

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

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The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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Did you see ...?

Information Professional

The Jul/Aug issue includes a couple of interesting news-stories and articles:

- “A united library service can support UK health agenda”, which looks briefly at the follow-on from a presentation¹ at the CILIP Health Libraries Group Conference in June; CILIP would like to take this forward as a sector-wide conversation which looks at “how libraries and the information sector across the UK can emulate work done in supporting learning and education over the last century, but tailored to health and social care needs.” [p4]
- Farrah Serroukh “Reflecting a sense of self: ethnic representation in children’s books”, which gives the background to the new CLPE report [pp45-47] [see below]

Museums Journal

The September 2018 issue includes:

- Geraldine Kendall Adams “Social welfare” (“Funding news” column), which looks very briefly at social prescribing schemes [p7]
- Rob Sharp “Addressing the housing crisis”, which looks at some examples of museums’ work to support homeless people, including the Museum of Homelessness²; Homeless History Newcastle³; and St Albans Museum’s “Squatlife” exhibition⁴ [p9]
- A brief review of the new National Disability Arts Collection & Archive website⁵ (and also of Network member The Wallace Collection’s new website⁶) [p59]

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Civil society strategy ...

The Government published this major new report⁷ in August 2018:

¹ Andy Wright and Rachel Heydecker “Engaging Libraries”, available as a PowerPoint presentation from:

https://www.cilip.org.uk/members/group_content_view.asp?group=200697&id=746075.

² See: <http://museumofhomelessness.org/>.

³ See: <https://www.facebook.com/HomelessHistNCL/>.

⁴ See: <https://www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/whats-on/squatlife>.

⁵ See: <https://the-ndaca.org/>.

⁶ See: <https://www.wallacecollection.org/>.

⁷ *Civil society strategy: building a future that works for everyone*. Cabinet Office, 2018. Available to download as a pdf (3846 kb) from:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachme>

“This Strategy sets out how government will work with and support civil society in the years to come, so that together we can build a country that works for everyone.

For the purpose of this Strategy, civil society refers to individuals and organisations when they act with the primary purpose of creating social value, independent of state control. By social value we mean enriched lives and a fairer society for all.

The government believes that social value flows from thriving communities. These are communities with strong financial, physical and natural resources, and strong connections between people. This includes public funding, private investment, buildings, and other spaces for a community to use. It also includes trust and goodwill, and the organisations and partnerships that bring people together.

To help communities thrive, the government believes we need to look at five foundations of social value: people, places, the social sector, the private sector, and the public sector.

In the past we have too often thought of these foundations as separate from each other. But when they work together, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Government alone cannot solve the complex challenges facing society, such as loneliness, rough-sleeping, healthy ageing or online safety. Government can help to bring together the resources, policies and people who, between them, can do so.” [p12]

The introduction is quoted at some length here, as it sets out exactly what this report is intending to achieve.

The report begins by highlighting the key recommendations, and then outlines the methods by which the Strategy was developed (which included via online consultation and group workshops).

From the comments received, it became clear that there was a number of meanings of ‘civil society’:

“For the purposes of this Strategy, therefore, we define civil society not by organisational form, but in terms of activity, defined by purpose (what it is for) and control (who is in charge).

Civil society refers to all individuals and organisations, when undertaking activities with the primary purpose of delivering social value, independent of state control.

This definition includes the social sector of volunteers, charities and social enterprises. It excludes a lot of private sector and public sector activity – the private sector work for which the governing purpose is to

deliver profits for owners, for example, or the public sector work delivered solely with statutory resources.” [pp26-27]

What also became clear was the need for better ways of measuring success:

“The government will explore options to develop an empirical and practical knowledge base for evaluating the financial, physical, natural, and social capital of communities.” [p28]

The report has five main chapters (relating to what it identifies as ‘the five foundations of social value’):

- Chapter 1 focuses on the role of citizens in civil society and the importance of a lifetime of contribution to society, with particular reference to the role of young people.
- Chapter 2 presents a vision of ‘place’, and the role of government in supporting local communities.
- Chapter 3 explains the government’s approach to the core of civil society, referred to as the ‘social sector’, comprising charities, voluntary organisations, and social enterprises, including mutuals.
- Chapter 4 outlines the role of government in supporting the contribution of business, finance, and tech to civil society.
- Chapter 5 explains how the government sees the future role of civil society organisations in the delivery of public services. [Taken from p28]

Within these five chapters are included a number of ‘Missions’, each related to key areas of social policy. Rather than go through these in enormous detail, here are the key points from each. (Some of the ‘Missions’ also include recommendations.)

