

Based on the Home Secretary's Scarman Lecture delivered at the Citizens' Convention,  
11th December 2003.

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# Introduction

# 1

## Section

In my Edith Kahn Memorial Lecture, *Civil Renewal: A New Agenda*, I set out a philosophy of civil renewal, together with an agenda for action. At its heart is a vision of strong, active, and empowered communities – increasingly capable of doing things for themselves, defining the problems they face and then tackling them together. In this pamphlet, I want to expand on the political significance of this agenda and how we are taking it forward in practice.

A key reason for pursuing civil renewal is that local communities are just better at dealing with their own problems. They have the networks, the knowledge, the sense of what is actually possible, and the ability to make solutions stick. Of course, they cannot do it on their own, without both the resources and the power of government. The civil renewal agenda is about supporting interdependence and mutuality, not simply leaving individuals or communities to fend for themselves. We are talking here about building the capacity, the social assets, and the leadership which will enable communities to take advantage of both the targeted help which is available and broader economic and social improvements and investment.

But it is not just about better outcomes, crucial though they are. It is also about what happens to communities along the way – what they learn about themselves and each other, the way they develop and grow. There is an analogy here with empowering individuals. People should be encouraged to solve their own problems in part because they know from their everyday lives what the core of the problem is, and how to engage with the best way of solving the challenge; but also because tackling your own problems is a vital part of growing as a person, a source of confidence and self-respect. The same is true of communities. We learn together through supporting each other. Our inter-dependence is our strength. And when we use this strength to tackle our problems, we build respect - self-respect, both as individuals and as a community, respect for others, and respect for the practices and institutions of democracy.

So within the family, the school, and the wider neighbourhood, it is critical to reconnect with the issue of respect in order to change the culture, to ensure that

people treat one another differently, that youngsters learn not to bad mouth and abuse those around them, but to be able to put a point of view or engage in a non-aggressive or threatening manner. It is important as adults to respect difference, whether of opinion or of culture and religion. It is important to recognise that this is a challenge for all of us and not just for government. The ethos here is one of something-for-something – of rights and responsibilities going hand in hand. Too often people demand rights, without understanding the corollary of developing a sense of duty, a way of thinking which takes them beyond the satisfaction of their immediate personal needs into supporting their family and the broader community. In this way we not only develop a sense of identity and belonging, but also a sense of the importance of being able to contribute to and draw down on the strength and resources of those around us – of how mutuality is not simply a safety net in times of crisis, but a driving force, a foundation for innovation, enterprise and initiative.

Of course, just as believing in individual development does not mean believing people are infallible when it comes to knowing what they should do, believing in community does not mean believing communities have a monopoly of wisdom over how their problems are to be solved. Communities as well as individuals can be trapped by prejudices and make mistakes. We all need to be open to others' ideas and be prepared to learn from each other.

The communities of the past deserve our admiration for their strength and solidarity, which helped them cope with the kind of privations and challenges which today would be unimaginable. But we must also acknowledge that sometimes this strength was combined with a degree of rigidity, or that solidarity among insiders was combined with hostility to outsiders or even to certain groups inside the community. Our challenge is to help communities rebuild the strength, the sense of belonging and shared goals, while maintaining the progress we have made in social justice, tolerance and inclusiveness. We need communities that define themselves positively, in terms of what they can do together, rather than negatively in opposition to outsiders.

I am talking about communities which powerfully embody the values of solidarity, mutuality and democratic self-determination. Solidarity is founded on the commitment to regard the well-being of others as an integral part of our own collective well-being. Mutuality stems from the readiness to embrace our interdependence as a positive motivation to co-operate in the search for solutions to our problems. And democratic self-determination holds that we are only truly free when we participate in the self-government of our communities.

These are not values invented by me. They have long been associated with what political theorists have referred to as the civic republican tradition. It can be traced back to ancient Athens where the ethos of active citizenship first emerged. It was revived by the Italian city states during the Renaissance, and developed by great Enlightenment figures like Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), a two-term American President who saw the greatest danger to democracy as coming from civic complacency, and argued all his life for engaging citizens actively in how their communities should be run.

It continued to be championed by leading progressive thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries such as John Dewey (1859-1952) and L.T. Hobhouse (1864-1929), who saw freedom as a value which can only be fully realised through positive engagement with the wider community. And amongst contemporary political theorists, there are Michael Sandel, who has criticised the post-war liberal consensus for its dogmatic individualism, for seeing the individual as logically prior to society rather than part of it and dependent on it; and Benjamin Barber, who developed his theory of 'strong democracy' to expose the ways in which modern conceptions of democracy were failing to sustain meaningful citizenship.

The central thread running through this tradition is that the freedom of citizens can only be truly realised if they are enabled to participate constructively in the decisions which shape their lives. All its major exponents share a belief in the power of education to enrich the minds of citizens, a commitment to develop a mutually supportive relationship amongst the members of a democratic community, and a determination to strengthen citizens' role in shaping the public realm. What I have tried to initiate is a renewed drive to consider how these aims and values are to be pursued and developed in the age of globalisation.

If these aims and values are to be realised we need to ensure that:

- Democratic institutions are in place and actively maintained by the communities they exist to serve
- Citizens learn and develop the skills, habits and knowledge needed for active engagement in the community
- Citizens cultivate the civic virtues of being committed to the common good, freely accepting one's obligations to society, and staying loyal to the shared values of a democratic community
- The public realm is recognised as the locus of the highest achievements of the community, in which citizens have shared pride.

What concerns me deeply is that these elements have been undermined by a range of structural and cultural factors. Take for example the way the speed of technological development has fuelled consumerist expectations for rapid innovation and instant satisfaction. Instead of in-depth deliberation or discussion, many people, encouraged by 24 hour, seven day a week communication, demand instant answers. When these answers are not forthcoming – often because the issues are actually highly complex – people become cynical or disinterested about public policy.

Or, to take another example, in the past there were workplaces which themselves formed a community. A community of common interest, but also of outward looking and shared perspective on the world. This was encouraged by detailed and politically educative trade union activity in large scale workplaces that facilitated mutual help, but also the sharing of ideas and perspectives. This all disappeared along with apprenticeships which mentored young men, developed and encouraged respect, as those workplaces disappeared and different forms of employment and working experience (including the use of technology) changed the relationship of individuals to each other in the workplace as well as in the wider community.

The growth of work mobility also feeds through into a more general disconnection from the wider community. At the same time, the need of all modern organisations to keep pace with inter-related demands at the local, national and global levels has necessitated the growth of managerial and delivery structures which increase the distance between the people who take decisions and the people who are affected by them. If these trends are left unchecked, there is a danger that people will cease to function as citizens altogether and society will fragment into individuals who look only to themselves and their private circles of friends and relatives. In short, we would be left with the worst possible form of privatisation – the privatisation of community life itself.

Instead of standing back and letting go of the values of solidarity, mutuality and democratic self-determination, government – both central and local – has a vital role to play in strengthening community life and renewing civic involvement. In our rapidly changing world, there is a greater need than ever for local stability and a sense of belonging as a counterweight to broader uncertainties. We cannot stop the pace of technological change or globalisation. But we can show leadership in developing a wider and deeper democratic engagement with citizens so that they are more able and inclined to take responsibility for shaping the well-being of their communities.

This is very much about helping people cope with rapid economic and social change. There are all kinds of transitions in our lives in which we seek the support of others, whether through family or community. But there is also a key role for government in assisting people not only to be able to cope with the challenge of change, but also to reduce the fear of it. This in turn assists people in being more flexible, more productive, and having a greater willingness to take risk. In both social and economic enterprise people do need to be prepared to innovate and to embrace reform and modernisation. Given that all of us are wary of change and that we need the anchor of security, government has a key role in its economic, social, and law-and-order policies, to provide that security and stability.

