

# Building the Big Society

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# The Big Society is being developed in a three-fold context

Lack of trust in politics



Longstanding social problems



Unprecedented challenge to public finances

# The Big Society represents an approach that seeks to give increased power to people to solve problems closer to where they live



## Demand

- Post-war reconstruction
- Industrialisation
- Basic welfare
- Urbanisation



- Economic crisis
- Complex system wide problems
- New technologies
- Diverse social structures
- Increasing public expectations

## Supply

Introduction of the 'Welfare state'

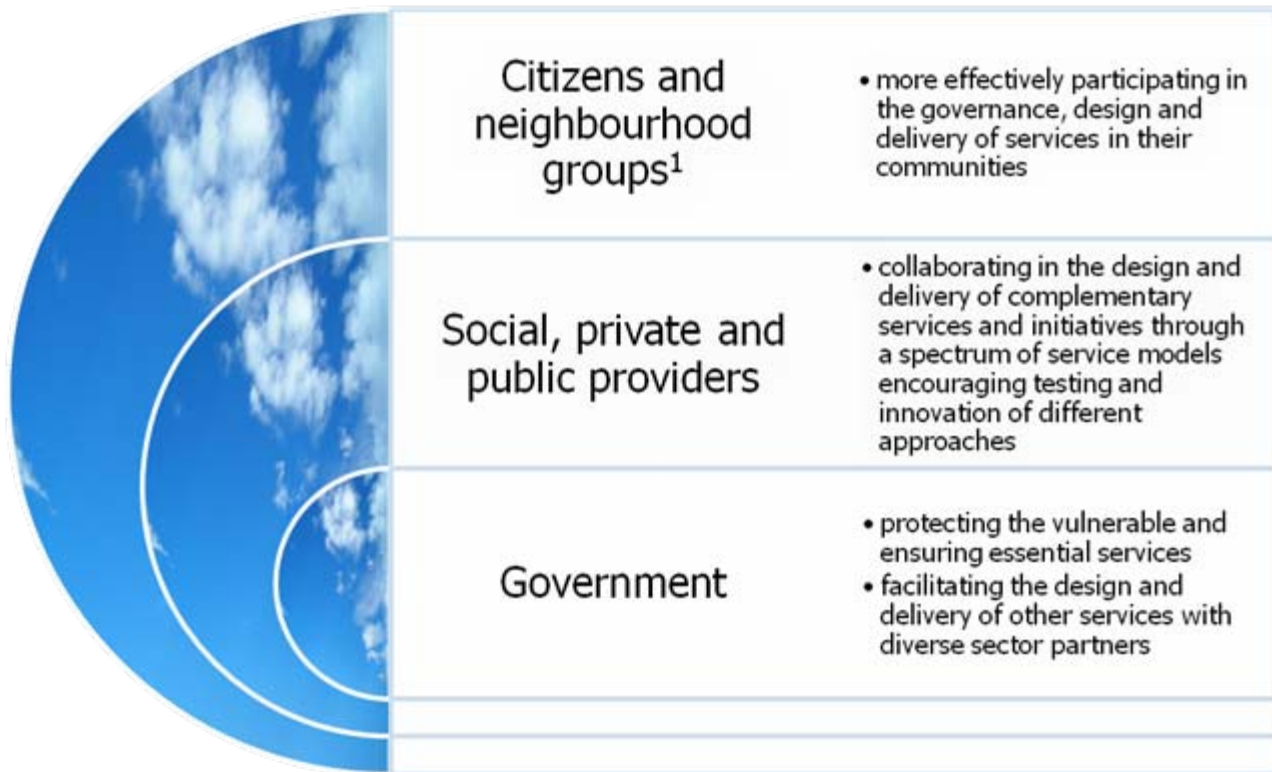
Privatisation: "reining back the state"

Increased investment, active role of government and markets

'Big Society'

# The Big Society moves from a default position of central design and governmental provision to citizen-driven partnership across sectors

An “ecosystem” of 3 levels where no one player dominates another...



## An approach to addressing the needs of society

- Policy designed and delivered in partnership across all 3 levels, with government as the enabler
- Policy and delivery closer to the issues on the ground and individuals
- Big Society policy agenda addresses two priorities
- Building the “ecosystem”
- Reconfiguring policy design and delivery

1 Neighbourhood groups comprise a broad range from those with an explicit social or activism mission to those focused on local participation, engagement and community building whether through informally through sports and interests or more formally in conjunction with local anchor institutions

# There are 3 priorities in building the Big Society ecosystem needed to reconfigure how policy is developed and delivered

1

People more involved in their communities

+

2

People able to contribute more effectively through a stronger social sector

+

3

People better able to shape governmental policy and delivery

## Example focus

- Group membership
- Mass civic action
- Charitable giving
- Corporate social activities
  
- Group formation
- Leadership and scale
- Funding and resources
- Organisation and operations
  
- Information provision
- Policy formulation
- Policy localisation
- Policy delivery

# Elements of the Big Society already exist

1

People more involved in their communities



2

People able to contribute more effectively through a stronger social sector

Community-led



Social movements



Environmental



Corporate



Education



Intermediaries



Charities



Membership



3

People better able to shape governmental policy and delivery



# Social entrepreneurship is helping people to engage with complex issues - the challenge is to move from selective to extensive impact

Charities outperforming public services:

