



ResPublica
changing the terms of debate

The ResPublica Fringe



**Articles and Essays from our
Party Conference Partners 2012**

About ResPublica

ResPublica is an independent, non-partisan UK think tank founded by Phillip Blond in November 2009. In July 2011, the ResPublica Trust was established as a not-for-profit entity which oversees all of ResPublica's domestic work. We focus on developing practical solutions to enduring socio-economic and cultural problems of our time, such as poverty, asset inequality, family and social breakdown, and environmental degradation.

The ResPublica Fringe

After successful party conference seasons in 2010 and 2011, ResPublica will maintain strong presence at all three conferences, with over 27 events across all three party conferences. Events will be held at fringe hotel venues at the Liberal Democrat and Labour party conferences, and the exclusive ResPublica Marquee at the Conservative party conference. Our programme will include public fringes, private roundtables and dinners. Much more than just events, our party conference fringes reflect ResPublica's wider research interests and feed in to our future work.

The full ResPublica fringe programme at Party Conferences 2012 can be found at www.respublica.org.uk/party-conferences

CONTENTS

Foreword by Caroline Macfarland, Managing Director, ResPublica

POLITICS AND SOCIETY

The Post-Liberal Agenda - Phillip Blond, Director, ResPublica (p.6)

Being British in 2012 - Damian Green MP, Joint Minister for the Home Office and Ministry of Justice (p.7)

Integration in modern Britain - Sunder Katwala, Director, British Future (p.8)

Integration and the common good - Neil Jameson, Chief Executive, Citizens UK (p.10)

Young people, the family and community institutions - David Burrowes MP, PPS to the Minister of State in the Cabinet Office (p.11)

It's not so complicated - Thomas Lawson, Chief Executive, Leap Confronting Conflict (p.13)

We need renewed civic ideals beyond party politics - Caroline Macfarland, Managing Director, ResPublica (p.14)

Is the Party over? Reconnecting people and politics - Olly Parker, Head of Events and Partnerships, The Fabian Society (p.16)

The meaning of marriage and its benefits - Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, President, OXTRAD (p.17)

I'm a gay man who opposes gay marriage. Does that make me a bigot? - Andrew Pierce, The Daily Mail (p.19)

ECONOMY AND GROWTH

Responsible recovery: Balancing economic and social priorities - Kate Green MP, Shadow Minister for Equalities Office (p.21)

Investing in what matters - Sir Robin Wales, Mayor of the London Borough of Newham (p.22)

Employee Ownership: Driving co-operation, achieving long-term sustainability - Norman Lamb MP, former Minister for Employment Relations and current Minister for Care Services (p.24)

Mutuals in the modern economy: An engaging idea - Nita Clark, Director, IPA Involve (p.25)

A Good Deal: Creating sustainable growth for cities - Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Financial Secretary to HM Treasury (p.27)

Why infrastructure is essential to our global competitiveness as a knowledge economy - George Freeman MP, Government Adviser on Life Sciences (p.29)

A good deal for cities: Cooperation and collaboration for growth - Mike Emmerich, Chief Executive, New Economy (p.31)

Creating sustainable growth for cities: The contribution of the European Single Market - Malcolm Harbour, MEP for West Midlands (p.32)

Constructing growth: skills and jobs for the real economy - Judy Lowe, Deputy Chairman, Construction Skills (p.33)

REVALUING PUBLIC SERVICES

Social value: Commissioning for communities, by communities - Chris White MP (p.35)

Beyond social value, toward a new social economy - Caroline Julian, Senior Researcher and Project Manager, ResPublica (p.36)

Bringing social value to life - Barney Mynott, Senior Communications Officer, NAVCA (p.38)

Choice and personalisation in social care through community engagement - Lord Victor Adebawale, Chief Executive, Turning Point (p.39)

Micro-scale and mutual solutions for care and support - Alex Fox, CEO, Shared Lives (p.41)

Getting down to the nitty-gritty about choice - David Boyle, Independent Reviewer, Review of Barriers to Choice in Public Services (p.43)

Making a transformational change with personalisation - Karyn Kirkpatrick, Chief Executive Officer, KeyRing (p.44)

Achieving personalisation: Moving from personal budgets to real personal choice - Dr Moira Fraser, Director of Policy and Research, Carers Trust (p.45)

Investing in the next generation - Graham Allen MP, Chair of the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee (p.47)

With thanks to all ResPublica fringe partners 2012:



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FOREWORD

**Caroline Macfarland, Managing Director,
ResPublica**

Party conferences this year fall at an interesting time in the political cycle. Following the Cabinet reshuffle and as we approach the mid-term for the Coalition Government, this autumn will begin to shape the terms along which the next election is fought. We will see parties re-evaluate the relative success and challenges stemming from their 2010 manifestos, and a renewed effort to reach out to members through a re-iteration of core values and principles. Whilst last year's conferences took place in the wake of civil unrest, this year's are set against a backdrop of renewed focus on successful community-building following the summer Olympic Games.

Previous party conference seasons have led to a pervasive critique that the conferences themselves, which one commentator recently described as 'festivals for the professional political class', now pander to the needs of lobbyists rather than party members. Other observers have pondered whether, in times of political coalition and economic hardship, we need to move 'beyond the party' in considering long-term solutions. And so as Westminster begins the exodus to Brighton, Manchester and Birmingham, the key question is what opportunities the conferences themselves present to capture the impetus for social change?

Now is fertile ground in policy-making terms. And the basis for the party conferences themselves remains as a gathering of ideas, innovations and inspiration. It may not seem the case from snapshots from the Commons sometimes, but the main political parties are very much in consensus in highlighting which social and economic issues policy must address. They all paint a similar picture in outlining prerogatives for

sustainable economic growth, social renewal and bottom-up participation.

The ResPublica fringe programme, amounting to an unprecedented 27 fringe events this year, demonstrates the potential for meaningful debate and policy innovations which lie in store this party conference season. Our fringe discussions aim therefore to tackle the big issues which face politics and society today, such as restoring association in a climate of low trust in political institutions, cultural integration and British identity, root causes of youth disaffection and the meaning of marriage in modern times. In response to the key challenges for the economy, we also will explore priorities for devolved growth and infrastructure finance, skills for a sustainable labour market, and plural business models – all taking into account the need for mutuality within markets and economic policies which also benefit social goals. And our vision for a social economy will also address a deficit in value and choice within public services, and the solutions which can be reached through personal budgets and personalisation of services rooted in community engagement.

These are themes that ResPublica will continue to explore beyond the party conferences, through our research, publications and events programme throughout the rest of the year. And whilst our fringe events are an important contribution to these debates, we appreciate that not everyone is able or inclined to attend party conferences. This is why we have compiled this collection of articles in order to extend the discussions to a wider audience, and why we continue to make the most of social media to capture the debates.

On behalf of all at ResPublica I would like to thank all the contributors to this collection, as well as the rest of our conference partners and speakers, for helping to platform such an array of insights and visions for the future.

The Post-Liberal Agenda

Phillip Blond, Director, ResPublica

Perhaps many would not disagree if I said most of our post-war politics has been an oscillation between collectivism and individualism. But part of my point is that individualism and collectivism are actually not socialist or conservative but rather two extreme forms of the liberal inheritance. So when the Labour Party embraced the state and the Conservative Party the unrestrained market, unbeknownst to themselves both were actually fulfilling a liberal logic that preceded and then encapsulated their politics and their philosophy.

But rather than offering a philosophical history to support this claim which I have done elsewhere – let me begin from where we are now. Is there truly a post-liberal moment? To argue such is in terms of contemporary politics to decry its consequences. In the economy in the name of free markets and prosperity for all we have seen unprecedented concentration of economic power and the conversation of whole ranks of people to little more than wage dependent figures who have no real hope of ownership or genuine options to trade. In society the war on the family and on the permanence and sanctity of human relations continues. The deep social dysfunction of Britain with broken families at the bottom and the inversion of parent child relationships continue apace. In immigration we have seen massive and almost unprecedented movements of people that have seen both the skilled and the unskilled cut off the routes to independence and agency for those living in the lower echelons of British society. And finally at the top and the bottom of society we see moral collapse and the erasure of ethos from both institutions and the personal direction of human beings.

Now this is not to impugn Liberalism in its entirety, there is a liberalism we need and one of the great figures of British post-war politics

refigured it brilliantly. Joe Grimond the decisive salvific figure of The Liberal Party in the 1950's and 60's was the first to really talk about a localised non statist form of democracy and economic participation. He spoke about mutualisation and employee ownership. Most importantly he saw that individualism was the greatest threat to individual liberty and he argued for the primacy of the group and association.

Unfortunately modern liberalism has forgotten these lessons and it has become a reduced and pervasive form of libertarianism that has corrupted not just the liberal party – but all parties. And when our politics becomes simply a eulogy to choice as it seems all politics is nowadays, it suggests that the foundational and moral act of our society is simply that of willing and acting –rather than saying what one should will or what one should act for. The consequences of a malign liberalism are all about us - if one only believes in individuals then in the resulting competition a few individuals will win and everybody else will lose very badly – creating the need for state welfarism to pick up the pieces.

If we are to escape the disastrous consequences of this post-war oscillation between collectivism and individualism, then we must recover a different account of liberty – one founded on morality and association. Because only if we act in the name of the good of all can we preserve the good for ourselves and for our families and only if we believe we have something in common can we create a polity within which we can differ and be free.

Phillip Blond will be speaking at 'Broken society or broken politics?' a ResPublica/Demos public fringe series at Labour Party conference: Sunday 30th September, 4.30pm – 5.45pm, Premier Inn Manchester Central, and Conservative Party conference: Tuesday 9th October, 5.00pm – 6.15pm, the ResPublica Marquee.

Being British in 2012

Damian Green MP, Joint Minister for the Home Office and Ministry of Justice

We enter this autumn with the echoes of the Olympics still reverberating, not least because they made us all think about what it means to be British in 2012. Politicians and academics have been grappling with “Britishness” for years, as the unprecedented levels of immigration allowed by the Labour Government meant that this country found itself suddenly with large numbers of residents who had no British history or daily habits as instinctive reference points.

Much of this latest debate was sparked by the opening ceremony, attacked by a few for its “multi-cultural” content. The exact opposite seemed to me to be true. The reason the opening ceremony hung together so well was that it was mono-cultural, while revealing, and indeed revelling in, the breadth and depth of modern British culture. Shakespeare, Brunel, village greens, the NHS, rock music and grime (the musical form!) all played a legitimate part in the national pageant, revealing the variegated nature of Britishness to the world. No other country could present its most famous rap singer with song called “Bonkers”—a word straight out of school fiction from the 1950s.

It should, but apparently does not; go without saying that Britishness has changed over the centuries. Any Tory who cares about British history will accept this. At various stages in the last few hundred years it has become possible to be a patriotic British citizen without being a Protestant (which is good for Catholics like me), without indeed having to be Christian, (which is good for Mo Farah), without having to be white, (which is good for half the England football team) and without having to be born here (which is good for a wide range of people from the sons and daughters of Empire to an increasing number of modern Londoners).

What you do have to be, though, is committed to the underlying values, habits and institutions of Britain. These are not immutable, and over time they evolve, but the national discussion that leads to this evolution is itself a key feature of

Britishness. It may at times be raucous and even rancorous, but it is a discussion between free individuals who are entitled to their say. It is not violent, it does not incite violence, and if laws need changing they are changed in Parliament, and then signed into effect by the Monarch. You are free to campaign that this should be not be the process, but if you want to change it you have to do it using these rules.

