), and many more unable to access affordable credit.⁷⁷ It can lead to reliance on high-cost lenders or loan-sharks, can be a barrier to employment, and means people pay more for other services (e.g. where payment is cheaper by direct debit).⁷⁸ In other words, it means hundreds of thousands of people lack a basic empowering platform which most of us take for granted, and which the Treasury's Financial Inclusion Taskforce describes as "increasingly essential to participation in modern society."

Organisations with a social purpose are similarly constrained by the shape of financial services in the UK. As the Government has recognised, "lack of access to capital is still holding social ventures back. It can frustrate investment in key areas such as buildings, equipment, technology and staff training. New social ventures struggle to get going without start-up capital. Social ventures already trading find it difficult to cope with 'lump' cash flow without working capital. And we have only a few social ventures that operate on a large scale... partly because of a lack of capital for growth."⁸⁰

75 NCVO & Charities Aid Foundation, *UK Giving 2010: An Overview of Charitable Giving in the UK, 2009/10* (2010)

76 HM Treasury, *Budget 2011*

77 HMT Financial Inclusion Taskforce, *Banking services and poorer households* (December 2010)

78 HMT, *Financial Inclusion – the way forward* (2008)

79 HMT Financial Inclusion Taskforce, *Banking services and poorer households* (December 2010)

80 HM Government, *Growing the Social Investment Market: a vision and strategy* (2011)

Financial services as an engine for social action

Alt Valley Community Trust (AVCT) is based in an economically deprived area of north-east Liverpool and focuses on creating training and employment opportunities for local people. Working with two sister organisations, AVCT runs a community-based training facility, the Communiversity, which is housed in a former old people's home and offers a broad curriculum, including subjects such as IT, construction, digital design and mechanics.

AVCT received initial social investment (i.e. investment intended to produce both a financial and a social return) in 2003 of £200,000 (£100,000 loan and £100,000 grant) to develop and expand the Communiversity site by building a recording studio, conference centre, café, crèche and study support rooms.

In 2006, AVCT received an investment of £1 million to develop a vocational training centre for 14 to 19-year-olds. It has subsequently increased its training and learning contracts and turnover has grown from £0.7 million in 2003/04 to £1.8 million in 2009/10. AVCT has used this income to make loan repayments and to invest in providing additional services to the local community.

What is more, in the areas most in need of what the Prime Minister has called “social recovery”, individuals and organisations are increasingly unlikely to have access to financial services – over recent years more local high street bank branches have been lost in Britain's least affluent inner cities and traditional manufacturing areas than in any other area.⁸¹

The Government is intervening to address the lack of access to capital holding social action back, with a variety of measures⁸² such as the creation of a Big Society Bank to promote the growth of social investment (i.e. investment that generates a social as well as financial return). We welcome these measures, but believe it must be the mainstream banks, acting with and in addition to existing and emerging social investment institutions, who act as the engine not just for economic growth, but for social recovery and the Big Society too.

Given that the banking sector played a clear role in the economic crisis of 2008 onwards, a crisis for which communities across the country are continuing (and in some cases only just beginning) to pay the price, we believe it is time for a step-change in the degree to which British banks engage with and support the communities they operate in. The Project Merlin agreement which some – but not all – of the banks reached with the Government in February 2011 is a step in the right direction, but it does not constitute the kind of fundamental shift in attitude and behaviour which we would like to see from the banking sector in terms of their support for community action. The banks need to reconnect with the communities they operate in, rely on, and in theory serve. The Project Merlin talks were a historic opportunity for the banks to do that – but they did not seize it. Their failure to do so is particularly disappointing given the vast sums of public money that have been spent on keeping them afloat. It therefore falls to the Government to use a variety of measures to ‘nudge’ the UK's banking sector towards greater social responsibility.

81 A. Leyshon et al., *The Changing Geography of British Bank and Building Society Branch Networks, 1995-2003* (2006)

82 HM Government, *Growing the social investment market* (2011)

Firstly, we urge the Government to apply the pressure of transparency to the mainstream banking sector to encourage it to engage with and invest in social ventures, and to lend responsibly to individual borrowers who are currently financially excluded.

Under the terms of the Project Merlin agreement between the Government and four of the UK's major banks, the Bank of England will monitor whether the promised funds for business are being made available, and will publish quarterly assessments.

We recommend that the Bank of England include, in its quarterly assessments of Project Merlin banks' lending to businesses, an analysis of the degree to which the banks are lending to voluntary organisations and other social ventures.