Chapter 1: People

Mission 1: a connected, resourceful society

Includes:

- Loneliness and social connections
- Civil society and disaster response (which includes a Ministerial Statement on policing; and a case study, “Grenfell voluntary, community and social enterprise organisation funding approach”)

Mission 2: People in charge

Includes:

- Active, mobilised citizens: “To realise the vision of a lifetime of contribution, we need active and mobilised citizens who are able and willing to play a responsible role in their communities. We also need the government and public sector agencies to open up and involve people in the decisions that affect their lives and that of their communities.” [p36] Also includes a case study, ‘Community Organisers’: “Community

organising builds relationships and inspires local communities to deliver positive social and political change led by residents. The government has trained 6,500 individual community organisers, including 900 young people, who between 2010 and 2014 listened to over 150,000 residents, worked in over 400 neighbourhoods, and supported over 2,000 community projects which mobilised people to take grassroots action on the issues that they care about.” [p37]

- Government and public sector open to citizen input. Includes: “The government will build up good practice by local authority commissioners working with service users on user-centred and community-led service provision. The government will create a peer network to enable commissioners, voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations, and councillors to share information, learning, and good practice across the country to create a long-term culture change in local authorities.” [p40]

Mission 3: Opportunities for young people

Includes:

- Local youth services – this seems to have been written without taking account of the reality of the current situation: “While the government recognises the priority that local authorities must place on functions such as child protection, it also recognises the transformational impact that youth services and trained youth workers can have, especially for young people facing multiple barriers or disadvantage. The guidance which sets out the statutory duty on local authorities has not been revised since 2012. Much has happened to change the way these services are provided in the intervening years. The government will therefore review the guidance which sets out the statutory duty placed on local authorities to provide appropriate local youth services. We expect that the review will provide greater clarity of government’s expectations, including the value added by good youth work.” [p42]
- Habits of social responsibility: “Alongside providing opportunities, the government also wants to empower young people to shape the future of the country. This means helping them to develop the skills and habits of social responsibility during their childhood and youth.” [p42]
- Helping the most disadvantaged young people, looking primarily at Big Lottery Fund resourcing; working with uniformed youth groups; further involvement of the private sector; and “Given the particular challenges faced by children in care and care leavers, government is launching the care leaver covenant, which provides a way for wider civil society to pledge concrete offers of support to care leavers – such as work experience, internships or mentoring support – that help them to make a smooth transition from care to independence.” [p44]
- Social responsibility in and out of school – includes: “The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will work with the Department for Education to develop proposals to help young people gain the attributes

needed for active and positive citizenship.” [p44] Includes a case study, Team London Young Ambassadors

- Building on our offer for young people
- Young people and national policy design.

Chapter 2: Place

This is where the Strategy begins to develop some of its key themes, for example:

“The government’s vision is that in the future, the public sector will take a more collaborative place-based approach. By working with service providers and the private sector as well as individuals and communities in a place, we will make more sensitive and appropriate policy, achieve better social and economic outcomes and make brilliant places for people to live and work in.

A place-based approach calls on people to work differently. Rather than public servants working in silos accountable to Whitehall, they need to work together and with local communities to co-design services and pool budgets [...]

Key to successful place-based work is involving the voice of local people in the decisions that affect them. People, communities, and services operate in complex systems. Bringing services closer to those they are intended to benefit and putting communities at the heart of their design and delivery can improve how services work and their impact for citizens [...]

Local partnerships involving the local community are key to tackling local crime, including serious violence which is disproportionately concentrated in certain places. There is strong evidence that place-based interventions with proactive prevention activity is successful in reducing crime in these ‘hotspot’ areas. It is crucial that communities including young people living there see this as a shared problem which they are committed to addressing, and that they are given the support and connections with programmes to do this, and this in turn, builds confidence and isolates offenders.” [pp51-52]

Mission 4: Empowerment

Includes:

- ‘Onward devolution’:

“The government has an ambitious programme of devolution. It has sought to decentralise power through structural and legislative changes. The introduction of directly elected mayors with specific powers and responsibilities has enhanced local control and accountability. In addition, the Community Rights introduced

through the Localism Act 2011 created new rights for communities, giving them an opportunity to take into local ownership community assets, shape planning and development in their area and gave options for voluntary and community organisations to deliver local services. Just as the UK is bringing back power over its laws, money, borders, and trade from the European Union, so local places are taking economic, social, and cultural policy away from Westminster and Whitehall.

