

## Big Society Update Issue 3 – March 11

Welcome to the latest edition of the Big Society update with all the news from the Big Society Programme Team in the [Department for Communities and Local Government](#). This edition is about Community Organisers, Community Rights and Community Power! But first.....

### VCS Cuts – Media Coverage

No doubt you will have seen the media coverage about Big Society and the impact on cuts to the Voluntary and Community Sector. Our Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles has responded to this and believes that the action the Government is taking will *“ensure that the most is made of the energy, expertise and experience of the voluntary sector”*.



Speaking at the National Council of Voluntary Organisations conference, he outlined the measures in the Localism Bill, including community rights to buy local assets and run local services that are designed to make it easier for community groups to make a real difference to their local areas. He also used the speech to praise those councils that have *“recognised that voluntary and community groups could hold the key to better value and better services when setting their budgets”*. He said that *“Councils have challenging decisions to make around how they prioritise spending but they must resist any temptation to pull up the drawbridge on the voluntary sector and pass on disproportionate cuts.”* He also said that *“Through the Big Society we want to make sure that voluntary and community groups have got the confidence, the clout and the power to match their experience and expertise.”* To read more about this, please go to <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1855010>

PS: As part of greater transparency all councils should publish what they give in grants and payments to VCS. See the link below has further information.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/transparencingovernment>

### Community Organisers

A group of community-led organisations is leading the way in training up 5000+ Community Organisers. **Locality** - a new nationwide network, formed through the merger of the Development Trusts Association (DTA) and bassac - has been chosen to carry out a range of work including developing a training framework, a Code of Conduct for Community Organisers, and an Institute for Community Organising.



Community Organisers will be well-trained and committed individuals who will play a major role in delivering the Big Society. They will work closely with communities to identify local leaders, projects and opportunities, and empower the local community to improve their local area. Up to five hundred senior Community Organisers will be trained and given bursaries of £20,000 for their first year, along with a further 4500 part-time and voluntary organisers who will support them.

The Community Organisers programme is about catalysing community action at a neighbourhood level – ‘igniting the impulse to act’. They will help their communities to take advantage of other key Big Society initiatives such as ‘Right to Buy’ community assets, and the ‘Right to Bid’ to run public services. Locality has ten areas ‘ready to go’ including Birmingham, London, Bristol, Cornwall and Norfolk. Community organisations in the ten areas have committed to recruiting organisers and to ‘hosting’ them. The organisers will have access to facilities, other groups and charities, mentoring and support (through a well-established national network) and financial resources. We will keep you up to date with the developments regarding this.

## Community Rights

On 4 February we published consultations on the detail of the Community Rights to Buy and Challenge - both policies which feature in the Localism Bill.

Under the **Community Right to Buy** community groups will be able to nominate local amenities and buildings - such as community centres, town halls, or the village shop or pub - for listing by the local authority. When these come up for sale, communities will have extra time to prepare a bid to take them over, making it easier to keep much-loved assets in public use and part of local life.



Under the **Community Right to Challenge** voluntary and community groups, parish councils and local authority staff will be able to challenge to take over the running of local authority services where they believe they can do so differently or better.

Please do tell us how you think these new rights can work effectively in practice. We would welcome your views on the detail of these rights. The consultation papers can be viewed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/localismbill/communityrights/>. We will be holding discussion events in Manchester (9 March); Bristol (22 March); Birmingham (31 March) and London (13 April). Please email us on [crtchallenge@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:crtchallenge@communities.gsi.gov.uk) or [crtbuy@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:crtbuy@communities.gsi.gov.uk) if you are interested in attending any of these events.

## Community Power

This is a 'watch this space' - the Government has plans to publish a White Paper on Public Services shortly. This will further recognise that local people, communities and frontline staff understand their local priorities and problems better than central government; and further develop the view that the best way to improve services is to open them up - diversifying provision to drive innovation and efficiency by increased competition and consumer choice. We also expect it to highlight the key roles of local authorities, and partners, in promoting and commissioning more independent provision of public services.

## Big Society in Action – Central Surrey Health

In every edition, we like to highlight a case study portraying Big Society in action. Central Surrey Health (CSH) is a social enterprise providing community nursing and therapy services to the people of central Surrey. Initially operating from within the East Elmbridge and Mid Surrey Primary Care Trust, the organisation is now a separate body which exists to serve the local community. CSH is co-owned and run by the nursing and therapy teams it employs. They combine the values and principles of the NHS with the 'can do' culture of a successfully run business.



Central Surrey Health employs around 770 co-owners and is contracted to provide community nursing and therapy services on behalf of the NHS. The people who are most in touch with patients' needs are now in charge of providing services. As a result the community in central Surrey can expect some real improvement in the quality of patient care. CSH was also one of the first organisations to receive a Big Society award. Visit their website for more information about this project. <http://www.centralsurreyhealth.nhs.uk/>.

Why not nominate an organisation for a [Big Society award](#)?

## Useful Resources

We are keen to ensure that you are aware of what else is happening on Big Society, so at the end of this update is a list of useful links for you to peruse at leisure – we hope you find this useful!

That's all for now but we would genuinely like to hear your feedback and thoughts. [Please email](#)

## Big Society – useful links

Please note: \* DCLG sites. Any queries regarding websites not marked \* should be directed to the relevant organisation.

### **Big Society advocates:**

[Big Society Network](#)

### **Central Government:**

[Big Society De-regulation Taskforce](#)

[The Government's Big Society Programme \[pdf\]](#)

### **Local Government:**

[Barrier Busting - devoted to helping local people get things done for their community\\*](#)

[Local Government Information Unit - Big Society Learning Network](#)

[Department for Communities and Local Government - Big Society\\*](#)

### **Communities**

[Citizenship Foundation](#) - The Foundation encourages and enables individuals to engage effectively in their communities and in democratic society at large.

[Community Builders Fund](#) - The Fund supports organisations at the heart of communities with finance, training and resources

[National Federation of Community Organisations](#)

### **Volunteering and charities**

[Access to Volunteering](#) - The Access to Volunteering Fund is a pilot that aims to increase the number of disabled people in volunteer positions by breaking down the barriers they currently face when wanting to volunteer.

[KnowHow NonProfit](#) - Enables an online community of individuals and organisations in the voluntary sector to share knowledge and expertise, and inspire effective practice.

[i-volunteer](#) - i-volunteer is a social action network connecting people that want to get involved in their community with others that share the same passion and interest and with charities and community groups that need help.

[Youth Action Network](#) for all young people to have the opportunity to participate in youth action volunteering and develop their own solutions to community needs

### **Charitable giving**

[Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy](#)

[Directgov – Giving money to charity](#)

[Tax Effective Giving](#)

### **Social enterprise**

[Social Enterprise Ambassadors](#) - The Social Enterprise Ambassadors are leaders of some of the country's most successful social enterprises.

[Social Enterprise Coalition](#) - The Social Enterprise Coalition represents a wide range of social enterprises, regional and national support networks and other related organisations.

[Business Link - how to set up a social enterprise](#)

### **Teaching resources**

[Giving Nation Challenge](#) - The Giving Nation Challenge is a learning programme which aims to boost learning about charities, social enterprises and individual giving.

[Go-Givers](#) - Go Givers is a leading national programme funded by the Cabinet Office to develop caring, concerned citizens with the confidence and skills to make a difference to their communities, both local and global.