In the US, successive administrations from 1977 onwards have legislated both to require banks to be more transparent about their lending practices to more deprived communities, and to reward banks with a strong record of responsible investment in poorer communities. The legislation (the Community Reinvestment Act or CRA) requires financial institutions with over \$1 billion in assets to report data on small business lending and enables those institutions to be examined to assess whether they are adequately meeting the credit needs of communities that suffer from financial exclusion. The financial institutions are given 'CRA ratings' which are publicly available and searchable online. The CRA has helped spread best practice in the provision of financial services to previously excluded groups, with larger banks often developing specialized units that focus on the needs of particular communities or forming partnerships with existing social investors such as community development finance institutions (CDFIs) and working through them to provide financial services to individuals and organisations who would otherwise struggle to access credit. Without encouraging banks to take irresponsible risks (institutions covered by the CRA were significantly less likely than those not covered to make the kind of high-risk home purchase loans that led to the credit crunch),⁸³ the CRA is believed to have channelled billions of dollars into more deprived communities in the US.

We support the analysis of the Social Investment Taskforce, chaired by Sir Ronald Cohen (Advisor to the Government on the Big Society Bank), that voluntary approaches to banking transparency "have failed," and that it is therefore time for a UK version of the Community Reinvestment Act, with the legislation ensuring that the pattern of lending and other investment by banks in under-invested communities is disclosed systematically, by borough, ward, type of loan and borrower.⁸⁴ In calling for a UK version of the CRA we add our voice to a growing number of individuals and organisations advocating such a measure, from think tanks such as Respublica and the Demos Progressive Conservatism project to the over 400 voluntary organisations signed up to the Better Banking Campaign. We believe that the result would be a mainstream banking sector far more engaged in supporting sustainable, scalable social action, a far more successful social investment market of the type the Government is committed to building,⁸⁵ and a voluntary sector far better placed to empower individuals and communities and promote social responsibility through the delivery of public services.

We recommend that the Government introduce a UK version of the American Community Reinvestment Act, tailored to the British economy and society, with the aim of promoting responsible, affordable and fair credit for individuals, and promoting investment in organisations whose activities have a beneficial social impact

83 M. Wind-Cowie, *Recapitalising the poor: why property is not theft* (Demos 2009)

84 Social Investment Taskforce, *Social investment ten years on* (2010)

85 HM Government, *Growing the social investment market* (2011)

Secondly, we welcome the Government's announcement that it intends to explore options for tax incentives to promote investment in social ventures,⁸⁶ and urge the Treasury to bring forward concrete proposals as soon as possible.

We recommend that the Government catalyse greater engagement between the mainstream banks and social ventures by bringing forward proposals, by the 2012 Budget, for tax incentives to encourage individual and corporate investors to invest in options that generate both a financial and a social return.

Finally, as a symbol of the new start we believe is needed from the banking sector in its relationship with communities, we believe poorer-performing banks should match those banks doing more to support the communities they operate in. Some banks already re-invest 1% or more of their pre-tax profits for social benefit, but others do less. Our public polling found that 74% of UK adults believe banks could do a lot to restore their image if they agreed to donate this proportion of their profits to charity instead of giving the money to shareholders.⁸⁷

We call on all UK banks to commit to re-investing 1% or more of their pre-tax profits for social benefit.

86 HM Government, *Growing the social investment market* (2011)

87 YouGov poll for the Commission on Big Society, April 2011. See appendices for a full breakdown



Appendices

Appendix A About the Commission

Appendix B The organisations we spoke to

Appendix C Public polling

Appendix D Poll of voluntary sector chief executives

Appendix A

About the Commission

The Commission on Big Society was set up by ACEVO in January 2011 with the following terms of reference:

“to articulate a vision for what needs to be achieved through the Big Society agenda, and to recommend practical steps that Government at all levels, third sector organisations, businesses and others need to take to make that vision a reality.”

Its members were:

Hilary Belcher (CEO, Mosaic Clubhouse)

Hilary Belcher is CEO of Mosaic Clubhouse, a small charity operating in south London whose mission is to assist in the recovery of people with mental ill-health. Mosaic Clubhouse provides members with opportunities to work and learn by contributing their talents and volunteering their time to work in partnership with the staff team to manage and run the charity. The Clubhouse provides routes back into paid employment, educational classes leading to nationally recognised qualifications and the chance to increase social networks through their participation in the evening and social programmes.

Lord Boateng

Paul Boateng is a Labour member of the House of Lords. He began his career as a civil rights lawyer, working primarily on social and community cases, involving women's rights, housing and police complaints. He became a Labour MP in 1987 and held a variety of ministerial posts at the Department of Health, Home Office and Treasury where, as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, he was responsible for finalising the 2002 and 2004 Spending Reviews. After standing down as an MP in 2005, he was appointed High Commissioner to South Africa. He was elevated to the House of Lords in 2010.

Nick Boles MP

Nick Boles is a Conservative Member of Parliament and Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Schools Minister, Nick Gibb. He previously founded a small business, was a councillor for Westminster City Council, and founded and then acted as Director of the think tank Policy Exchange. In 2008 he was appointed Chief of Staff for the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson. In 2010 he was elected to Parliament. He is a member of the Cambridge-based think tank the Henry Jackson Society.