The government wishes to go further and devolve more power to community groups and parishes. As proposed by the National Association of Local Councils and the Local Government Association there are opportunities for ‘onward’ devolution of service delivery and decision-making beyond the large regions to smaller geographies [...] The government will explore with the National Association of Local Councils and others the option for local ‘charters’ between a principal council, local councils, and community groups setting out respective responsibilities. This could include joint service delivery or the transfer of service delivery responsibilities to local councils, parishes or community groups, the transfer of borough council assets to local councils, or from councils to parishes, and the opportunity for councils or parishes to ‘cluster’, that is to form a consortium with sufficient scale to commission or deliver larger service functions. There are also useful models in other parts of the public sector – notably health and social care systems – which are building formal alliances with the local social sector to co-deliver services.” [pp52-53]

- Participatory democracy – includes: “The government will launch the Innovation in Democracy programme to pilot participatory democracy approaches, whereby people are empowered to deliberate and participate in the public decisions that affect their communities [...] The government will work with local authorities to trial face-to-face deliberation (such as Citizens’ Juries) complemented by online civic tech tools to increase broad engagement and transparency.” [p53]
- Community assets – includes:

“As set out elsewhere [...], the government is exploring means of ensuring community-led enterprises which take over public assets or services are able to secure the funding they need. It is recognised that these initiatives must acquire a genuine asset, not simply a liability, and that they often need non-repayable finance in the form of equity or grants to get going.

Many public libraries have an established track record in providing opportunities to facilitate this. Many are actively developing their role as community hubs bringing together local people, services, and organisations under one roof. There is a growing number of public libraries which are directly run or managed by the communities themselves or as mutuals by the people who work in

them (or as a combination of the two), with varying levels of support from local councils at all levels.

The government will encourage further peer learning and support between mutual and community-managed libraries, and ongoing positive relationships and support between them and their local library authorities. Library services wishing to become mutuals can apply for support funding under the government's Mutuals Support programme.

There are many communities without high-quality facilities and the capacity to manage them. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, in conjunction with the Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government, will design a programme to look at the barriers to and opportunities for more sustainable community hubs and spaces where they are most needed. The government will consult with key partners with a view to launching some pilot projects later in the year." [p54]

Whatever the pros and cons of mutuals, this all ignores the issue of resources (especially with the continued promotion of community-managed libraries).

It also includes a case study, Suffolk Libraries, which seems to conflate being a mutual with having been awarded the Arts Council NPO status.

Mission 5: Investment

Includes:

- Strategic spending: "The government has committed to creating a UK Shared Prosperity Fund once we have left the European Union and European Structural and Investment Funds. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will tackle inequalities between communities by raising productivity, especially in those parts of our country whose economies are furthest behind." [p58]
- New models of finance – this includes, for example: further encouragement for crowdfunding; looking at ways to "[...] increase the use of social impact investment to tackle homelessness, housing for vulnerable groups, and the regeneration of places at risk of falling behind." [p59]

"The government will work with Big Society Capital and others to develop new models of community funding, which bring together social impact investment with philanthropic funding, crowdfunding, community shares and corporate investment to create substantial place-based investment programmes." [p60]

- Supporting local sports, arts and culture:

“The argument which runs through this Strategy is that government action should focus on boosting, and bringing together, the resources of a community, so that life becomes better for everyone and social problems are prevented or reduced. This is an argument for public spending on civil society, and it applies as much to local government and to other independent commissioners of local services, such as Clinical Commissioning Groups or Police and Crime Commissioners, as it does to central government.

The government recognises that finance is critically pressing for civil society in many places. Sustained, long-term investment in the social fabric of places is vitally necessary.

Through the Cultural Development Fund, a commitment in the government’s Industrial Strategy, funding is provided to towns and cities across England to support them to develop and implement transformative culture-led economic growth and productivity strategies by investing in place-based cultural initiatives. The fund will support place-shaping by investing in culture, heritage, and the creative industries to make places attractive to live in, work, and visit.

