

# Council on Social Action:

Commentary on year one



**COUNCIL ON**  
**SOCIAL**  
**ACTION**

## The Council on Social Action

David Robinson, Community Links  
Kay Allen, Royal Mail  
Oli Barrett, Connected Capital  
Shankari Chandran, Allen & Overy  
Olga Heaven, Hibiscus  
Geoff Mulgan, Young Foundation  
Julia Ogilvy, Project Scotland  
Rob Owen, St. Giles Trust  
Tim Smit, Eden Project  
Kevin Steele, Inspired Campaigns  
David Thomlinson, Accenture  
Sophi Tranchell, Divine Chocolate Ltd.  
Paul Twivy, Communications Consultant  
Julia Unwin, Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
Peter Wheeler, Investment and Philanthropy Specialist

## Ministers attending CoSA meetings

Rt. Hon Gordon Brown MP, the Prime Minister  
Phil Hope MP, Minister for the Third Sector (until October 2008)  
Rt. Hon Hazel Blears MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

## CoSA Support team

Radhika Bynon, on secondment from Tom Hood School, Waltham Forest (three days a week from March 2008)  
Rebecca Thorn, on secondment from Accenture (from July 2008)  
Farid Haque, on secondment from Accenture (from December 2007 to July 2008)  
Matthew Smerdon, 1 day a week on secondment from Links UK



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**CoSA paper number five CoSA Commentary**

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# Commentary on year one

## CoSA paper no. 5

The Council on Social Action was set up by the Prime Minister in 2007. It brings together innovators from every sector to generate ideas and initiatives through which government and other key stakeholders can catalyse, develop and celebrate social action. We consider “social action” to include the wide range of ways in which individuals, communities, organisations and businesses can seek through their choices, actions and commitments to address the social issues they care about.

The Prime Minister encouraged us to be bold. We have tried to learn from what has worked in the past and from what hasn't but to not be burdened by old certainties. Sustained progress depends on a positive response from those to whom our recommendations are directly addressed and from those who influence opinion, particularly in the media. We challenge you, as we are challenging ourselves, to be open-minded, and to be bold.

This report is about work in progress. CoSA will be sustaining its interest in one-to-one in the year ahead developing these ideas, supporting where we usefully can, commenting where we think we should and reporting again at the end.

The Council has a small support team equivalent to two full-time posts and 14 members – all extraordinary people with lots of ideas but very busy diaries. We are thus especially grateful to the senior civil servants, the many practitioners and to the corporate, public and third sector partners who have contributed generously and enthusiastically to the development of our thinking and to the swift progress of our practical collaborations in our first year.

This report is the work of the Council on Social Action, and as such it makes recommendations to government and to others in its capacity as an advisory body, independent of government. It is not a government document or a statement of government policy.

# Contents

## Commentary of year one

Our values	3
Introduction – the story so far	4
<b>1</b> Willing citizens	9
<b>2</b> Catalyst Awards	12
<b>3</b> Chain Reaction	17
<b>4</b> Social Impact Bond	21
<b>5</b> Side-by-side	27
<b>6</b> Collaborative Commitments	43

# Commentary on year one

## Our values

Values are the beginning, the means and the end: they inspire, they determine what we do and how we do it, and they are what we are trying to achieve. In the first phase we worked on the paper “Willing Citizens”. This set out the values that would drive our work:

**We all have power** There is a desire that this power should be used as a force for good in every part of our lives at home, at work and at play. The wellbeing of us all, our communities and our planet, is dependent on the aggregation of these individual, everyday behaviours. Together, through our actions, we have the power to change the world.

**We are all equal** There is a belief that the individual is the author of their own life and can and should rise as far as their talents can take them, but a recognition that we all need support at some time in our lives. With the right support and control of resources, everyone has the potential to achieve great things.

**We are all connected** The actions of each of us impact on the lives of others. Acknowledging this makes us tolerant and respectful of each other and recognise that we are more if we combine and collaborate than if we pursue me-first individualism. There is a sense of solidarity between each other across the world and between us and future generations.

**We all need to work together** Our democratic institutions will not, not their own, deliver the change we desire. Our public agencies such as schools or hospitals will not, on their own, create the world we want. Industry, business or the market will not, on their own, provide the means or the answers. Community organisations, social enterprises, trade unions or faith groups will not, on their own, save the world. But all of these are part of the response and unless we work together, we will not succeed.

**We must be guided by those who have least** People who experience a problem understand it best. Given the opportunity, the right space, an audience willing to listen, control over the right resources and networks, the solutions developed by those who currently have least can change the world.

**We are optimistic** We believe that we can succeed in the effort to ensure everyone shares in the good society.

We all need support at some time in our lives. With the right support and control of resources, everyone has the potential to achieve great things.

*Willing citizens;*  
people who choose to  
show concern for one  
another not because  
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because they *want* to.

## Introduction – The journey so far

On 24th July 2007, Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced the creation of the Council on Social Action (CoSA). At CoSA's first meeting in December 2007, he expressed his hope that CoSA would serve as a symbol of the power of ideas and play an important role in the effort to build the good society.

Nine months later, this publication sets out what CoSA has done since then. This is a commentary on the journey so far. It describes what has been a process of research and development as themes have been explored and action taken forward and as CoSA has learnt about how best to use its position to influence and encourage social action. This commentary provides summaries of the major areas of CoSA's work. The purposes of this are to report back to all those involved in the work about what has and has not been achieved so far, to engage a wider group in the issues and ideas being explored and, finally, to help us to take stock about what we are learning and how we will take the work forward next year.

Of course, some areas of work have progressed further than others. The summaries pay particular attention to the lessons and advice that this work is generating. They also give details of other papers, websites and organisations where areas of the work are discussed in greater detail.

## Willing citizens and the making of the good society

As CoSA began its work, we discussed a paper setting out the ideas that would underpin its efforts. This paper coined a new term to describe the people who drive the making of the good society. We called them *willing citizens*; people who choose to show concern for one another not because they *have* to but because they *want* to. Willing citizens create two powerful forces for good; the first is the individuals themselves, the people who bring the values set out at the beginning of this report to life; the second is a community of people who are prepared to demand and accept the need for bold action by the institutions that represent us in tackling the greatest problems that we face. CoSA asked itself two questions that have become themes at the centre of our work: how can we make more willing citizens; and how do we help existing willing citizens to feel and be more powerful?

## The role of technology, the Catalyst Awards

From the earliest moments in the discussions about CoSA, the role that technology can play in supporting and stimulating social action was an important part of our thinking. Therefore, one of CoSA's first initiatives was the launch of the Catalyst Awards, a scheme that celebrates the ways in which technology is being used to provide simple and effective solutions to make a difference to the lives of individuals and communities. The awards received over 100 entries and 25 high quality finalists. The winners are exemplary illustrations of how technology is changing lives. With the right support, many of their ideas could be scaled up throughout the country and even the world.

## The role of social leaders, Chain Reaction

We also began to think about the role of leadership in stimulating social action. Not leadership in traditional senses, but in the ways that are dispersed, collaborative, empowering and driven by the values underpinning our work; social leadership. Plans for an event to bring together social leaders from across the world in a part-festival, part-conference, part-new movement were announced by the PM at the same time as the Council. The result is Chain Reaction, a bold attempt to bring together 500 people from government, business and local communities not just to talk, but also to conceive, plan and commit to taking forward 25 new ideas for generating social change.

## Social Impact Bond, new models of financing social action

A widely recognised issue for government, at both national and local level, is the risk of spending money now to achieve potential savings in the future. At CoSA's launch, we brought together a group of City Leaders and received a challenge from the Prime Minister for us to explore alternative forms of financing social action, with a particular focus on cross-sector collaboration to fund prevention and early intervention. The result is the Social Impact Bond.