Phil Collins (*The Times*)

Philip Collins is a writer on *The Times*, chair of the think tank Demos, and a Senior Visiting Fellow in the Department of Government at the London School of Economics. He was, until July 2007, Chief Speech Writer to the Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Between 2000 and 2004, he was Director of the Social Market Foundation (SMF), an independent think-tank and charity. Prior to that, Mr. Collins spent five years as an investment banker. He has also

worked as a political assistant to Frank Field MP, for the Institute of Education at the University of London and for the BBC and London Weekend Television. He has published two novels and a number of academic books on broadcasting policy and public service reform.

Richard Chartres (the Bishop of London)

Richard Chartres became the 132nd Bishop of London in November 1995. He has previously acted as the Gresham Professor of Divinity, and a Privy Counsellor. He is a director of the Coexist Foundation (a charity promoting interfaith understanding), Chairman of the Church Buildings Division of the Church of England, founder and chairman of St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, and deputises for the Archbishop of Canterbury as Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Church Commissioners. He is also responsible, on behalf of the Archbishop, for relations with the Orthodox Churches.

Matt Hyde (CEO, NUS)

Matt Hyde has been Chief Executive of the National Union of Students since 2007. Prior to NUS, he was General Manager of Goldsmiths College Students' Union, Deputy General Manager of KCLSU and President of the University of London Union. He is a Director of NUS Services Limited and attends the Endsleigh Insurance Limited Board. Matt has worked in the voluntary sector over a number of years as consultant and board member (of the Poetry Society and Student Volunteering England), is a Patron of UNLOCK (the National Association of Reformed Offenders) and Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts.

Peter McGurn (CEO, Goodwin Centre)

Peter McGurn is Chief Executive of the Goodwin Development Trust, a social enterprise on an inner-city housing estate in Hull. Peter has held this position for 10 years and has overseen its growth from a small volunteer-led community organisation to one of the country's most entrepreneurial and successful Development Trusts. Goodwin currently employs over 300 staff, works with over 100 volunteers, and has an annual turnover of more than £10 million. Its activities include conferencing, catering, childcare, education, ICT, facilities management, neighbourhood wardens, healthcare, transport and construction. Peter has recently completed a Masters research project at the Judge Business School, Cambridge University, identifying and comparing the psychological profiles of the UK's leading social entrepreneurs.

Michael Quicke (CEO, CCLA)

Michael Quicke joined CCLA in March 2006 and is the Chief Executive. Before joining the Company he was the Chief Executive of Leopold Joseph Holdings plc, the private banking and asset management group which was quoted on the London Stock Exchange. He is a Trustee of the National Trust and Chairman of its Audit Committee.

Lord Rennard (Chair, Commission on Big Society)

Chris Rennard is a Liberal Democrat member of the House of Lords. He was formerly Chief Executive of the Liberal Democrats, having held a variety of posts within the party over a period of nearly 30 years. He is also a trustee of the charity Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) and a member of the Advisory Board of the Magna Carta Institute Brunel University.

Srabani Sen (CEO, Contact a Family)

Srabani Sen is Chief Executive of Contact a Family. Previous roles include Chief Executive of the campaigning organisation Alcohol Concern, and Head of Communications and then Acting Director of Nations, Regions and Campaigning at Diabetes UK. She is also a trustee of the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO).

Jane Slowey CBE (CEO, Foyer Federation)

Jane Slowey is Chief Executive of the Foyer Federation, and chair of Skills – Third Sector. Previous roles include Vice Chair of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) between 2003 and 2008, CEO of Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC), Vice Chair of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, and as an elected member of Birmingham City Council she chaired the Community Affairs Committee and led work on devolution.

Dame Clare Tickell (CEO, Action for Children)

Clare Tickell is Chief Executive of Action for Children, a national children's charity, and a trustee of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). She has previously held many non-executive and advisory positions in the voluntary and housing sectors, as well as in the Social Exclusion Unit, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Department of Health and the Audit Commission. In 2010 she was appointed by Government to lead a review of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and reported in early 2011.

Ralph Michell (Secretary to the Commission)

Ralph Michell is Head of Policy at the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), where he leads ACEVO's work representing its members to Government and other stakeholders.

Adam Leach (Stakeholder Engagement for the Commission)

Adam Leach was formerly CEO of the International Business Leaders Forum, a not-for-profit organisation founded by HRH the Prince of Wales, working with business, governments and civil society to enhance the contribution that companies can make to sustainable development. Prior to this he was regional director at Oxfam, where he had overarching responsibility for Oxfam's work in Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

Over the course of January to April 2011, the Commission:

- held evidence-gathering roundtables across the English regions and in Scotland and Wales
- met collectively or individually with key stakeholders
- received written submissions from a variety of organisations
- undertook a poll of over 100 voluntary sector chief executives
- commissioned YouGov to undertake public polling

A list of organisations we spoke to or received submissions from is contained in Appendix B.