Some think there is a tension between, on the one hand, trying to make communities secure and stable, and on the other, trying to help them be more open to change. But this is a mistake. Just as in economic policy we have provided stability as the basis on which flexibility and entrepreneurship can flourish, so too in social policy it is security and stability which allow people to feel confident to take an active role in collective life, to welcome change from outside or inside the community. There are also similar connections between social and education policy. We all accept that government has a role in helping individuals cope with a changing world, by ensuring they get the right kind of education and training for flexibility. The question is how can we help communities cope with a changing world, ensuring that new forms of social capital get the support and recognition they need.

In all these areas of government policy we need to reject the false choice between the old totalitarian ideal of a government which tries to do everything, and the libertarian ideal of a government which tries to do nothing. In other words, we don't wish for a government that takes away our responsibility or our ability to contribute, but nor do we want a government that disengages, leaving it to the individual to sink or swim. We want neither a maximalist nor a minimalist government, but an active, enabling and supportive government.

The progressive, activist state accepts that it cannot and should not be trying to do everything. Instead, it acts as an enabling and supportive mechanism, not just with money but with ideas, identifying and sharing best practice, maintaining standards and exposing injustice.

This is why we must advance the civil renewal agenda together, in a partnership between government, the community, and citizens. It is relevant to everyone: the poor and vulnerable who need help to overcome their socio-economic exclusion

and gain the confidence to participate in rebuilding their communities; the legal migrants our economy needs and our communities should welcome; the rich and powerful who need to be reminded why they should care for others in society rather than retreat into their own private 'gated communities'; and citizens in general who need to realise that their personal interests are best safeguarded when they actively take part in the protection of their common good. What is at stake is the vitality of strong, empowered and active communities, in which responsible citizens look after each other, with the state helping to support and enable them to lead self-determined and fulfilled lives.

No government can do this on its own. Without the understanding and engagement of citizens and local communities, even endless investment in public services would routinely be dismissed by the alienated as inadequate. But at the same time citizens and communities cannot do it on their own either. Without government and the collective resources it can bring together, many communities would be too weak and fragmented to revive themselves.

What I will set out in this pamphlet is how central and local government, in partnership with citizens and their local institutions can in practice meet the challenge of civil renewal. Civil renewal can only be attained through communities of different shapes and sizes, of interest as well as geography becoming engaged in defining and solving the problems they face. To bring this about, there are three crucial ingredients:

- **Active Citizenship:** citizens should be given more opportunities and support to become actively involved in defining and tackling the problems of their communities and improving their quality of life.
- **Strengthened Communities:** communities should be helped to form and sustain their own organisations, bringing people together to deal with their common concerns.
- **Partnership in meeting Public Needs:** public bodies, within the established democratic framework, should involve citizens and communities more effectively in improving the planning and delivery of public services.

I will say more about each of these in, respectively, Sections 2, 3 and 4 of this pamphlet. It will be seen that the pursuit of civil renewal, by reconnecting citizens with the public realm, is in fact indispensable to meeting government objectives in improving communities' social, economic and environmental quality of life. In Section 4 in particular, I will expand on why we need to move beyond simple consumerist models and towards a new model of collective public consumerism. Citizens and communities are not just passive consumers of public services.

A key element of 'choice' in this context concerns the opportunities to become actively involved in shaping the public domain. I will illustrate this further with examples of how the ethos of civil renewal is being embedded in the activities of the Home Office, and how this ethos is helping us build safer and more inclusive communities in partnership with the citizens we serve.

# Active citizenship

The ethos of active citizenship is derived from the Athenian tradition which unites the values of democratic self-determination with mutuality and solidarity. This means that those who can look after themselves and contribute to the well-being of the wider community will endeavour to do so, while those who cannot will equally be respected and supported by others. This requires a sense of common purpose. As we live in a society with a diversity of cultures, what we need both to bind us together and to enable us to respect our differences, are common beliefs in the democratic practices of citizenship itself, and the rights and duties that go with it.

But the cultivation of active citizenship is not a simple task. The complexity of contemporary society tends to fragment the links between a democracy and its constituent citizens. Rapid, technology-driven global change can leave some people feeling disconnected and disorientated. And even where we manage to secure consistent economic growth and stability, there is no guarantee that this is making people more content with their quality of life. Indeed we hear that despite years of economic growth, there is no parallel increase in individuals' reported sense of well-being. We need to ask if part of the reason for this is the loss of a sense of community, of civic togetherness. If so, this is another reason to look at what we can do to help citizens find the confidence and the opportunities to reconnect with their community – to become more actively involved in tackling their common problems and improving their quality of life.

## Home Office Citizenship Survey

### What it means to be a good citizen

- 97% of respondents agreed (definitely agreed/tended to agree) with the statement that 'if people treated others as they would want to be treated themselves, our society would be a better place'.
- 96% agreed that 'you can't demand rights as someone living in the UK without also accepting the responsibilities'.

## Social and community participation

- 65% of people participated socially in groups, clubs or organisations (being a member, attending meetings or events, playing in a team) at least once in the last 12 months. This is equivalent to approximately 27 million people in England and Wales.
- 38% of people were involved in civic participation at least once in the last 12 months. This is equivalent to approximately 16 million people in England and Wales.
- 67% of people volunteered informally (as individuals) at least once in the last 12 months. This is equivalent to approximately 28 million people in England and Wales.
- 39% of people volunteered formally (through groups, clubs or organisations) at least once in the last 12 months. This is Equivalent to approximately 16 million people in England and Wales.

Of course, active citizenship is for an end and not an end in itself. It is about improving quality of life, about social justice, and about meaningful participation which makes democracy and accountability a reality. Civil renewal is partly about reinvigorating communities and helping citizens to have more fulfilling lives – and seeing how these two aims are mutually supportive and self-reinforcing. But there is also an absolutely critical political dimension. If misunderstanding and apathy persist about how the public realm is to be improved, then democracy itself is undermined. Citizens who are not constructively engaged with policies and services affecting their communities cannot play an informed role in helping to improve those policies and services. They will become more alienated – and governments will find it harder and harder to connect with them and respond to their needs. Promoting active citizenship is a central part of tackling this – and we are promoting it in a number of ways. First, we are drawing together research and evidence on what actually works in this area. Secondly, we are giving citizens more opportunities to participate and more support when they do so. Thirdly, when there are real barriers to improving participation, we intervene directly to break these barriers down.

### ● Research and evidence on what works

#### The Active Citizenship Centre

There are numerous research reports and practical projects focused on active citizenship, but so far there has been no overarching framework which would enable us to bring them together, so we can assess them critically and

systematically, and make them available to a wider audience in a more accessible and coherent way. That is why in the Edith Kahn Memorial Lecture I announced that I would commit £1 million to help set up an Active Citizenship Centre to address this gap.

I have now appointed Professor Paul Whiteley of Essex University (Director of the ESRC Research Programme on Democracy & Participation, 1998-2003) as the Chair of the Steering Group for the Centre. The Active Citizenship Centre will drive the agenda on research and evidence, collaborating with experts across local and central government, community groups and practitioners in the field to provide a focal point for sharing ideas to enhance active citizenship. From citizens giving up their time to help out with local groups, through organising community activities, to putting together a case for the community perspective to service providers in the private and public sectors, the Centre will serve as a democratic resource to which anyone can contribute, and all can freely access.

Through its web-based advice service:

([www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/civil/activecitizenshipcentre/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/civil/activecitizenshipcentre/)) the Centre is making available information on research findings and good practice examples which are being continuously added to its knowledge base.

- In collaboration with the ESRC, it is planning to identify major research gaps which need to be addressed.
- Early in 2004 the Centre will launch the findings of the Community Engagement Evidence Project – a project developed to set out the case on how the engagement of active citizens can enhance the quality of community life and support the delivery of public service objectives.
- Through its steering group, which brings together both academics and practitioners, it will provide a focal point for developing new ideas and guidance on how to promote active citizenship.
- The Active Citizenship Centre is also in negotiation with partner agencies across the country to set up at least one dissemination hub in each region to promote awareness of the available evidence and good practice examples.
- It will initiate a series of events to enable community groups to share good practices.
- It has commenced the development of a model for civil renewal which will be tested in the next Citizenship Survey conducted by the Home Office on public attitudes and behaviour as citizens.