## Side-by-side, changing lives one human interaction at a time

At CoSA's first meeting in December 2007, the Prime Minister asked us to imagine a society where everyone feels they have someone they can turn to, a one-to-one relationship that is supportive and transformative. Responding to this challenge has formed the major part of our work. It has brought us into working together with many government departments and skilled practitioners in the field. We have been the catalyst for new relationships, identified policy and delivery options for government and put in motion a series of initiatives that we think will take this work forward in powerful ways.

## Collaborative Commitment, a new model for cross-sector working

Whilst considering ways of developing mass engagement for the Side by Side paper on one-to-one particularly within business, we found ourselves in the arena of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). We learnt about the many different partnerships evolving between businesses and charities and saw how more complex models of collaboration between private, public and third sector organisations are also emerging. In order to stimulate debate and develop this new collaborative approach to CSR, CoSA commissioned Prof David Grayson of the Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility to write a 'think piece' developing the concept of what we've called 'Collaborative Commitments'.

## Other impacts

As we have developed these strands, we have responded to invitations from two government departments and helped them to develop their thinking on major new initiatives. Firstly, we were consulted by the Department for Communities and Local Government on their 'Communities in control: Real people, real power' White Paper.

Imagine a society where everyone feels they have someone they can turn to, a one-to-one relationship that is supportive and transformative particularly throughout our childhood and thereafter at times of crisis or transition.

Community empowerment is needed to encompass participation in ‘civil’ as well as ‘civic’ society, with a vibrant and independent civil society being crucial to any effort to empower citizens.

In addition to a number of meetings with officials, CoSA invited Hazel Blears, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to join our meeting in June 2008 where she heard two principal messages from CoSA members. Firstly, that community empowerment needed to encompass participation in ‘civil’ as well as ‘civic’ society, with a vibrant and independent civil society being crucial to any effort to empower citizens. Secondly, that one-to-one approaches have a significant part in any effort to transform the power and influence of individuals and communities. CLG responded positively to both these contributions and they were reflected in the final text of the Paper. An unexpected but welcome consequence of this work was the Minister’s request to become a regular attendee of the Council.

Secondly, we have worked with the Department for Children Schools and Families on ‘MyPlace’, the £190m programme of government capital investment in local facilities for young people. We have explored how this capital programme could be delivered in a way that empowers people and sustains their activity in the long term.

### Points on the journey

CoSA has been supported with a grant from the Office of the Third Sector. This has enabled us to fund a small support team hosted by Links UK, the national team of Community Links. Accenture has also provided and funded a full time secondee. Together, this team of four people, equivalent to two full-time posts, has a big job and so we have depended on the willingness and generosity of social action practitioners, public servants, partners and other funders to take CoSA’s work forward. We are very grateful to you all.

This commentary has offered an opportunity to reflect on CoSA’s work so far. We feel in a unique position. We meet in Whitehall with the engagement of the Prime Minister and senior Ministers, but our members bring experience from across the sectors. Though specifically tasked to advise the Prime Minister and the government we recognise that social action by its very nature involves us all. Government alone cannot build and sustain supportive communities, though its role is fundamental. We have therefore endeavoured to progress our work through collaboration; catalysing new activity and sharing with government, and others, practical advice rooted in cross-sector experience.

We believe that social change begins with people making decisions about how to live their lives and working with others to challenge the forces that undermine the good society. This is a community development approach to social change.

We believe that social change begins with people making decisions about how to live their lives and working with others to challenge the forces that undermine the good society. This is a community development approach to social change. What we have endeavoured not to lose sight of is how to make this work deeply affect the structures that create and perpetuate the conditions that make our work necessary. We feel the tension between work that stimulates useful, but potentially marginal practical activity, and work that achieves a scale and sophistication that generates real structural change. Our work is continuing to evolve on that score. The ways we have chosen to pursue our purpose are not the only ways but have been pragmatic, given the life of the Council, the resources available and the desire to achieve practical change, not just produce policy papers.

In most areas of our work it is simply too early to draw wider conclusions about the process but we are clear about the challenges that we are addressing and the questions that we need to ask ourselves:

## How best can we make an impact?

Amongst CoSA's purpose to inspire, catalyse and celebrate, the role of catalyst has been perhaps the most prominent so far. Our work on one-to-one has been partly about, if not quite shuttle diplomacy, certainly match-making. For example, critical to securing significant support for one-to-one approaches is getting local public services commissioners to recognise how one-to-one can help to deliver mainstream objectives, from 'improved skills' to 'safer children.' The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation has been advocating this and has an important role to play. The Department for Communities and Local Government has come to recognise the value of one-to-one, most recently in the 'Communities in control' White Paper.<sup>1</sup> The Local Government Association also has an important role to play. But the three had never met to discuss it. CoSA convened a meeting which resulted in three actions in the one-to-one Action Plan.<sup>2</sup> And may well lead to more. Being able to bring these people together reflects the convening power of the Council. This is a feature that we feel has been instrumental in a four-month programme of work, delivered by two workers, resulting in 27 recommendations and a further 17 actions now underway.

Only one suggestion we have made to government has resulted in a clear 'No', and that is on benefit rules and full time volunteering. A record, so far, of 44/1 can be interpreted in two ways: Firstly we have made a compelling case on 44 actions and recommendations. Secondly, we have self censored or at least not stretched ourselves. There certainly has been no conscious effort on our part to do this – if we had, there would be no point in carrying on. However it does lead to the next question.

## Are we being challenging enough?

We could answer this in different ways. Firstly we could acknowledge that we have in some cases identified, and in some cases already achieved, some easy wins. By working consensually and pragmatically, we quickly saw some obvious things that could usefully be done but that were not happening already. It would have been obtuse to pass over these just for the thrill of more challenging battles. Secondly, we feel that, in fact, there are some very challenging proposals being generated by the work. The Social Impact Bond would be a revolution in models of financing social action. Lots more work needs to be done before we can know if this revolution will take place as well as on really delivering on all 44 of the actions and recommendations on one-to-one. And this leads to the next question:

## Are the people we are seeking to influence responding?

As we have said, on much of what has been done so far, it is simply too early to tell. If future progress is slow and small scale, there may be a number of reasons that we will have to address. Some ideas may have been bad ideas. Some may simply have not been pursued with much enthusiasm and will have withered on the vine. The rest may have been consciously rejected. The question to ask of the second and third of these will be 'why?' CoSA will be judged over its two year life span on its failures as much as its successes.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has come to recognise the value of one-to-one,

- 1 DCLG (2008) *Communities in Control: Real people, real power*. Cm7427. London: DCLG
- 2 CoSA (2008) *Side-by-side; a report setting out CoSA's work on one-to-one*. London: Community Links

As we begin to see actions generated out of our work, from supporting social uses of technology to working with a government department to support real progress on the one-to-one agenda, we feel confident that we have instigated changes that have the potential to grow to serious scale.

### Next steps

A network of contributors has gathered around the Council over the course of the first year. There is a convening power that flows from the engagement of the Prime Minister and we have been learning how best to harness this experience and expertise. In our second year the Council will be working strategically with more themed groups of thoughtful advisers tackling specific topics.

As we begin to see actions generated out of our work, from supporting social uses of technology to working with a government department to support real progress on the one-to-one agenda, we feel confident that we have instigated changes that have the potential to grow to serious scale. That is the aspiration for our second year and the basis on which we would expect to be judged.

Underpinning all this work is a fundamental realism and a strong sense of optimism. We all need help at some times in our lives. We all have a contribution to make. Each contribution is worthwhile in its own right. Collectively we build the case for wider change.