The results of the public polling undertaken by YouGov can be found in Appendix C.

The full results of the poll of voluntary sector chief executives can be found in Appendix D.

Appendix B

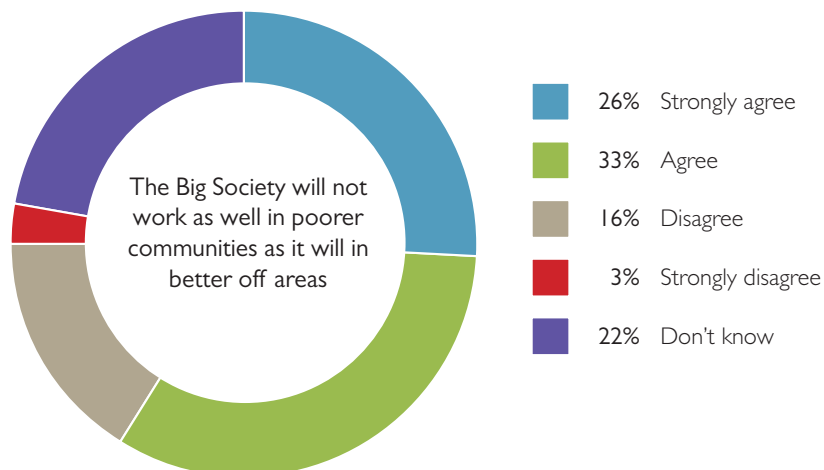
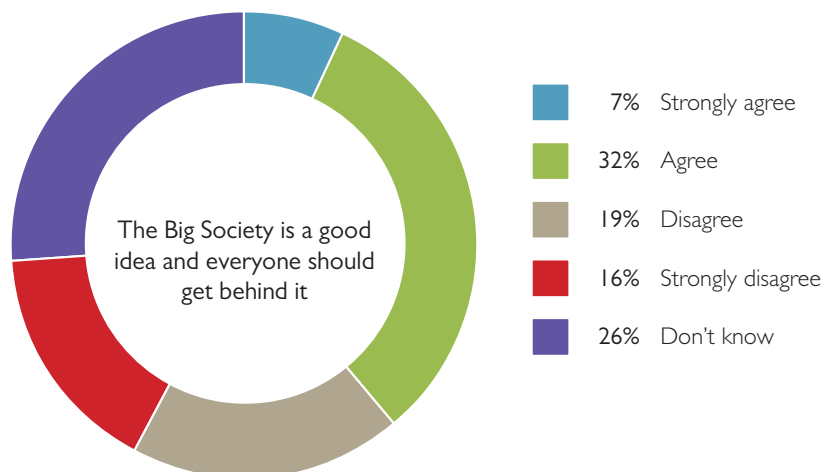
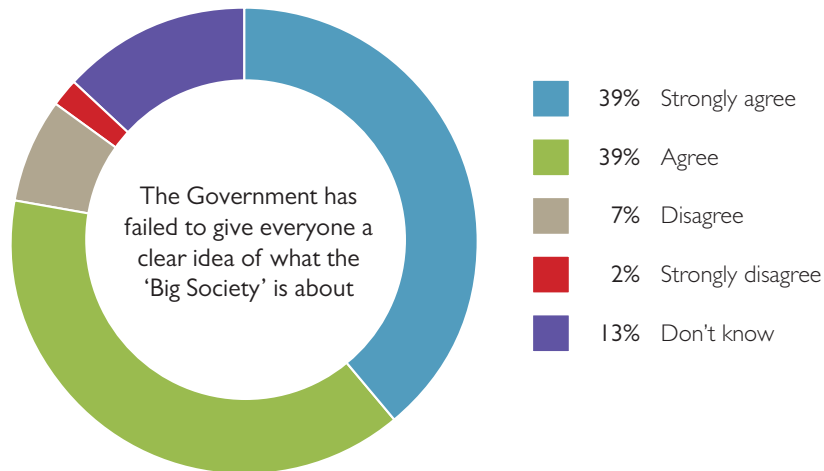
The organisations we spoke to