This basic rule of political and social discourse is only one way in which being British differs (sometimes subtly) from being a citizen of any other advanced democracy, whose values we will largely share. One of the ways we intend to approach the wider definition of Britishness will become clear in the new version of the document the Home Office produces to go with the “Life in the UK” test which new citizens have to pass.

The previous guide was too much about how to interact with the state and not enough about the wider context of Britishness. We have changed it radically to give a proper sense of British history so that new Brits can understand how Britain has grown into what it is today. The guide is unashamedly patriotic and explains the daily life of British people, including cultural and leisure activities, so that no new citizen should feel inclined to stick to a parallel culture.

The section titles of the new Guide give a good clue to its overall direction. They include “The values and principles of the UK”; “A long and illustrious history”; “A modern, thriving society”, and “The UK Government, the law and your role”. It will also set out clearly the fundamental principles of British life, including democracy, the

rule of law, individual liberty, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, and participation in community life.

It is important that these principles are not regarded as motherhood and apple pie. They entail stopping some behaviour as well as allowing some. A variegated society needs some taboos, or it just becomes parallel societies occupying the same piece of land.

The publication of the Life in the UK Handbook will I hope provoke another round of debate on

what it means to be British today. The more we can bring together our permanent values with contemporary mores the likelier we are to achieve a relaxed and coherent society.

Damian Green MP will be speaking at 'Immigration and integration in civic life', a ResPublica public fringe event co-hosted with Barrow Cadbury Trust and British Future at Conservative Party conference: Sunday 7th October, 8.00pm – 9.15pm, in the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

Integration in modern Britain

Sunder Katwala, Director, British Future

The Olympics showed that Britain is a confident, multi-ethnic society. That's what 74% of us think, while only 9% disagree, as polling for Ipsos-Mori for British Future shows. 82% believe the Games made us prouder to be British. 67% were surprised by how much they brought the country together – and, while commentators tell us we will all get back to moaning about everything very soon, six out of ten believe this will have a long-term impact on our society. One of the many reasons that we cheered Team GB to the rafters was that we found that we liked being a country that takes pride in who we are and who we have become.

It is more accurate to see the spirit of Team GB as expressing confidence in multi-ethnic Britain than as an endorsement of multiculturalism itself. After all, multiculturalism means several different things to different people. A major source of confusion is that people talking about "multiculturalism" often mix up the descriptive social fact that Britain has become an irreversibly multi-ethnic and multi-faith society with the choices that we now make. There are different, naturally contested ideas about how we live together, and what we need to have a strong

sense of a shared citizenship in our liberal and democratic society.

Of course, those hopeful findings of national confidence do not settle public controversies over difficult and contested issues. Debates over multiculturalism, immigration or integration are simply not the type of questions that could ever be settled by a brilliant kick on the last lap from Mo Farah in the 10,000 metres. But we should be able to take confidence for our ability to have open, frank and civic debates about these issues: about how to promote a shared and inclusive national pride; about the conditions of having a common citizenship; about what Britain's interests and values say about who we want to let in to contribute to our society; and about how we address all of the barriers to integration and opportunity for all across our society.

But will need to do more to change the way we talk about integration. Too much is unclear. People often talk past each other without settling foundational questions. What we are trying to achieve? How much integration does a liberal society demand? What are the tests of success? How do we judge how we are doing – where the glass is half-full or half-empty?

A major contribution to these confusions comes from how much these issues are so often discussed in the most abstract and intangible terms. Discussions of community cohesion, multiculturalism and even interculturalism may or not mean something to academics and policy specialists. But most people will feel that they need translation into a recognizable version of the English language before they can understand what is going on, which means that they will never be fit for creating the type of public conversation they require to succeed. That is a hazard of many different types of public policy debate, where discussion of the regulation of telecoms or the financial sector end up dominated by technocratic expert speak.

But the disconnection matters more when the theme is how we live together. It can't work if we don't all feel involved. The balance sheet for post-war multiculturalism is a mixed one – at different times, it was sometimes a force promoting integration, and sometimes promoting segregation too. Whatever its shortcomings, it was successful with most black, Asian and mixed race Britons help to create a sense of an inclusive British identity to which they could belong, and was much better at this than other European countries, such as France. But half of the challenge was out of reach, if most people felt these were not issues of the national identity we would all share, but debates by minorities, for minorities and about minorities

The social fact of a multi-ethnic society is challenged today only by the handful of fringe voices interested in contesting the past, not the future. That doesn't necessarily mean an endorsement of multiculturalism. If national adulation of heptathlete Jessica Ennis, born in Sheffield to a Jamaican father and English mother, tells us anything at all about multiculturalism, perhaps it is that November's census results will confirm that the lived reality of multi-ethnic Britain has spilled happily out of the neat and tidy boxes of any "community of

communities" multiculturalist model of British society, showing how Britons from "mixed race" backgrounds are now more numerous than any particular minority group.

That could help to break down "them" and "us" thinking, which misses out a central strand of the challenge. In fact, researchers consistently find a slightly stronger sense of British identity among new citizens, and also among those with ethnic minority heritage, than among the white majority. That could give us confidence in the attractions of British identity, and an ability to integrate and adapt over the last three generations that proved much greater than cultural pessimists feared, as long as we pay attention as to what it might be saying about those who fear being left behind too.

The question is not just about whether or not "they" want to become like "us" but about what we believe that we need to share as citizens. These become questions about the whole of our society, not only about how immigrants can contribute become integral to our society. It is important that everybody has a grasp of British history, so we need to think about how we teach it in our schools. Citizenship ceremonies have proved popular among those who are becoming British from overseas. Shouldn't we also find symbolic and practical ways to mark and celebrate the passage to citizenship for all Britons? Why not have a day each year when 18 year olds and new Britons from overseas come together in town halls to celebrate becoming citizens? It could even give the rest of us a chance, too, to "renew" vows to our country that we have never got to make in person.

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Integration and the common good

Neil Jameson, Chief Executive, Citizens UK

CitizensUK is the home of community organising. We exist to support and develop people's capacity to participate in public life and so strengthen their institutions and associations in the process. We are proud to be an arm of civil society and to have civil society and its interests as our own. London Citizens is our best known affiliate. It is the largest and most diverse community organisation in the country, made up of a rich mix of schools, faith communities, diaspora communities and local associations. Our funding comes from our members through annual membership dues (and Foundations and Trusts) and we neither seek nor accept funding from the State. This unique mix of thousands of organised people across a city like London – and now growing affiliate alliances in Nottingham, Cardiff, Glasgow and Birmingham – makes us very centred on community cohesion and particularly the shared interest of governance. Governance unites all communities and is relevant not just at election times but always – how decisions are made; who makes them; who is or feels excluded is relevant to the health and peace of every neighbourhood.

Some of our core campaigns have been provoked by the State's inability or reluctance to act on an issue which impacts substantially on civil society. Where this happens it is usually civil society that has to pick up the pieces or open the soup kitchen or food bank. The plight of the asylum seekers in the UK encouraged us to establish the 'Independent Asylum Commission' which toured the country collecting stories and testimonies from those seeking asylum and those agencies funded to help them. This Commission made several significant recommendations to improve the system. It also established our 'Citizens for Sanctuary' Team of professional Community Organisers tasked with the responsibility or ensuring the recommendations of the IAC were

implemented. Five years on this Team has learned that working to strengthen the power and effectiveness of the various diaspora communities that have settled in the UK – often fleeing tyranny or poverty – was the best way of using our limited resources. Hence the original Team is now The New Citizens Organising Team.

A related issue which CUK responded to in 2006 was the plight of thousands of irregular migrants living in Britain with no papers or status. We were very much aware of this issue through our faith communities in membership who themselves were offering food, clothing and advice to people in their congregation – with little hope of legislative change or a sympathetic response from the government. We ran the national 'Strangers into Citizens' campaign for four years and organised the biggest Rally in favour of a limited and 'earned' regularisation which the UK had ever seen. In May 2008 over 20,000 people packed Trafalgar Square in support of this Campaign. This encouraged the government to act on the back log of Legacy Cases which had accumulated and now thousands of long term asylum seekers who have put their roots down in the UK have been given permission to stay and work. This is an example of where the State and Civil Society can work together well and in each other's interests. As was the positive response of the Coalition Government to CUK's call for an end to families and children being held in immigration detention centres – this ended in 2011.

The London 2012 Olympics have been a wonderful example of Britain at our best – well organised; optimistic and diverse. The heroes of the Olympics in many cases are people who either themselves or their parents were immigrants. Mo Farah is one of these faces and a wonderful role model not just for the Somali Community/Diaspora in the UK but for young people everywhere. There is greater recognition

that diversity is strength and that the UK is actually a country of immigrants and always has been. CitizensUK is keen to sustain this reality and continue to build diverse civil society power alliances in our major cities that can play their part in the governance of that city and in promoting the common good.

Young people, the family and community institutions

David Burrowes MP

Just over a year has passed since riots rocked our nation, leaving in its wake damage and destruction. They also left behind the knee jerk reactions which simply blamed gangs or youth culture, as well as political tribes struggling to pin point the possible causes suggesting disaffection, poverty or moral failure. I have become increasingly convinced during my 20 years of political representation as a local councillor and now MP, that the role of the family must be central to any policy response to social breakdown.

Take drugs and alcohol addiction as an example. My involvement helpfully did not start as a politician but as a criminal defence solicitor representing many addicted clients. My case files provided details of lives and families across generations damaged by addictive substances and I was witness to the terrible impact on children that substance abuse and the associated problems cause. Traditionally, Government has looked at the issue of addiction in terms of simply providing treatment for individuals. We have often failed to take account of how the troubles faced by an addicted person can have a severe and lasting impact on those closest to them, especially those in their care. Failing to address the resulting problems in shared family experience has not only impeded our efforts to

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effectively address the underlying and exacerbating factors encouraging substance abuse in an individual's life, but it has also led to a tragic growth in the number of people who become addicted as children. Those children whose adult relatives are struggling with addiction too often become a part of the destructive intergenerational cycle of drug and alcohol problems within families and communities.

We need to see policy issues like drugs and alcohol addiction, and public disorder, as not just an individual issue but in need of a whole family solution. I know from the experience of addicted clients that any notion of a stable family had often been lost in the throes of addiction. Lynne had been abused by her step father at the age of 13 and then moved from care homes to the streets, becoming addicted first to alcohol and then heroin. Fortunately she found her way to a rehab facility where she told me, "When politicians talked about family values I did not have a clue what they were talking about until I was loved and accepted [at the rehab]". And then there was Mark who had graduated into crime and addiction without much concern for his victims and those around him. When he became a father it was like a light switching on inside him and he realised his responsibility to his child and his community.

Family policy is not just about specific policies such as married couple's transferable allowances

or accessible child care. It is about a wider institutional approach to relationships. The weak relationships between young people and adults, highlighted during the riots by the lack of respect in order and authority, can only be strengthened by strong families. The ravages of intergenerational addiction cry out for stronger families.