12 Local Delivery Pilots which, between them, will receive up to £100 million of Sport England investment over the next four years, are a brand new approach to addressing the inactivity challenge. The Local Delivery Pilots will trial innovative ways of building healthier and more active communities across England. They will adopt a ‘whole systems’ approach, bringing together a broad range of organisations from different sectors including health, travel, and education to tackle inactivity and reach underrepresented groups.” [p60]

Includes case studies, “Greater Manchester Combined Authority – the role of place, community engagement and public sector reform”; and “West Midlands Combined Authority – towards an inclusive growth model”.

Chapter 3: The Social Sector

This chapter looks at charities and social enterprises.

Mission 6: the voice of civil society

Includes:

- The rules on campaigning:

“Some civil society organisations believe that the space for campaigning and advocacy has closed in recent years, creating a ‘chilling effect’ on civil society campaigning and advocacy [...]

Evidence from the engagement exercise is that the government should improve its engagement with civil society, consult charities, and community groups, consider what is said and be transparent about decision-making, include diverse civil society voices in policy development, and that beneficiaries especially young people should be engaged and involved in policy making in a meaningful way.” [p70]

This section also includes the statement: “The government is ambitious to play a key role internationally in standing up for free speech and a vibrant civil society.” [p70]

- Hearing from civil society – this section continues looking at the ‘chilling effect’:

“The government is determined that charities and social enterprises should be fully confident in their right to speak in public debates, and to have a strong campaigning and advocacy role. It is right that we have government grant standards which prevent taxpayers’ money being spent on political campaigning or lobbying. However, simply being in receipt of taxpayers’ money should not inhibit charities from making their voices heard on matters of policy or practice.” [p70]

To do this: “The government will renew its commitment to the principles of the Compact. The Compact is a document that sets out a series of principles and commitments governing the relationship between the social sector and the government.” [p71]

Mission 7: funding and financing the social sector

Includes:

- Diversifying funding and finance – this includes:

“The government will continue to explore opportunities, working with sector partners, to make access to funding and finance easier, particularly for the small social sector and community organisations. This will include exploring the potential of technology.” [p73]

“The government also supports building the awareness and understanding of social investment through its partnership with the Access Foundation to fund GoodFinance.org.uk. Good Finance provides charities and social enterprises with a comprehensive digital resource to help them effectively navigate the social investment market.

There is also a growing movement of what is called blended finance, in which a mixture of funding from different sources is made available, on a variety of terms, to single projects or initiatives.

The government has partnered on funds like the Arts Impact Fund, Dementia Discovery Fund, Northern Cultural Regeneration Social Investment Fund, and Building Connections Fund which have all attracted a mix of funding from different sources to collectively focus on a specific theme or issue.” [p74]

- Philanthropy
- Tax and regulation – for example: “Reducing restrictions on the size and type of projects which can claim Social Investment Tax Relief could accelerate communities taking ownership of important community assets and expand the use of small scale finance for community energy projects. In these areas Social Investment Tax Relief could play a bigger role in helping social sector organisations to be more financially resilient.” [p75]

Mission 8: leadership, support and regulation

Includes:

- Leadership – which looks at, for example: training and skills development for trustees and chief executives; widening the diversity amongst trustees.
- Local support system: “Just as business depends on available infrastructure to flourish, like transport and finance systems, social sector organisations depend on an appropriate support system. This includes the right people and networks, information and advice, knowledge and skills, adequate and affordable places to work from, and opportunities and incentives to collaborate.” Therefore:

“The government will convene key stakeholders to explore how we can collectively help to develop strong local support systems for social sector organisations. This process needs to look at what has worked in the past, what is working now, and how this can be improved. It includes considering alternative models of support, drawing on capacity, knowledge, skills, and resources from across sectors.” [p78]

- Charity regulation, transparency and safeguarding.

Mission 9: a social sector confident with digital

Includes:

“The government will promote the role of technology in helping to create social good, emphasising its ability to drive growth, enrich lives, promote Britain and address policy challenges across government and society. To ensure that civil society is up to the challenge, the government will invest in digital skills in a number of ways.

The government has recognised the synergies between technology and cultural organisations in our Digital Culture Report, and have thereby invested £1.1 million through Arts Council England to create a Digital Culture Network. This Network will share expertise and best practice to build digital capability in arts organisations, facilitating partnerships and collaboration between its funded organisations and the tech sector [...]