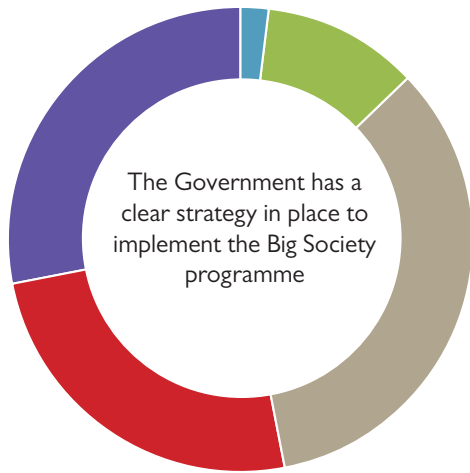
Accord Housing Group
Age Concern Neath Port Talbot
Aneurin Bevan NHS Trust
Association of Charitable Foundations (ACF)
Beating Bowel Cancer
Bell Pottinger
Big Society Network
BT
Business in the Community (BITC)
Cabinet Office
Careers Development Group
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing
Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)
Christie Commission
Church of England Archbishops' Council
Citizen's Advice Scotland
Community Accountancy Self Help
Community Foundation for Merseyside
Community Foundation for Merseyside
Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
Corporate Culture
Demos
Department for Communities and Local Government
Department of Health
Development Trust Association (now Locality)
Development Trust Association Scotland
Equality and Diversity Forum
Friends of the Elderly
Future Health and Social Care Association (CIC)
Grenfell Housing Association
Groundwork UK
Hays Wales
HW Controls and Assurance
Industry and Parliament Trust
Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr)
Institute of Directors (IoD)
Institute of Fundraising
Ipsos Mori
Jamie Oliver's companies
Lench's Trust
Local Government Association (LGA)
Local Solutions
Lord Wei
Mediation Works
Midland Heart
Mission Fish
NAVCA
NCVO
Netherton Feelgood Factory
PKF
Policy Network
PSS
Quarriers
Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS)
Reform
Rethink
Rotary International
Sandwell Council
Scottish Chief Medical Officer
Scottish Community Development Centre
Scottish Government
Scottish Refugee Council
SCVO
SIFA Fireside
Social Action Forum (Labour Party)
Social Enterprise London
St Barnabas Hospice Trust (Lincolnshire)
St Peters Partnerships
Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Highland Council
The Fire Fighters Charity
The Jan Foundation
The Lucy Faithful Foundation
The Philanthropy Review
The RSA
The Theatres Trust
The Wise Group
UnLtd
Urgent Care 24
Volunteering England

Appendix C

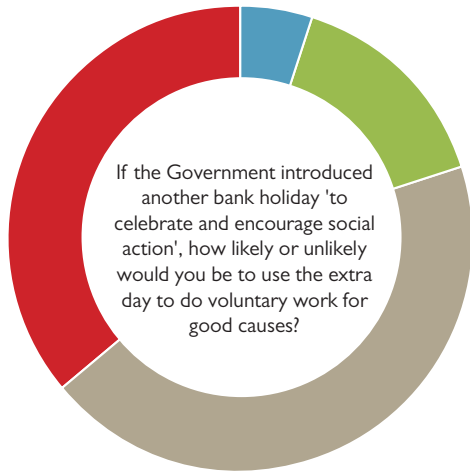
Public polling

In April 2011 we Commissioned YouGov to undertake a poll of a representative sample of just over 2,500 adults across the UK on their views relating to the Big Society. The results of this polling are shown below.

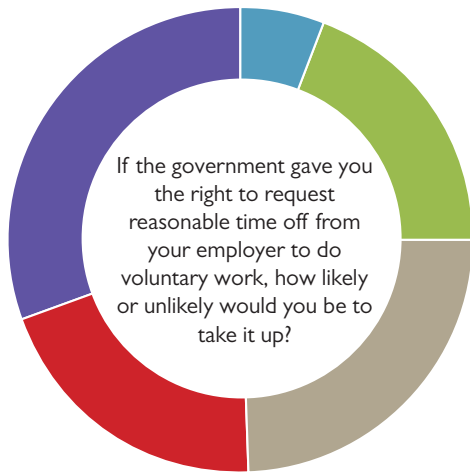




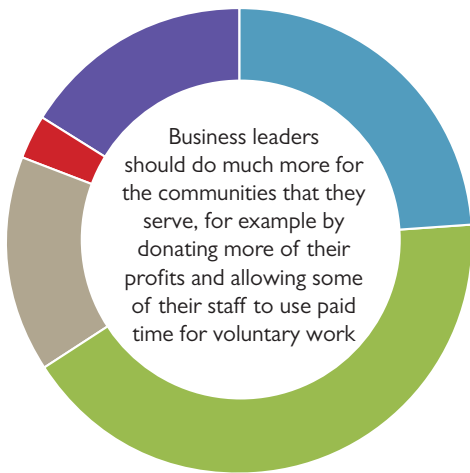
- 2% Strongly agree
- 11% Agree
- 34% Disagree
- 25% Strongly disagree
- 28% Don't know