# 1 Willing citizens

As CoSA began its work, we produced a paper setting out the ideas that would underpin its efforts. The values set out at the start of this Commentary are derived from that paper. It coined a new term to describe the people who drive the making of the good society. We called them *willing citizens*; people who choose to show concern for one another not because they *have* to but because they *want* to. Willing citizens create two powerful forces for good; the first is people who live up to the values set out at the beginning of this report; the second is a community of people who are prepared to demand and accept the need for bold action by the institutions that represent us in tackling the greatest problems that we face. CoSA asked itself two questions that have become themes at the centre of our work: How can we make more willing citizens; and how do we help existing willing citizens to feel and be more powerful?

If you are concerned with social change then you may be driven by a sense of shame or anger at all that is bad in the world; talent wasted, aspirations unrealised, illness endured, inequality suffered and harm done. But, you may also draw confidence and a sense of optimism from the good that exists; people supporting one another, society finding solutions to problems, generosity and differences peacefully resolved.

For CoSA's first meeting, Links UK produced a paper called 'Willing citizens and the making of the good society.' This set out the ideas underpinning CoSA's work. In it, we argued that we believe in the existence of the good society but that it is not something that just happens. It has to be made and continually sustained. In this process, more people must be helped to share in the good society and we are optimistic that this can be achieved. This work begins with each of us as individuals taking two profoundly important steps; firstly, to decide that we want to help make the good society and, secondly, to believe that we can.

In order to understand how and why people make the decision to act for the good society, we have to explore the way people make choices about what they value, what they want to be part of and how they want to behave. This is about building an understanding of how identity is constructed. The identity we choose for ourselves defines the choices we make in every area of our lives. It determines what we feel part of, who we agree and disagree with, what messages and influences we give importance to, what we want to change, how we want to behave and what values we hold. Some people have one-dimensional and restricting identities thrust upon them by others. People can also hold many identities at once reflecting different aspects of their lives. But values, when they are deeply held, run through all these to create an intuitive sense of the life we want to lead. We saw that CoSA would need to understand these processes and influences that act on people and shape their values. In particular, what information and experiences do people

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The good society is made up of willing citizens: the school child who goes over to a new arrival to make them feel welcome; the woman who gives her time to mentor a new parent; the company chairman who ensures all his staff earn a living wage; the scientist who devotes her career to finding a cure; a nurse who spends time comforting the families of her patients; all those people doing the infinite number of things that can make other people's lives better.

need in order identify with the good society and play their part in making and sustaining it.

We also realised that we would have to explore how people can be empowered to play as effective a role as possible in making the good society. This is about power; economic power – access to and control over material resources; social power – access to knowledge, skills and partners for collaboration; political power – access to and influence over decision making; and psychological power – the self confidence and belief in one's own ability to bring about change. Perhaps the last of these is the most important. People who 'simply believe things could be better than they (are) and set about making them so.'<sup>3</sup>

The people who drive the effort to make the good society are *willing citizens*. These people choose to be part of a local and global community where people show concern for one another. They acknowledge the power of individuals and the value of collaborating to use this power for the collective good. They are 'willing' in the sense that they behave in this way not because they feel they *have* to, but because they *want* to. This is important because it gives their effort energy, creativity, confidence and the commitment to persevere. People choose to be willing citizens, not because they are forced from without, but because they are compelled from within.

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We think willing citizens are important because the idea creates two powerful forces for good. The first is people who, in their day to day relationships and their work, try to live up to the values expressed above. These are people who are prepared to reach beyond themselves to the lives of those around them, locally and globally, to respond to the needs of others and to take action on their own and in collaboration. The results of this work are substantial and useful, from the smallest acts of kindness to the greatest and most bold effort to change the world. But the process of doing this work is also valuable. Seeing your actions have a positive effect on other people raises your self esteem and it gives people the confidence and resilience they need to build their own ladder out of the problems they face.

The second force that willing citizens create is a community of people who are prepared to demand, and accept the need for, bold action by the institutions that represent us in tackling the evils we face. Willing citizens provide a platform for the policy interventions needed to encourage the good society. In this, government is seen as a progressive force, collecting resources and deploying them on our behalf and taking decisions, from universal health and education to urgent action against climate change, that result in the improvements to people's lives. But the levers of government are nothing without the consent of wider society and so the empowered willing citizen is the partner of the enabling state, not the alternative.

3 Brown G (2007) 'Britain's Everyday Heroes; the making of the good society.' Edinburgh: Mainstream.

In this, we argue that responsibility for making the good society does not lie in one place. As we set out in our statement of values, government, business, or civil society cannot do this alone. With continuing inequality and unmet needs, CoSA's task is to support the genuine participation of willing citizens in all these places in the process of making the good society. Its work must not be about what government or other major forces can do unto others but about what we as a society can do together.

CoSA realised that it was not enough to “preach to the choir”. To increase the level and extent of willing citizenship, we have to tackle the following big questions. How can we make more willing citizens? And how can we make the millions of existing willing citizens more powerful? Answering these two questions have become themes at the centre of our work. In this, CoSA requires an approach that recognises the skills and contributions of public, private and voluntary sectors but also their limits. Pursuing this is certainly not the sole responsibility of individuals on their own, nor of one of the sectors, as they are defined. CoSA realised that its work programme would have to encompass action across all these areas.

We believe that willing citizens are the energy that drives the making of the good society. We want to help make the good society and we believe that we can.

## ■ Signposts

This section is a summary of a longer paper called ‘Willing citizens; the making of the good society.’ CoSA Paper No.1. London: Links UK. Available from the CoSA webpage: [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social\\_action.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_action.aspx)

Responsibility for making the good society does not lie in one place. As we set out in our statement of values, government, business, or civil society cannot do this alone.

## 2 Catalyst Awards

From the earliest moments in the discussions about CoSA, the role that technology can play in supporting and stimulating social action was an important part of our thinking. Therefore, one of CoSA's first initiatives was the launch of the Catalyst Awards, a scheme that celebrates the ways in which technology is being used to provide simple and effective solutions to make a difference to the lives of individuals and communities. The awards received over 100 entries and 25 high quality finalists. The winners are exemplary illustrations of how technology is changing lives. With the right support, many of their ideas could be scaled up throughout the country and even the world.

### CoSA is working with:

Make Your Mark, Colman Getty, National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (NESTA), Polecat, UnLtd, the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulation Reform and the Office of the Third Sector.

The Awards unearthed and profiled hundreds of inspiring stories that demonstrate how this technology is enabling people to connect with each other for social good.

We can now communicate with more people, more quickly, in more ways than ever before. Our ability to use this technology to improve and develop human relationships is one of the defining challenges of our time.

The Catalyst Awards were set up to recognise enterprising uses of social technology for social and community benefit, especially using the internet and mobile phones. We could see that there already existed a host of individuals and groups pioneering this work and that, with support, a new movement could be born. The Awards unearthed and profiled hundreds of inspiring stories that demonstrate how this technology is enabling people to connect with each other for social good. By celebrating positive examples, we hope that the Catalyst Awards will inspire more. By giving success stories a media profile, we can help these pioneers to attract the attention and funds they require to grow. Finally, we hope others will be encouraged to adapt existing applications towards a pro-social focus.

The Awards have involved many different communities including leading third sector players and activists, digital and physical grass-roots communities, social technology providers (internet, mobile and platforms) and both mainstream and digital media.

The Awards were structured as two separate but related phases:

Firstly, a call for “existing examples” of social technology being used in an enterprising way to deliver social and community benefit across a number of different categories. These had to be able to prove their current use and impact. The winners of these awards were announced in July 2008 by the Prime Minister.

