

*We're not an arm of the state - we have our own arms*

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**Newsletter No: 17**

**July 2010**

## **So now we're all doing 'Necessary Cuts' and 'Big Society' are we?**

My anger levels are rising again. What is this thing with authority? It seems like we only need to be told by the 'people in charge' to stick our heads in buckets of water, than we eagerly apply our resources to getting the heads in, efficiently, effectively and with outcomes that can be accredited by the Charities Evaluation Service. So it is with the current buzz of discourse in the wonderful world of voluntary action. On the one hand the 'Big Society' is being treated as if it is... well, something.... A plan, an idea, a strategy, a programme, hmmm?? People at local level think they ought to be talking about it, grappling with how to respond to something that, mysteriously, becomes illusory. At national level, there's a lot of hot air, and an awful lot of bandwagoning, by those who want to protect their interests, and be at the front of the queue when the contracts (what contracts?) are given out. But what if the 'Big Society' is a back-of-the-envelope electoral invention, or even worse a deceit (they don't really believe in what they say) or a falsehood (they're not going to do it anyway) or, most likely, incompetence (they don't know what they're talking about)? Where does that leave us?

And in what appears to be a parallel universe, we're, at the same time, helping the Government and local state shred public services, accelerate their continued privatisation, reduce living standards (disproportionately poor to rich), and increase pressure on voluntary and community groups coping with the consequences. Doesn't sound very 'Big Society' to me; more like 'Big Cuts'. But the 'we're-all-in-it-together' message appears to have got through. We have national voluntary second tier agencies *advertising* the government website where we can nominate our own, personally recommended, cuts. It's almost like it's a bit of a laugh.

Sadly, this issue of our newsletter features quite a lot of this stuff and I fear it will continue. However, this week I have been cheered by the news of the acquittal of all defendants in the 'Smash EDO de-commissioners' trial. Here are people already part of our real big, already existing, society, doing what they think is right. 6 activists broke into the factory of the Brighton-based arms manufacturer in January 2009, and caused £200,000 worth of damage. The argument that their action was not illegal because they were trying to impede the committal of war crimes in Gaza, was accepted by a jury of ordinary people, who sent them on their way as free citizens. Is this an outbreak of common sense and sound thinking? You can catch up with the whole story here: [www.smashedo.org.uk](http://www.smashedo.org.uk) and here: <http://decommissioners.wordpress.com>.

Now, not all readers of this newsletter will approve of direct action of this sort.....or will you???

## **News from the Coalition**

### **The Coalition has co-ordination!**

We've rather had our heads down lately becoming what may masquerade as a real organisation (OMG!). We have been appointing STAFF! Anyway the outcome, we are delighted to tell you, is that we now have two National Co-ordinators and they are called Melaina Barnes and Rachael McGill. Each is working two days a week on a job share and are currently trying to figure how they might get a quart (the work involved) into a pint pot (the time they have available). Offices have been found and handover is continuing in a typically anarchic fashion. We will circulate contact details and more information as soon as we can.....

### **What next for voluntary action?**

July 9<sup>th</sup> was the hottest day of the year so far and most appropriate for lying on some grass close to a lido. Despite this, 68 interested, concerned, opinionated, inspired, bewildered and/or angry people attended 'What Next for the Voluntary and Community Sector?' at St Martin in the Fields church in central London. The event was a discussion and exploration day jointly organised by NCIA and the Second Tier Advisor's Network (STAN), a project of the London Voluntary Service Council.

The participants were from a variety of organisations - or none - but mostly from 'second tier' support organisations like councils for voluntary service. The event used the 'open space' meeting format, in which those involved create the agenda and decide which discussions they want to be part of themselves, moving between groups as the mood takes them. Many areas were covered, from how to support activism to how/whether to respond to the 'Big Society', whether infrastructure support is dead, how to question the need for cuts and how to interact with funders and commissioners. Each of the 22 discussions which emerged produced notes and ideas which others commented on or pledged their

support to (there were six votes for 'revolution.' We're working on whether this is enough of a popular mandate to just get on with it).

STAN staff are writing up the notes from the meeting now and we can report soon about new activities and connections arising from the debates.