- It will also be examining how the lessons from international development – where it is generally recognised that more can be delivered and on a more sustainable basis if local people were properly involved (and not treated simply as passive recipients) in the process – can be applied to our own domestic policies.

*If you would like to find out more about the Active Citizenship Centre, contact Henry Tam on 020 7035 5381 or Duncan Prime on 020 7035 5190*

## ● Opportunities and support for citizens to participate

We need to give citizens the information and motivation to encourage them to seek out opportunities to build, regenerate and renew the community on which they are dependent and which is dependent on their contribution.

This is more of a challenge in areas where the asset base of individuals and families, and of the wider community itself, has been eroded or is at such a level that day to day immediate concerns and survival take precedence. That is why building the asset base in terms of the capacity and confidence of the individual, and the resource – including its people – of the community, should be fostered.

Regeneration and inclusion are at the heart of this Government's agenda, and at the heart of regeneration is investment in human capital. Only by engaging and developing citizens, especially those disadvantaged by socio-economic or other circumstances, will there be hope of achieving ambitions for a robust, knowledge-driven economy, for vibrant, self-sustaining communities and for a universal culture of lifelong learning. Through the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, the Government is committed to target support to our most disadvantaged communities.

The Department for Education & Skills (DfES), with its range of programmes from Sure Start to Millennium Volunteers, its promotion of lifelong learning and citizenship education in schools, is encouraging and enabling more people to participate in the activities of the wider community. Its Adult and Community Learning Fund, Community Champions Fund, Community Leadership Training Pilots and neighbourhood learning centre demonstration projects have shown how the wide variety of voluntary and community groups can make a real and sustainable impact on neighbourhood learning, capacity building and social inclusion. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) will need to build on this development work through its local arms, and engage more

effectively with the voluntary and community sectors through its Widening Adult Participation Strategy.

The LSC has the clear remit and funding to widen participation and build capacity for learning, particularly among 'hard to reach' groups in both urban and rural contexts. In developing their local strategic plans, LSCs will need to work with the full range of organisations able to provide both formal and informal learning, accredited and non-accredited, particularly with community and voluntary groups which can reach deeper into communities than more traditional institutions, and meet untapped demand.

### Active Citizen – Neighbourhood Renewal

Neighbourhood Renewal funding enabled Karen Bowen, who has just been named Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire Citizen of the Year 2003, to set up the Townsend community residents association. The project began in 2001 when Karen secured NRU funding for a playground. The residents association then set up a community house and established "teentime" for 13-15 year olds to meet and help older people. Committee member Christine Kudlek was quoted in the local newspapers as saying, "if we can do it, anybody can. We are just ordinary people who have come together and shown people can get things done" (source: Government Office for West Midlands)

The Department for Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS), through its sponsored bodies such as Arts Council England and Sport England, supports a network of organisations promoting and developing active citizenship. DCMS is establishing 3,000 paid, qualified Community Sports Coaches working at local level to increase the number and range of coaching opportunities according to strategic and local need by 2006. In 2003/4 the Arts Council is providing approximately £770,000 across a number of organizations that support voluntary and community groups (such as the Voluntary Arts Network, Foundation for Community Dance, National Disability Arts Forum)

The Home Office leads on the promotion of volunteering and civic participation, and has worked with other Government Departments to create over 140,000 new opportunities for men and women to help in schools, hospitals, fire stations and prisons. This has real results: more children being helped with their reading, more patients being comforted by people who simply want to help. We are also exploring with the Treasury ways to develop more systematic opportunities for

young people to benefit from a voluntary experience. More generally through support for the Community Service Volunteers, the Prince's Trust, and others, we are helping citizens to connect with their communities through the vital work they carry out.

### Active Learning for Active Citizens

The development of mentoring, both in terms of individuals working with each other and in mentoring in schools and the wider community, is beginning to take hold. We will be looking to develop this further and to encourage employers to release staff to undertake this work which is both beneficial to those who they are working alongside, but also to those who have experience and knowledge, confidence and leadership skills, as they develop a better perspective themselves which feeds back into the workplace and their knowledge of the world outside.

In parallel with identifying opportunities for greater participation, it is of course also important for people to be able to learn about the context and skills of exercising our citizenship. Building on the work of citizenship education I began at DfES, I have established in the Home Office the 'Active Learning for Active Citizens' project. Following a consultative seminar which brought together key institutions involved in citizenship learning, a report will be published early in 2004, which will put forward a common framework and curriculum of citizenship education for adults. I welcome that along with the projects mentioned above, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has continued and fostered the pilot schemes I established when at DfEE for sixteen-nineteen years olds in schools and colleges to develop skills of active citizenship in the community. And we are including citizenship in the new proposals for education for those settled in Britain and naturalisation.

This is not just about 'top-down', central government initiatives. I am heartened to discover that new approaches to help citizens to engage with governance issues are also being actively considered at the local level. The New Deal for Communities (NDC) project in Bristol, for example, has shown how local residents can be actively engaged in improving their localities. Over 240 people from one neighbourhood invest on average between 5 to 10 hours per week to community activities. The Sheffield Association for the Voluntary Teaching of English received support from the Time Limited Development Fund to recruit and train people to help others in their communities learn to speak English. More generally, since the disturbances of 2001,

Bradford City Council, for example, has been exploring ways of better co-ordinating the recruitment, training and development of local citizens to take on governance positions in relation to schools, regeneration schemes, housing management boards, integration of minorities, health trusts etc. Instead of different public bodies competing for the input of active citizens and all finding it in short supply, they are being brought together to provide developmental support to help more citizens participate in their activities.

- **Specific interventions**

Attempts at promoting participation can encounter different kinds of problems. Both central and local government need to remain vigilant to these problems, and where appropriate should intervene decisively to overcome them. Here are a few drawn from many of the examples I could cite.

The current reform of the Criminal Justice System, for instance, is looking at building confidence so that victims and witnesses will be more ready to come forward (see section 4).

We need to recognise that fear and anxiety can understandably hold people back from sharing their views and concerns with statutory agencies; but that is precisely when we need to intervene to give them the support and confidence they need. For example, the Metropolitan Police, in order to tackle the rise of gun crime afflicting certain black communities, launched Operation Trident last year. Senior leaders from the community were invited by the Police to serve on an independent advisory group, and were given regular liaison support at Detective Inspector level, backed by full-time officer and civilian staff. At the same time young people were brought in to the project through targeted advertising in public places. The Police's commitment to encourage and support both younger and older citizens in participating in the operation has paid significant dividends for the communities concerned. Over 200 individuals were arrested and charged in connection with murder, firearms and drug offences. And over 130 guns, a thousand rounds of ammunition and 500 kilograms of class A drugs were recovered.

The confidence generated by involving communities can be dramatic. The Haringey Peace Alliance managed to involve around 2000 local people giving their commitment to help tackle gun and violent crime and drug problems.

In Harlesden in north west London, Stonebridge Housing Action Trust worked with the police to give local people the confidence and support to reclaim their

estates from crime. In the six months which followed, 40 people were arrested on suspicion of drug dealing, 150 abandoned cars were removed, and reported crime fell by 12%. A betting shop, once a focal point for drug dealers, was successfully converted into a community radio station. With its mix of music, community news and discussion about local safety issues, the station has helped to engage young people on the estate.

In Liverpool, local and central government agencies collaborated over the Liverpool Community Safety Network, which provided training to citizens through over 70 community groups in relation to confidence raising, capacity building, and specifically how they can work with the City Council's Anti-social Behaviour Unit to enhance local safety.

On the Blackthorn Estate in Northampton, high levels of repeat victimisation resulted in low levels of crime reporting and high tenant turnover. Northampton Borough Council, in partnership with the County Council and the Police, worked with the local Residents Association to set up the Blackthorn Workers Forum which took action to rebuild local people's confidence in local security. In addition to local initiatives ranging from alley-gating, removal of abandoned cars to play and sports facilities for young people. The Home Office supported the development of a Neighbourhood Warden scheme which provided further reassurance to local people to become involved in community safety.

All these examples show once again how the progressive, activist state remains central to the civil renewal agenda – in this case by intervening decisively to overcome the barriers which fragment communities and stop initiatives aimed at renewing participation from even getting off the ground.