Government can only do so much to strengthen families. It is mainly about practical long-term involvement from the local community. One programme that is championing this idea of strengthening relationships is the 'Let's Stick Together' programme run by Care for the Family. Although there is some attention to ante natal and infant care, rarely are new mums and dads told how the arrival of the new family member can strain their own relationships and why attention is needed to strengthen them? 'Let's Stick Together' covers powerful principles for aiming for happy and healthy relationships and is crucially about getting both partners involved to the maximum. Or the 'Fatherhood Institute', which is rightly calling for more involvement from fathers in day to day child care. Their aims are to do this through changing work conditions so that fathers are more available to care for their children; changing education so that boys are prepared for future caring roles; and changing support to family life so that the caring role of fathers and father-figures is more recognised and supported.

What however does this achieve? The involvement of fathers and the strengthening of parental relationships can go a long way in keeping families and communities together. When a child sees caring, committed relationships taking place within their own home, this will have an impact on the way that they treat others. If a son learns from his father to treat women with respect and to help within the home, this in turn will lead him to help and treat others with respect as well. This is why promoting

committed and stable parental relationships is an issue of social justice and not an outdated and elitist concept.

Marriage is not for everyone and is not a panacea, but it is likely to provide a good foundation for children. Knowing and experiencing love and stability within their family unit can stop children from looking elsewhere for fulfilment and belonging, whether that is in drugs, alcohol or gangs.

Children and youths looking to belong are often much more susceptible to pressure from outside forces and from their peers. We saw this all too clearly during the riots, where peer pressure no doubt played a large part in getting so many young people involved in the destruction that took place.

This year we have celebrated over the Olympics which are a stark contrast to the shame of the riots last year. The army of volunteers have won most plaudits. The values of service, compassion and respect seen on the streets of London this summer are modelled in strong families. When we talk about a legacy, we need to ensure we do not forget the huge legacy for local communities of strong families.

I welcome ResPublica's commitment to go beyond political tribalism when addressing social issues in family policy terms and their determination to go beneath the short term debate to strengthen a local community's institutional capacity for change. I look forward to joining the debate at Conference.

David Burrowes MP will be speaking at 'Young people, the family and community institutions', a ResPublica public fringe event at Conservative Party conference: Monday 8th October, 2.30pm – 3.45pm, in the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

It's not so complicated

**Thomas Lawson, Chief Executive, Leap
Confronting Conflict**

Early August marked the anniversary of the riots that started in Tottenham, North London and sprung up through England. There were many pieces of commentary about the riots. Some predicted a repeat of the turmoil, others claimed the preventative impact of high profile initiatives. But, perhaps, the truth is that in the UK we know what can work and how to make it work.

Within two weeks of the riots Leap and nearly 30 other organisations (which became the Resilience Consortium) joined up to try to understand what had happened and why, but without judging it. It was important that the group included not only those from the voluntary or social sector but also business, police and other statutory services. Two weeks later we facilitated a group of young people, some of whom were encouraged by their friends to get involved but didn't, some who would never have got involved and, quite possibly, those who were involved.

What was striking was that the conclusions of those two groups of what caused the riots and what could prevent it were not significantly different from the conclusions drawn by the excellent NatCen report *4 Days in August*, the Victims and Communities panel's conclusions and other reports that have come out over the last year.

The UK has a strong tradition of supporting young people to be the change they want to see. Good programmes, of which there are hundreds, recognise the very real and difficult challenges that young people face but also that it is the young people who have many of the things they need to tackle them: courage, vision, talent, passion, creativity, understanding...

Leap is also pleased to be a partner in the ResPublica/ NCVYS Commission on Youth, the

main themes of which are directly relevant. It is focusing on broad areas including young people's relationships with authorities and institutions, family structures and community support, and young people's engagement and participation in civic society and democratic outlets. Questions being considered by the Commission are of direct relevance, such as: In the correlation between economic/moral poverty and civil unrest, what is the cause and where are the symptoms?

Support for people between 18-24 without work or who aren't getting training or in education, is scant. They also made up the largest segment of those convicted of offences in the riots. Of course, they have amazing potential. We need to find ways they can play a real role in building resilience in their communities and match that with support for them around leaving prison, attitudinal change, employment, education and training, and family support.

The Resilience Consortium has secured funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to research the needs and assets of 18-24 year olds in the areas of some of the worst riots and to assess what services there are for them and also what gaps there are. Crucially, the research will also establish the extent to which those services are connected or joined up. What Leap knows from its work in the oft-quoted Community Initiative to Reduce Violence, led by the Strathclyde Police among members of the very violent East Glasgow gangs, is that one of the reasons that it saw an extraordinary drop of 46% drop in knife incidents is the extent to which the education, behaviour and attitude management, employment, enforcement and other programmes, whilst delivered by a range of organisations were wrapped around the young people. They, with all of the chaos and challenge in their lives, did not have to navigate from one organisation to another with different branding. They simply got

access to high quality, well-led work that made the difference.

In Glasgow it was the Strathclyde Police who showed excellent leadership – their model is now being used by Police in some London Boroughs. It doesn't have to be the police, it could be an innovative local business who could call partners together; it could be an organisation like Leap; it could be a new Police and Crime Commissioner.

What we hope the research will show us is how to capitalise on the existing high-quality work and innovation in youth work that the UK should be proud of. Any solution should work out how to capitalise on new initiatives like the Cabinet Office's National Citizenship Service.

We need renewed civic ideals beyond party politics

Caroline Macfarland, Managing Director, ResPublica

Whilst I have a personal dislike of apocalyptic political rhetoric, I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that we have an ongoing crisis of representation in this country. Recent years have demonstrated a significant decline of trust in government and other social and civic institutions. In a recent Hansard Society study, only 42% of those surveyed expressed interest in politics, the lowest level ever recorded in the nine-year Audit series. There is widespread public sentiment that politicians will first and foremost represent the needs of their party over and above the needs of the nation.

The key issue here is that the concept of 'the political' has become narrowed to mean either Westminster decision-makers or devolved elected representatives. But in fact, politics in its

most fundamental sense is about participation in society, whether this relates to tribal rituals of gift exchange or ancient Athenian processes of law-making. What we need are renewed ideals of civic participation which include the whole of society and the relationships which contribute to this. The issue here is not reconnecting people with politics, it is reconnecting people with each other. For the ordinary citizen outside the Westminster bubble, the main concerns are the economy, job security, the quality of schools and healthcare – speculation about leadership contests or shifts in party ideology are often just pastimes for policy wonks and the press. In tough economic times, there is also the danger that political narratives serve to pit social groups against each other – public sector employees against private sector workers for example, or a cohort of young people facing insecure job prospects against an older generation facing an insecure retirement. Our current politics propagates competing self-interest rather than mutual social goals.

A representative from Leap Confronting Conflict will be speaking at 'Young people, the family and community institutions', a ResPublica public fringe event at Conservative Party conference: Monday 8th October, 2.30pm – 3.45pm, in the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

most fundamental sense is about participation in society, whether this relates to tribal rituals of gift exchange or ancient Athenian processes of law-making. What we need are renewed ideals of civic participation which include the whole of society and the relationships which contribute to this. The issue here is not reconnecting people with politics, it is reconnecting people with each other. For the ordinary citizen outside the Westminster bubble, the main concerns are the economy, job security, the quality of schools and healthcare – speculation about leadership contests or shifts in party ideology are often just pastimes for policy wonks and the press. In tough economic times, there is also the danger that political narratives serve to pit social groups against each other – public sector employees against private sector workers for example, or a cohort of young people facing insecure job prospects against an older generation facing an insecure retirement. Our current politics propagates competing self-interest rather than mutual social goals.

By 'crisis of representation', I am not solely referring to politics in terms of constitutional representation. This government has implemented a number of promising localist initiatives designed to increase accountability of local representatives, such as elected mayors and local police commissioners. However, as shown by the recent British social attitudes survey, initiatives such as these may increase confidence in responsiveness, but also give way to concerns about undue political power to individuals.

Yes, party politics can act as a channel for participation. But so can a multitude of other membership groups, faith bodies, voluntary activities, sport, women's institutes - the other conduits through which people can make a difference and achieve change which is relevant to their priorities. Being an active member of society does not just mean being represented, it is about participating in social and economic processes and being able to achieve tangible results relating to things which matter. This is a point about decision making for everyday life.

By no means am I suggesting that the political party system should not exist. But, in a society where new media opportunities and instantaneous access to knowledge mean people are increasingly involved in social causes, we need to be aware of all the other productive ways to bring people together over shared interests and concrete goals. Party politics – ie. engagement with Westminster and local government - should not be prioritised over other

forms of social and economic participation. A more meaningful account of citizenship also means extending representation and participation to issues such as employment, financial institutions and community activity. We need businesses which engage with local residents and give employees a genuine stake, and market structures which enable people to be producers and owners rather than consumers of goods and government services. Co-operative business models, democratised financial intermediaries, mutual models for education and healthcare, and community-owned assets all map out the potential for a resurgence of the civic.

'Politics' in the partisan and constitutional sense has an important role to play in achieving consensus on long term changes needed to solve the most pressing problems today. Whilst party politics can platform these issues, it is changes in society which will realise them.

Caroline Macfarland will be speaking at 'Is the Party over? Reconnecting people and politics', a ResPublica public fringe series co-hosted with the Fabian Society and CentreForum at Liberal Democrat Party conference: Saturday 22nd September, 8.15pm – 9.30pm, the Grand Hotel, Brighton; Labour Party conference: Sunday 30th September, 12.45pm – 2.00pm, Manchester Town Hall and Conservative Party conference: Tuesday 9th October, 10.30am – 11.45am, the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

Is the Party over? Reconnecting people and politics

Olly Parker, Head of Events and Partnerships, The Fabian Society

How do we reverse the collapse in voter turn-out over the past sixty years? How about we massively extend the funding and public service remit of the BBC?

The public's mistrust of our politics is a problem that parties of all persuasions should be worried about. It is often said that it is the political games of a distant Whitehall, so removed from the ordinary lives of real people that are to blame for General Election turnout falling from 83.9% in 1950 to 65.1% in 2010.

Such hand wringing is usually followed by calls for a more decentralised version of the state, handing power back to the people and giving them a greater say in our democracy. In principle I agree with this, the public however are lukewarm to the idea. 2010 local election turn-out stood at around 32% and the introduction of Police Commissioner Elections is predicted to result in a turn-out of just 18% - less than one in five are saying they plan to vote.

Maybe my cynicism is misplaced and the public will warm to the idea of Police Commissioners (though I'd still suggest November probably isn't the best time to hold an election) and some of the problems with local government are well documented. There certainly isn't a silver bullet that can re-engage the electorate and those proposing decentralisation as a cure-all need to engage on a wide variety of fronts and not see the aim of driving power down as an end in itself. Further reform must be matched with deepening engagement or it simply isn't worth doing.

One issue that can address turn-out and help foster engagement is the chronic lack of accountability that currently infests local branches of Government. It saddens me that, and

I say this as a Labour Party member, if you were elected as a Labour Council in 2010 than it almost doesn't matter how bad you are or how many awful decisions you make as there is a 90% chance you will remain a Labour council until there is a change in Government.

The refrain "send a message to the Government" remains the catch-all slogan that our parties use to fire up their base and gain control of Town Halls while remaining in opposition in Westminster. However, Councils make decisions every day and sometimes those decisions are bad ones and they need to be exposed and shown to the public so they can make an educated decision at local election time.

Local newspapers, historically the place to inform you about local decision making, are seeing 10% year-on-year decreases in circulation. Steadily rising online readership is not making up for the loss in revenue and, consequently, dailies have become weeklies, journalists have been laid off and regurgitated press releases and human interest stories now take precedence over local scrutiny. It was hoped that the birth of widespread internet usage and the power of the blogger could fill the gap but, with honourable exceptions, that is still yet to happen.