### **So who does want to fund us (and who doesn't)?**

We have had a couple of forays lately into the world of funding, quite unsuccessfully as it happens. As the Coalition has expanded, the pressure on the time and people available has also expanded. We thought that money would help, especially that it would allow us more often to pay people to do the things that need doing. We made applications to City Parochial Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, two of the small number of private trusts that we thought might share our concerns and approach. One for was work on redefining how second tier organisations might more effectively support local work for social justice; the other was to develop a new theory for voluntary action in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, connecting academics and thinkers with those on the ground struggling to make improvements in our common-wealth. Both were turned down.

Though disappointing, these decisions are focussing our collective mind on the same issue that is now affecting the whole of the sector - how can we be effective and do the things that are needed if we can't get money to help with this? We will certainly try to do these pieces of work with or without the support of those who have the power of money, but there's no doubt that it will be slower and more of a struggle. Join the real world I suppose.....

## **Clobberings, clones, chameleons, cuts, and closures**

### **ConLib plans for the sector**

Statements in the queen's speech amply express the schizoid features of the new Government's approach. Overall concerned with the cuts they say are needed to deal with the public debt, there is simultaneous celebration of this 'big society' we are all going to build with the Government and the role of the voluntary and community sector in this. The "role of social enterprises, charities and cooperatives in our public services will be enhanced" said the queen. Number 10 added "radical reform of public services was needed and third sector organisations were one means by which to improve outcomes and reduce the national debt." More public services markets would be opened up to allow third sector organisations to bid to run public services: "Barriers to involvement will be identified and measures will be implemented," the bold statement from Number 10 said.

In a separate speech, Frances Maude, the Minister responsible for the 'big society show' said that the government would cut red tape to make it easier to set up a charity or a social enterprise, and the third sector would receive a

"better share" of public funds. So far, however, they have announced the closure of the Grassroots Grants (£130M) and Futurebuilders programmes, withdrawal of £1.2B to local council grants programmes, and are reviewing expenditure on other central government spending on the sector like the Compact, Strategic Partners grants, Capacity Builders and V, the volunteering organisation. The only new programme announced is the Communities First fund, which "would provide start-up funding for community groups in disadvantaged parts of the country." However, neither the size of the fund nor when it will open is known. Over here at the Coalition, we will not mourn the loss of much of this co-optive spending, but shutting down expenditure can hardly form the basis of much confidence about future intentions.

In addition, quite how all this squares with the cuts to voluntary sector contracts and grants that are happening right now is not clear. But maybe it's not that complicated. Is the idea simply that a) voluntary agencies can do things more cheaply, by using volunteers for example to deliver public services, b) they are more controllable because they are fragmented, non-unionised and are now all competing with each other, c) the government won't have to be responsible for the failings (you just blame the 'contractors'), and d) while all this is happening keep the rosy glow going by lavish PR-spun references to the 'big society' rising from the 'age of austerity'?

Needless to say this kind of analysis is not exactly in your face if you visit the 'sector-leadership' websites, and most certainly it is 'partnership' rather than 'opposition' that remains the tired and empty rhetoric to be found there. Meanwhile real life is played out on the ground.....

### **Keeping the dreadful cuts tally**

News of cuts is now beginning to mount. In this it will be important not to trust information that comes from official sources and it is thus useful to see that sites are being set up that allow groups to log the cuts they are experiencing. One such is the 'Crowdsourcing the Cuts' on the NCVO website. Although not yet properly underway (though Arts Council cuts are comprehensively listed), this may prove a useful way of understanding the emerging picture. You can access the spreadsheet here: <http://bit.ly/bI9esi>

Information is also beginning to emerge that some local authorities are cutting voluntary sector funding by amounts far greater than the overall levels that the government is demanding (25% indicative). For example in South London, Croydon Council is intending cuts in grants of 66% from £1.8m a year to £625,000 a year over the next four years, accompanied by a greater emphasis on commissioning. Croydon's cabinet member for stronger communities (yes that's right), said: "With the current funding climate, the priority is now to fund those enabling organisations that have a broad reach across the area and commission services from others as we need them, which is far more efficient.

However, we accept that many groups that have previously been well funded might now have difficult decisions to make. We will actually be looking to commission more front-line services from the voluntary sector in future, not fewer. But we will do that in a different way."