The plan for the second phase is to develop a programme that offers more sustained support and opportunities. Catalyst 2.0 will be launched at Chain Reaction, during Global Entrepreneurship Week in November 2008.

The first phase of the awards received 115 entries and there was very positive feedback from judges on the quality of the 25 shortlisted entries some of which was captured on video (see the end of this section for details). The National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (NESTA), one of the Catalyst sponsors, was so impressed by the shortlisted projects that they offered three of them significant (£10k+) additional funding and support.

### The winners of the Catalyst Awards for existing examples of pioneering social technology were:

**Wheelies** – The Revolutionary Award for something that makes people in power more aware of the need for change.  
[www.youtube.com/watch](http://www.youtube.com/watch)

This is the world's first virtual disability nightclub. Founded in 2006, Wheelies has supported over 5,000 people in over 30 countries and its membership continues to grow.

**The School of Everything** – The Self-Help Award for something that helps people to help themselves. [www.schoolofeverything.com](http://www.schoolofeverything.com)

The School of Everything matches up would-be learners and would-be teachers, unleashing unused skills in local neighbourhoods. From active retired people, to teenage whiz-kids, there are people who could gain satisfaction, confidence (and in some cases a new career) from passing on what they know.

**FreqOUT** – The Chalk and Cheese Award for something that brings two different groups of people together.  
[www.vitalregeneration.org.uk/freqout](http://www.vitalregeneration.org.uk/freqout)

Harnessing Westminster Council's own wifi, FreqOUT engages socially excluded young people in a programme of wireless arts and education projects. So far 358 young people with multiple barriers to learning have used technologies such as mobiles, bluetooth and mini radios to discuss and create responses to current issues.

**Liftshare.com** – The David and Goliath Award for something little that makes a difference to something big and powerful

Liftshare.com is an online car-sharing solution for councils, businesses, hospitals and community groups across the UK. Since October 2001, Liftshare has provided over 1,180 car-sharing schemes and recruited more than 235,000 members, cutting congestion and CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, bringing people together and saving the average car-sharing commuter around £1,000 a year.

**Helen Anderson, South Witham Broadband Ltd** – The Individual Hero Award

South Witham Broadband Ltd. Is a not-for-profit company that provides broadband internet and wifi for South Witham, Lincolnshire and surrounding villages. It was set up in 2004 after the large

internet suppliers decided that it was not worth the investment to provide these villages with broadband internet. The residents disagreed and decided to do it themselves.

**Savvy Chavvy** – The Community Award for a community group or association [www.SavvyChavvy.com](http://www.SavvyChavvy.com)

Savvy Chavvy (Chavvy being the old Romany word for ‘youth’) is a social networking site administered by its users where young gypsy travellers can network, blog and share media such as podcasts and video content amongst their peers. Savvy Chavvy now has 1,250 members that gives a voice to young travellers to help to change how their community is perceived.

**Slivers of Time** – The Enterprise Award for an innovative new technology solution developed by a business. [www.SliversofTime.com](http://www.SliversofTime.com)

Slivers of Time is a new form of web-based employment allowing people to find bits of work which they can do in between unpredictable commitments in their life. After registering you choose the hours you are available to work and your hourly rate. Employers then log on and select staff according to their needs. So far, over 650 people have worked the Slivers-of-Time way, and many have found a job as a direct result.

**The Freeconomy Community** – The People’s Choice Award for the best idea, as voted by the public. [www.justfortheLoveofit.org](http://www.justfortheLoveofit.org)

The Freeconomy Community is a skill, tool, space and land sharing website to build closer, stronger communities through the power of sharing. It has close to 7,000 members and there are over 174,000 skills offered and over 29,000 tools on the site. No money changes hands for this skills exchange as people share simply for the love of it. Nearly 3,500 online votes were cast for this award.

The plan for Catalyst phase two is to create something that offers more sustained support and opportunities to projects than is possible with the simple competition format. The aspiration is to turn the buzz from the competition in to sustainable structures.

On 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008, the Prime Minister led a high-profile awards ceremony along with John Hutton, Secretary of State for Enterprise and Phil Hope, Minister for the Third Sector. Press coverage of the award winners was very positive and widespread. A commitment to mentor the winners was secured from some prominent digital entrepreneurs including Michael Smith of social gaming company, Mind Candy and Sháá Wasmund of Smarta.

The plan for Catalyst phase two is to create something that offers more sustained support and opportunities to projects than is possible with the simple competition format. The aspiration is to turn the buzz from the competition in to sustainable structures. Catalyst 2.0 will therefore be aiming to strengthen the pathways for projects to further support such as funding, mentoring and contracts. The current stakeholders (funding bodies & government departments) are well placed to help in this respect.

Catalyst 2.0 will also seek to develop the potential for mutual aid and support among the Catalyst community. Whenever the short-listed projects came together there was an immediate buzz. Although

they are not working on the same social issues, they recognise some commonality and were keen to share experiences and even to form partnerships. There is also a wider community of peer support in the UK digital scene and in the social media space. Make Your Mark has made a start by setting up a group in UnLtd World (the social network for social entrepreneurs) to act as a focal point.

Judging from the first round of the Awards, our sense that some kind of movement is developing around the enterprising use of social media for social good was justified. Catalyst 2.0 is well-placed to bring together initiatives like Social Innovation Camp, geekyoto, 2gethero8 and Channel 4's 4IP, to develop an ecology of support for these new forms of community action. The Chain Reaction festival (see section three) offers an ideal springboard for the public launch of Catalyst 2.0.

To provide effective support to social start-ups like those that entered the first Catalyst Awards, Catalyst 2.0 will need to be agile and embedded within the social media / enterprise space.

### Lessons, questions and next steps

- One of the Catalyst Awards short-listed projects is now struggling to continue because support has been slow to materialise, despite having had a lot of interest from government departments and others. We propose that government should fund a similar model to Seedcamp which provides seed investment and, critically, three months of intensive mentoring and support to early stage social technology start-ups, on the basis of a competitive call for entries. A Catalyst Seedcamp for social innovation would provide an arms length entity for government and stakeholders like NESTA to fund, while drawing on the in-field expertise of other social technology entrepreneurs.
- Government can usefully support this by seeing supporting social technology as going way beyond simply being one aspect of its charitable support. Social technology is a route to help government do all the things it wants to do, from community empowerment to crime reduction; climate change to tackling unemployment.
- Social technology pioneers face problems common to other entrepreneurs such as access to networks and markets, development funding and hands-on support. Technology firms need to recognise that social technology is a product with great potential and back existing initiatives so that they can achieve real scale.
- The media played a big role in promoting the Catalyst Awards. The technology is fashionable. This provides opportunities for working with the media to promote this work.
- It is important to note that the technology being used here is not necessarily cutting edge. It is largely the application of existing technology in new and interesting ways. Third sector organisations should think more widely and creatively about how technology can be used to help deliver their purposes. This is an issue of making organisations aware of the potential offered by technology. What are there partnerships that could support this work?

It is important to note that the technology being used here is not necessarily cutting edge. It is largely the application of existing technology in new and interesting ways. Third sector organisations should think more widely and creatively about how technology can be used to help deliver their purposes.