The government has also committed Arts Council England to work with Heritage Lottery Fund to create a Digital Maturity Index for the cultural sector, to enable organisations to understand and benchmark their own digital capability and set plans in place to make improvements.” [p84]

Chapter 4: The Private Sector

Includes:

Mission 10: responsible business

- Supporting responsible businesses: “The government’s vision is one where responsible businesses will play a key role as a force for good in our society.” [p90] “The government will build on its conversation with the business community and others as to what it is to be a responsible business in our society, at home and abroad. The government will champion the positive contribution that business can make to society, and the importance of this for long-term business success.” [p91]
- Supporting Socially and Environmentally Purposeful Businesses: “Across the UK, a growing number of businesses are adopting purposeful business models, looking to meet citizens’ changing expectations of the social contribution of business. These businesses are moving beyond a focus on ‘corporate social responsibility’ as a distinct function alongside their corporate activity, and placing positive social and environmental impact at the core of their operations.” [p91]
- Updating corporate governance
- Partnerships with business on social challenges: “The Grand Challenges set out in the Industrial Strategy (on artificial intelligence and data economy, clean growth, the future of mobility, and ageing society) are set to transform industries and societies around the world. By addressing the Grand Challenges, we will make the UK world-leading in the industries of the future, and competitive in the face of the most significant global economic trends. The Grand Challenges represent a new approach and encourage collaboration between the government, business, academia, and civil society.” [p93]
- Promoting visibility and transparency: this includes a section on the role of the UN Sustainable Development Goals – “The government recognises the increasing business interest in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [...], particularly as a means to frame and communicate what they do for society and the environment to wide audiences.” [p94]

Mission 11: finance for good

Includes:

- Social impact investment, which includes a section on the Corley Review⁸
- Community shares: “Community shares is a sustainable social investment model that gives communities an opportunity to purchase a stake in their local community enterprise. It empowers communities by giving members, as part-owners, a direct say in the success of an enterprise, encouraging them to play an active part in its future.” [p100]
- Financial inclusion: “[...] the government will direct funds for the establishment of a new Financial Inclusion organisation responsible for deploying £55 million of funding from dormant accounts. It will primarily address the problem of access to affordable credit and alternatives. Over three million customers in the UK currently use high cost credit. They can struggle to access mainstream credit and therefore turn to expensive credit provided by payday lenders, doorstep credit or rent-to-own services. There are social alternatives to high cost credit which promote financial resilience in customers as well as helping to cover short-term expenses. This funding will help the affordable credit sector to grow and support alternatives, through both investments and grants that support existing and new organisations.” [pp100-101]

Mission 12: the role of technology

Includes:

- Tech for good: “The government will continue to champion technology as a real force for social good. We will explore what more can be done to harness the power of technology to address complex social issues, including but not limited to tackling loneliness, healthy ageing, online safety, and digital inclusion.” [p102]

⁸ “In 2016, government appointed Elizabeth Corley, Vice Chair of Allianz Global Investors, to chair an Advisory Group looking at how to grow a culture of social impact investment and savings in the UK.” [taken from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/growing-a-culture-of-social-impact-investing-in-the-uk>].

Full report: *Growing a culture of social impact investing in the UK*. Advisory Group [on social impact investing], 2017. Available to download as a pdf (2560 kb) from:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664321/Full_Report_Growing_a_Culture_of_Social_Impact_Investing_in_the_UK.pdf.

Executive summary: *Growing a culture of social impact investing in the UK*. Advisory Group [on social impact investing], 2017. Available to download as a pdf (729 kb) from:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/659079/Executive_Summary_-_Growing_a_Culture_of_Social_Impact_Investing_in_the_UK.pdf.

Chapter 5: The Public Sector

The introduction to this chapter reinforces the Government's continuing approach to funding:

“Many of our public services began life independent of government. Individuals and communities developed their own responses to the challenges or injustices they saw around them. The probation service, the National Health Service, and Jobcentre Plus all have their origins in models of charitable and mutual responsibility.

Over time, government stepped in to support and extend the work done by communities and private philanthropy. This helped ensure high standards and universal access, and created a system – the welfare state – which people could trust.

Over the last generation, government has introduced mechanisms intended to deliver greater value for taxpayers' money in public services, and to broaden the supply of services to include independent providers. These mechanisms, including the use of competitive tendering, have helped stimulate a market in which commercial players, as well as charities and social enterprises, take part. The government now spends £200 billion per year on outsourced public services [...] The benefits for the taxpayer are clear: independent provision by a diverse range of suppliers can offer better value for money, open up to innovative solutions to policy challenges, and give public services access to new expertise and knowledge on complex issues.”