As well as developing the skills and motivation of citizens to participate in community activities, we also need to focus on the capacity of communities to organise themselves, particularly through asset ownership. I will say more about this in the next section.

# Strengthening communities

Globalisation, as we all know, brings massive opportunities but also enormous challenges. To cope with the scale of change, decision-making structures everywhere have become immeasurably bigger and more complex than ever before. The appeal of anti-globalisation movements has something to do with a quest for lost identity, the lack of an anchor, and a search for a sense of purpose and roots which give both individuals and communities a sense of continuity with their own heritage. This yearning can only be fulfilled, I believe, through communities which combine a respect for diversity with a core of shared values.

So while it is important to have citizens who are able and willing to contribute on an individual basis, there is also a significant need for them to join forces in strengthening their communities. First, because the impact of civic action is that much greater when it unites the efforts of citizens through the organised activities of community groups. And secondly, because it is the formation and development of these groups at local, national and international levels which acts as a democratic counterweight to private and commercial interests which themselves increasingly operate on a global scale.

Government can help communities build social capital, strengthen their sense of mutuality, and enable them to cope with rapid change. To achieve this, we have to put community development at the heart of the government's agenda, right across the different government departments, across both central and local government – and across the working partnerships which all the different government agencies have with local communities.

- **Civil renewal through community development**

### **Building community capacity**

Communities are in a better position to be able to tackle the challenges they face if they are enabled to develop the capacity to initiate and direct collective action. But the support they need to do this is not always easily accessible and Government can do more to join up our work in this area more effectively.

Following the completion of the Home Office-led government-wide Community Capacity Building Review, we will be publishing the commitments of different government departments to support community capacity building. The strengthening of community capacity is vital to the promotion of social and environmental justice, equality, learning, co-operation, and participation. By enhancing the scope for fair and inclusive self-determination, vibrant community groups enable local people to develop a sense of pride and respect, and respond positively to social and economic changes.

Government departments are already collaborating more closely to facilitate the involvement of voluntary and community sector organisations in public service delivery, particularly in deprived areas. Ownership of assets is also important in helping community groups and social enterprises sustain their activities and minimise their grant dependency. We are now into Round 2 of the highly innovative Adventure Capital Fund. I launched this fund with the support of the Scarman Trust, Development Trust Association, Local Investment Fund, and New Economics Foundation and other government departments to help channel investment into meeting community-focused objectives. The fund is helping to build capacity in black and minority community organisations, and to encourage growth in community-based service delivery in priority areas such as crime reduction, childcare, education and training, and job creation. In the West Midlands, for example, it has enabled the Birmingham Credit Union Development Agency and the South East Birmingham Community Credit Union to support the development of community-based credit unions.

Through the Adventure Capital Fund, we are demonstrating a new investment approach which manages the risks inherent in social policy – just as we have long appreciated the need to manage risk in economic policy. While retaining necessary and sensible audit trails, this approach lays emphasis on overall outcomes rather than specific outputs, matches finance with hands-on, tailored organisational support, and sets a balance between financial and social returns. The Fund is still at a fairly early stage, and there are encouraging signs that it is already beginning to establish the value of this patient capital approach in the broader investment market. We are actively working with other funders to extend the range of support for social entrepreneurship in this way. More work needs to be done, particularly in making the process more user-friendly. The controls which govern access to investment can still make applying for funding for community projects seem like taking a postgraduate degree.

I mentioned in the Edith Kahn Lecture six months ago the proposal to develop Community Interest Companies (CICs) as a new legal form for social

enterprise to facilitate asset-based development, and support social entrepreneurs to pursue their business goals in the public interest. This has now taken a major step forward in The Companies (Audit, Investigations & Community Enterprise) Bill published after the Queen's Speech by the Department of Trade and Industry. Our plan is to combine the relatively inexpensive company model with light regulation enabling those wishing to commit their surplus to meeting community needs a simple legal structure which will attract the support of philanthropists. The first working CICs are expected to be in operation by Spring 2005.

### **Championing community development**

Apart from ensuring community groups can expand their capacity to operate, we should also pay attention to the skills and confidence building associated with community development practices. For decades, despite the success they brought to local problem-solving and regeneration, the work of community development workers – professionals and volunteers – has been left on the margins. But some local authorities have given much greater recognition to the importance of community development. Recently, community development practitioners across the country gave their support to develop the profile and influence of their own organisation, Community Development Exchange (formerly the Standing Conference of Community Development), to engage with government bodies, and I encourage them to maintain their momentum.

As the sponsor of the Community Development Foundation, the Home Office is also able to provide a direct steer to mainstream community development as key to the renewal of community life. The Foundation is now well placed to draw practical lessons both from numerous community-based examples they come across, through those they collaborate with and the many projects they carry out. These lessons will be fed into the work of all government departments.

### **Celebrating success**

Successful community projects should be backed by funding support for social as well as economic development. Where appropriate, they should also be shared more widely with other communities so that good practices are adopted and known pitfalls are avoided – and so that the community concerned can take deserved pride in their achievement.

This can be developed through learning networks of neighbourhood communities, one of which is being explored between the community

organisations from Balsall Heath and other neighbourhoods in Birmingham. The Balsall Heath Forum is of course renowned for its effectiveness in bringing local people together to tackle crime, improve local services, and create new associations such as resident groups to strengthen their neighbourhood. There are 21 resident groups to help address the local issues facing the area, and out of Balsall Heath's population of 12,000, over a third regularly participate in a caring activity to improve their neighbourhood's quality of life. The Forum has an ambitious target of involving 60 per cent of residents in the work of the local associations.

One of the biggest challenges faced by community development workers is the selective attention of the media. When a community is failing to cope, it comes under merciless scrutiny. But when it turns things around, when it is thriving because of the energy and determination of its citizens, it is difficult to get the same kind of attention. There is no shortage of successes to celebrate – from the triumph of the Lambeth Community Health Action Group which mobilised local residents and health workers to help develop one of the most innovative community care centres of the 1980s, to the St Paul's Church project in Bow, Tower Hamlets, which will be completed in 2004 after 1,000 local people petitioned for and actively supported the development of a derelict church building into a community centre as well as a place for worship for people all faiths. We in government should be concerned both with identifying problem areas in need of urgent support but also with ensuring that neighbourhoods who feel real pride in their achievements get the recognition they deserve. We can take a lead in trumpeting the achievements of dedicated community development work. I want to pick out two examples in particular. They both illustrate the way civic action can tackle serious problems and enhance the self-respect of communities.

#### **Scarman Trust: the Poet's Corner Residents Society (PCRS)**

The can-do philosophy of the Scarman Trust is an inspiration to everyone concerned with community development and civil renewal. Take the example of the Poet's Corner area of Hove. The area was run-down, the physical environment was one of decay, the community was unconnected and the area did not feel safe and was somewhat of a no-go area at night. A local resident, Gloria, wanted to make the area more environmentally attractive and bring the community together.

The formation of the PCRS came about in 1998 after Gloria made 10 posters and put them up in shops asking people to give their name and support inside the shop. PCRS designed a walk of the area following plaques on walls about

the poets that gave the area its name, and they began a project to bring multi-cultural people together around the unifying factor of food through eating out together. The involvement of Scarman Trust enabled the launch of an organised Society, and other pots of money became identified and accessed with greater credibility. By 2002, the PCRS could list 10 funders and partners: the Hove YMCA, Police, local councillors, UNICEF, CRASH, BHCC, Volunteer Bureau, Working Together Project and Business Community Project along with the Scarman Trust.

PCRS's current projects include multi-cultural, arts, heritage, environment, annual two-week summer festivals, community health, ICT Training for youth and over 50s, traffic calming and road safety, the Stoneham Park development and the Talkshop which acts as an office and base for all the different projects. So through the drive of an active citizen, the development of a community organisation, the support of a variety of voluntary sector and statutory bodies, a community is transformed for the good of all.