## ■ Signposts

As befitting an initiative focused on the role of technology, there are rather a lot of websites you can go to for more information about the organisations and ideas mentioned in this section:

[www.ukCatalystawards.com](http://www.ukCatalystawards.com)

[www.2gethero8.com/2008/06/09/the-Catalyst-awards-unexpected-community-innovation](http://www.2gethero8.com/2008/06/09/the-Catalyst-awards-unexpected-community-innovation)

[www.youtube.com/Catalystawards](http://www.youtube.com/Catalystawards)

[www.sicamp.org](http://www.sicamp.org)

[www.geekyoto.com](http://www.geekyoto.com)

[www.4ip.org.uk](http://www.4ip.org.uk)

[www.seedcamp.com](http://www.seedcamp.com)

[www.youtube.com/makeyourmarkcampaign](http://www.youtube.com/makeyourmarkcampaign)

# 3 Chain Reaction

Early on in CoSA's life, we also began to think about the role of leadership in stimulating social action. Not leadership in traditional senses, but in ways that are dispersed, collaborative, empowering and driven by the values underpinning our work; social leadership. Plans for an event to bring together social leaders from across the world in a part-festival, part-conference, part-new movement had been announced by the PM at the same time as the Council. The result is Chain Reaction, a bold attempt to bring together 500 people from government, business and local communities not just to talk, but also to conceive, plan and commit to taking forward new ideas for generating social change.

## CoSA is working with:

Community Links, Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department of Energy and Climate Change, Department for International Development, Office of the Third Sector, bassac, Beacon Fellowship, Make Your Mark, NCVO, Accenture, Allen & Overy, Business in the Community, Constellation, Global Entrepreneurship Week, Google, Heart of the City, iPhelion, Parity, Serenity IT Ltd, IBM, Triodos Bank, Prospectus and Virgin Atlantic.

In every community around the world, there are individuals and groups of people saying “we can build a better world.” They are shaping new ways of living and working and are inspiring others through their ideas and actions. There are many models of leadership, but we think the social leadership practiced by willing citizens in local communities, in government and in business is the key to tackling successfully the global challenges we face.

Therefore, on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2007, at the launch of CoSA, the Prime Minister announced:

*“we will support the development of an annual global forum on social leadership which will meet each year to inspire debate, forge links between activists and stimulate the pursuit of social change.”*

The first step in this development is the Chain Reaction event on the 17th and 18th November 2008 on London's South Bank. The event brings together 500 social leaders from the UK and beyond. One hundred places at the event are reserved for young people. Crucially, all these social leaders are drawn not just from government, from business or the community, but from all three. The purpose of this combination is threefold:

- **To connect:** We are all connected and the actions of each of us impact on the lives of others. Chain Reaction brings people together in unexpected groups – world leaders with children, business leaders with micro enterprises – to share learning about how social leaders use their individual and collective actions to build a better world.

We think the social leadership practiced by willing citizens in local communities, in government and in business is the key to tackling successfully the global challenges we face.

Every single one of us has the power of our own actions, from choosing to be a mentor through to ethical purchasing, from supporting neighbours to recycling rubbish, our individual actions shape and change lives across the world. When our individual actions are multiplied by those millions of others, in communities, in government and in business, they become a driving force for change.

- **To collaborate:** none of us on our own can create social change, not governments, not business, not communities. We succeed when we work together. By identifying common issues and challenging received wisdom, Chain Reaction will catalyse new collaborations, actions and networks.
- **To commit:** the event will result in practical ideas for the development of social action which have secured commitment from participants to take forward.

### What is social leadership?

A definition of social leadership might build on the following:

- Dispersed or distributed leadership – this recognises that there are leaders everywhere.  
*‘Leaders reside in every city and every country, in every position and every place. They are employees and volunteers, young and old, women and men. Leadership knows no racial or religious bounds, no ethnic or cultural borders. We find exemplary leadership everywhere.’<sup>4</sup>*
- Empowering leadership – this is participative, diverse and enabling, recognising the strengths that are already there and building confidence in others to take on leadership roles.  
*‘The resource of the many, rather than the gift of the few.’<sup>5</sup>*
- Collaborative leadership – this is leadership shown by a group that is acting together to solve complex issues, ensuring that all people affected by the decision are part of the change process. This:  
*‘requires a new notion of power...the more power we share, the more power we have to use.’<sup>6</sup>*
- Value driven leadership – this is based on and driven by shared values. Our values help us to navigate through complex issues. It is the practical demonstration of living your values that provides leaders with the legitimacy and their confidence.  
*‘Values are not a touchy feely extra adorning the Annual Report... rarely intruding on the real business of day-to-day management. They are at the heart of every successful organisation, in the heart of every successful leader’<sup>7</sup>*

We propose that ‘social leadership’ therefore needs to be dispersed, empowering, collaborative and driven by shared values. Social leadership also challenges the idea that leadership solely resides in those in positions of the greatest influence. It is about recognising our own power. The Prime Minister has the power of positional leadership. But every single one of us has the power of our own actions, from choosing to be a mentor through to ethical purchasing, from supporting neighbours to recycling rubbish, our individual actions shape and change lives across the world. When our individual actions are multiplied by those millions of others, in communities, in government and in business, they become a driving force for change.

Chain Reaction will result in new ideas for social change which participants, at the event or virtually via the website, will commit to taking forward.

4 Kouzes J and Posner B (2003) *The Leadership Challenge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

5 bassac (2007) *Leadership in Communities; and empowering approach*. London: bassac

6 [www.collaborativeleadership.org](http://www.collaborativeleadership.org)

7 Blake G *et al* (2006) *Living Values: a report encouraging boldness in third sector organisations*. London: Community Links.

Our vision is to create an event that, one day, will capture the best of the international summits, conferences, fora and festivals already happening: from the profile and sophistication of the Davos World Economic Forum to the celebration and inspiration of the Hay Festival; from the energy and commitment of the World Social Forum to the sheer scale of the global internet network Avaaz.org. All this with the aim of harnessing the creativity and commitment of people who acknowledge that now, at this moment, we need to make **real** changes to the way we live.

The programme in November 2008 will focus on themes such as the potential of new technologies, the power of sports and arts as tools for transforming communities, and the experiences and contributions of young people. Practical workshops will explore issues such as financing, communicating and the 'scaling up' of ideas. The launch of Global Entrepreneurship Week with an interactive debate stimulating discussion across a global audience will be a highlight of the first day, and the Beacon Fellowship Awards Dinner will round off the second.

Alongside senior Cabinet Ministers, the contributors will include boundary crossers like Dr Victoria Hale, founder of the world's first non-profit pharmaceutical company and Rachel Lomax, formerly permanent secretary of two government departments and now deputy governor at the Bank of England. Bernard Horn, Chair of Social Finance, and Sue Cooper, Deputy Head of Business Banking, Triodos Bank will be applying their experience to the financing of social change, Mark Thompson Director General of the BBC will tackle the contribution of the media and Professor David Grayson from Cranfield University will be launching new work commissioned for this event on cross-sector collaboration. Richard Branson will be joining us via a video link. Other business leaders like Royal Mail CEO Adam Crozier and Accenture Managing Director David Thomlinson will be with us in the flesh. Leaders on the role of education in social change – such as Hetan Shah, Chief Executive, Development Education Association – will share their learning. America's Nipun Mehta, the creator of Charity Focus and Comic Relief founder Jane Tewson, now doing ground breaking work in Australia, will challenge and inspire us and angry alchemists like John Bird (Big Issue) and Tim Smit (Eden Project) will be reminding us that some things are hard but nothing is impossible.

We need to be clear about how our lives are connected to everyone else and how we can use those connections in positive ways. Chain Reaction aims to capitalise on people's thirst for change and show that it is not governments, or business or community organisations that will drive that change, it is all of us working together. Leadership is a collective enterprise.

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### Lessons, questions and next steps

- The future belongs to those who collaborate. It has been relatively easy to attract third sector participants to this event but we need to think beyond these rigid sector boundaries. The long term success of this event will come from going beyond the silo mind-set.
- It is important that there are spaces, real and virtual, in which potential collaborators can meet. If we each stay in our own worlds, we miss the opportunity.

