

We have rounded up a few of the articles and news that may be most pertinent to you and your organisations during this great time of flux and almost daily announcements.

We hope to continue producing this in advance of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) announcement in October 2010, to avoid partners having to trawl information yourselves as much as possible.

If you discover something we should include or have any positive or negative feedback, please contact faye.conroy@dudley.gov.uk or call 01384 814756.

Growing the Big Society

In a major speech to the Policy Exchange on 27th July 2010, Greg Clark (Minister of State and Minister for Decentralisation) set out three key actions that will be fundamental to decentralising power and building the Big Society.

Mr. Clark said that the UK has become one of the most centralised countries in the democratic world "not just in respect of the balance of power between central and local government, but also in the disempowerment of the professions in the public sector; and in the way that voluntary organisations have been pushed out of the provision of public services."

Already, Ministers have begun to remove swathes of the obvious centralising and red tape policies that have put "outrageous impositions on local freedom", Mr. Clark said, including ending Regional Strategies and putting housing back into local hands, making the health service more answerable to patients not politicians, allowing parents, teachers and chari-



ties to set up 'Free schools', abolishing Home Information Packs and a burdensome council inspection regime (Comprehensive Area Assessment).

The decentralisation of power and building the Big Society will depend on three fundamental actions:

a right to know - as part of a new era of transparency and public accountability.

a right to challenge - so consumers never again feel powerless to challenge the way public services are deployed.

turning Government on its head - so it works for communities, not just for ministers

A full transcript of the speech can be found at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/growingbigsociety>

Lorna Prescott from Dosti has added Big Society links, articles and speeches to a new Dosti webpage:

<http://www.dosti.org.uk/bigsociety/>

Link to news on decentralisation:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/>

New task force to cut Big Society red tape

On 17th August, the government announced a new red-tape cutting task force to 'thin the thicket of bureaucracy and regulation' on the voluntary sector.

The president of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), Lord Hodgson, will lead the task force, which is designed to free-up time and resources and make it easier to run charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises.

Civil society minister Nick Hurd and business and enterprise minister Mark Prisk pitched the workforce as a way to help 'mobilise the Big Society'

and 'swing the balance back in favour of entrepreneurial spirit'.

Mr Hurd said: 'This is a tough time for small civil society organisations and we want to make life easier for them.... I see it very simply. Every pound or hour we can save a small voluntary organisation is a pound or hour that could be better spent.'

The task force will make recommendations about how red tape should be reduced, including changes to legislation. Focus areas are likely to include responsibilities of trustees and directors, employment law and contractual arrangements for when civil society organisations provide public services.

Cabinet Office news article:
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100817-redtape.aspx

Reform of Children's Trusts

Education secretary Michael Gove said a forthcoming Education Bill would mean local authorities would no longer have to set up children's trust boards or publish a joint children and young people's plan. The statutory guidance on children's trusts will also be withdrawn and schools will no longer have to cooperate.

A news story on the Department for Education website 22nd July 2010 stated: "Strong local partnerships are crucial to meeting the needs of all children, but a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. That is why this government intends to remove much of the bureaucracy surrounding children's trusts and allow schools to choose how best they may engage."

The government stated that this does not mean Children's Trust partnerships were no longer a priority and said it would instead free up partners to be more innovative. "The basic duty to cooperate will continue but the list of statutory partners will be reviewed."

For the full news story go to:
<http://www.education.gov.uk/news/new/childrenstrusts>

Place-based/Community Budgeting and Total Place

The Local Government Association (LGA) has published a document, *Place-based budgets - the future governance of local public services*, setting out its vision for the future planning and delivery of local services. Proposals in the report include:

- putting councils at the heart of local economic development, allowing councils in each region EITHER to replace the regional development agencies (RDA) with local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) OR to retain existing regional arrangements, and abolishing the boards of primary care trusts and strategic health authorities

- devolving RDA, Homes and Communities Agency and Skills Funding Agency budgets to place-based budgets
 - devolving the budgets and commissioning of employment support and Job Centre Plus functions
 - transferring responsibility for many trunk roads (excluding motorways) from the Highways Agency to local government
- creating local accountability for offender management

In a speech on 27th July 2010, in response to the LGA's document, Eric Pickles supported place based budgets. He revealed that among other supporters are the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Chancellor. Eric Pickles, Communities Secretary, dislikes the name however, and suggested that a more appropriate term might be 'community budgets'.