The continued onward march of commissioning as the preferred method for funding voluntary groups is evidenced from many other parts of the country, and the casualties that result from this. For example, the Disabled People's Alliance Northamptonshire will close next month after it missed out on a renewed contract to provide disabled people's services and in the same area, Parents in Partnership, which supports families of children with learning disabilities, is considering its future after it missed out on a £600,000 advocacy service contract. The contract went to Advocacy Partners Speaking Up, the expansionist baby corporate.

### **The 'Big Picture' on likely scale and focus of cuts**

Useful discussion from Karl Wilding at NCVO on the overall picture of cuts and where the axe is likely to fall - you can catch it here: <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/networking-discussions/blogs/209/10/05/25/axeman-cometh>

### **£100M cuts from local council budgets coming up**

More than £100m is likely to be slashed from voluntary sector funding over the next few weeks after cuts to council budgets, warns NAVCA.

Funding of £1.2bn to local councils' grant programmes was immediately stopped by the DCLG, much of which has supported the work of local voluntary groups. Many of these groups will receive no further payments from councils, said Neil Cleeveley, Policy and Communications Director at NAVCA. "Many charities will receive no further money from this month onwards. Some might not even get what they were promised for work they have already done."

### **Figures on grants confirm fall**

The [NCVO Almanac](#) for 2010 confirms the continued drop in grant funding. The figures show grant funding from statutory sources in 2007/08 was £3.7bn, a drop of £400 million from the previous year. This means that grant funding is almost £1 billion less in real terms than it was in 2000. Kevin Curley of NAVCA said: "The figures show.... a dramatic drop and once and for all that grant funding is under threat - especially when you consider that these are figures for 2007/08, before we were hit by the recession. We have consistently argued for the need to protect grant funding.... We have won the argument - now we need to see this decline in grant funding reversed. Unfortunately this will already be too late for many voluntary organisations and community groups."

## This month's 'That Takes The Biscuit' award goes to....

### CITIZENS ADVICE

Citizens Advice, the national organisation for citizens advice bureaux, has in recent years quite lost its bite and now presents very much like a part-owned subsidiary of the Department for Business, Innovations and Skills, its main funder. Trying to ride two horses seems to be getting a bit much for the poor dears. In an effort to be insightful, whilst not upsetting its masters, John Ludlow, Head of Press and Public Affairs at CitA, writing in the latest 'evidence journal', gets in a bit of a muddle:

*"The good news about the planned cuts is that they will only apply to non-front line services and that those on low incomes will be protected from the effect of the spending constraints. But it remains to be seen where the axe will fall. Benefits are certainly a prime target....."*

Now we thought that benefits were intended to protect people on low incomes, or have we got that wrong?

#### **Legal Aid – cuts and incompetence wreak decimation**

The sheer vandalism that has been applied to Legal Aid by the Legal Services Commission, and behind it the Ministry of Justice, has been documented in these columns before. A string of changes culminating in the introduction of fixed fees in 2007 has increasingly made this source of funding for advice work unsustainable. The indications now are that 'we ain't seen nothing yet'.

One development that made the news was the closure of the largest not-for-profit legal aid provider of asylum advice - Refugee and Migrant Justice. This voluntary body employs over 300 staff and helps over 10,000 people a year. It has gone into administration because it is owed £1.8M in a backlog of legal aid payments. Despite a high profile campaign to persuade the Government to step in and pay their debts, Ken Clarke, the Minister responsible, refused to act. An excellent analysis of the situation that brought this disaster has been produced by the Information Centre for Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) - you can access it here <http://refugee-migrant-justice.org.uk/downloads/090610legalaidrelease%20FINAL.pdf>.

This is likely to be the first of many such closures as legal aid providers are now being told the results of their tender bids for continuing services after October of this year. The picture is already emerging - a mixture of cuts and the favouring of large suppliers will wreak chaos in local services. One such casualty is the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit which has been told that its contract will be cut by 70%. This decision is being vigorously opposed by the Unit. Denise McDowell, director of the service said: "The LSC have

damaged immigration legal aid beyond repair. This will mean that there will be even more people standing unrepresented before the courts. Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit remains committed to providing a high quality service to people affected by immigration control.... We remain as committed as ever to the people we are here to serve - people affected by immigration control. Over the next few weeks and months we will be taking action to manage this situation including seeking to secure alternative funding to continue the work.... We will not take this lying down, and we need you to help us fight this." Further information from and offers of support to [denise@gmiau.org](mailto:denise@gmiau.org), 0161-741 2646.