The next step is for as many people as possible is to join us at Chain Reaction to connect, collaborate and commit to new social action. People can do this at the event, via the internet or by signing up to the actions that are generated.

■ **Signposts**

[www.chain-reaction.org](http://www.chain-reaction.org)

# 4 Social Impact Bond

A widely recognised issue for government, at both national and local level, is the risk of spending money now to achieve potential savings in the future. The Prime Minister challenged CoSA to explore alternative forms of financing social action, with a particular focus on cross-sector collaboration to fund prevention and early intervention. The result is the Social Impact Bond.

## CoSA is working with:

Social Finance, Frontier Economics, Lionshead Capital Partners and Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts

## Social Impact Bond

St Giles Trust works to reduce crime and social exclusion. The organisation believes that the people it helps can be part of the solution to crime and offending. One of the organisation's trained ex-service users has a client group of 50 young gang members in HMP Rochester. These are 'hardened' gang members who have a string of offences and they collectively cost society a great deal.

The St. Giles worker patiently develops relationships with his clients whilst they are still in prison. When they leave prison, he works intensively with them, helping them to settle back into society, sever their ties with previous bad associations, find accommodation and get into education, training or employment. The usual re-offending rate for this group is 70–75%. The re-offending rate for the St. Giles Trust group is 10%.

According to the Social Exclusion Unit every re-offender costs the state a minimum of £143,000 a year, not including the costs to the victims of their crimes<sup>8</sup> So for a group of 50 gang members if 38 (75%) of them will re-offend, this will cost the state 38 times £143,000 or £5,434,000.

With St. Giles Trust's intervention, only five will re-offend, saving society a remarkable £4,719,000. The worker costs St. Giles Trust £49,000 and the organisation believes this work could be delivered on much wider scale. As you could say, it's a no-brainer.

The fact that more public resources are not currently invested in prevention and early intervention results, to a large extent, from two characteristics of government:

- The constraints of budget structures and the need to allocate spending to meet present financial needs mean that we see government struggling in some policy areas with the investment necessary to achieve savings and social impact in the future; and
- In some instances, the perceived risks for government of adopting new initiatives, such as negative media coverage and the perceived

The Social Impact Bond will allow social investment to take place on the basis that government will pay out in the future only for social outcomes that are achieved.

8 Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *Reducing Re-offending by ex-Prisoners*. London: Social Exclusion Unit

waste of public funds, outweigh the rewards for success, making risk-taking and innovation challenging

In 2007, the Prime Minister challenged CoSA to explore alternative forms of financing for social action with a particular focus on the potential for cross-sector collaboration to fund prevention and early intervention. In the current economic climate it is vital that public funds are used effectively to achieve the maximum benefit. Following a series of meetings with colleagues from across Whitehall, the third sector and the City, further work is now being taken forward by Social Finance in partnership with a range of economists and investment bankers. Social Finance aims to transform the ability of the third sector to respond to society's changing needs by enabling greater access to a variety of finance and investment.

This group is developing an outcomes-led financing model, the Social Impact Bond (SIB), to allow social investment to take place now on the basis that government will pay out in the future only for social outcomes that are achieved. The SIB will be applicable to a range of social arenas and enables:

- Increased funding for prevention and early intervention around entrenched social problems;
- Increased sustainability and responsiveness of third sector service providers through a rational revenue and investment framework; and
- Social investment, through such mechanisms, to become a new investment asset class over time.

The SIB could have a significant impact on the future financing of social interventions as it provides both a route for effective interaction between government and non-government funding and a rational framework in which investment, and thus innovation and growth, can take place. It could also play a fundamental role in transforming the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the social sector in the UK.

### How SIBs would work

Each SIB would be structured around a set of well-defined outcomes in a clearly specified intervention area (e.g. youth offending, teenage pregnancy, young people not in education, employment or training). Appropriate outcomes and success metrics would be negotiated and agreed between government and knowledgeable Social Investment Intermediaries (SII) – in the first instance an SII may be a collaboration of foundations and grant-making trusts with experience in addressing the target outcomes.

Having established the terms of the bond, the SII could then seek investment from socially-oriented investors that have an interest in ensuring the defined outcomes. These investors are asked to take all the risk that the interventions lead to the target outcomes, but know that, in the event that the interventions are successful, they will make a return on their investment.

Reflecting their pioneering status, it is likely that early bonds would be financed by sophisticated institutions that are driven by the potential social impact as well as being better able to quantify the risks of the transaction. Early investors are expected to include:

The SIB could have a significant impact on the future financing of social interventions as it provides both a route for effective interaction between government and non-government funding and a rational framework in which investment, and thus innovation and growth, can take place.

- Foundations that presently make grants to address the issues concerned, but are frustrated at a lack of well-defined engagement with government; and
- Social investors with a specific sector interest, or who could be engaged by the investment intermediary.

Bond payment from government to the SII would be on a sliding scale, typically with the status quo paying nothing, increasing linearly to a maximum payment at 100% success. This avoids the perverse incentives that can be created with a stepped approach. Once a track record in such instruments is established, a social investment market of intermediaries with a broader range of investors is expected to evolve. There is real potential for the development of retail social investment using SIBs.

To suit this approach, potential applications need to have:

- *Well-defined metrics*: the outcome measure needs to be clearly achieved or not achieved based on objective criteria;
- *Clear target group*: the group who are being targeted needs to be sufficiently clear to enable objective measurement of success;
- *Reasonable payment period*: the gap between intervention and the measurement of outcomes should not be too long both to attract investors and to ensure a link between intervention and result;
- *Stable intervention environment*: other factors that could significantly affect the desired outcomes (e.g. demographics), are expected to stay relatively stable over the intervention period.

Due to the novelty of the mechanism, there is considerable value to piloting it in more than one social arena. The development group is currently investigating the feasibility of pilot SIBs in the following areas:

### **NEETs (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training)**

The Department for Children, School and Families and a grant-making foundation focussed in this area have expressed a strong interest in exploring whether this mechanism could be used to reduce the under-18 NEET rate in local authorities with a particular problem. Initial analysis indicates that this offers great potential for a successful pilot in an area of considerable social need.

### **Youth Offending**

Conversations with a range of stakeholders, from grant-making foundations to government and research organisations, have indicated that one of the highest impact points of intervention is between a young person's first caution and their first conviction, at which point they become properly entangled in the criminal justice system. We presently anticipate that a youth offending pilot may aim to reduce the number of under-21 year olds, in specified local authorities, progressing from first caution to conviction relative to agreed baselines. A grant-making foundation has agreed to fund initial development work in this area and others have expressed interest in investing in the resulting SIB.

Once a track record in such instruments is established, a social investment market of intermediaries with a broader range of investors is expected to evolve. There is real potential for the development of retail social investment using SIBs.

### Young NEETs Social Impact Bond

- Government is aiming to reduce the number of 16-18 year old NEETs (young people that are not in education, employment or training) from 10% in 2004 to 8% in 2010.
- At the end of 2007, the national average rate had fallen slightly to 9.4%, but some local authorities, 'NEET hotspots', still had NEET rates in excess of 15%, though 2008 rates are looking more positive.
- Social Finance is developing a social impact bond (SIB) to reduce these hotspot NEET rates by supporting these young people back into education, employment or training.
- For example, a local authority with 300 17 year old NEETs might agree to pay the social investment intermediary (SII) a reward for every individual they manage to move into education, employment and training for a defined period of time.
- They may agree to increase the reward payment for each individual in proportion to the length of time each ex-NEET remains in education, employment or training (e.g. the reward would be lower for an ex-NEET that stayed on a course for six months, than if they were still studying or in employment after two years).
- The more NEETs the SII manages to get into and keep in education, employment or training, the greater the reward from the local authority will be 12, 24 and 36 months later.
- On the basis of this funding agreement with the local authority, the SII can then raise investment from socially-motivated trusts and individuals.
- This investment would be used to pay for and scale-up a range of services, additional to those currently provided, to reduce the NEET rate from 300 young people. These services are most likely to be delivered by third sector organisations.
- If, after the agreed period of time, all 300 individuals are still NEET government would pay nothing – the investors bear the full risk of failure.
- If, on the other hand, many are now ex-NEETs government would pay the SII according to the agreed payment schedule confident in the knowledge that money it would otherwise have had to spend dealing with the consequences of a NEET population – e.g. higher offending rates, substance abuse, teen pregnancy – has been saved.

