

## **PART ONE**

- Thank you Liz (Barclay) for the introduction. It is good to be here to celebrate your work over the last 70 years.
- Firstly, at your AGM, you appointed a new chair – John Gladwin, the retiring Bishop of Chelmsford. I would like to congratulate John on his election. While he has a challenging legacy of professional service and commitment to maintain, I am sure he will work with you across the country to build on the organisation's considerable successes.
- Yesterday I visited CAB Nottingham, run by Trish who is here today, and I was shown around by David and Courtney. What I saw was a thriving organisation supporting its local community during testing times. I saw volunteers and paid staff, professionals working side by side. I saw an organisation embracing new technology, but still maintaining its roots in the local community. I saw leadership and I saw relentless activity, enthusiasm and passion.
- CAB Nottingham is not an isolated case. I see my own local CABs in Basildon and Thurrock, and the difference they make to my constituents. As Minister for the Third Sector and Social Exclusion, I hear about the excellent work being done

by Citizens Advice Bureaux across the country. In Parliament and in Government, I see the value and influence of Citizens Advice nationally – through your lobbying, through your policy ideas and through your representation of some of the most socially excluded people in society.

- Most of all, I know the impact that Citizens Advice Bureau across the country have made to the lives of millions for people across the UK. That is why it I feel privileged to speak here today on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Citizens Advice.
- A simple description of Citizens Advice's achievements over the last 70 years would fail to acknowledge the true value of the organisation. I know the impact of CAB on the lives of millions of people; I see the regard in which your free, independent and impartial advice is held by people who access your services; and I see the huge level of public confidence and trust held in your organisation.
- This is all down to the contribution of individual staff and volunteers across the country. Particularly in times of hardship, the value of your hard work is recognised and appreciated by individual people, by society and by the Government. So I would like to start by thanking you – each one of you – for your hard work, for what you do and for the difference you make to people's lives.

## **Part 2 - An example of the third sector at its best.**

- As the world's first Minister for State for the Third Sector, I also want to hold up Citizens Advice Bureaux as a remarkable example of the third sector at its best. It was founded with true vision and throughout the last 70 years – despite many challenges of the times – that clear sense of vision and its ability to deliver has not diminished.
- Citizens Advice Bureaux are created with a backbone of volunteers. I find it incredible that you have around 20,000 volunteers, which makes up an incredible 77% of your workforce. By your own estimation, the value of work done by bureaux volunteers is equivalent to over £85 million a year.
- We know across the third sector how important volunteering is. The nearly three-quarters of adults who volunteer make a huge difference to the third sector and – as Citizens Advice knows – the organisations themselves. The volunteers enrich and enable the quality and reach of services for which the third sector is rightly lauded.

### **Part 3 – You asked, ‘how does Government want the third sector to respond to the recession over the coming years?’**

- These are important times for the third sector. Government has devolved increasingly power to local government while ensuring the third sector is properly embedded in local decision-making.
- At the same time government’s commitment to more personalised and responsive public services puts the third sector at the heart of public service reform.
- Tough times can breed innovation and efficiency as we look for different ways of doing things, and I believe that by building on the strength of the third sector, together with strong government commitment and support, we are greater than the sum of our parts.
- But there will be challenges along the way. As you are no doubt only too well aware, the recession has impacted on the third sector in terms of demand on services - particularly advice services - reduction in income and an increase in volunteers. Challenges also breed innovation and efficiency as we look at different ways of doing things. I am confident that the sector can meet these challenges and come out stronger, more effective and more resilient.
- The Government can help. And we have, through the last Budget and through our *Real Help for Communities* action plan. This action plan of up to £42.5 million is supporting the sector through the recession.

- **Examples:**
- As part of the action plan the £15.5 million Targeted Support Fund has now provided grants to over 500 small third sector organisations in fifty areas identified as at most risk of increased deprivation this year.
- The last Budget recognised the importance of ensuring people had access to quality advice services during the recession and provided an additional £10 million to expand local face to face advice capacity in England and Wales.
- The Modernisation Fund, which aims to support third sector organisations to become more resilient during the recession, has offered over 1,000 frontline organisations £1,000 bursaries to help explore the potential benefits of collaboration or merger.
- The Jericho Centre is one such organisation. Operating from a church hall in Birmingham's Balshall Heath, the centre grew out of community action in the 1980s to address drug dealing and prostitution and went on to tackle joblessness and poverty through its drop-in centre.
- People who work in the centre feel that their work helps people turn their lives around. They take a truly personal approach – not just helping with training and language skills, but even calling up potential employers to help secure that all important

interview. The recession has made their work more important. But the financial situation has really tested them.