### **Community Matters to widen membership**

One organisation with an eye on the future is Community Matters, the self-styled representative body for community groups. After a six-month review of how they can best serve civil society they have decided to allow businesses, community organisers and community schools and colleges to become members.

David Tyler, chief executive of Community Matters, said that businesses, smaller groups, experts and community organisers were contributing to improving their communities in common with traditional community groups, "albeit in slightly different ways. We now want to provide a supportive home for them too so we can work together to bring about our shared vision." Sounds like a bit of 'Big Society' positioning to us.....

### **Fightbacks take many forms**

#### **Cuts briefing from Public Law Project**

The 'Empowering the Voluntary Sector' project has issued a special edition of its newsletter outlining some of the tactics and devices available to groups wanting to fight cuts. Our copy of the file was damaged but you can get the briefing from [Carolyn.Ellis@navca.org.uk](mailto:Carolyn.Ellis@navca.org.uk).

#### **World to Win goes for 'People's Assemblies'**

Campaign group 'A World to Win' is promoting the idea of building 'People's Assemblies' as a way to "defeat the attacks by the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition government on public services and living standards.... What Cameron and Clegg call the 'national interest' in reality means doing what's right by the bankers and speculators who are responsible for the global crisis in the first place."

Says the group: "Parliament won't defend us and New Labour is equally responsible for the disaster. So we should create a network of People's Assemblies to unite communities. People's Assemblies will represent ordinary people's interests, whether they are young or old, in work or unemployed, in the

public or private sector, trade unionists, students, minorities and community groups resisting the cuts. The Assemblies will also look beyond a failed economic system where profit and speculation comes first and towards building a true democracy in place of the sham one we live under now."

You can register support for a People's Assembly in your area here: <http://www.aworldtowin.net/frontline/BuildPeoplesAssemblies.html> .

### **NAVCA says 'hold onto your values and work together'**

Kevin Curley from NAVCA argues, in an article for the Directory of Social Change, that faced with dramatic public spending cuts, it is vital that voluntary and community groups "hold to the values that drive us; pragmatism has its place, but it must not trump principle. If we disagree with something we should oppose it, even if this discomforts politicians." In a carefully crafted piece, designed it would seem to bolster self-determination, even opposition, whilst not antagonising our "local statutory partners", Curley urges closer joint working, especially between second tier agencies: "The spirit of the time requires us to consider how we can collaborate, perhaps even form coalitions to support the things we believe in - but be aware that this will mean compromise". You can catch the whole two-sided thing

here: <http://www.dsc.org.uk/NewsandInformation/News/SoapboxHowdowerespondtothenewCoalitionGovernment>

### **Local anti-cuts alliances begin to form**

In contrast, activists in local areas are beginning to come together to fight public service and spending cuts. The approach here is not to work with 'statutory sector partners', understanding their difficulties and working to make the cuts 'constructive'; rather to oppose the shredding by any means possible.

In two London areas, for example, Southwark and Hackney, trade unionists have joined with local community groups and activists to form anti-cuts alliances. In the latter area, resisting cuts to nursery provision has already resulted in some of the decisions being reversed and the nurseries getting their money back. It is possible..... more information

from [southwarktuc@gmail.com](mailto:southwarktuc@gmail.com) or <http://friendsofhackneynurseries.wordpress.com/>

### **'In Defence of Youth Work' girds up its loins**

The radical youth work network is busy discussing resistance to the cuts. In their latest mailing they say: "Clearly there is an utter necessity to stand together in fighting the onslaught across both the state-funded and often quasi-voluntary sectors. By this latter comment we mean no more than that significant sectors of the voluntary sector depend for their existence on state finance and in doing so abide by the State's demands in terms of targets and outcomes. However this dire situation does not mean we should abandon the

original inspiration of the campaign - to defend and extend the tradition of democratic and emancipatory practice..... Indeed it is probable that the defence of an emancipatory youth work in the coming period is intimately intertwined with the defence of a pluralist view of work with young people."The network has set up a designated page to log information and views about the cuts. It is also planning a day event for youth workers to "to reflect on the implications for their work of the new political settlement." This will take place on Tuesday 14 September at Manchester Metropolitan University, Didsbury Campus. Whilst the second 'in defence' national conference will be held in Sheffield on Thursday November 4<sup>th</sup>.