So what can Whitehall do to fill the gap? We have in this country a public service broadcaster which is trusted by the public and a well-used source of information. Why not empower the BBC to provide more locally focused news? Adding locally relevant stories to the news homepage based on your location could overnight increase the amount of local news coverage the average internet users receives on a daily basis. The BBC's unique public service remit and heavily regulated impartiality make it the ideal platform, the public could even learn the name of their local

Councillors once more and respond to the decisions that they are taking on their behalf.

This could also give the local-news blogosphere the jump-start it needs as a flowering of locally based content would no doubt also prompt competition from others keen not to toe the BBC line. Social media sites like twitter and Facebook would also see the news spread beyond those who just engage with the BBC.

Ok, so a suggestion to increase the level of funding for the BBC is probably not an election winner, especially in times of austerity, but then again neither is spending millions on making our police electable. Driving power away from Whitehall has only succeeded in making the

public even less aware of what politics can and should be doing, it's time to make all our politicians accountable.

A representative from the Fabian Society will be speaking at 'Is the Party over? Reconnecting people and politics', a ResPublica public fringe series co-hosted with the Fabian Society and CentreForum at Liberal Democrat Party conference: Saturday 22nd September, 8.15pm – 9.30pm, the Grand Hotel, Brighton; Labour Party conference: Sunday 30th September, 12.45pm – 2.00pm, Manchester Town Hall and Conservative Party conference: Tuesday 9th October, 10.30am – 11.45am, the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

The meaning of marriage and its benefits

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, President, OXTRAD

There has been a good press for marriage lately. More people are marrying and more people are staying married. This is welcome news. I have recently been with a number of community groups that promote marriage in schools, colleges and generally in society. This has been an encouraging and hopeful experience for me

The Church certainly did not invent marriage. The union of a man and a woman for mutual support and for the upbringing of children has been there from the beginning but it did emphasise the importance of consent, love between husband and wife and 'one-flesh union' which is based on the complementarity of male and female; social, psychological, biological and sexual.

It is such a public doctrine of marriage that needs to be restored in this country. Both divorce reform and other kinds of legislation have not just damaged but almost destroyed any public

understanding of marriage. What is marriage in this country? For many years, centuries perhaps, the public doctrine of marriage was that of the Book of Common Prayer as it is set out in the preamble to the marriage service and one by one all of the aspects of marriage in the preamble have been placed under severe threat at the very least, if not more than that.

Why do we need a public doctrine of marriage? The Roman Catholic bishops today in their recent letter on the subject have given some of the answers which bear repetition because a) marriage is good for society: marriage is one of the basic building blocks of society and as far as I know, there has never been a society which has not had marriage and the family as a basic unit of it; b) It is good for children: the best outcomes for children are to be found within marriage, whether that is how they do at school, or in terms of delinquency, the likelihood or not of children getting into crime or other kinds of anti-social

behaviour; c) Marriage is good for the partners themselves: all the studies show that people who are married live longer, are healthier, perhaps even happier (that would be something, wouldn't it?). So there is that aspect to marriage, the fact that it is good for society, good for children, good for the partners themselves.

Now, human beings have many different kinds of relationships. We are social animals and, of course, we have relationships with parents, with siblings, with relatives and with friends and it is important for us to recognise the importance of relationships and the richness of relationships, that there should be in people's lives. I'm so sorry that so many of these relationships, because of the patterns of modern life, are nipped in the bud, as it were, and not allowed to flourish. It may be right for us as a society and indeed for the government to recognise and to support some of these relationships. It may be right for people in a particular kind of relationship, whatever that may be, to take legal steps for that relationship to be one that is just and fair to each person in that relationship. I'm certainly not against that. In the House of Lords, when the Civil Partnerships bill was going through, some of us sought to widen its remit to include people who were sharing domestic arrangements on a long term basis for a number of reasons. In fact, the amendment was passed in the House of Lords and was only set aside in the other place. I'll leave you to judge the wisdom of that.

But what about civil marriage? The press delights in telling us that more and more people are now not getting married or if they are getting married they are not getting married in church, they are getting married in registry offices or in one of these wonderful 'New Agey' places that there are all around. What preparation is there for such people? I was at such a marriage recently. The groom, to keep up his nerve had had quite a number of drinks and he was having another one, so I said to him: "Do you really need to have this

drink?" and he said: "Oh yes, I do because in a few minutes [this was just an hour or so before the ceremony] I'm having my preparation with the officiant at the ceremony". Well, how much? What sort? What would be the influence of such preparation on a person who had already had more than his fair share of you know what? This is simply unacceptable. This is heading for disaster and if Parliament can do nothing else but to encourage all around marriage preparation for people, whether that's in church, or in the ceremony of another faith, whether it's a *nikah*, whatever it may be, or if it's on civil premises.

If there is a public doctrine of marriage – this is one of the reasons why a public doctrine of marriage is necessary – then there will be some preference for marriage and for the family, for example, in the tax system. I was so glad when the Conservative Party before the election made a pledge that there would be such preference and I was sad, however, when that pledge was not honoured or, at least, not yet. It is very important, if people are to mean what they say – if the Conservative Party or the PM, whoever it may be – says that marriage is important for society and important for the family, then that has to be recognised somehow. One obvious way to do it is through the tax system. How that is done can be discussed; whether through some kind of restoration of the married couples allowance or the transfer of tax allowances between one partner and the other or the support of marriage and families where there are children, the last being the pattern that is to be found on the continent – in France and in Italy. However it is done, it must be done for the sake of marriage, for the sake of the family and for the sake of demography.

We are in a situation which is quite serious insofar as the replacement of the population is concerned. The reason we don't see it more clearly is, of course, firstly, immigration and secondly, people living longer. But the whole of

Western Europe is facing a critical issue of demography and there should be no shame in encouraging people to have children and supporting them by the State and through the tax system, so that we can look after the elderly when they can no longer work.

Our present need then, is not to redefine marriage but to understand the nature of it and the threats to it. It is also to promote marriage and defend it; for the sake of society, for the sake of the children and for the sake of the spouses

themselves. Would that we were having a consultation about these essentials, rather than the marginal and somewhat exotic one in which we are engaged at present.

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali will be speaking at 'Marriage: Changing the terms of debate', a ResPublica public fringe event at Conservative Party conference: Wednesday 10th October, 10.30am - 11.45am, the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

I'm a gay man who opposes gay marriage: Does that make me a bigot?

Andrew Pierce, Columnist, The Daily Mail

When David Cameron committed the Government to supporting same-sex marriage some months ago, he declared: 'I don't support gay marriage despite being a Conservative. I support gay marriage because I'm a Conservative.'

His argument being that the party should support a long-term commitment in any relationship. The unexpected policy shift caused uproar in the Tory Party in Parliament and across the country. Now, a submission by the Church of England into the Government's consultation on gay marriage has warned of an historic division between the Church's canon law — that marriage is between a man and a woman — and Parliament.

It suggests the schism could even lead to 'disestablishment', a split between the Church and the State, and the removal of the Queen as Supreme Governor of the Church. Despite the opposition of every major faith group — notably the Catholic Church — Mr Cameron is arrogantly

pressing ahead with an issue which excites his chums in the metropolitan elite, but which disregards the sentiments of millions of ordinary people who, as poll after poll has shown, are against it.

Even some of the Prime Minister's admirers concede that the policy has less to do with offering equality to the gay community and more to do with decontaminating the allegedly 'toxic' Tory brand. Perhaps the Prime Minister has calculated that anyone who stands up and argues against his proposals will be branded a homophobe and a bigot. Well, Mr Cameron, I am a Conservative and a homosexual, and I oppose gay marriage. Am I a bigot? And what about Alan Duncan, the first Conservative MP to come out as gay? Mr Duncan, the International Aid Minister who is in a civil partnership, is implacably opposed to gay marriage.

So is Dr David Starkey, the celebrated historian, who is openly gay. The Labour MP Ben Bradshaw, meanwhile, who was the first Cabinet minister to enter into a civil partnership, is contemptuous of Mr Cameron's motive for smashing down centuries of traditional Church teaching in reference to marriage.

This isn't a priority for the gay community, which has already won equal rights with civil partnerships,' says Bradshaw. 'This is pure politics.' He's right. It's yet another sop to the wretched Lib Dems, even though they number only 57 of the 650 MPs at Westminster.

The introduction of same-sex marriage became a policy commitment at the Lib Dem conference two years ago, even though there was no reference to it in their election manifesto, or in their four-page manifesto written for the gay community only six months earlier. Even gay rights campaigners are puzzled by the Prime Minister's conversion to the cause. Stonewall, a powerful pressure group for gay equality, has not called for gay marriage. While the organisation — of which I'm proud to be a member — supports the idea of gay marriage, its priority remains tackling homophobia in schools after research showed that gay men in the 16-to-24 age group are significantly more likely to have attempted suicide than other young men. So who — apart from Mr Cameron — is clamouring for gay marriage to be allowed?

A poll by Catholic Voice of 550 gay men and women suggested only 40 per cent identified the change in marriage as their priority. What sort of message does our preoccupation with fringe issues like gay marriage and Lords reform send to people who are worried about their jobs?

The Tory Party HQ, I can disclose, has warned the Prime Minister that this issue has triggered the biggest revolt among grassroots members since Tory MPs dumped Margaret Thatcher in 1990. Certainly, the Archbishop of Canterbury has dismissed as worthless the assurances of the Prime Minister and the Lib Dem Equalities Minister Lynne Featherstone — nicknamed 'Featherlight' by her despairing civil servants — that churches will not be ordered to conduct same-sex marriage ceremonies. Ironically, if the change goes ahead, it could provoke legal challenges from the heterosexual community. Ministers have ruled out extending civil partnerships, which became law in December 2005, beyond the gay community. So we gays will enjoy rights denied to heterosexuals. What an absurd state of affairs.

The truth is that no one has been able to explain to me the difference between gay marriage and a civil partnership. I have asked ministers and friends. None has an answer. But I do. We already have gay marriage — it's called civil partnership. Why can't Mr Cameron just leave it there?

Andrew Pierce will be speaking at 'Marriage: Changing the terms of debate', a ResPublica public fringe event at Conservative Party conference: Wednesday 10th October, 10.30am - 11.45am, the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

Responsible recovery: Balancing economic and social priorities

Kate Green MP, Shadow Minister for Equalities

I take it as a given that economic performance and social justice go hand in hand. Social goals: equality, the eradication of poverty, building strong communities, enabling everyone to participate fully in society, and the right to respect and dignity, are most readily achieved through - and, I'd argue, prerequisites for - sustainable economic growth.

There's plenty of evidence for this assertion, whether from the highly influential work of Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, popularised in "The Spirit Level", showing the superior performance of more equal societies against a whole set of social and economic indicators, or the recent findings from the International Labour Organisation and International Institute for Labour Studies that those countries that prioritised income transfers to poorer households have seen the fastest economic recovery.

So the argument isn't about whether, but how to balance economic recovery and social goals. Sadly, nearly everything you can think of that's being done by the present government goes in the opposite direction. The economy's in recession, the highly respected IFS says child poverty's set to rise. Disabled people are being singled out for welfare cuts, while public attitudes to disabled people harden, and disability hate crimes on the increase. The causes of last summer's riots are undoubtedly complex, but the independent Riots, Communities and Victims panel's findings are unequivocal: many young people lack a sense of hope for the future in an age of record youth unemployment.