Eric Pickles also described total place as a step in the right direction, but it was the smallest, most begrudging step possible. Minister for Civil Society, Nick Hurd has also given his support to total place. He said he saw it as an opportunity to drive Big Society further.

Eric Pickle's speech:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/lgaoffer>

L G A document:
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/publications/publication-display.do?id=12294112>

Francis Maude Launches Pathfinder Mutuals

The first wave of Pathfinder mutuals, to be run by entrepreneurial public sector staff, who want to take control of their services, has been announced (12 August) by Minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude.

As part of the Government's commitment to support the innovation and entrepreneurialism of front line staff, twelve fledgling public service spin-offs have been chosen to be Pathfinders for the mutuals initiative. These pathfinders will be trailblazers for the rest of the public sector – helping Government establish, by learning from the front line, what type of support and structures will best enable the development of employee-led mutuals on an ongoing basis.

The Pathfinders have a range of different innovative business models. They will be supported by expert mentors from some of the country's most successful businesses and leaders in employee ownership models, including John Lewis.

Minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude stated that; *"This is a Big Society approach, decentralising power so people can deal with the issues that concern them. We must not be afraid to do things differently if we are to provide better services for less money."*

Further information can be found at <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>

Clegg asks British People: 'what is freedom to you?'

On 1st July 2010, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg issued a call to arms against pointless regulation and unnecessary bureaucracy, asking the public how they want the Government to redress the balance between the citizen and the state.

The Your Freedom website at <http://www.hmg.gov.uk/yourfreedom> is an opportunity for anyone to suggest ideas on restoring liberties that have been lost, repealing unnecessary laws and stripping away excessive regulation on businesses.

The aim is that the Government will roll back the unnecessary regulation that really matters to people. There will be a Freedom Bill in the autumn that will take into account the views expressed on Your Freedom, and departments will consider every suggestion.

On Friday 30 July 2010. Danny Alexander, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and Oliver Letwin, Minister for Government Policy, responded to the thousands of comments submitted by the public to the Coalition's Programme for Government. To watch the response, go to <http://www.youtube.com/deputyprimeminister#/a>

LIBERATING THE NHS: Government consults on healthcare shake up

On 12 July 2010 the Secretary of State for Health Andrew Lansley released a White Paper on health reform entitled *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS* setting out an ambitious agenda for the NHS for the next five years. Within its values, the white paper

states that "...the NHS is an integral part of a Big Society, reflecting the social solidarity of shared access to collective healthcare, and a shared responsibility to use resources effectively to deliver better health."

On 22nd July the government launched two consultations on key proposals contained in its white paper. The consultation papers – *Local Democratic Legitimacy in Health* and *Commissioning for Patients* – set out how patients, councillors, local authorities, public health experts and others will work alongside GP consortia, which will now make most commissioning decisions.

Proposals include establishing a statutory partnership board or "health and wellbeing board" within local authorities. Andrew Lansley and Eric Pickles said the partnerships, led by local authorities, would mean services "will become more responsive and be developed in ways that fit around the people who use them".

This joint Department of Health and Department for Communities and Local Government consultation provides further information on proposals to increase local democratic legitimacy and accountability in health, through an enhanced role for local government. Responses to the consultation document are due by **11 October 2010**.

The white paper, consultations and associated documents can be found at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_117353

Prime Minister launched National Citizen Service pilots for young people

On 22nd July, the Prime Minister announced plans for National Citizen Service pilots. A competitive commissioning process was launched on 4th August.

National Citizen Service will give young people the chance to learn new skills that will help them to make a positive contribution to their community. Government-backed pilots for the scheme will take place in summer 2011 and provide around 10,000 places for 16 year old school-leavers, subject to the outcome of the cross-government spending review which concludes in October 2010.

For the full press release go to: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100722-citizenservice.aspx