### **Community Action Furness (CAF)**

I visited Community Action Furness recently to join in their 10th Anniversary celebrations. CAF began life in 1993 as a community initiative to help young people in Barrow in Furness, Cumbria. The area had been hit by the decline of heavy engineering and shipbuilding, coupled with the downsizing of traditional employers, and youth unemployment soared.

CAF responded by taking concerted action to strengthen the community's ability to deal with these problems. It did not rely on any single funder but secured financial and material support from 158 different sources over a three-year period. To date, it has set up nearly 20 community enterprises, including a housing and landscaping co-operative, a catering/training business, recycling and tourism projects, arts and craft workshop, and security for old people. Over 90 jobs were created and between 300 and 400 people a year received training.

CAF is already generating 55% of its income through its own activities, and it aims to increase that to 70%. What has impressed me is the commitment of members of CAF to come together and do something about their predicament. They would not give in to despair but rallied local people to

take action to improve their condition. To note that they have done well in devoting their own energies to solving their problems is not to suggest that communities can be left to their own devices. On the contrary, it illustrates vividly why the government must play its part to ensure that the efforts made by community groups are given reliable support to maintain their success.

## • Civil renewal through community cohesion

Communities are more able to organise themselves to tackle their common problems if they are not divided by mutual suspicion or misunderstanding of diverse cultures. The pursuit of civil renewal therefore needs to be backed by a resolute commitment to break down barriers to the realisation of our shared citizenship.

The Home Office Community Cohesion Pathfinders Programme is making available £6m to build real life examples of mainstreaming community cohesion in core service delivery in 37 local authorities. Furthermore, the Department for Education and Skills has made additional funding available<sup>1</sup> to support Home Office work on community cohesion by helping schools to be more community focused. Funding is to be allocated to LEAs in local authority areas that are currently either pathfinders or shadow pathfinders for the Home Office community cohesion programme. Where there are clear fractures within the community, schools will be encouraged to take active measures to provide services that will build bridges, particularly where the school itself has a pupil population that does not reflect that of the wider population.

Our Connecting Communities grant scheme has played an important part in tackling racial exclusion at the grassroots level. 75 projects will run from 2003 to 2006, including, for example, the Wellingborough Race Equality Council Positive Images scheme which will improve the understanding people of diverse backgrounds in Northamptonshire have of other cultures, and build social cohesion between these groups and between different generations. It is by setting a clear legal framework for citizenship, and developing practical initiatives to promote its realisation that we will strengthen communities through strengthening their cross-cultural relationships.

1 *Amounts for 2005-2006 are provisional and are subject to the outcome of the next Spending Review.*

Cultural institutions such as museums also have a responsibility to respond to the changing needs and interests of local communities. Through innovative use of their collections, they can help promote powerful messages about embracing the rich diversity of our cultural heritage. A shared appreciation of our heritage can contribute to removing a sense of alienation in communities, especially when the wider community is involved in developing the plans and proposals for their neighbourhood. DCMS' Renaissance in the Regions programme is giving museums the resources to invest in training and support for volunteers from local communities. In museums across the country from Wolverhampton to Hackney, there are exhibitions and programmes, developed in partnership with the community, that educate and break down cultural barriers.

### **Fighting discrimination**

What we must remember is that cultural diversity is not incompatible with common social purpose. All the great religions in the world teach us to treat others as we would want ourselves to be treated by them. The common thread of our humanity leads us to both a respect for our cultural differences and a recognition of our shared values – such as the obligation to avoid unnecessary suffering.

I want to make it absolutely clear that discrimination and hatred against others on racial, ethnic or religious grounds are repugnant and unacceptable. Such attitudes and behaviour threaten our common good and cannot be tolerated. I will press on relentlessly to root them out.

But this ongoing challenge must be combined with longer term objectives. In the longer term the best way to counter bigotry is to build better understanding within and between communities. The government is involving different faiths so they can each bring their distinct perspective in helping to meet common needs. I have set up the Faith Communities Unit in the Home Office to promote engagement with faith groups and local leaders who are so important in developing the skills and confidence of their members to play an active role in society. A Steering Group has been looking specifically at how faith groups can have a greater input into policy.

Staff in the Immigration & Nationality Directorate are being encouraged to engage more with local schools about immigration issues and promote better understanding of diversity and difference within our country. And we will continue to explore how we can support groups which strengthen diversity and help to tackle social concerns. The support we gave to Derby Council for

Voluntary Services, for example, has helped to enhance the capacity of local elderly Asian women to run their own self-help groups and influence the way health services are delivered to meet their needs. This demonstrates what active public consumerism can mean in practice by connecting communities with the NHS.

### **Integration of new arrivals**

The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act of 2002 requires all those legal residents seeking citizenship to have a knowledge of one of the official languages of the United Kingdom and a knowledge about life in the United Kingdom. Proposals are now being considered to bring together the attainment of legal citizenship and the capacity to play an active part as a citizen. This will involve community groups collaborating with educational authorities and local government to enhance mutual understanding and promote joint working.

I also want to build on the schemes which have been developed to support integration of refugees and other new arrivals. Many of these schemes are aimed at supporting the involvement of local communities, for example through mentoring schemes, in helping refugees and other immigrants settle and contribute to the economic, social and cultural life of the country and the local area.

As part of this commitment, we are currently developing a more closely managed process for “move-on” arrangements for refugees from NASS supported accommodation, and later accommodation centres. This will enable local authorities to plan more effectively for the arrival of new refugees within their area, including working with the local community to provide mentors, focusing on opportunities for developing English language and employment skills. We are also keen to see refugees take an active interest in the welfare of their local community by undertaking voluntary activity.

We currently fund more than 70 projects in this area across the country. These projects are subject to extensive evaluation so we can identify how the services they provide can be improved, developed or replicated. This process ensures that we find out what works, how it works, and why it works and informs our future funding as well as that of public and charitable funders. And we continue to emphasize the need to partner with the local community in delivering real change. The multi-agency project for refugee integration in Manchester, for example, is funded to promote settlement within the city by ensuring that refugees have access to necessary services and are supported through local networks and community groups.

## Partnership in meeting public needs

People want and expect services to be tailored to their needs, to be flexible and responsive, and to be addressing the issues of today rather than yesterday. But will this be best achieved by providers responding solely to the demands of individuals, and to the resources those individuals are prepared to spend individually? Or have we not learnt the lessons of the 1980s when entire communities were devastated, when people's entire sense of identity, as well as their purchasing power, was undermined overnight? Issues here were very much about whether government was prepared to help people through rapid change and global pressures and to assist in managing that process over a timescale which allowed social as well as economic consequences to be handled both with humanity and in a planned approach that used resources most effectively. Instead, throughout the 1980s in major traditional industries such as steel, engineering and mining, it was the public purse that had to pick up the negative consequences of change rather than investment in making that change both acceptable and creative in finding new forms of work, new areas of enterprise and the re-invigoration of areas, and the dignity of individuals which maintains both motivation and morale. Instead the Welfare State, much maligned at the time, was actually used, in particular through Incapacity Benefit, to prevent wholesale political revolt and complete social disintegration. The consequences, however, are still being felt today in our efforts to reinvigorate and restore the social capital which was undermined at the time.

Clearly the state has a duty to help communities cope with the impact of economic shocks. But the civil renewal agenda also raises wider economic questions, such as how should we understand consumerism in the 21st century. Consumerism is conventionally thought of in relation to individuals seeking to acquire private goods on the most favourable terms they can individually obtain. But people consume public as well as private goods. We need to ask, what are the terms on which public services are produced and consumed which would be most favourable, not to any particular individuals, but to communities as a whole? To answer such a question we have to shift from viewing the public as a collection of individual purchasers, to viewing them as communities of citizens. The starting point of this, as I have outlined in Section 2 of this pamphlet, is the development of active citizens, which then needs to be supported, as we have just seen in

Section 3, by the strengthening of community groups, networks and relationships. This now takes us to the crucial point where this new thinking has to be completed – how government at all levels, central and local, approaches the provision of public services.