However, the report recognises that there have been problems with this (eg “[...] the development of a transactional model of service delivery” [p105]), so reiterates the Government's vision:

“[...] the government's vision for public services in the modern era is one of 'collaborative commissioning'. This means that in the future, local stakeholders will be involved in an equal and meaningful way in commissioning and all the resources of a community, including but not confined to public funding, will be deployed to tackle the community's challenges. People will be trusted to codesign the services they use.

Rather than being seen as a place of distinct policy priorities – health or crime or educational underachievement – a community will be seen as a 'system' of interconnected parts, each of which impacts the others.

Rather than being treated as the passive recipients of services designed elsewhere, the people of the community will be the active shapers of their own future, trusted to 'co-design' services, to direct commissioning decisions, and to play their part in making the service work.

Just as there will not be an automatic assumption that the state delivers public services, there will not be an assumption that only large

corporations – the ones capable of carrying major financial risk – can be trusted to do important work on the government’s behalf.

An important role of the government will be to ‘steward’ the public service market, using the most appropriate funding mechanism to achieve social value, be that contracts, grants or social investment. This means helping ensure far higher standards by commissioning collaboratively for outcomes.” [p106]

Mission 13: A framework for collaborative commissioning

Includes:

- Supporting civil society from Whitehall – which is actually about supporting collaborative commissioning
- Citizen Commissioners: “The government will support the spread of ‘Citizen Commissioners’, local people supported to make commissioning decisions on behalf of their communities such as the scheme implemented by Sutton Council [9]. This will also include young people.” [p107]
- The role of local government: this is a surprisingly short section!

“In the face of current challenges, local authorities continue to play an active role in communities by helping to establish clear local priorities, including bringing the voices of the voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations to bear in the design and delivery of local services. Some local authorities, for example Calderdale council, have prioritised maintaining strong links with local social sector organisations to provide vital and tailored services to those who need it most.

Some councils are also increasingly taking a systems-wide approach to commissioning (rather than viewing it through the lens of individual services) to achieve better outcomes for their local population and enable more collaborative and grounded conversations about priorities and organisations’ individual contributions to them.” [p108]

Mission 14: Funding the future of public services

Includes:

- Alternative commissioning models, eg Social Impact Bonds. “In addition, the government will work with partners to develop additional financial models for social enterprises which deliver public services alongside debt investment, including non-repayable capital grants, last-call or repayable grants (that are only paid once the enterprise is profitable), and equity investment.” [p111]

⁹ ... which is not mentioned elsewhere in the report.

- Grants 2.0: “In addition to Social Impact Bonds, and to social impact investment [...], the government wishes to broaden the range of funding options for community initiatives. This includes a revival of grant-making – ‘Grants 2.0’ – to reflect the fact that grants can combine flexibility with the accountability and performance rigour of a contract, and also bring ‘additionality’, such as philanthropic or in-kind investment.” [p111]

- Flexible contracting:

“It is also possible to use contracts to create a more diverse supply of public services. Already commissioners are able to use public money in imaginative ways, if the will and the knowledge are there [...] As participants in the engagement exercise stressed, more must be done to encourage commissioners to use the flexibilities available to them.” [p112]

“[...] the government will consider the most effective ways to measure and evaluate social value. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will commence this by publishing a guide to selling to government for voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations, including social value.” [p112]

Mission 15: Commissioning for social value

Includes:

- Strengthening the Social Value Act:

“The government is determined to ensure that public spending is used to generate social value in addition to the services it purchases. There needs to be an increase in social value commissioning across all levels of government. This means improving the use of the Social Value Act.” [p115]

“Firstly, as announced on 25 June 2018, central government departments will be expected to apply the terms of the Act to goods and works and to ‘account for’ the social value of new procurements, rather than just ‘consider’ it as currently. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will lead the way by applying this wider remit to major projects, to be followed by other departments in due course.

Secondly, the government will explore the potential for the use of social value in grants as well as contracts.

Thirdly, the government will explore the suggestion submitted to this Strategy that the Social Value Act should be applied to other areas of public decision-making such as planning and community asset transfer.” [p115]

As Jeremy Wright MP and Tracey Crouch MP state in their Ministerial Foreword:

“The future we want is one of collaboration and ‘co-creation’. This Strategy is therefore a contribution from government to the task of co-creating the civil society we want in the years to come.

We look forward to working together.” [p11]

There has been considerable coverage of this report. Here are some examples.