More information on all of this from <http://www.indefenceofyouthwork.org.uk>

### **Dealing with the cuts – balancing certainty with uncertainty – contemplating death.... Or re-birth?**

Up and down the country, voluntary groups are trying to get their heads around the cuts and the future for their work, including whether the group itself has a future. Here's how one bunch of people, drawn from frontline agencies, thought the issues could be approached: <http://www.independentaction.net/?p=7083>

## **Organising, mobilising and keeping-on-keeping-on**

### **Taking Part – Arts, Culture and Civil Society Conference**

An international and multidisciplinary conference, planned for the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October in London, will aim to open up issues regarding the role of arts and cultural activity in civil society, provide an opportunity to strengthen links and develop a shared understanding between voluntary and community groups and those working in arts and participation. The two days will offer opportunities to share effective practice, listen to keynote speakers and contribute to the thinking; but shared through the creative methods of *World Cafe*, *Open Space Technology* and *pecha-cucha*, plus there will be plenty of time for the kinds of informal networking and exchanges that help to create new partnerships and consolidate old ones.

Fees will be: 2 days conference attendance: £50 for individuals and £75 for organisations; 1 day conference attendance (either day): £30

More information from <http://www.gold.ac.uk/taking-part/>

### **What's in a name?**

Keen readers of NCVO's 2010 Almanac will have noticed that, on page 10, our 600,000 civil society organisations formerly known as 'unassociated community groups' are now, for the first time, described as 'micro social enterprises' ! My, my, the power of language!

### **Much More to Life than Services**

New publication from Coalition supporter Bob Rhodes establishes the systemic failings of 21<sup>st</sup> Century care in the UK and explores a vast array of potential solutions. His aim is to revolutionise the way we think about 'care' in our society today. Emphasis is given to the simple fact that we "cannot buy a good life; that life without reciprocal relationships and meaning is fundamentally deprived. Rhodes asserts that: "only when we act together as couples, families, neighbourhoods and communities can we truly flourish, and that this unity should be the bedrock for founding a new care services system."

Uplifting messages in such downhearted times. You can find out more at [www.livesthroughfriends.org](http://www.livesthroughfriends.org).

And out of the project that beget the book, there is now to be a conference (October 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>) in Newcastle "A Master Class in Asset Based Community Development, Co-production and much, much more.....". Drawing on the ABCD approach, the conference will: "explore effective ways of re-energising and reinventing kinder and more interdependent communities as it becomes increasingly apparent that our over-dependence upon professionals and services is ill-judged and unsustainable." This one will cost you £70 + VAT....more information from [bob@livesthroughfriends.org](mailto:bob@livesthroughfriends.org)

### **Immigration alliance calls for detention reform**

As Immigration Minister Damian Green confirms that plans to build two new detention centres have been scrapped, ("currently unaffordable"), twenty five organisations working with immigration detainees have come together to call for reform of the detention system.

London Detainee Support Group, Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group and the Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees have coordinated the letter, with support from the Detention Forum. The letter urges the government to hold an independent inquiry into the detention system, which is expensive, inefficient and damaging to detainees.

This size of the coalition of co-signatory organisations is almost unprecedented for an action on detention, and includes a wide spectrum from support organisations, to campaigning groups, to policy groups. The letter and list is at <http://detentionforum.wordpress.com/2010/06/24/letter/> . More groups are joining on a daily basis to add their names to the call for reform.

### **The madness continues.....**

**Victim Support really joins the corporates**

Having completed the 'transformation' from a federation of local, autonomous charities to one national charity, Victim Support has launched a new 'brand identity' that it hopes will more clearly communicate its purpose. Having found out that 73 per cent of people had heard of Victim Support but had little idea of what the charity did to help crime victims, they have changed their strapline from "helping people cope with crime" (clear enough I thought) to "find the strength" (excuse me?). Guy North, executive director of marketing at Victim Support, said the charity's new image was designed to show how it helps to restore the inner strength of victims and witnesses. Oh right.