What could a different approach look like, and what might Labour do differently? Here are three suggestions, which have tackling poverty and inequality at their heart.

First, rethink fiscal policy by rebalancing the approach to tax and spending cuts. Analysis of the Chancellor's budgets and spending reviews since June 2010 shows that, with the exception of the very richest 10%, the impact of the measures is highly regressive: the poorest take most pain. Yet, as the IMF itself has pointed out, putting money into the pockets of the poor is the most effective form of economic stimulus – they go out and spend.

The poorest families stand to lose over £20 billion from tax credit and benefit cuts by 2015, as the Child Poverty Action Group has shown. CPAG suggests the "fiscal hindrance" effect on the economy could be a £32 billion reduction in GDP as a result.

Tax cuts (including even that favourite of Liberal Democrats, cutting tax rates at the bottom) favour the better off. A more progressive tax system alongside not slashing welfare benefits should be the priority – not only to bring much-needed funds into the economy, and not only because cutting poverty doesn't just help the immediate recovery but also brings long-term savings to the Exchequer (research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has suggested that the cost of child poverty to the public purse could be in the region of £25 billion a year), but as a matter of simple fairness.

Second, invest in infrastructure spending that simultaneously supports economic growth and promotes greater equality. That means investment in good quality childcare (which brings the greatest developmental benefits to the most disadvantaged children, and supports women's employment); investment in more affordable housing to create jobs and homes, and help build stable communities (the government's policies are proving woefully inadequate, with the most recent figures showing a 24% fall in the

number of new homes started compared with the same period last year); and investment in education. Following the hike in university fees to £9,000, we've seen a 7.7% fall in the number of applicants for university places compared with the equivalent point last year – something that makes no sense when our global competitive position depends on a highly skilled workforce.

Third, tackle the discrimination and disadvantage in the labour market that means that women, disabled people, those from certain BME backgrounds, older and younger workers, experience significant under or unemployment. There's a whole range of policy solutions that could be developed, from offering incentives to employers who take on a young or disabled worker, to anonymising applications processes to deal with employer discrimination, to mandatory pay audits. The government has only a one-club approach to maximising labour market participation – a Work Programme that isn't

actually working. Rather than focussing exclusively on supply side measures, we need policies that dismantle barriers that stop people working and create more opportunity for people to work - not least, of course, including the creation of jobs.

All this might seem too simplistic or obvious an approach, but what we need are policies that are effective. Policies that maximise social and economic participation not only increase economic performance, they deliver stronger communities, improve social justice, and promote equality for all. Those are the goals that must remain at the front and centre of public policy.

Kate Green MP will be speaking at 'Responsible recovery: Balancing economic and social priorities', a ResPublica public fringe event at Labour Party conference: Wednesday 3rd October, 4.00pm – 5.15pm, Manchester Town Hall.

Investing in what matters

Sir Robin Wales, Mayor, London Borough of Newham

Like all public bodies, local authorities are facing a tough financial challenge. Everyone is struggling. But the cuts have hit places like Newham the hardest. Last year we had a cut to our budget of £160 per resident compared to areas like Richmond with only a £6 per person cut.

When faced with a restricted financial situation as we are, it would be easy to make a simple decision and salami slice off all services, or just stop doing things we don't have to do as part of our statutory duty. You can see that that's what some Councils have done.

But that's not the route we've chosen to take in Newham. Being faced with cuts doesn't mean you

should lose sight of your priorities – in fact it means those priorities become more important than ever.

In Newham we have a strong vision for delivering sustained improvement to the borough. Our analysis shows that to improve the lives of our residents we have to look at three elements. We need to build the personal capacity of our residents so they have the skills to succeed and overcome challenges. But at the same time we must recognise the importance of having a strong community where residents support each other and have the networks and relationships necessary to prosper. And equally we recognise the impact of the economic environment on residents' lives. The local area needs a strong

economy and residents need strong financial capabilities.

Resilience is not about saving money. It's a recognition that welfare and the work of the state has to help people improve their lives, not trap them in their poverty. To build resilience you have to invest in the right things. Each local area will have its own priorities but in Newham, one of the most deprived boroughs in the country, it's clear that giving young people the best start in life and helping residents into jobs are absolutely key.

That's why in Newham we're investing £15 million in programmes that will give our young people the skills and capacity to realise their full potential. We offer free school meals for every primary school child in the borough, giving them a much needed nutritious meal and saving families £750 a year before tax for each of their children. Our research has shown that this measure in particular helps low income working families who otherwise would not receive support.

Our Every Child a Musician (ECAM) scheme gives all our young people the opportunity to excel and gain the excellent skills to be had from learning an instrument and reading that children in richer areas of the country have.

Equally, our Every Child a Reader (ECAR) scheme aims to ensure that all our young people have that fundamental skill to help them excel in education and employment later in life.

We know that raising employment rates is a real game changer but our residents are not always

helped by national work programmes. So we invest £5 million a year in our jobs brokerage "Workplace". It's the most successful programme of its kind in the country. Last year alone we helped 5,000 residents into work, half of them long-term unemployed. Independent research has shown that 75% of residents who find work through Workplace are in work a year later.

It's also important to be honest about what you will stop doing. It's no good falling into the trap of providing a service simply because it's always been there. In Newham this means serious consideration of whether a programme is creating a sustainable improvement for our residents and our community.

There are some difficult times ahead. The Government's welfare reforms will put pressure on families, particularly those living in London and other expensive areas.

Our role in local government is to step up the support we give residents to help themselves. Residents need to make good choices here – moving into work is the best way of ensuring families thrive even during tough times. That's why it matters more than ever to invest in building resilience. Our investment now will make the difference in years to come.

Sir Robin Wales will be speaking at 'Responsible recovery: Balancing economic and social priorities', a ResPublica public fringe event at Labour Party conference: Wednesday 3rd October, 4.00pm – 5.15pm, Manchester Town Hall.

Employee Ownership: Driving co-operation, achieving long-term sustainability

Norman Lamb MP, former Minister for Employment Relations, Consumer and Postal Affairs and new Minister of State for Care Services

It is no secret that I am a passionate advocate of greater employee-ownership. I was thrilled when, at the beginning of this year, Nick Clegg launched a government push to promote mutuals and I am delighted now to be the minister charged with delivering on this ambition. I am also proud that Liberal Democrats will be debating the issue at this year's Autumn Conference.

Employee ownership is not just a niche issue. As the title of this fringe event suggests, it has a role to play in achieving this Government's key goal of long-term, sustainable and balanced growth. Research by the Cass Business School has shown that employee-owned businesses are just as profitable as traditional companies and that their performance is more stable over the business cycle. Interestingly, during the recession they proved to be more resilient than traditional companies. They consistently recruited more staff, and get more out of them: productivity tends to be better at companies with an element of employee-ownership. Other evidence shows that rewards are distributed more evenly within an employee-owned business, with a smaller gap between the top and the average worker's pay.

The Liberal Democrats, and the Liberals before them, have long been standard-bearers for this agenda. John Stuart Mill argued that, "the efficiency and economy of production on a large scale, may be obtained without dividing the producers into two parties with hostile interests and feelings," and predicted that, "the relation of masters and work-people will be gradually superseded by partnership." Jo Grimond, inspired

by a visit to the Mondragon co-operative in Spain, founded the organisation that developed into today's Employee Ownership Association. At this year's Liberal Democrat conference delegates will be debating and voting on the party's policy in this area, which has been reviewed by a party working group over the last year.

In Government, we have already made significant progress in this area. We plan to give employees a stake in Royal Mail and have ambitious plans to establish a mutually owned Post office, giving sub-postmasters and employees a stake in the business and also giving consumers a voice. Graeme Nuttall, an expert in the field, was appointed the government's independent advisor on employee ownership back in February and spent the intervening months investigating the barriers to greater employee ownership. He split these barriers into three broad areas: a lack of awareness of the concept; a lack of resources available to support it; and a complicated – or seemingly complicated – legal, tax and regulatory framework.

Graeme's report is now available online, and was presented at a summit hosted by the Deputy Prime Minister shortly before the summer recess. Groups from the sector were in attendance, as were major law and accountancy firms, professional bodies, business advisors, academics, banks and policymakers whose support and expertise will be needed if we really are to drive employee ownership from the fringes into the mainstream of the British economy. Graeme laid down a challenge to Government: to maintain the focus and the momentum on this issue and to "translate its support into concrete changes". I hope he will not be disappointed when the Government's response is published in the autumn. Indeed, we have already announced that an independent, expert Institute for Employee Ownership will be established;

launched a call for evidence on how a Right to Request employee ownership could work in practice; and started working on new off-the-shelf 'DIY packs' for companies looking to adopt an employee-owned business model. The publication of the Government's response to the Nuttall report will be another important step forward. However, there is much still to do and I am utterly determined to make this happen. We have a vital opportunity in Government to make real progress. All three main parties are broadly supportive of this agenda, and there are knowledgeable, vocal champions of employee ownership in the Conservative and Labour parties as well as in the Liberal Democrats.

It is an idea whose time has come, and one that speaks to many of our current concerns. Whether it is about securing balanced, sustainable growth; addressing the disparity of pay between the

boardroom and the shop floor; moving beyond the greed and short-term thinking which led to the financial crisis; or giving people a greater voice in the workplace, employee ownership and the principles which underpin it has something new and something very valuable to offer.

Norman Lamb MP will be speaking at 'Choice in social care: Making care personal', a ResPublica public fringe event co-hosted with Home Instead and Keyring at Liberal Democrat Party conference: Tuesday 25th September, 12.30pm – 1.45pm, Holiday Inn Brighton.

ResPublica will also be hosting 'Employee Ownership: Driving co-operation, achieving long-term sustainability', on the same day, 6.15pm – 7.45pm, with the new Minister for Employment Relations, Jo Swinson MP.

Mutuals in the modern economy: An engaging idea

Nita Clark, Director, IPA Involve

These are interesting times for mutualism. There has been a crisis of confidence in traditional models of ownership; the private sector seems unable to sustain growth and the public sector is creaking under growing pressure. At the same time, employee ownership is increasingly being seen as offering the potential to rebuild the UK economy and revolutionise our public services. Public services need to change. Demographic shifts will lead to ever growing demand just as public finances are undergoing an unprecedented and prolonged squeeze. What's more, people are increasingly demanding as consumers of public services. They want bespoke services that meet their individual needs, not one-size fits all. This poses a significant challenge to the old monolithic model of public service delivery. But at the same

time increased involvement of private providers in public services tends to provoke opposition – particularly in sensitive areas such as education, policing and the NHS.

It is undeniable that faith in the private sector as a whole has been shaken. The financial collapse and the prolonged recession have undermined confidence in our economy. The fact that those at the top receive ever-increasing salaries whilst the majority are feeling squeezed has led many to conclude that the old model can no longer be relied upon to produce sustainable and equitable growth.

There is a gap in the market here in which mutuals could play an increasingly important role going forward. It is clear that employee ownership offers both the potential to deliver

more sustainable economic growth and a 'third way' in the debate on public services.

This is something not lost on politicians on all sides who sing the praises of employee ownership. However, much of the discussion on employee ownership has been woolly at best. There's been talk of a 'John Lewis economy' and of the 'spinning out' of mutuals from the public sector. But for all the warm words, there has been little clarity on exactly what the benefits of employee ownership are for consumers and employees, or how we are to go about encouraging the growth of the sector.