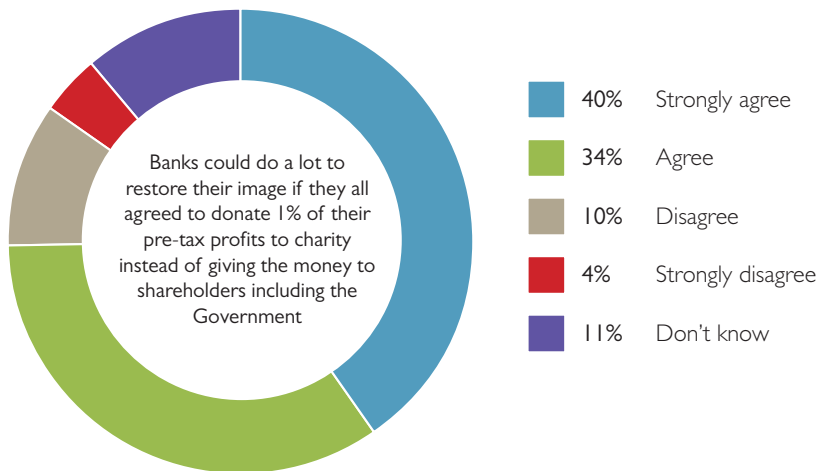
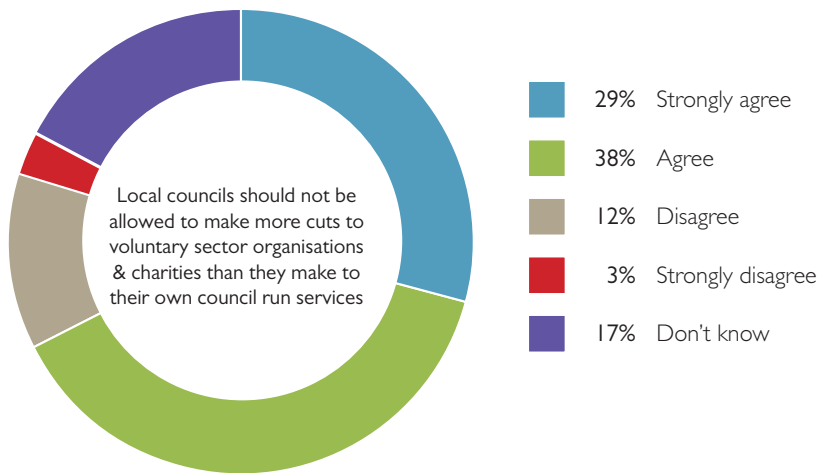
- 5% Very likely
- 15% Fairly likely
- 44% Not that likely
- 36% Not likely at all



- 6% Very likely
- 19% Fairly likely
- 24% Not that likely
- 20% Not likely at all
- 30% Not applicable, I don't have an employer



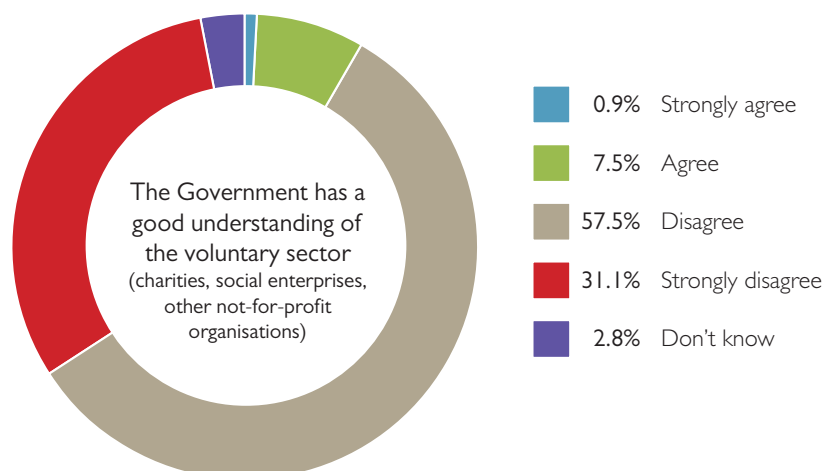
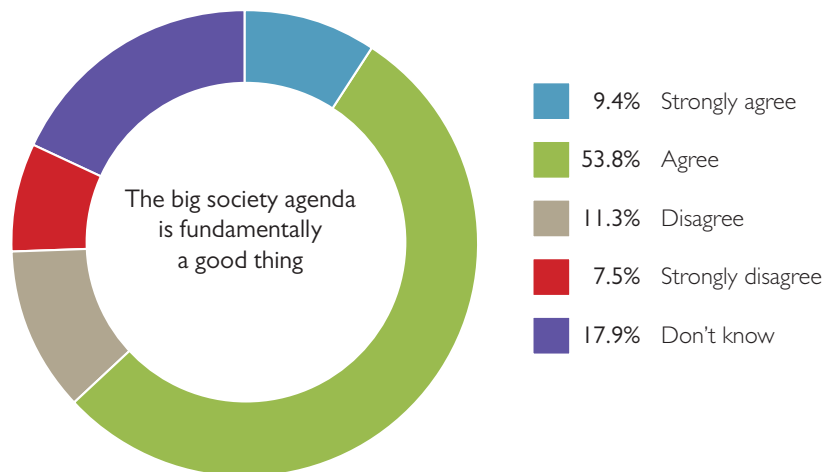
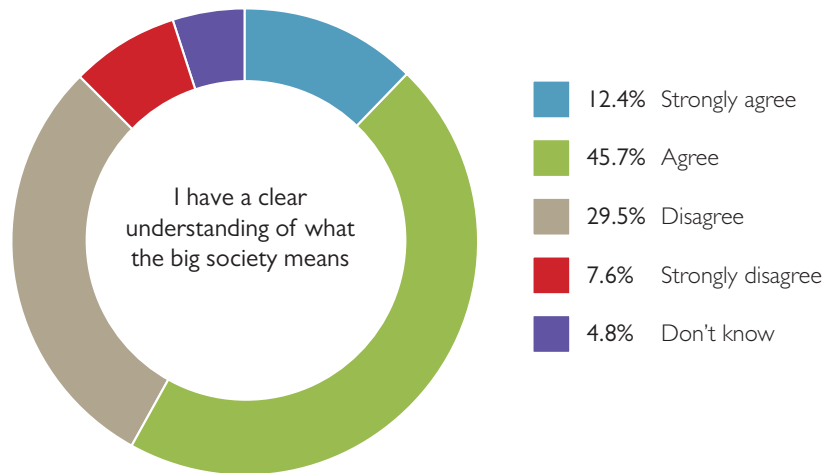
- 24% Strongly agree
- 42% Agree
- 15% Disagree
- 3% Strongly disagree
- 16% Don't know