## St Giles Trust



- St Giles Trust enables disadvantaged people to maximise their potential
- The Trust trains offenders whilst they are still on the inside, so they have skills when they are released
- Only 2% of St Giles Trust clients reoffend
  - Improving lives
  - Saving taxpayers money

Neighbourhood social action:

## Balsall Heath Forum



- Balsall Heath was an infamous red light district
- Residents organised a protest, resulting in an immediate two-thirds reduction in sex work
- Subsequent projects have encompassed
  - Family life
  - Environment
  - Safety
  - Business
  - Education
  - Participation
  - Sustainability

Giving skills not just money:

## SI camp



- Camps start with an open call for ideas
- Judges take forward the best entries to build over one weekend
- Everyone is welcome at the camp weekend: web developers, business experts, lawyers
  - 3 UK SI camps have created 300+ ideas, 20 prototypes, 5 have received funding and 2 have been incorporated as companies (MyPolice and Enabled by Design)
- Now rolled out to Slovakia, Georgia, South Korea, Australia.

Creating leaders who educate:

## Teach First



- Teach First gives exceptional graduates the opportunity to teach and make a difference in the most challenged schools
- Voted a Times Top 100 Graduate Employer by students on campus
- Recruits ~300 graduates per year from Britain's top universities
- Benefited thousands of pupils in disadvantaged areas

# Big Society builds a more productive, responsive government and a more self-reliant participative society

1

People more involved in their communities

- Increased participation
- Increased well-being from
  - Reduced isolation
  - Stronger social ties
  - Greater self-reliance

Stronger, more resilient society

2

People able to participate more effectively through a stronger social sector

- Increased capacity and capabilities
  - New groups/enterprises formed
  - More trained leaders and support networks
- More local and national initiatives to address complex local or topical issues

Better outcomes

- Welfare
- Education
- Health
- Less crime
- Cohesion

3

People better able to shape government policy and delivery

- Increased democratic accountability
- Increased citizen-led design/delivery
- Increased focus towards the most needy and/or issues with longest payback
- More effective and targeted state provision
- Increased trust in frontline services

More productive and responsive government

# Initiatives are already planned in the government's policy agenda for all 3 of the Big Society priority areas to kickstart implementation

**1**  
People more involved in their communities

- Promoting mass social action, inc. 'Big Society Day'
- Encouraging charitable giving and philanthropy
- Creating a flagship National Citizen Service for 16 year-olds
- Increasing civil service's community involvement

**2**  
People able to contribute more effectively through a stronger social sector

- Developing a new generation of community leaders and neighbourhood groups
- Support the creation and expansion of mutuals, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises
- Create the right for public sector workers to form employee-owned co-operatives to operate services
- Use funds from dormant bank accounts to establish a Big Society Bank

**3**  
People better able to shape governmental policy and delivery

- Promote radical devolution to local government and citizens
- Give councils a general power of competence
- Abolish Regional Spatial Strategies, and return housing and planning powers to local councils
- Create a new 'right to data' for public use with regular publication
- Oblige the police to publish detailed local crime data statistics every month
- Local community powers to run services

# How can government get involved in creating the Big Society?

## Ministers / Politicians

- Promote Big Society key messages
- Ensure austerity measures are consistent
- Catalyse activity in own geographical area

## Departments

- Remove obstacles to civic action
- Create new powers for civil society groups
- Orientate own staff more towards communities

## Service Delivery Organisations

- Consider options for setting up as mutuals
- Gather citizen feedback using social media
- Take into account community benefit in decisions

# How can institutions get involved in creating the Big Society?

## Business

- Think local and not just globally in sales
- Target employee activities where they live
- Find ways to interact with small providers

## Local Government

- Think in terms of transition when cost cutting
- Use spend, invest, shop model fiscally
- Facilitate most, co-commission, deliver least

## Voluntary Organisations

- Gear organisation up to provide public services
- Find ways to support and harness citizen groups
- Ally with financial partners to retail social investments

# How can citizens support the Big Society?

## Daily activity

- Think more locally about where to carry out activities
- Connect with a mix of neighbours online/offline
- Join local time banks and other means of local association

## One-off activity

- Take part in local events, and national ones like Big Lunch
- Participate locally based on interest (e.g. budgeting, mentoring)
- Give feedback on public and non-public bodies online

## Long-term commitments

- Join or set up a group, which in turn may commission
- If in public sector, consider creating a mutual
- Use professional or other skills to support social enterprise

# Big Society activity already underway in many areas but in others key to success will be through showing the way and making the Big Society real

- Providing easily understood and clear examples of Big Society at work will allow citizens and institutions to learn by example and apply the general lessons to their particular contexts

## Geographical showcases

- Whole systems demonstrations of the Big Society approach
- Variety of contexts – urban / rural; levels of deprivation
- Strong involvement of citizens and social sector in identifying issues to target

## Flagship policies

- Iconic policies which represent core Big Society principles e.g. Free Schools, Data Transparency etc.
- Across Whitehall departments

## Case studies

- Bank of detailed case studies showing how citizens, institutions and government implemented aspects of the Big Society
- Success stories as well as examples of how overcame difficulties
- Freely available centrally

## What does it mean for you in your job?

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What do you see as the barriers to the communities you serve engaging with you?

How could you overcome these?

What do you see as the barriers you face in engaging with the communities you serve?

How could you overcome these?

**Further comments or suggestions:**

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