## Lessons, questions and next steps

- Government should be encouraged to consider the value of specific social outcomes, in terms of their current costs and hence their potential future savings, when considering appropriate reward levels for outcome-based funding.
- If outcome-based reward levels are sufficiently attractive, a range of private / social investors could be persuaded to take-on implementation risk (the risk that given interventions will genuinely improve social outcomes) that has previously been borne by government.
- There is a chicken and egg relationship between improving revenues and increasing investment in the social sector. Connecting revenues for social sector organisations to their effectiveness and efficiency in generating social outcomes creates a context in which investment for growth and innovation can take place strengthening the sector's sustainability and potential.
- In order to succeed, the SIB approach needs political buy-in from relevant ministers, civil servants and the Treasury. The Prime Minister and Chancellor's support for such innovative approaches is crucial.
- Relevant government bodies, both national and local, need to participate in the development of specific SIB pilots to ensure that it meets their needs in terms of target outcomes, to agree appropriate outcome payments and to identify the payment body within government. Giving SIB development groups access to relevant data sets is essential for establishing and agreeing appropriate baselines.
- As pilots move into their implementation phase, government will need to ensure that service providers have adequate access to the target group, including institutional settings (e.g. schools or young offenders' institutes) where necessary.
- Over time, government may also want to create tax incentives to encourage social investors seeking to finance social change through mechanisms like the SIB.
- SIB investment from mission-focused trusts and grant-making foundations will be crucial during the early pilots to establish the attractiveness of the SIB to a wide range of investors.
- SIBs will give social service providers access to predictable, rational revenue streams that are primarily based on cost per positive outcome and delivery capacity. This creates an environment in which investment can take place to fund innovation and growth.
- The SIB approach would benefit a wide range of third sector providers from large, well-established organisations to small, specialised organisations.
- Private sector social service providers may be involved in delivering target outcomes alongside third sector providers under the SIB structure.
- Once a SIB track record is established through pilots, a diverse social investment market including private intermediaries and investors is expected to evolve. This would open-up sufficient investment to enable social impact at scale.

■ Signposts

[www.socialfinance.org.uk](http://www.socialfinance.org.uk)

[www.frontier-economics.com](http://www.frontier-economics.com)

# 5 Side by side

At CoSA's first meeting in December 2007, the Prime Minister challenged us to imagine a society where everyone feels they have someone they can turn to, a one-to-one relationship that is supportive and transformative particularly through out our childhood and thereafter at times of crisis or transition. Responding to this challenge has formed the major part of our work. It has brought us into contact with many government departments and skilled practitioners in the field. We have been the catalyst for new relationships, identified policy and delivery options for government and put in motion a series of initiatives that we think will take this work forward in powerful ways.

## CoSA is working with:

Department for Children Families and Schools, Department for Communities and Local Government, Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform, National Union of Students, 1-2-1 Youth Befriending, v, Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, the Citizenship Foundation, ContinYou, Horseshmouth, National College for School Leadership, Open University, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, Volunteering England, St Giles Trust, Royal Mail, Allen & Overy, Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility, Accenture, Business in the Community, Chance UK, Make Your Mark

The Council on Social Action began this project with a simple objective: To increase numbers involved in successful, high quality, voluntary one-to-one activity. We set ourselves the target of producing a set of recommendations and collaborations in time for publication and discussion at Chain Reaction. The report on our work – Side by Side – is published in November 2008.

Whilst examining voluntary services in this field we developed our own perspective on how the commitment to personalisation is also driving public service reform. We have captured this learning in a separate paper Side by Side: the implications for public service.

We began by identifying three constraints to growth: Money – one-to-one is good value but not cost free. Understanding – potential partners often don't understand mentoring and befriending or appreciate its value, and Volunteers – not a problem everywhere but often a limitation.

These led us to work around six steps which take a positive approach to those barriers identifying the opportunities and realising the potential: Start young, Exploit technology, Develop momentum and build mass, Incentivise and sustain engagement, Invest in growth, Learn and share.

On each one we have worked on a set of practical collaborations and we have advised on other possibilities more than 40 in total.

This is about more than government on your side. It is about all of us, side by side, receiving support when we need it, giving it when we can.

If we are able to stimulate a new mindset around the voluntary support of one another, within government and way beyond ... that would be success.

A shared recognition of one-to-one amongst public service commissioners, independent funders, policy analysts and frontline providers and an understanding that it is an established, effective and mutually beneficial approach to realising potential, tackling need, building social capital and eroding inequality.

We have developed or suggested new ways to build support for one-to-one in every sector, to embed the principles in future policies, to measure results and identify and celebrate success and to support practitioners and new strategies for engaging more people, for realising the potential of technology, and for recognising and rewarding the individual effort.

Some of our collaborations – a role for the Open University in the development of mass for instance – are totemic. They are useful in their own right but also an illustration of what might be achieved if the principal is pursued further. Others like the outward facing school network, now already agreed and under development, reach beyond our brief on one-to-one.

All make some contribution to the top line objective on increasing one-to-one activity – a field in which many flowers bloom. Mentoring and befriending is nothing if not personal and a lot of good work is already undertaken on a small scale. Much would be lost if we tried to industrialise the sector but we do believe that there is great potential for further organic development and that more could be done to nurture new schemes and to create a climate in which effective projects flourish and grow. We conclude with three suggestions that would stretch the vision and take the sector to another level.

Of course we have no powers of enforcement but for every action we have asked ourselves who will take this through to fulfilment and how will we know that they have done this or, if not, understand why the idea was unworkable. We have added recommendations about measurement, monitoring and cross departmental oversight suggesting, for instance that DCSF should embed reference to the development of one-to-one services in their Impact Assessment guidelines for all policy officers.

CoSA is a unique structure with the people and the opportunity to do more than report. That's why we have driven each of our recommendations through to the point where there is, at the very least, a group of partners committed to the next steps. In the case of roughly half, mostly the lower hanging fruit, there is already action underway. We expect to be judged in the year ahead partly on the impact of this activity and especially on our ability to channel the momentum into wider cultural or structural change. If we are able to stimulate a new mindset around the voluntary support of one another, within government and way beyond ... that would be success.

### Lessons, questions and next steps

From a report with 44 recommendations it is difficult to distil a summary that does justice to the work without reproducing all 20,000 words but if we had to pick five that have not been covered elsewhere in this Commentary they would be:

- 1) A task force should bring together sector leaders and communications experts to develop and guide a two year profile raising communications strategy. Not for any individual agency but to build a build a one-to-one mindset – a shared recognition of one-to-one amongst public service commissioners, independent funders, policy analysts and frontline providers and an understanding that it is an established, effective and mutually beneficial approach to realising potential, tackling need, building social capital and eroding inequality.