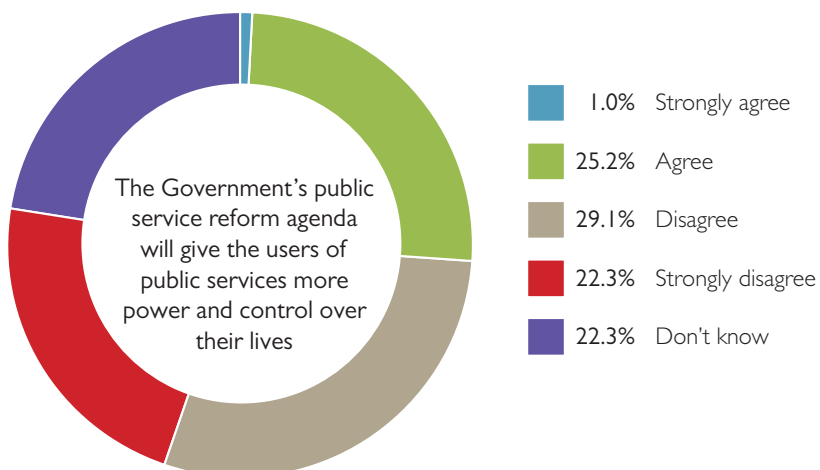
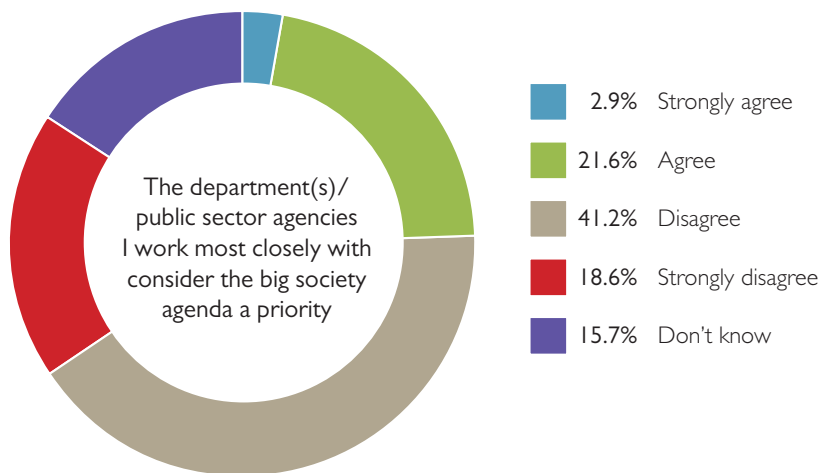
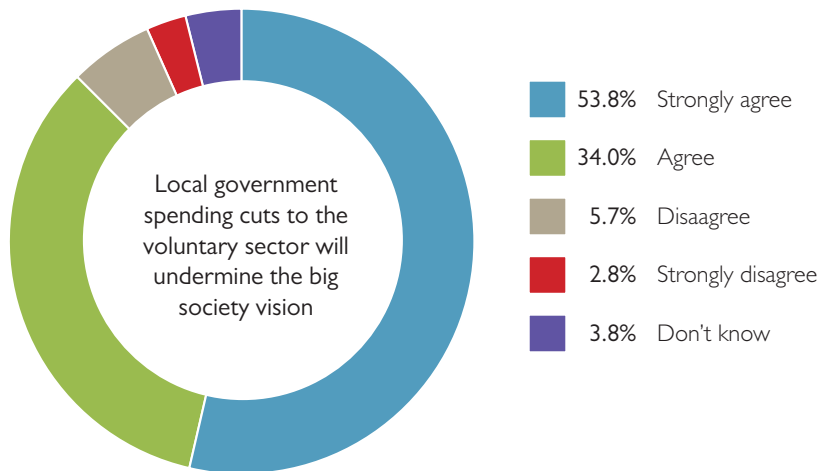
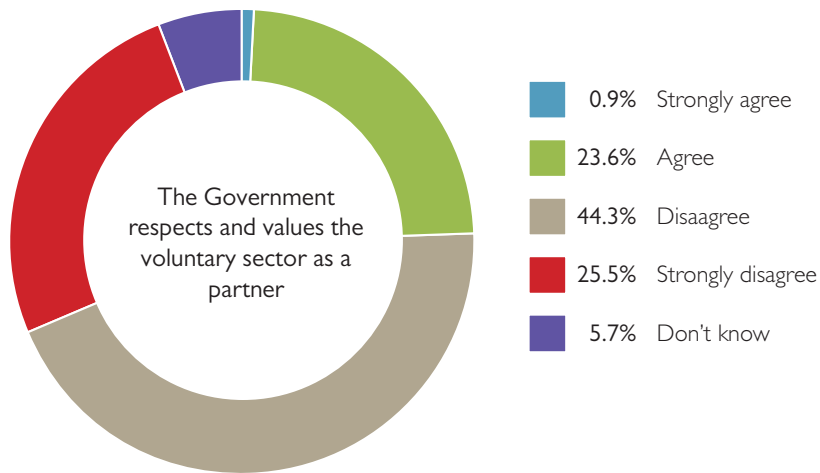