JRF¹⁰ have picked up on the report, and, in welcoming it, also suggest that:

“The social exclusion people feel and experience in everyday life goes well beyond voting, which is why considerations about innovations in democracy, which are generally welcome, need to consider the ‘participation gap.’ Social status is a strong factor in who exercises their democratic rights, and efforts to open up democracy need to close, not widen, the gap between the politically ‘rich’ and the politically ‘poor.’”

JRF recommend three ideas:

- Promoting self-organisation of people through community groups, TUs, etc
- “Strengthen representative democracy to make pledges more public and use digital technology to explain how policies affect voters, and report back on promises.”
- “Root policy-making and design of services in the needs, attitudes and wants of the public.”

NCVO¹¹ have published a really helpful blogpost summary¹², outlining the key points in the report. They also welcome it:

“Before delving into the specifics, it’s important to recognise that the initiative itself, setting out a long-term vision for government’s work with civil society, is a really positive one. For too long, we have been missing

¹⁰ Claire Ainsley “To open up democracy, people in poverty must have real power”, *JRF Blog*, 10 Aug 2018, https://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/open-democracy-people-poverty-must-have-real-power?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=JRF%20weekly%20round-up%20wc%2020%20August%202018&utm_content=JRF%20weekly%20round-up%20wc%2020%20August%202018+CID_3af19f37ed2e48ec9c3984e22744300b&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=Read%20blog.

¹¹ Source: NCVO Member Update, Aug 2018.

¹² Elizabeth Chamberlain “The Civil Society Strategy: what you need to know”, *NCVO Blog*, 9 Aug 2018, https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2018/08/09/the-civil-society-strategy-what-you-need-to-know/?_cldee=am9obkBuYWRkZXIub3JnLnVr&recipientid=contact-449e2fd22746e411b4e4d89d6765e198-889e2a0f195e44c9a1bda2bc5f85ed1e&utm_source=ClickDimensions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Networks%3A%20Monthly%20Members%20Bulletin&esid=e8bf9ac0-8da7-e811-8143-e0071b66c011&urlid=2.

a unifying thread across all government departments in their approach to civil society.”

However, the NCVO assessment concludes:

“The announcements about recommitting to the Compact, establishing a new cross-government group to ensure better involvement in policy-making, and the revival of grants are all new initiatives to be welcomed. But it would be fair to say that the majority of the strategy repeats existing commitments or, at most, builds on work that is already under way.”

In addition, in a series of related, topic-themed blogposts, NCVO look in more detail at particular areas:

- Volunteering¹³: the overall assessment is that the Strategy did not feel strategic, was not aimed at all people (it favours young people and those in need of ICT support), and it doesn't feel new
- Funding and finance¹⁴: the blogpost summarises the main financial implications, and concludes: “Despite the many pots of money mentioned by the strategy, there has been disappointment about the lack of commitment to a long term and strategic approach to funding charities and the communities they support.”
- Campaigning¹⁵: this assessment suggests that there is a more positive tone in the Strategy around campaigning, and the commitment to renew the principles of the Compact (“[...] the agreement between government and the sector which sets out how the relationship between charities and government should operate.”)

¹³ Shaun Delaney “The Civil Society Strategy: what it says about volunteering”, *NCVO Blog*, 15 Aug 2018, https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2018/08/15/the-civil-society-strategy-what-it-says-about-volunteering/?_cldee=am9obkBuYWRkZXIub3JnLnVr&recipientid=contact-449e2fd22746e411b4e4d89d6765e198-889e2a0f195e44c9a1bda2bc5f85ed1e&utm_source=ClickDimensions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Networks%3A%20Monthly%20Members%20Bulletin&esid=e8bf9ac0-8da7-e811-8143-e0071b66c011&urlid=4.

¹⁴ James Clarke “The Civil Society Strategy: what it says about funding and finance”, *NCVO Blog*, 14 Aug 2018, https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2018/08/14/the-civil-society-strategy-what-it-says-about-funding-and-finance/?_cldee=am9obkBuYWRkZXIub3JnLnVr&recipientid=contact-449e2fd22746e411b4e4d89d6765e198-889e2a0f195e44c9a1bda2bc5f85ed1e&utm_source=ClickDimensions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Networks%3A%20Monthly%20Members%20Bulletin&esid=e8bf9ac0-8da7-e811-8143-e0071b66c011&urlid=5.