Working together and providing together ensures two things. First, that we have a safety net at times of great and urgent need. Second, that the kind of things which are less urgent but we need only at particular times of our life, can be provided in a much more cost-effective and all-embracing manner. One reason for providing these things together is so we can share the cost of broad-based provision, as social justice demands. But there is also another reason, which is that supporting public services in this way partly defines the kind of community we want to be – the kind in which services which are necessary to any civilised community are not left to the vagaries of individual transactions.

My experience in the Home Office confirms that this is the only viable future. Community safety, for example, cannot be maintained through being broken down into individuals pursuing their own ends regardless of the overall impact of their decisions. Indeed, in all the different examples I draw out below, it is clear that communities cannot be supported in meeting their needs if the members of those communities do not pull together in sustaining that support. And this is true right across government.

Take the example of when people need to be moved from private hospital care into acute high dependency units, which all but a very few of the most sophisticated private sector hospitals in this country do not and cannot provide. In a wholly private system such as the United States, it is only the very wealthy who are able to get the best possible and technologically advanced treatment, whereas in a system like our own which is based on mutuality, it is need rather than ability to pay which entitles people to benefit from the best treatment we can collectively afford. Of course, in less acute services, people will turn to the private sector, for instance, for quick and easy cataract operations or hip replacements. But we need to make sure that people don't feel they have to go outside the publicly-funded and publicly-provided services if they don't want to – by making sure we are providing the highest possible quality, flexibility, and responsiveness in delivering those services. If we can achieve this, people will be committed to continuing to fund those services, knowing that they and not just those who are most disadvantaged, can rely on them when they need to.

In recognising the civic dimension of public consumerism, we accept that any government, be it central or local, can only truly succeed if it works in partnership

with active citizens, community groups and local institutions. Without the effective engagement of the latter, we risk setting the wrong priorities or making changes which could not be sustained without the efforts of the communities concerned. The challenge is to find the right balance between national accountability for upholding standards and levels of provision across the whole country, and local accountability for enhanced flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of different communities.

## Civil renewal and the Home Office

The Home Office has a critical role in spreading and embedding the ethos of civil renewal, because a sense of safety and cohesion is integral to the building of strong and active communities across the country. The Civil Renewal Unit is now in place to establish and develop the Active Citizenship Centre (see Section 2) and ensure that policies and practices consistently take into account the need to advance citizenship, strengthen communities, and deliver in partnership with communities. The Unit will draw attention to new ideas and good practice examples of effective engagement with citizens and communities, and provide a focal point for collaborating with other Government Departments and key stakeholders. It will also assist me in monitoring and assessing progress across the Home Office, and examine how a comprehensive programme of training and development can be introduced for civil servants whose work requires skills and understanding relating to community engagement. Set out below are just some examples of the important progress already being made and the direction in which we will continue to travel.

### • Policing and Police Reform

#### Police Reform

One major area of our own challenge of change is police reform. We picked up and completed a decade old programme of radical reform to pay and regulations, and to the management and delivery of the service. This included the Police Reform Act 2002 which followed the White Paper of the previous December, which laid out our policies very clearly. We are now engaged with phase two. On 4 November this year we published the second phase of our reform agenda in the form of a consultation paper on accountability and responsibility at local level, and the relationship between local policing and national policy. I have been heartened by the positive response to the issues set out in *Civil Renewal: A New Agenda* around police reform and accountability. In the last six months we have:

- strengthened the effectiveness of police authorities' engagement with communities, within the current statutory framework. Three police authority pilot areas have been identified (Cheshire, Merseyside and Northumbria) that will test new ways of engaging with communities. We expect the pilots to go live early in the New Year. The learning which emerges from this exercise will feed into the overarching work of a Practitioner Panel, flagged up in *Civil Renewal: A New Agenda*, which met for the first time in October. The Panel will serve to identify, collate and disseminate good practice in the area of citizen focused policing and community engagement.
- ensured that police performance data is available on-line to police forces and authorities who are able to access regular updates on performance and crime statistics. The provision of better information on community safety issues is a pre-requisite for increasing community engagement in policing and assisting local bodies such as police authorities to carry out their role in scrutinising the performance of their police forces.
- published the National Policing Plan for 2004-07<sup>2</sup> which stresses the key importance of the civil renewal agenda to the delivery of policing services in England and Wales and makes clear that the Government expects police forces and authorities to treat as a key priority the provision of a citizen focused service to the public, especially victims and witnesses, which responds to the needs of individuals and communities and inspires confidence in the police particularly amongst minority ethnic communities.
- launched a major consultation exercise on the future direction of police reform with the publication, in November, of *Policing: Building Safer Communities Together*.<sup>3</sup> The consultation paper explores a range of issues across four key, inter-linked themes - increasing community engagement, strengthening accountability arrangements, improving the operational effectiveness of policing and further modernising the police service. I am expecting to receive next year more refined proposals, and further consultation will take place prior to legislation for substantial alteration to the present framework for policing in England and Wales. We want to move beyond traditional notions of policing simply by *consent* to policing with the active *cooperation* of the public.

2 Published on 4 November 2003; available at [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

3 Published on 4 November 2003; available at [www.policereform.gov.uk](http://www.policereform.gov.uk)

## Neighbourhood Watch

I want to see the network of local Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators expand across the country to become a vibrant network of voices and leaders for their communities. Each of them should become a focal point for discussions and dissemination of ideas and information concerning the safety of their neighbourhood. This would therefore not demand more of those who have taken on this role than they were prepared to give, but to try and enhance the way that two-way communication can engage with prevention as well as relying on vigilance, and to mobilise the community as has happened in a number of areas to act as volunteers in particular projects with the police, to act as eyes and ears, and where appropriate to communicate easily and quickly to facilitate the police reacting more speedily. Again, it is possible to combine the passive neighbourliness that constitutes many of the Neighbourhood Watch schemes with the active volunteering and commitment to partnership of more proactive groups going the extra mile. We are examining whether email can help those in government, who are working on crime reduction to communicate directly with Watch co-ordinators and receive feedback.

## Special Constables

I also want to encourage further use of the skills and knowledge within local communities. Police forces can set up community accreditation schemes to give formal recognition to appropriate community safety work in their areas. Local businesses and community groups can then seek accredited status for their employees to enable more effective communication with the police. We also need to work with organisations such as the new Security Industry Authority to see how they can help support the development of the extended police family. For example, how those who are already engaged in providing security services might be encouraged to develop their skills to enable them to undertake other roles such as Special Constable.

The business community and trade unions have a vital role to play in this by working with local Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships, and by offering practical support and encouragement to people to get involved as Special Constables or through other volunteering opportunities (through, for example, the provision of additional leave for volunteering). The police service should be looking at how they can use people's specific skills and knowledge to target particular areas or crimes. For example, the Metropolitan Police is currently looking at a scheme with leading retailers under which employees who are Special Constables might be given paid leave, with these volunteers deployed to patrol retail areas, reducing business crime

and providing a reassuring uniformed police presence for the public. We are looking with the trade union movement at how we might develop the concept of health and safety representatives more broadly so that “security” would be part of the remit where this was appropriate, with the appropriate training and necessary accreditation.

## • Criminal Justice Reform

Reform of the criminal justice system will continue to address the challenge of developing more effective community engagement. Justice is not something far removed from ordinary people, the individuals and communities affected by crime. A more open and engaged process will give people the basis for confidence in the CJS. Ordinary people have a right to see for themselves how the CJS is working on their behalf. And they need to play a part in solving the problems created by crime in their areas - because they are often best placed to do it.

Our restorative justice strategy, published in July 2003, set out how restorative approaches are being developed in the criminal justice system, as an innovative way of giving both victims and communities more of a say in the process. One role of the CJS is to support and facilitate their action at local level, often in partnership with other agencies - rather than to displace it. We need to ensure there are resources in place to allow local people to take responsibility for dealing with local problems, as well as providing the “backstop” of public protection. The result will be not just a more effective CJS which people trust - but stronger and more active communities.