The rebrand, which also includes a 'refreshed' website (obligatory), will be supported by the charity's first national print, radio and online campaign, with print adverts in several national newspapers, costing, no doubt, loads of dosh. The rebranding is the latest stage in the charity's restructure. Says Guy: "Victim Support has undergone a massive transformation. It is now time to bring this to life through a modern brand identity that reflects what Victim Support is all about." I'm sorry to say that the expression 'bringing to life' conjures up images of Frankenstein's monster....

### **CRB checks have cost sector £220m in eight years, says Manifesto Club**

A report from the libertarian Manifesto Club claims that the four million criminal record checks that have been carried out in the last 8 years have cost the voluntary sector £220M and that the bureaucracy to which volunteers are subjected is "completely out of proportion to the informal and low-key nature of their activities". You can check the claims here: <http://www.manifestoclub.com/volunteeringreport>

Meanwhile, in a rare piece of good news, the government has suspended New Labour's plans to introduce the expanded scheme to force registration of staff and volunteers with the Independent Safeguarding Authority. However, this does not amount to abandoning the scheme which, the Home Office says, it will "remodel....back to proportionate, common-sense levels". We'll see.....

### **Frothy 'Big Society' creates quite a lather**

In simultaneous outbursts of enthusiasm, naivety, brownosing, and organisational positioning, our inbox is full of messages about how we can all make the Big Society a reality. Here is a selection .....

First up is a frankly laughable quote from Martin Brookes, the tell-it-as-it-is Chief Executive of New Philanthropy Capital: " 'If charities want to be the answer to helping build Big Society they need to get serious about demonstrating their impact. The best should be supported and scaled up. The less good might be earmarked for cuts. If ministers choose this path, meeting the twin goals of cutting the deficit and fixing social problems is a possibility.' " Do you think he really believes that?

Meanwhile, Skills Third Sector reckons that: "The government has pledged support to voluntary sector organisations in delivering the Big Society, particularly in providing more public services and building strong communities. To rise to these challenges charities, social enterprises and other voluntary sector organisations need people with the right skills in the right numbers to make a difference. A National Skills Strategy represents the foresight needed to bring about the kind of workforce for a professional and thriving voluntary sector." 9 regional events now coming up so all the 'skills strategists' can have their say - "Be part of it. Make your views count"

Whilst NAVCA has launched a survey monkey, and a minisite to bring together information about the Big Society (<http://www.navca.org.uk/stratwork/big-society/>). NCVO is on the case, of course, with innumerable pieces about the 'challenges and opportunities' (<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/policy-campaigns-research/-big-society/big-society>). And the Big Society Network ([www.thebigsociety.co.uk](http://www.thebigsociety.co.uk)) must be wetting themselves, since it was they who were on the inside track with the Tories as far back as 2007.

There is much more of this..... as one of our correspondents wrote when sending us some pap: "here is a good example of how these organisations have seamlessly adapted their language and phraseology to accommodate the political changes and new office holders, following the election. The "Big Society" is now referred to as if it has a real and substantial meaning that the Voluntary Sector (sorry, Third Sector) is fully aligned and in-tune with. I suspect that entire sentences are simply lifted from Government (or Tory Party) circulars and Press Releases and reproduced for circulation around the Voluntary Sector..."

### **You couldn't make it up!**

#### **McDonalds ("pre-eminent in training and retention") to run the Olympics volunteers**

Lord Coe, who is Chair of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games, has announced that fast-food chain McDonalds will be 'presenting partner' for the volunteering part of the games. This means they will be responsible for recruiting and training the 70,000 volunteers apparently needed to run the 2012 Games. Said our Seb: "I just instinctively know we have to get this right, and recruit 70,000 of the best volunteers," he said. "McDonald's is pre-eminent in training and retention, and I'm delighted it will be our partner". He declined to reveal the financial terms of the deal.

Steve Easterbrook, chief executive of McDonald's, said branches of the chain would display posters encouraging people to volunteer at the games. Some of the firm's

staff would be seconded for two years to recruit and train the volunteers, he said. "Selecting and training talent is what we're about," he added. ....