- They had already decided to look at collaboration and partnership. But the Modernisation Fund bursary is paying for them to look closely at practical ideas about how that can happen. They are looking at linking up with a local social enterprise – a joinery company that does training in carpentry a that people the Centre work with can access. And they've found another local organisation that offers similar services to them that might share resources and facilities that have got a Modernisation Fund award aswell.
- The Government has funded IDeA (the Improvement and Development Agency) to set up the National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning, with capacity to train around 3,000 commissioners of public services in how to involve the third sector more effectively in service design and delivery. In June, we awarded IDeA a contract for phase 2 of the programme, which will run until March 2011.

### Part 3 – And you asked ‘what part will service delivery play?’

- Two recent publications summarise well the government’s approach to public services. The first *Excellence and Fairness* sets out where we want to be in delivering world class public services, and the second *Working Together* provides examples of how we are going to get there. They are both on the Cabinet office website and its worth taking a look. None of this suggests that public sector workers aren’t looking to be very personal – but often it’s the structures that we have got in the first place which make it more difficult.
- At the heart of *Excellence and fairness* is the concept of citizen empowerment. It is about extending choice and control to the individuals and communities who use public services, and is at the heart of innovation in service delivery.
- In health and social care, individual budgets are one example of how public services are changing to allow individuals to design services around their own needs rather than those of the service provider. And the third sector is playing an increasingly important role in the move to this type of innovative public service.
- **Examples:**
- The Department of Health is committed to establishing a user-led organisation for disabled people in every local area by 2010. These organisations are run and controlled by people with

disabilities and are supporting them to use individual or personal budgets and to advocate for their needs and choices. This kind of peer-led service provision at a local level is driving significant service improvement not only within health and social care, but across employment, skills and education services.

- The government is supporting innovation through the appointment of Anne McGuire as the Cabinet Office Advisor on third sector innovation in public services. Anne's work aims to identify key opportunities for the third sector to develop and personalise services, delivering improved health and social care outcomes and reducing crime and re-offending.

Anne has recently issued a call for evidence and would like third sector organisations to submit ideas, evidence or recommendations as to how the third sector can:

- offer real choice to citizens;
- deliver personalised early interventions;
- overcome organisational barriers to personalisation; and
- improve outcomes through service user participation.

The deadline for submissions is 25<sup>th</sup> September and it would be great to hear your views.

## Part 4: Conclusion

- The Government is rightly proud of its record of supporting the third sector. We have invested in the sector like never before – a total of £12 billion in the UK in 2007/08; that's an increase of £3.6 billion since 2000/01.
- We are working with and listening to the sector like never before. We have invited the sector to become a key player in our society, not just to deliver services, but also to be the voice of our local communities.
- As the Minister for the Third Sector I can assure you I am working across Government to ensure **that** voice is heard; and that the sector is involved as a key player in the development of policies that shape our everyday lives.
- I was asked to talk about how the third sector should respond to the recession. The short answer is that you know best. I know Citizens Advice Bureaux in particular and the third sector in general is innovative and effective and is acutely aware of the needs of its service users – it is **those** skills that mean that the sector can best respond to the challenging economic climate.
- I want to end with a challenge to each one of you. I believe Citizens Advice has enormous power. By every measure, every MP, every councillor, every voter and every citizen places enormous value on the CAB. Through first-rate staff and volunteers, you have the skills and experience to make things

happen in every community, and across the UK, to help create a good society. I want you to continue to use those skills to help Britain emerge as a stronger, better and fairer place. The Government will do its best to support you and we are committed to listening to your solutions. The rest is up to you. I know you are up to it and I am confident that your experience, professionalism, commitment and passion for social justice mean that you will succeed.