In an attempt to put some meat on the bones of this agenda, the Cabinet Office established the Mutuals Taskforce, chaired by Prof Julian le Grand, of which I was a member. Our [report](#) published in July makes it clear that mutualisation has benefits for employees themselves, for service users, and for performance. First, employees who have a stake in the ownership of their organisation tend to be more engaged. They are more likely to display high job satisfaction and have a good sense of wellbeing. Perhaps as a result of these higher levels of engagement, employee owned organisations tend to be more innovative, more productive and more successful than competitors with different ownership models. These higher levels of performance can feed through into more satisfied service users and customers. It truly is a win-win situation.

So there is much evidence that employee owned organisations are more successful and innovative than others. But it is not clear precisely why this is. Are employee owned organisations more successful as a direct result of staff having a stake in the organisation? Or is it something distinct from the ownership itself; something about the way the company is run and the way employees are treated?

The evidence here is much less clear. Take John Lewis for example, the most well-known employee owned organisation in the country.

Few within the organisation – from Chief Executive down to the Partners who work in store – would say that it is the dividend alone that drives performance and productivity. For mutuals, it is not necessarily the ownership itself, but their *modus operandi* that makes them effective. It's how they treat their staff, how they engage with them, how they listen to and empower them, how they harness their expertise and enthusiasm. This suggests there is a gap in our understanding about the 'added value' employee ownership offers; the benefits that arise from the model of ownership itself, distinct from any other factors. We are planning further research into this area to try and fill in this gap.

This has important consequences for the debate on employee ownership, productivity and growth. It seems that instead of focusing and indeed fixating on the *model* of ownership, we need to look at exactly what it is that makes employee owned organisations out-perform their competitors.

In the [Engage for Success](#) report for the Department of Business Innovation and Skills, David MacLeod and I demonstrated the importance of employee engagement, and its tangible impact on performance in all types of organisation. More than just the model of organisation itself, it is the way that they engage with their employees that determines their success and drives performance. We need to learn what it is about employee ownership that is such a powerful driver of engagement –and perhaps then we can use these lessons to help drive performance across every type of organisation and in the economy as a whole.

Nita Clarke will be speaking at 'Employee Ownership: Driving co-operation, achieving long-term sustainability', a ResPublica fringe event at Liberal Democrat Party Conference: Tuesday 25th September, 6.15pm – 7.45pm, Holiday Inn Brighton.

A Good Deal: Creating sustainable growth for cities

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Minister for Cities and new Financial Secretary to HM Treasury

In July a series of ground-breaking deals were agreed between the Government and the eight largest English cities outside London – Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle, Nottingham, Bristol and Birmingham. Together they represent the first round of the City Deals programme – which I believe has the potential to transform the way that this country is governed.

However, one could argue that this agenda is more about restoration than revolution. If you look at history of our great cities, it is clear that their rise to national – indeed, global – prominence was characterised by bold municipal leadership. Each city had a proud tradition of independent, innovative and, above all, local decision-making, but one that was interrupted in the course of the 20th century. Though many factors – economic, social and environmental – were involved in the era of urban decline, there is no doubt that it went hand-in-hand with an encroaching culture of control from Westminster and Whitehall. The proliferation of top-down bureaucracy was bad for the country as a whole, but especially bad for urban Britain.

Cities are complex, multi-layered communities – understanding their problems and their potential requires in-depth, intuitive knowledge, something that is only truly available to those who live – and make their living – locally. The notion that they can be administered from a remote location by people whose whole life experience is rooted elsewhere is utterly misguided. Indeed, it speaks of a fundamental arrogance that does much to explain the failure of so much government policy over the years.

Now, at last, we live in an age where the limits of central government are beginning to be

appreciated. The architects of the bureaucratic state finally noticed that they did not, in fact, succeed in building a new Jerusalem. It's difficult to pin point a particular moment of epiphany, but for some time politicians have been willing to at least talk about decentralisation. Unfortunately, that is mostly what it was – talk. The record of the previous government is a case in point. Look through old speeches and you can find any amount of lip service to localism, but in terms of action, the centralising mind-set was still very much in control. Thus, even when power was being 'given away' – that is to say, given back – it was always with strings attached. Somehow, the whole point of localism, which is to allow people to do things their own way, was missed.

Though modulated by the language of localism, the culture of control first began to crack in 2010, with the election of new government. The initial priority for the Coalition was to sweep away the legal, regulatory and bureaucratic mechanisms through which the centre had onerously and expensively micro-managed local government. The Localism Act was the key piece of legislation in this respect. Then, about a year ago, we moved to the next phase.

David Cameron appointed me as the Minister for Cities, with the City Deals programme as my main responsibility. The idea was to turn decentralisation into a genuinely interactive process, rather than one imposed from the top-down. Instead of pre-determining which powers would or wouldn't be devolved, the idea was to enter into an open negotiation with the leadership of each city – allowing policy proposals to come from the other side of the table. Each of the City Deals is therefore based on locally-determined priorities.

The negotiations go both ways, of course. As a responsible Government we still need to seek sensible assurances – for instance, to ensure co-operation among the neighbouring local

authorities that many of our cities are divided between. But there is a big difference between checking the viability of a proposal and dictating its purpose. There is also a difference in attitude. In conducting negotiations with each city, my aim is always to find a way of saying yes, rather than looking for an excuse to say no.

It is an approach that has rapidly borne fruit. The first City Deal was agreed with Liverpool in January and now deals are in place in all eight cities. It's been very encouraging to see different local authorities, different political parties and different economic sectors coming together in each city, proposing transfers of power that in many cases go well beyond what was originally thought possible. I've also been encouraged by the clamour from other cities – not mention shire and unitary authorities – for deals of their own.

We're currently progressing plans to expand the programme and will soon be making

announcements about the next wave of communities that will be taking part. But again, this will not represent the limit of our ambitions for a more dynamic and decentralised Britain. Expanding the number of participating localities will generate further diversity and opportunities for innovation, which will in turn inform and inspire future waves of decentralising reform.

This is as it should be. Decentralisation that only takes place at the discretion of the centre is a contradiction in terms. Localism must have a life of its own.

Greg Clark MP will be speaking at 'A Good Deal: Creating sustainable growth for cities', a ResPublica public fringe event co-hosted with Core Cities at Conservative Party Conference: Sunday 7th October, 6.30pm – 7.45pm, the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

Why infrastructure is essential to our global competitiveness as a knowledge economy

George Freeman MP, Government Advisor on Life Sciences

Infrastructure investment is essential to a coherent plan for growth and economic recovery. The economic crisis we face as a result of the collapse of Labour's debt-fuelled boom is a stark reminder of our over-reliance on retail, housing and public sector spending and the scale of the challenge we now face in constructing a more sustainable model of economic competitiveness. We can't borrow our way out of a debt crisis. We will have to trade our way out. With the Eurozone in meltdown, that will mean focussing our economy much more clearly on the developing world, and selling them the things they will increasingly need. As developing nations develop from subsistence to more advanced economies, they will evolve through a kind of Maslow hierarchy of needs from basic requirements like public health, agriculture and food, water and energy today to become, in the coming decades, markets for more sophisticated (Western) bio-medicines, sophisticated foods and clean energy. Our life science sector can play a key role in helping them achieve that transition, whilst driving investment into our science base, and support the UK's leadership in clean energy, biomedicine and food science, which is why I was delighted to be appointed Life Science Adviser last year and work on the Government's Life Science Strategy announced in December 2011.

We have much to be optimistic about. But we can't build a 21st century innovation economy on 19th century infrastructure. Modern infrastructure is vital to our economic recovery. In fact I believe infrastructure is one of the five key strands to the modern industrial policy for innovation we need to drive our economic

recovery. By (a) backing technology sectors where we have a genuine competitive advantage; (b) focusing on the fastest emerging global markets; (c) building infrastructure to support innovation 'clusters'; (d) supporting a radical culture of entrepreneurship in Britain; and (e) entering more entrepreneurial global-UK collaborations with key nations, we can use this crisis to unlock a 'New Victorian' age of global UK growth.

Infrastructure is key to this not because it's going to put millions of people to work with shovels in a Rooseveltian New Deal as some neo-Keynesians suppose. It's needed because high speed communications are central to the knowledge economy, increasingly central to the new models of public service delivery that modern electorates expect and demand, and key to the 'clusters' of innovation and excellence which drive innovation.

As I know from my 15 year career starting, financing and running various start-up businesses in the Cambridge area, innovation doesn't happen in vacuum. It happens increasingly in 'clusters', where concentrations of talent and ideas lead to innovative new product development. These can be at various scales. In neighbourhoods like London's Tech City. In cities like Cambridge. Or in regions like East Anglia – treated for decades by planners as a rural agricultural backwater for commuters and retirees but rapidly coming to be seen as the 'California' of the UK Economy. By better linking the Cambridge biomedicine and IT hub with the Norwich cleantech and agri-science and Ipswich Telecoms cluster around BT, Martlesham we can unlock a new 'golden triangle' of high growth research based businesses, and help the UK lead the world in some key areas of agriculture, renewable energy, clean fuels, engineering and biomedicine. But it won't happen without first class road, rail, air and broadband links. That's

why all the MPs in the region came together earlier this year to launch the East Anglian Rail Prospectus.

The Government 'gets it' and is rightly prioritising infrastructure as a core part of its growth and recovery mission. It has recently announced the biggest modernisation of our railways since the Victorian era, with £9.4 billion to be spent on railway upgrades across England and Wales. These include the provision of guarantees for up to £40bn of infrastructure projects among the 500 schemes in the 2011 National Infrastructure Plan, and the investment of £530m over five years to extend superfast broadband to 90 per cent of the population by 2015. The Government has also unlocked £20bn of private pension fund money to co-invest in infrastructure.

This all gives rise to some important questions about the right model of commercial co-investment to attract private capital to invest in public infrastructure. Post the scandals of PFI, what are the new models of ownership and leadership for channelling and co-ordinating this New Victorian renaissance of infrastructure? We need to find models of infrastructure investment which harness the benefits of private sector capital, management and innovation, without creating a raft of new quangos and messy 'Public / Private Partnerships'. Let's be bold.

Bold innovations are sometimes easier to pilot at a local level. That's why I've suggested we look seriously at the idea of piloting an East Anglian Rail Company - reintegrating track and TOC on a regional basis to create an integrated rail

company; combining the only real benefit of the nationalised railway (integration) with the benefits of private sector leadership, investment and innovation. With a long term franchise and control over track, trains and stations, and some development powers along the rail corridor, it could attract the very best management; secure the billions in new finance we need to fund new rail, train and station infrastructure, and help pioneer a coherent model of sustainable development along our rail corridors. Why not let the rail users and taxpayers of East Anglia have a stake in it?

Create a Regional Rail company like this, with a 20 year franchise and the ability to develop the rail corridor, and you create a FTSE 250 company overnight. And not just an integrated rail company but an engine of growth and technology transfer to help build the regional economy. So, we won't rebalance the economy without massive investment in new transport infrastructure. Government can't and shouldn't pay for it. So let's be bold in the area we can and create the viable *structures* to attract the private capital we need to modernise essential public infrastructure. We may need to be similarly bold in our thinking on roads, broadband, and airports. Out with the old thinking. Bring on the new.