To encourage more effective community engagement we need to increase public confidence in the Criminal Justice System. In 2000-2001 only 20 per cent of crimes resulted in a perpetrator being brought to justice. This is not good enough if we are serious about reducing crime and fear of crime in our communities. We have therefore introduced provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 2003 which will rebalance the system in favour of victims, witnesses and communities and deliver justice for all, by building greater trust and credibility. They will put an end to ‘revolving door’ justice, whereby offenders are arrested, charged and bailed only to commit further offences.

The Criminal Justice Act sets out a strategy to modernise the entire criminal justice system from end to end - from better detection, to effective sentencing, right through to the rehabilitation of offenders. Under the new sentencing framework, all prison sentences will include periods on supervision in the community following release, to enhance public protection and reduce re-offending. Community sentences will be more flexible and may be tailored to

meet the needs of individual offenders and new sentences for dangerous offenders will be introduced that provide for the indeterminate detention of those most serious sexual and violent offenders. These reforms will promote transparency, increase public confidence and lay the foundations for more community engagement.

As well as reforming the whole CJS we are also looking at how we can improve the delivery of justice at a local level. Initial funding was announced in September for the first US-style community justice centre for Britain. It is expected to be set up in Liverpool and it will serve the local community as a one-stop centre to tackle crime, dispensing justice to perpetrators of anti-social behaviour and low-level crime. The Justice Centre will be closely linked to the local community, with faster access to custody alternatives such as drug treatment, restorative justice and debt counselling. It will act as a hub for crime prevention information, advice and guidance, and will be the base for local activities, such as community projects for young people. Criminal justice agencies and social services will be set up around the courtroom, to ensure that offenders have quick and easy access to the support needed to get them back on track. More information about the Red Hook Community Justice Project in the United States can be found at [http://www.courtinnovation.org/demo\\_09rhjc.html](http://www.courtinnovation.org/demo_09rhjc.html)

In addition to the development of Community Justice Centres there are several other ways in which we want to bring the administration of criminal justice closer to local communities:

- Increasing openness and accountability, by letting the public know more about how the criminal justice system works and enabling them to complain if they are not satisfied
- Seeking communities' views and changing services to reflect those views
- Increasing participation through volunteering and through engaging citizens directly in deciding how to address criminal justice issues locally.

Proposals in the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Bill constitute the biggest overhaul of domestic violence law in 30 years, heralding tough powers for the police and the courts to protect victims and prosecute abusers. They would also strengthen the rights of victims and witnesses, ensuring they get the help, support and protection they need. Again they build on the Government's ongoing reform of the criminal justice system, rebalancing the process in favour of victims and witnesses.

Ministers from the Home Office and Department for Constitutional Affairs, and the Attorney General will be considering key proposals to drive forward community engagement across the Criminal Justice System. These include:

- Improvements to the framework for community engagement
- Delivering culture change in the judiciary, magistracy and prosecution
- Addressing the balance in sentencing between national consistency and local responsiveness

## ● **Correctional Services**

Communities can help to provide the structures and support which offenders need on release from prison and when under community supervision. Better links with voluntary and community groups and better engagement with citizens also makes the correctional services more aware of the issues relevant to their local communities, better integrated with them and more accountable to them. And the correctional services have a part to play in making offenders more active citizens themselves, through encouraging them to undertake voluntary work in prison or to put something back into the community through appropriate reparation schemes. At any one time up to 1,500 prisoners are carrying out community projects.

It is estimated that there are up to 10,000 volunteers working in the youth justice system. In addition, the Youth Justice Board has succeeded in recruiting and training over 5,000 people from local communities to volunteer to serve on Youth Referral Panels and help administer community justice. It has also managed to involve more people who are representative of their local communities. Another 1,800 volunteers serve on the Independent Monitoring Boards, providing a link between local communities and prisons. Prison establishments themselves work with the Samaritans and around 900 local organisations on a wide range of activities including suicide prevention, resettlement, drug/alcohol treatment/advice, befriending prisoners, counselling and relationship support.

The National Probation Service also has a significant track record in encouraging community involvement and, in particular, is positively encouraging greater involvement as part of the new Enhanced Community Punishment Scheme. This scheme is dependant upon the availability of local work projects and local Probation Areas are engaged with a wide range of local charities and other organisations which provide the service with work projects.

I believe that more can be done. Responses to our restorative justice strategy, for example, suggested ways in which we can involve communities more in

deciding the focus of offender's reparative work in the community. There were also suggestions based on the success of referral order panels – chaired by community members – in the youth justice system, for developing a similar model for adult offenders.

Following the conclusion of the consultation on *Youth Justice – the Next Steps*, we will now explore how Youth Offending Teams and local authorities can work together to identify suitable community reparation projects, consulting local people in the process. The aim is to boost the supply of local projects which tackle offending behaviour while at the same time doing something useful for local people, and improving public confidence in youth justice.

Other areas where there may be scope for increasing community involvement and engagement with individual citizens include *circles of support and accountability*, mentoring and - probably the most fruitful area - the resettlement/rehabilitation agenda, where there is clearly a role for the community and voluntary sector in delivering services and possibly in modelling different ways of managing offenders and linking them into the services they need to help reduce the chances of re-offending. We will also look to develop further initiatives such as *Local Crime, Community Sentence*, which involves presenting a case study to groups of the public and getting them to think about the sentencing process in order to increase their understanding of the issues involved and the options available.

In relation to other aspects which are dependent on the outcome of the Review of the Correctional Services, I will return to these when I respond to the Review's recommendations.

### ● **Tackling drug-related problems**

We have been monitoring what Drug Action Teams across the country do to engage local communities. Encouraging progress is being made in a variety of ways:

- New models for engaging communities (in two joint New Deal for Communities Areas/Drug Action Teams projects) have been developed in helping run local programmes (the research findings on their impact will be available in 2004)
- £18.4 m of Communities Against Drugs and related funding has been awarded directly for community development activity on drugs with evaluation now being carried out

- A grants scheme for BME community groups to undertake research into the health needs of their communities and generate ideas for service improvements has been developed and run via the Department of Health
- We have developed a range of intervention programmes which have community development activity built in as an integral part, such as Positive futures, the sport diversion project, and Blueprint, which is an education programme

Building on these, we will be developing a comprehensive community engagement strategy on drugs. It will also look at the degree to which different initiatives can be shown to impact on reduction of harm from drugs expressed in reduced crime and increased treatment. The New Deal for Communities Areas research identified above (Tower Hamlets and west Middlesbrough), for example, should demonstrate that through involving community members, it is possible to deliver services in a quicker and more supported way and to secure community support for otherwise unpopular programmes such as needle exchanges, hostels, treatment services, etc, and that it also leads to greater reporting of crime to the police. We have already witnessed success in new, different and effective treatment services being created. These have included specialist services (for example the Asian Community in Tower Hamlets, and services for women in Middlesbrough); gateway services – where a local access point or satellite assessment clinic has been set up, or a worker attached to the local GP: or outreach work.

## ● Reducing Crime

Many of our emerging initiatives are taking on board the importance of supporting and engaging communities in reducing crime and disorder. This is reflected by what I have mentioned above regarding our work with the reform of the police and the wider criminal justice system, and what we do with offenders and drug problems. The overall impact of these initiatives will undoubtedly also depend on how well they are joined up at the local level. There are two areas in which I plan to have further development.

First, I want to revisit the way the police, local authorities and others that comprise the membership of local Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) work together to involve communities in pursuit of their objectives. Working with communities to reduce crime is not an optional tool, but must become the routine way to do our business. We cannot build community safety if local people do not take ownership of what is done in their name. To help embed the practices of community engagement in CDRPs, a programme is being developed to identify and apply more consistently good practices, and align what

we are doing to related initiatives across the Home Office and in other government departments, particularly the work ODPM leads on developing the community engagement role of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

We need to help communities to build the capacity to take responsibility for their problems as well as to hold the professionals to account. At the same time we need to equip the professional to work in different ways with communities and to have a clear citizen focus. This is being addressed in the current consultation on police reform. In the meantime, we are supporting a project in Nottingham that will put some of these innovative ideas into practice over a 12-month trial. This will be focused on the neighbourhood level and will link community action on crime with housing, environment, health, education and other important issues.