¹⁵ Chris Walker “The Civil Society Strategy: what it says about campaigning”, *NCVO Blog*, 15 Aug 2018, https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2018/08/15/the-civil-society-strategy-what-it-says-about-campaigning/?_cldee=am9obkBuYWRkZXIub3JnLnVr&recipientid=contact-449e2fd22746e411b4e4d89d6765e198-889e2a0f195e44c9a1bda2bc5f85ed1e&utm_source=ClickDimensions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Networks%3A%20Monthly%20Members%20Bulletin&esid=e8bf9ac0-8da7-e811-8143-e0071b66c011&urlid=6.

- Impact and evaluation¹⁶: this assessment suggests that, whilst there are some positive points about evaluation, “[...] we’re disappointed by the lack of focus on evaluation, especially when the charity sector needs to do more to overcome the significant dent in public trust and confidence in charities.”
- Regulation¹⁷: the indication that there is to be more continuity than change is welcome; the assessment raises concerns, however, about the Charity Commission’s plans to introduce some form of charging for its regulatory work.
- Public services¹⁸: the assessment of this area helpfully summarises the key points in the report, and also highlights:

“Public service design and delivery is a key theme of the civil society strategy. It has attracted some criticism for being a rehash of David Cameron’s Big Society, particularly when taken in the context of cuts to local services, whereas others have welcomed the recognition of the role of civil society in the services that benefit communities and beneficiaries.

The strategy articulates a desire to reflect the ‘independent origins’ of public service. Whether this can be construed as an ambition to put further distance between the state and public service delivery, or a push for more flexibility and agility in the delivery of services, this blog sets out the strategy’s key commitments to improve the design and delivery of public services.”

¹⁶ Alex Farrow “The Civil Society Strategy: what it says about impact and evaluation”, *NCVO Blog*, 20 Aug 2018, https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2018/08/20/the-civil-society-strategy-what-it-says-about-impact-and-evaluation/?_cldee=am9obkBuYWRkZXlub3JnLnVr&recipientid=contact-449e2fd22746e411b4e4d89d6765e198-889e2a0f195e44c9a1bda2bc5f85ed1e&utm_source=ClickDimensions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Networks%3A%20Monthly%20Members%20Bulletin&esid=e8bf9ac0-8da7-e811-8143-e0071b66c011&urlid=7.

¹⁷ Douglas Dowell “The Civil Society Strategy: what it says about regulation”, *NCVO Blog*, 16 Aug 2018, https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2018/08/16/the-civil-society-strategy-what-it-says-about-regulation/?_cldee=am9obkBuYWRkZXlub3JnLnVr&recipientid=contact-449e2fd22746e411b4e4d89d6765e198-889e2a0f195e44c9a1bda2bc5f85ed1e&utm_source=ClickDimensions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Networks%3A%20Monthly%20Members%20Bulletin&esid=e8bf9ac0-8da7-e811-8143-e0071b66c011&urlid=8.

¹⁸ Rebecca Young “The Civil Society Strategy: what it says about public services”, *NCVO Blog*, 14 Aug 2018, https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2018/08/14/the-civil-society-strategy-what-it-says-about-public-services/?_cldee=am9obkBuYWRkZXlub3JnLnVr&recipientid=contact-449e2fd22746e411b4e4d89d6765e198-889e2a0f195e44c9a1bda2bc5f85ed1e&utm_source=ClickDimensions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Networks%3A%20Monthly%20Members%20Bulletin&esid=e8bf9ac0-8da7-e811-8143-e0071b66c011&urlid=9.

This is an extremely important report, in that it sets out the Government's vision for service delivery – and, more widely, how society organises itself.

Libraries get several mentions (the rest of the cultural heritage sector doesn't), but very much reiterating the view that community-run or 'spun-out' service delivery is the way forward – making the assumption that the political strategy of austerity will continue, and that there will not be more resources made available directly to local authorities themselves. In that respect, the Strategy appears to ignore recent work suggesting that there are real flaws in expecting the charity/voluntary sectors, the private sector, and communities themselves to pick up the running of what had previously been state-run services.

As many of the NCVO commentators have noted [see above], there is not a lot that is new in here, much of it is reiterating previous political statements. Some of the sections of the report (eg that on youth provision) appear to have been written by someone who has not seen the UK in 2018.

There is a dire need for a realistic strategy that starts to work with communities where they really are, and to start to repair the damage caused by the banking crisis and the subsequent austerity policies – depressingly, this is not that strategy.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

CLPE = Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation

NCVO = National Council for Voluntary Organisations

NPO = Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation

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