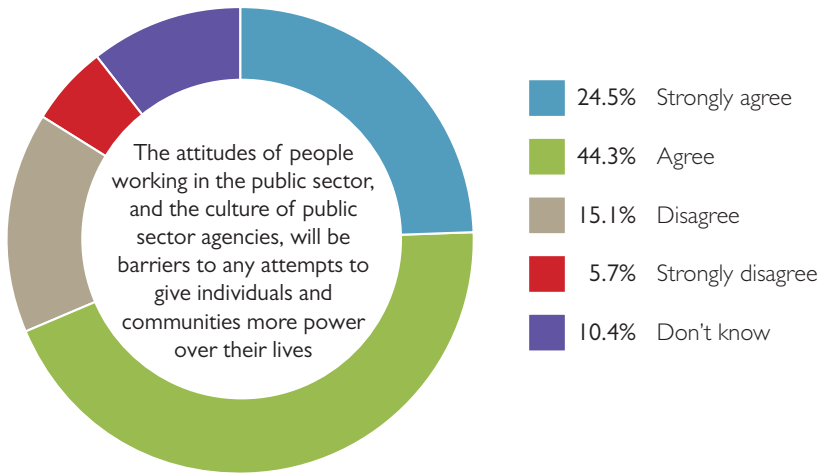
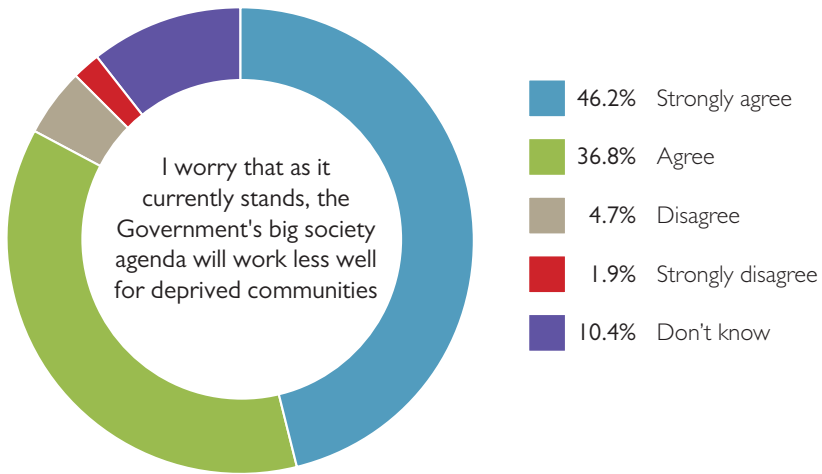
Appendix D

Poll of voluntary sector chief executives

In April 2011 we polled just over 100 ACEVO members (chief executives of charities, social enterprises and other voluntary organisations) on their views relating to the Big Society. The full results of that poll are below.







ACEVO is the professional body for third sector chief executives. We connect, develop, support and represent our members, to increase the sector's impact and efficiency.

We promote a modern, enterprising third sector, and call upon organisations to be:

- **Professional and passionate** in achieving change and delivering results
- **Well-led**, with a commitment to professional development, training and diversity
- **Well-governed and accountable**, with robust and fit-for-purpose systems to protect independence and enable effective decision-making
- **Enterprising and innovative**, taking an entrepreneurial approach to funding issues and striving for continuous improvement and sustainable development.

For more information, visit www.acevo.org.uk