### **Compact to consume more 'refreshments'**

Notwithstanding the fact that the £6M committed by the Government to the Compact is 'being considered for cuts', David Cameron has pledged to "refresh and renew" the Compact. Oh no, not again!!!

Cameron said he wanted to make sure it "really means something". In a somewhat obscure but ominous response, Sir Bert Massie, Commissioner for the Compact, said: "Although the Compact was refreshed last year, the new agenda relating to the big society might mean that we need to examine how the Compact relates to the private sector and whether further changes are needed."

And Oliver Reichardt, at Compact Voice, which maintains that it represents the voluntary sector on the Compact, said: "It's great that the Prime Minister recognises the vital role of the Compact in building better relationships between public bodies and civil society."

Oly is being a bit Canute-like here as the reports flood into Compact Voice of cuts that are clearly in breach of Compact guidelines. For example, Eleanor Knowles, director of the Cumbria Development Education Centre, said she was told their funding had been axed by email at 6pm on a Friday and the following Monday a press release was sent out announcing the decision. She said: "They've seriously broken the protocols in the Compact. It says an organisation should have a chance to challenge a decision. They've flashed it all over the papers before they've even talked to me."

The Departments of Health, and Communities and Local Government reckon they are also worried about Compact breaches and have announced new initiatives to promote their commitment to the Compact. This will include supporting and promoting a new page on Compact Voice's website providing information about the importance of the Compact when making spending cuts. That should take care of it then.

Meanwhile more support for the Coalition's position on the Compact comes from historian Meta Zimmeck, a visiting research fellow at Roehampton University. Writing in the first edition of [Voluntary Sector Review](#), she described the Compact as "a handsome facade with not much behind". She said last year's refreshed Compact "does not remedy the opaqueness of the original version and indeed adds additional levels of obscurity".

But at Compact Voice HQ, Oly Reichardt was back in positive mood. He agreed that progress was initially slow but "over the past five years has been rapid"... and "We now have many examples where the Compact has transformed areas and relationships for the better," he said.

### **Management styles under scrutiny**

A number of news reports recently highlight the ways in which damaging management practices are taking root in the voluntary sector. First off trade union Unite has been drawing attention to the rise of 'glaring pay differentials' and wants state-funded charities that breach the 20:1 pay ratio to be included in the fair pay review into public sector pay announced by David Cameron. The 20:1 ratio came from Cameron himself. (Over here at NCIA, we stand on a 5:1 ratio - see <http://justwage.blogspot.com/>)

Secondly, the interim report of the Volunteer Rights Inquiry, the panel set up by [Volunteering England](#) to examine the treatment of volunteers, has revealed "shocking stories of bad management, poor governance, bullying and improper behaviour" and cites intimidation and sexual harassment as examples. "Despite the preponderance of codes of practice and guides on managing volunteers, standards remained low, especially in the voluntary sector," the report says. The inquiry will publish more evidence and detailed recommendations in November.

Meanwhile a separate study reveals that bullying is on the rise in the voluntary sector and senior managers are bearing the brunt of it. A poll of charity employees, run by *Third Sector* magazine and Birdsong Charity Consulting, found the proportion of respondents who felt they had been bullied at work during the past 12 months rose from 12% in 2008 to 16% in 2010. In particular, there was a sharp jump in the percentage of senior managers and charity directors saying they had been bullied, up from 16% (2008), to 19% (2009), to 24% this year.

Rachael Maskell, national officer for the community and non-profit sector at the union [Unite](#), said the reported rise in bullying reflected a trend across all sectors. "Bullying is on the increase.....worse behaviours are being exhibited and there's more competition, leading to a dog-eat-dog culture". She also thought the survey results underestimated the size of the problem.

### **About this Newsletter**

This newsletter is the voice of the NCIA. Views expressed are not necessarily that of everyone involved with NCIA. We aim to issue newsletters regularly to keep you informed of what we and others are doing or saying.

### **How Can You Participate?**

Tell us your news, write articles, sound off with your opinions and feedback but - most important - find ways of taking your own practical action to defend and protect the independence of your work and aspirations.

Talk to us and others via the Coalition website [www.independentaction.net](http://www.independentaction.net) or the Coalition email address - [indyaction@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:indyaction@yahoo.co.uk) .

We also welcome offers of help. If you'd like to help make this initiative prosper then please get in touch with us.