- 2) The Chief Secretary to the Treasury should write to all departments, as part of the spending review process, advising them that, even in these cash strapped times, indeed especially in these cash strapped times, No. 10 and the Treasury are likely to look favourably on spending plans which involve one-to-one provision. Every government minister should challenge their department and themselves “What does one-to-one mean to us and what more can we do?” The PM should announce a new commitment to employee volunteering in government. All these actions we recommend because the willing citizen is the partner of the enabling state and not an alternative. The good society needs vision and leadership from government as much as it needs drive and innovation from the third sector.
- 3) DWP should undertake a dynamic and widespread campaign to ensure, once and for all, the consistent application of existing rules to support volunteering and to remove the barriers previously experienced by benefit claimants. Tackling some issues on the statute book is not the same as tackling them on the ground. We make no apology for raising an issue that has been raised by others many times. Better communications to claimants and especially to Job Centre Plus staff can resolve this problem and would be an effective demonstration of government commitment to the support of social action.
- 4) The board charged with the oversight of Public Service Agreement 21 ‘Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities’ should champion development of one-to-one across government and recommendations in our paper should form part of their agenda. The CLG White Paper acknowledged “strong and supportive individual relationships are at the centre of every successful community.” Our many practical recommendations to government run with the grain of public policy around personalisation of services and the empowerment of communities but CoSA has no power to implement and our advice could easily get lost. CLG own the cross government PSA on building cohesive, empowered and active communities The development of one-to-one should be central to the PSA strategy and its progress should be driven by this senior, cross departmental board.
- 5) Politicians, policy makers and practitioners should distinguish between personalising and customising. This may seem like a pedantic point but it matters because they can work in opposite directions. A call centre or an online service may customise provision but it doesn’t personalise it. Both can be beneficial in specific circumstances but they are not the same. The recommendations in our paper are about personalising, one human being supporting another because again and again we have seen how effective mentoring and befriending changes lives

We believe that our recommendations are individually worthwhile, collectively significant. We think they offer the prospect of serious change. That has been our objective. CoSA has neither the resources nor the mandate to implement the recommendations but we will help where ever we can by returning regularly to monitor progress, influence and support. And we will report publicly on what has or has not been achieved in 12 months time.

The willing citizen is the partner of the enabling state and not an alternative. The good society needs vision and leadership from government as much as it needs drive and innovation from the third sector.

We believe that our recommendations are individually worthwhile, collectively significant. We think they offer the prospect of serious change.

## ■ Signposts

This section is a summary of a longer paper called 'Side by side: a report setting out the Council's work on one-to-one.' CoSA Paper No.2. London: CoSA. Available from the CoSA webpage: [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social\\_action.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_action.aspx)

An additional discussion paper has also been produced by CoSA focusing on the implications of one-to-one for public services called 'Side by Side and the implications for public service.' CoSA Paper No.3. London: Community Links.

# 6 Collaborative Commitments

Whilst considering ways of developing mass engagement for the Side by Side paper on one-to-one particularly within business, we found ourselves in the arena of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). We learnt about the many different partnerships evolving between businesses and charities and saw how more complex models of collaboration between private, public and third sector organisations are also emerging. In order to stimulate debate and develop this new collaborative approach to CSR, CoSA commissioned Prof David Grayson of the Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility to write a ‘think piece’ developing the concept of what we’ve called ‘Collaborative Commitments’

## CoSA is working with:

Accenture, Allen & Overy, Royal Mail and Doughty Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility at Cranfield University

## Our working definition is:

*Collaborative commitments are agreements made voluntarily between individuals and organisations from business, public and third sector, to achieve positive social impacts which could not be achieved by one sector acting alone.*

Collaborative commitments are characterised by being typically tri-partite, cross-sector collaborations in which the potential of one organisation is unleashed by the involvement of the others in a mutually dependent commitment. In this way collaborative commitments are seen as moving from traditional collaborations of “I will if you will” to the more committed “I can’t if you won’t”.

CoSA’s inspiration was the International Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm). In this collaborative commitment, the private sector (Goldman Sachs) created a financial mechanism to enable the public sector (governments of UK, Italy, etc.) to front-load the release of its resource of funding for international development to the third sector (NGOs) who delivered the intervention of childhood immunisation.

As we discussed the concept with CSR practitioners, more examples arose which reinforced and developed the definition including Royal Sun Alliance (RSA) UK’s work with the Indian government and rural communities in India to create insurance products for farmers. Their cycle of mutual dependency is completed by the government regulation on RSA UK to work with rural communities as a condition of carrying out its broader business strategy in India.

One common characteristic was the serendipity by which collaborative commitments were created: a chance meeting, people knowing people. But we wanted to encourage more deliberate efforts to create these

In this way collaborative commitments are seen as moving from traditional collaborations of “I will if you will” to the more committed “I can’t if you won’t”.

powerful collaborations. David Grayson's paper discusses a set of ideal conditions for strategically bringing about a collaborative commitment.

In summary, a collaborative commitment requires:

- shared vision and values between collaborators;
- commitment to partner benefits;
- collaborative behaviours;
- allocated roles (trusted brokers, 'go-fors', leadership);
- a common issue as focus; and
- a meeting place (particularly to enable the trigger).

The 'meeting place' could be a real place, an online forum or a network where collaborations can be proposed and triggered. Chain Reaction is an example of a cross-sector meeting place encouraging participants to 'connect, collaborate, commit'.

The 'Collaborative Commitments' paper goes on to look at challenges that all sectors face in order to create collaborative commitments. In the March 2006 Economist Intelligence Unit report, executives predicted that global changes in markets, organisations and competition "will drive companies to increase collaboration of all types in order to move quickly, work effectively and continue to grow." The challenge is to recognise cross-sector collaboration as part of this shift. To move towards this all sectors need to identify converging interests; an understanding of available resources and expertise; a willingness to share and experiment externally; and cost-benefit analysis to demonstrate that collaborative commitments are an investment worth making.

Collaborative commitments will not always be feasible or appropriate but can now be recognised as an available mechanism in our toolkit. It may take time for more collaborative commitments to occur, but from the results of those working now, the benefits for those who are helped, make them worth the wait.

## ■ Signposts

This section is a summary of a longer paper called 'Collaborative Commitments.' CoSA Paper No.4., Prof David Grayson, Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility. Available from the CoSA webpage: [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social\\_action.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_action.aspx)

### Other resources

- David Grayson – [www.davidgrayson.net](http://www.davidgrayson.net)
- Doughty Centre – [www.som.cranfield.ac.uk/som/research/centres/ccr/](http://www.som.cranfield.ac.uk/som/research/centres/ccr/)
- International Finance Facility for Immunisation – [www.iff-immunisation.org/](http://www.iff-immunisation.org/)

## Council on Social Action Papers

The Council on Social Action has produced a series of papers setting out the CoSA programme.

**CoSA Paper No. 1**, Willing Citizens

**CoSA Paper No. 2**, Side by side: a report setting out the Council on Social Action's work on one-to-one

**CoSA Paper No. 3**, Side by side and the implications for public service

**CoSA Paper No. 4**, Collaborative Commitments, written by Prof David Grayson, Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility on behalf of CoSA

**CoSA Paper No. 6**, Heart of the City

**All the CoSA papers are available for download from the CoSA website:**  
[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social\\_action.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_action.aspx)

## Websites

[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social\\_action.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_action.aspx)

[www.chain-reaction.org/](http://www.chain-reaction.org/)

[www.ukcatalystawards.com/](http://www.ukcatalystawards.com/)

[www.socialfinance.org.uk/](http://www.socialfinance.org.uk/)

### For more information contact

David Robinson  
Council on Social Action  
c/o Links UK  
Community Links  
105 Barking Road  
London E16 4HQ

Website – [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social\\_action.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_action.aspx)

email – [socialaction@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:socialaction@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk)



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105 Barking Road  
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020 7473 2270

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