George Freeman MP will be speaking at 'Infrastructure and Investment Platforms for Growth', a ResPublica public fringe event at Conservative Party conference: Tuesday 9th October, 8.00pm – 9.15pm, the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

A good deal for cities: Cooperation and collaboration for growth

Mike Emmerich, Chief Executive, New Economy

The defining global trend of the early part of the twenty-first century is the urbanisation of the world's economy. More than half of the world's population now live in cities, which collectively generate some 70% of global GDP. This trend is forecast to continue with the global urban population expected to grow by 2 billion over the next 20 years. The result will be that, increasingly, the success or failure of national economies will be determined by the strength of their city economies.

Britain is already a profoundly urban country. London and the eight English 'core cities' alone account for two-fifths of the country's population and more than half of national economic output. However, London apart, Britain's cities do not punch their weight on the international stage and have not been able to drive national growth to the extent that they should have.

Successive governments have sought to balance the economic benefit of fully exploiting areas of opportunity against the political risk of creating 'postcode lotteries'. The result is that, outside London, there has been little differentiation in the policy approach between cities alongside, paradoxically, an increase in regional disparities. Cities have been left with a disjointed mix of national, regional and local policies and programmes which, at best, do not complement each other and, at worst, actively detract from one another. Either way cities aren't driving growth.

The current Government has made some progress on this. The appointment of a dedicated Cities Minister was a key early statement of intent, which has been followed through via a series of bespoke city deals for the eight English

core cities. These deals recognise the reality that what might be a good policy for Manchester may not be a good policy for Birmingham. Each city has its own unique set of opportunities and challenges, and to unlock growth – and drive down public sector dependency – each place needs a tailored approach that targets these relentlessly.

Manchester's deal – which will see the city 'earn back' a proportion of national tax take delivered by economic growth and allow greater flexibilities in skills and transport policies, amongst a host of other pro-growth initiatives – is perhaps the most ambitious of all the deals. It reflects the opportunities Manchester, the largest concentration of economic activity outside the South East, has for driving national economic growth.

A good deal for cities is more than just a set of signatures on a document; it is an on-going process of dialogue, cooperation and collaboration. Manchester's first city deal then needs to be seen as the start of a process, not an end in itself. Good early progress has been made but much more far reaching reforms will need to be enacted if the city's full potential is to be unlocked. As the UK looks to create a new economic growth model, Manchester is in no doubt that it can, and must, play a central role. Why? Because a good deal for Manchester is a good deal for the UK's future economic growth, and as Disraeli once said, what Manchester does today, the rest of the world does tomorrow.

Mike Emmerich will be speaking at 'A Good Deal: Creating Sustainable Growth for Cities', a ResPublica fringe event co-hosted with Core Cities at Conservative Party Conference: Sunday 7th October, 6.30pm – 7.45pm, the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

Creating sustainable growth for cities: The contribution of the European Single Market

Malcolm Harbour, MEP for West Midlands

As urban populations grow and resources come under strain, there is a growing need for our cities to be “smarter”, more innovative on transport and telecoms solutions, more energy efficient, less polluting, and more able to exploit their diversity to generate long term jobs. Policies need to be adapted to become more responsive to the needs of small business, especially those with growth potential. In the current economic climate, businesses in Europe's cities are reducing overheads and pleading for the elimination of unnecessary regulatory burdens, while looking for new market opportunities. Meanwhile city authorities are under pressure to improve efficiency and reduce costs, while improving service delivery.

Successful and sustainable cities will have very strong international outlooks. Jobs will be created, and sustained for the long term, by globally competitive businesses marketing and selling products and services worldwide. Industries running international businesses find that cities are highly integrated into a global business culture. The diverse communities in cities provide them with excellent skills in languages, and experience with the trends, practices, standards and the regulatory frameworks of other countries. This gives them a competitive edge in terms of export promotion, marketing and customer service activities.

The European Single Market must offer the most open and accessible opportunities for business growth, and continue to be a magnet for successful cities. In the Single Market, businesses, particularly SMEs, can exploit consumer or business demand that can be easily reached through a short journey, where the ability to

establish a business requires a minimum of cost and red tape, and where legal rights and intellectual property can be safeguarded. Single Market expansion is a lower risk route for young businesses to build an export infrastructure, before tackling higher risk opportunities like Brazil or China.

The framework for the European Single Market has taken major steps forward over the last few years, particularly with the opening of the services market. Enlargement has brought new countries into the Single Market fold. The Prime Minister has given great leadership, with other likeminded governments, to promoting the Single Market. The European Parliament instigated a new political programme, the Single Market Act, which is setting clear targets for all EU Governments to implement existing Single Market rules, modernise existing frameworks and tackle obstacles to the digital economy. Right at the top of the priority list is the need to reduce the bureaucracy that hinders local business from innovating and stifles competitiveness.

Super-fast broadband and high speed wireless connections are an indispensable infrastructure for the modern, globally connected city. Through the optical fibre, city businesses can deliver high value services anywhere in the world. They can design, develop and evaluate new products, then market, sell and deliver them.

Cities need to transform themselves using the same digital technology. Citizens want better services delivered at lower cost. Education, transport, health, energy, water and waste are all services where ICT can transform performance. City dwellers can interact with their service providers and make choices through far better information.

To help cities deploy imaginative and innovative solutions, a major reworking of the EU public procurement rules is underway to simplify the rules and release the potential of the public purse as a driver of innovation. The centre piece will be the promotion of new procurement tools that will engage innovative companies, especially SMEs, in developing more efficient solutions to the delivery of public policy objectives. The recently adopted EU patent will underpin all innovation projects by allowing companies to protect inventions at a much lower cost. The overall impact will enable cities and regions to develop high value added innovative products and services. (For more information, see the interview with the author in Science Business - <http://tinyurl.com/cktyjzm>)

Electors are looking for city leadership that will focus on meeting new challenges of job creation and sustainability. They will support those administrations that are ready to deploy bold solutions. Within the European Union, we have the knowledge and the capabilities to support city decision makers, and to help them defray risks by building expert networks with other cities. We must build partnerships for innovation and growth.

Malcolm Harbour will be speaking at 'A Good Deal: Creating Sustainable Growth for Cities', a ResPublica fringe event co-hosted with Core Cities at Conservative Party Conference: Sunday 7th October, 6.30pm – 7.45pm, the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone)

Constructing growth: Skills and jobs for the real economy

Judy Lowe, Deputy Chairman, Construction Skills

Like most of UK PLC, the construction industry is suffering. We are often held up by media and government as the cause of economic woes (the contraction in the sector helped tip the UK into recession last quarter) and it's true that construction is an economic bellwether which Chancellors neglect or ignore at their peril.

But construction is also a fast and proven route out of recession and good value for money – an industry with real clout and the potential to create jobs quickly, and help turn around an ailing economy. Despite the UK's anaemic performance since 2008, last year the sector contributed 8% of our GDP, employed over 2.5 million people and trained more apprentices than anyone else. For every £1 invested in construction £2.84 is returned to the economy.

Construction is fundamental to our future prosperity – but the industry hasn't always been as successful at building relationships with government as we've been at building world-class houses, hospitals, railways and roads. It is this that led us to launch the Construction4Growth campaign - to change the way the construction sector works with Westminster, Whitehall and beyond. Assembled by CITB-Construction Skills and supported by industry big hitters – companies like Carillion, Midas Group and BAM Nuttall – the C4G programme is bringing together MPs, ministers, civil servants and the industry to focus on kick-starting the UK economy, targeting investment and improving our sector's skills.

The panel at our joint fringe event with ResPublica will discuss the economic and skills landscape we need for industry growth on a local and national scale, focusing on the key themes of

the Construction4Growth campaign: investment, skills and the green construction agenda.

It is the issue of investment which the campaign first sought to address. Both the government and private sector have invested significantly in construction – but many of the mooted projects still haven't begun. We must work together to speed up everything from procurement to the planning process, and start delivering the real jobs the economy needs now.

Our procurement rules are strangling growth. In Canada, a project to construct a hospital would break ground one year after the procurement process began, whereas in the UK the same project would take at least four years to reach a similar stage. This must change - quicker procurement encourages private sector innovation and efficiency, stimulating economic growth and boosting employment.

The UK Government has launched their Construction Strategy in an effort to reform and improve the procurement process, and industry continues to work closely to support this. However, the current programme is focused on saving money, rather than making it easier for private companies to tender, procure, innovate and employ. Construction4Growth will make the arguments for change, shifting the emphasis towards encouraging the private sector to build its way to success.

The campaign is about more than contributing towards an immediate recovery – it is about securing the right skills across the construction sector to support long-term innovation, cultural change and growth. Key to this will be reversing the crippling 23 per cent decline in construction apprenticeships the construction industry is now experiencing. Apprenticeships are a good investment, returning £16 for every £1 of taxpayer money spent. We are looking to focus government on a range of measures to make it easier for young people to take on a construction

apprenticeship, helping to secure the talented future workforce our industry needs to grow.

Developing 'green' opportunities for growth through construction and ensuring the successful launch of the Government's Green Deal scheme is the final plank of our campaign. The Green Deal offers a great opportunity to reduce carbon emissions in a cost effective way – giving up to 14 million households the opportunity to install energy saving products to the sum of £10,000 into their property for no upfront cost through until 2020. Responsibility lies with Government to offer incentives and interventions that will help achieve the aims of the 2008 Climate Change Act. The construction industry must work with Government and politicians of every stripe to make the values and aims enshrined in legislation a reality. Our industry is eager to deliver the Green Deal and other low carbon construction initiatives to support the Government's carbon reduction ambitions. However, if initiatives such as the Green Deal are to succeed across the construction industry, they need to be adequately promoted and consumers incentivised and confident that the small and medium sized construction companies tasked to deliver much of this work are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet this challenge.

By harnessing the determination and ambition of the industry and working closely with Government to achieve our common aims, Construction4Growth is tackling issues around investment, skills and the green agenda to help return the sector and wider economy to a position of promise and prosperity.

Judy Lowe will be speaking at 'Constructing Growth: Skills and Jobs for the real economy', a ResPublica public fringe event co-hosted with Construction Skills at Conservative Party Conference: Sunday 7th October, 5.00pm – 6.15pm, the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

Social value: Commissioning for communities, by communities

Chris White MP, Sponsor of the Public Services (Social Value) Act

One of the aims of the Public Services (Social Value) Act was to give commissioners the opportunity to be more innovative about the way that they design public sector service contracts and to create additional well-being for the communities they work for.

However the Act will not have succeeded if it merely sees public bodies have internal conversations about how to increase well-being for our communities. Social value is not something that can be easily measured and it presents commissioners with many options which are incommensurable.

The only way that commissioners will be able to decide what social value is appropriate for communities and how they should weight the different options presented to them is if they engage with citizens and seek to build an understanding of their concerns, their priorities and their aspirations.

Social value will mean different things to different communities. A rural community may believe that environmental protection or sourcing from local produce is important or an urban community might view anti-social behaviour or improving local skills as key local priorities. While communities will operate beyond these simplistic stereotypes, these examples give an idea of the different choices that communities may wish to make.

Public servants behind closed doors are not in a position to make these kinds of decisions and in a democratic society; we instinctively believe that choices made on behalf of the community should be made by the community.

The Social Value Act does not specify how public bodies should engage with communities and merely gives them a duty to consider consultation. If social value is to feed into every part of public service delivery then public bodies need to consult widely and frequently with citizens, civil society organisations and private sector businesses about what it can mean and how it can be created.