Secondly, I would like to look at the scope for using restorative justice (RJ) approaches to prevent and deal with more minor crime and anti-social behaviour in the community. When the community is suffering from unacceptable behaviour, firm action needs to be taken, and the Anti-social Behaviour Action Plan sets out how I intend to make sure this takes place in order to ensure that communities are protected. But at the same time, restorative approaches, like community conferencing, can bring together everyone affected by such behaviour with those responsible for it to find a positive way forward. They can provide the community with a safe forum in which to raise issues about how they live together. That can stop unacceptable behaviour, and other people's responses to it, escalating in a cycle of resentment that leads to more serious crime. With dialogue, problems that arise from misunderstanding and differences of perception can simply evaporate. I know that some police forces, Youth Offending Teams (YoTs) and mediation services have had successful experience of this approach, and we plan to assess how that could be built on and more widely applied.

A scheme in East Manchester, for example, managed by Victim Support and supported by New Deal for Communities has enabled people to talk to each other through the conferencing structures and reduce police call outs along the way. Residents have worked through the issues, and reached a written agreement for the future - which all parties have kept. A team at the Sefton Centre for Restorative Practice, co-funded by Sefton YoT and Sefton Children's Fund, has had success in using restorative community conferences to deliver Acceptable Behaviour Conferences to tackle ASB. They have found that the use of RJ is very effective in creating an environment in which the young people can understand

the impact they have had on their community, and take responsibility for their actions.

## Local government and community engagement

“Local government has a vital part to play in persuading people to relate their local experience in workplaces or communities to a broader advance to a better society.” In the twenty years since I wrote that when I was leader of Sheffield City Council (*Building from the Bottom*, Fabian Tract 491), I have not come across any reason to change my mind. In fact, in recent years, many local authorities have demonstrated just how innovative and effective they can be in bringing different public service bodies and local communities together to work out how best to meet local needs.

The Home Office is in discussion with the LGA (Local Government Association) and ODPM (the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) to develop a joint approach to build on the work of those local authorities which are leading the way for civil renewal in their areas. ODPM’s research report on public participation in local government (2002) shows widespread use of sophisticated techniques for community engagement. I have no doubt that local government at its best can transform community life and revive the values of solidarity, mutuality and democratic self-determination. And what is a common feature is that the local authorities which work best are the ones which work through effective partnerships of statutory, business and VCS (voluntary & community sector) organisations, and local people to promote civic engagement and strengthen community life. I want to see similarly vibrant partnerships established across the country.

Community-focused partnerships are indispensable if the latent energy of a neighbourhood can be drawn together to tackle the problems which could otherwise so easily overwhelm its residents. Change, for better or worse, is not something we can manage out of society. What we can do, locally and centrally, is to prepare together to respond to new challenges. On the Slade Green Estate in Bexley, for example, the Council led a partnership to tackle crime and disorder with input from Primary Care Trusts, the Housing Association, the police, the local Voluntary Services Council and residents through local forums. In addition to £210,000 made available through the Government’s Communities Against Drugs fund, the Council contributed an extra £500,000 to support crime prevention measures. 72 per cent of local residents now think that their council is doing a good job at working with residents to solve neighbourhood problems, 98 per cent of them think the police are good at responding to community concerns, and recorded crime has dropped in one year by 30 per cent (2003 figures).

This is just one out of many examples which can be cited to demonstrate that effective engagement of communities can significantly help to reduce crime, enhance community safety and build confidence in the criminal justice system.

Examples of the impact of community engagement are not confined to the large metropolitan areas either. In Haverhill in Suffolk, the Town, Borough and County Councils worked in partnership with young people, local community groups and statutory service providers to regenerate the town. Over the period 1995-2000, significant improvements were achieved across the board.

Unemployment dropped, and business confidence grew. Young people set up the Haverhill Youth Council, ran their own community newsletter, and contributed their ideas to a housing project which turned a derelict Victorian school building into affordable housing for young people. Other notable activities included the development of the Haverhill Clinic Users Group, the creation of Forum 55+ by older residents to discuss public issues from their perspective, and an umbrella group for voluntary organisations was formed. Access to learning from other parts of the county was increased via IT, and environmental enhancement was delivered in the most deprived estate in the town with the help of local volunteers. Above all, surveys which initially found most young people wanting to leave the town discovered five years later that a large majority saw their future in it.

## Learning the lessons

Although we now have a better understanding of what effective community involvement requires, there is still a long way to go before all those in government, politicians and officials, know how best to involve people in improving public services. For a start, government departments should join up our respective engagement arrangements more effectively. Local people do not want to be asked by countless statutory bodies to participate in numerous overlapping tasks and processes. The Home Office and ODPM have started to collaborate on finding a way to link various processes from central government to strengthen engagement with local areas. This will need to involve other government departments, such as the Department of Health's Patient & Public Involvement Forums, the Department for Constitutional Affairs' Community Legal Partnerships, and others.

Good practices for involvement should be more readily shared. The hugely successful *Planning for Real* technique pioneered by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation in the 1970s, and used by many local authorities effectively to resolve the most contentious development proposals since, remains little known in most parts of the public service. By facilitating discussions at the neighbourhood level in a creative and constructive manner, *Planning for Real* has helped thousands of

people influence public service providers and shape the way their localities are transformed. As one resident on Langley Dale estate, North Shropshire, famously said, “even the children got involved ... they were as good as gold, not the little hooligans we thought they were.”

Given the chance, young people do get to be recognised as vibrant contributors of energy and new ideas to the improvement of their communities. Undoubtedly they should be given more meaningful opportunities to contribute to policy deliberations. Barnsley, for example, has an elected youth council who represent the views of all young people (aged 13-19) who live in the borough – they have meetings every three weeks, discuss issues of concern with other young people and meet with councillors to put forward their views. Two of these currently sit on the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP). It is the UKYP’s aim that by 2006 young people in the UK will be aware that they have their own Youth Parliament, and that they can stand as an MYP if they so wish. The UKYP produces its own Youth Manifesto to which the Government issues a formal response.

When the Home Office issued the consultation paper *Youth Justice – the Next Steps*, we arranged for a version of the document to be produced specifically for children and adapted it into electronic format on 6 websites for children and young people. At the same time the Youth Justice Board ran dedicated focus groups with young offenders to give them a chance to have their say.

More generally, we have considerable experiences to draw from community involvement in the Single Regeneration Budget, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, New Deal for Communities, and Neighbourhood Management. Lessons from these programmes, along with the best examples from Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Local Strategic Partnerships should be promoted more vigorously for adoption or adaptation. The Active Citizenship Centre outlined in Section 2 will play a central role in drawing together and disseminating what we can learn from these different experiences.

Active citizens make strong communities. They do so because in addition to what they contribute themselves, they bring other people and resources into play to solve common problems. The state has a duty to support them, and to support communities undergoing civil renewal. To suggest, as some still do, that the state should jettison more and more of its public responsibilities to enhance individual freedom betrays both a cynical disregard for the consequences of dismantling entitlements to public support, and a fundamental misunderstanding of the value of freedom.

The anarchic freedom for some to thrive at the expense of others is not a value we should celebrate. The freedom to improve our lives individually *and* collectively without losing sight of the common good and our responsibility for others, whether neighbours or strangers, that is worth pursuing. Ultimately, neither government operating on its own nor communities left to fend for themselves can be a viable solution. Active citizens participating responsibly, active government enabling responsibly, this is the key to a sustainable democracy.

It should be clear from what I have set out so far that civil renewal is not a programme, but an on-going ethos to be applied to the development of active citizenship, strengthened communities, and a partnership approach to delivering public services. If both local and central government, both citizens and communities, are really to be brought together through a shared agenda to meet common needs, the ethos of civil renewal must spread throughout the reform of public services.

Of course this will contribute directly to the improvement and reform of the delivery, accountability, and responsiveness of these services. It is, however, also a crucial element in reshaping the whole relationship between government and governed, between decision takers at every level of governance, and those drawing down on and using public services, helping to sustain and regenerate communities and the culture and lifeblood of mutual support in a highly complex 21st century globalised economy.