In a mature democratic society engaging citizens on public service delivery is not an easy process. Although the public understands the importance of public services and the cost of these services, most people don't have the time to think through the details of social value on a regular basis. Public bodies will need to think outside the box if they are to create useful frameworks for consultation with communities. Of course, traditional forms of consultation such as surveys and public meetings will have their uses but public bodies will need to consider how they can create a debate within a community about these issues.

One of the Coalition's boldest reforms has been the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners. This reform recognises that in a democratic society, when multiple choices or strategies are open to communities those communities can resolve these issues through appointing a representative. Not only does this give the community an opportunity to debate, but it also gives them a coherent voice through an individual through which their preferences can be weighted.

Unlike policing and crime, public sector commissioning is perhaps a more routine subject but it is no less important for communities. Bringing democratic politics into public service commissioning might be disruptive, but it would

also bring innovation and dynamism into an important area of public life.

Creating “social value champions”, locally appointed or elected individuals, who can represent their communities on how to create additional well-being through public service contracts, might be one way for public bodies to engage communities. However in order to ensure accountability and a flow of information to the “champion”, there is room for a more direct method of consultation through “social value forums”. These could be made up of individual citizens, civil society organisations and local businesses to provide their views, expertise and advice on the capacity available within the local community to achieve the social value outcomes that people want.

Consultation need not equal cost and getting commissioning right and delivering additional

outcomes can create significant savings in the long term. Public bodies need to work with communities if they are to deliver the quality of services that citizens expect and tap into these potential savings. The Public Service (Social Value) Act has forced a wedge in the closed door of public service communities; it is up for commissioners and public bodies to force it wide open and to begin a radical transformation to the way that commissioning is done.

Chris White MP will be speaking at 'Innovating Public Services Through Social Value', a ResPublica public fringe event co-hosted with Selwood Housing and NAVCA at Conservative Party conference: Monday 8th October, 5.00pm – 6.15pm, the ResPublica Marquee, ICC Birmingham (secure zone). A corresponding event will also take place at Labour Party conference.

Beyond social value, toward a new social economy

Caroline Julian, Senior Researcher and Project Manager, ResPublica

The recent legislative emphasis on ‘social value’ is a welcome shift in public policy thinking. Through Chris White MP’s Public Services (Social Value) Act, which came onto the statute book in February 2012, all public bodies in England and Wales are for the first time required to consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. Other guidance and policy emphases sit alongside this Act, and have now been established for some time, but it offers a way through which public bodies can be ‘nudged’ to incorporate social value in both the services they procure and the services that they deliver.

Laudable as this requirement is, however, the renewed emphasis on social value, much like David Cameron’s ‘Big Society’ agenda, has received a mixed reaction, and to date, little impact. The social value agenda is in danger of producing short-term and tokenistic solutions to long-term social and economic problems. ‘Contracting in’ social value and establishing a defined list of ‘social requirements’, as is often its interpretation, could cultivate an overly bureaucratic ‘tick box’ exercise that does not allow for flexibility and innovation, and, most importantly, a meaningful form of engagement with the service users and surrounding community. Quantifiable approaches to its measurement have also produced narrow understandings of what social value truly entails. Social value should rather be ‘demonstrated’

through cases, qualitative research and long-term engagement with all stakeholders involved.

We need to press for a far more radical social settlement than this duty implies. The emphasis on the 'social' and the associative has huge potential to deliver a transformative agenda that calls for a new social foundation upon which our public and private markets could be based. Far beyond 'tick box' exercises, or the establishment of 'social requirements', intermediary institutions can act as facilitators, enablers and capacity builders for a whole new social economy.

In a ResPublica report due to be published this autumn, which explores the role of housing associations in delivering successful localism, we argue that intermediaries such as housing associations can play, not only a role in pressing for good social practice in procurement procedures, but also a key part in facilitating such a local, social economy. Many housing associations can act as facilitators, incubators and guarantors to support a whole range of social initiatives, whether at the early ideas or 'start-up' stage, or throughout the development of a sustainable business model.

Housing associations have also been leaders in weaving social value into their core business strategies, indicating an emerging shift away from *ad hoc* community engagement. The housing association, Plus Dane Group, has recently been re-branded as a 'Neighbourhood Investor', completely re-organising all operations to ensure that this role is firmly embedded in everything that they do. This has crucially not equated to bad business. To the contrary, Plus Dane has this year reported a £2M increase in turnover with only a £400K increase in costs. Through operational savings elsewhere, £5M has now been freed up to directly invest in the neighbourhoods it serves. This is where localism becomes the key to the delivery of social value and vice versa. Marrying the two agendas will safeguard against national, prescriptive models,

or a purely individualistic and ineffectual approach to social renewal.

Of greatest importance, therefore, is the need to look 'beyond the bill' to the Government's broader agenda and Britain's successful social economy. We must ensure that social value is woven into the Government's Open Public Services initiative, for example, but also to the potential for wider user-led and owned services to deliver real equitable returns to our most deprived communities. Reforms to the social care system also offer a unique opportunity to stimulate new social and asset-based models to public service and personalised care. With changes to the banking and financial services sectors, and their regulators also, the Government must consider where the 'social' will likely fit in.

This new agenda cannot so much be delivered through additional national legislation – social value itself must be something to emerge within a community rather than without. Rather, it should manifest itself through local accountability, self-regulation and through a radical change in culture amongst business leaders, service providers and their neighbourhoods, and with the added ambition of the ever emerging social entrepreneurs. Without such a shift to core and locally invested practice, the agenda is likely to fail our communities and become yet another ambitious drive swept away by the political tide. For it to be a success, we must now move beyond social value and toward a new social economy.

Caroline Julian will be speaking at 'Public Services, Social Value and the Social Economy', a ResPublica fringe series at Labour Party conference: Wednesday 3rd October, 6.00pm – 7.15pm, Manchester Town Hall, and Conservative Party conference: Monday 8th October, 5.00pm – 6.15pm, the ResPublica Marquee, ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

Bringing social value to life

Barney Mynott, Senior Communications Officer, NAVCA

Reflecting back on London 2012, the warm response to the Olympic and Paralympic athletes (win or lose), the cheering of that very British institution the NHS at the opening ceremony, and the applause for the Olympic volunteers at its close, demonstrate once again that there is far more to life than money. At a time when faith in financial institutions has been strained, 'social' value is back on the agenda.

And when public authorities are making their choice about how to spend their money (£220 billion a year in the UK), finding ways to ensure social value is obtained, not just cheapest price, is important to communities.

The Public Services (Social Value) Act requires public authorities, including local councils and health bodies in England and Wales, to consider social value when commissioning services. It has the potential to make a big difference for charities supporting the most disadvantaged people in our local communities. It is also a big opportunity for commissioners to rethink how they commission services, but will they make the most of this?

Will public authorities wait for the Act to come into force in January 2013 or will they start thinking now about how to make the Act work for them and bring social value to life?

Of course, this is easier said than done. The Act leaves social value up for interpretation. Writing recently for a NAVCA briefing, Chris White MP, the *godfather* of the Act said he thought that would need to be done on a case by case basis, adding that he hoped "all public bodies will see this as a duty to consult" to best structure social value into contracts.

NAVCA's main interest is that commissioning leads to increased social value for local communities. Our approach is that councils and other local public commissioners should seek to identify the key elements of social value that are important to people in their locality. This might include local jobs, local skills, fairness, the quality of environment or community engagement. Of course, what is important will be different for different areas.

We have also supported the LGA's Procurement Pledge to allow small and medium sized business and charities to compete with the big guys on a fairer basis. This would benefit the resilience of local economies.

At NAVCA we have been working with our local members to explore these issues with commissioners. Three things stand out. Firstly, while individually many officers in local government are enthusiastic about the Act, they are apprehensive about how to use it and looking for political leadership locally to make it happen. The time for bold political leadership locally to bring about new commissioning practices, encourage culture change and foster a more open exchange of dialogue with communities is now. Local councillors should ensure they set out clear policy guidance for their officials to follow. Without this, the danger is more box ticking and inertia will prevail; the same savvy bidders who complete the tender with high promises but deliver to minimum standards. We've seen too much of that in recent years.

This brings us onto the second area, what counts as having met the Act's requirements? NAVCA would like to see an approach where local political leadership sets out a minimum standard and threshold for meeting the Act, and drives the implementation of that.

Otherwise we feel we will only see pockets of good practice across public bodies, failing to really grasp the potential of the Act.

As an example, what will count as having 'considered' social value, what will count as having 'consulted', and what do commissioners understand as 'economic, social and environmental well-being'? The Act raises many questions that demand both political leadership, but also guidance and a framework to work within.

Thirdly there is a big thirst to understand how to make all this happen in the current legislative

framework of procurement, and learn from others. We are working with commissioners, civil society organisations and umbrella bodies to help them understand how to make it happen, learn from other areas and share good practice. How will you make the Act work in your community?

A representative from NAVCA will be speaking at 'Public Services, Social Value and the Social Economy', a ResPublica fringe series co-hosted with NAVCA and Selwood Housing at Labour Party conference: Wednesday 3rd October, 6.00pm – 7.15pm, Manchester Town Hall, and Conservative Party conference: Monday 8th October, 5.00pm – 6.15pm, the ResPublica Marquee, ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

Choice and personalisation through community engagement

Lord Victor Adebawale, Chief Executive, Turning Point

At Turning Point we have long believed in person-centred services. We work with people with complex needs, including those affected by substance misuse, mental health problems, unemployment and those with a learning disability. We support people in a range of settings including registered care homes, Supported Living and through community outreach work.

We have welcomed the introduction of direct payments and personal budgets that provide greater choice. Such schemes in social care should also be linked to ones in health and housing and people should have access to support to manage their money if necessary. Integrated services are particularly important for people with complex needs, as many already face barriers when accessing services, and many services are not designed with them in mind. The divide between health and social care may exist in

service provision and policy, but it certainly doesn't exist in people's lives.

The inverse care law states that those who need support the most tend to get it the least and it's when services are inaccessible that people can become vulnerable to crisis. People cannot be expected to adjust to existing service models that don't suit their needs and we should not talk about hard to reach groups, but instead focus on improving hard to reach services.

I welcome plans in the social care white paper and draft bill to focus on tackling social isolation, support local networks and encourage more community involvement in services. At Turning Point we strongly believe in involving communities in the design and delivery of services. It's our way of ensuring truly personalised support is available, which also helps with the challenge of reversing the inverse care law. Our Connected Care model of community led commissioning was designed to address the gaps in service provision for those with complex

needs and has so far delivered 13 projects across England and engaged with over 140,000 people. It centres on teams of local residents who research community need and engage with commissioners and frontline staff. Recommendations for improved service design and delivery are then turned into reality by local people and commissioners working together.

Choice and personalisation also require effective commissioning and our work has shown us that commissioning and procurement are different things. Commissioning is the process by which the needs of a community are understood, from which procurement follows. These early stages are important to get right if services are to meet the needs of the people using them.

In a time of economic difficulties and spending cuts, it's important to note that Connected Care has a key economic benefit. A cost benefit analysis of our work in Basildon estimated that improved service delivery could realise savings of £4 for every £1 invested. The advantages for communities are also clear, with people able to benefit from integrated services that they can better engage with and use.

Connected Care projects have resulted in the creation of social enterprises supporting socially excluded people and vulnerable older people, carers' groups and community time banks and all the projects have brought the needs of communities, including their most vulnerable and isolated members, to the attention of commissioners. Many local residents have become more involved in their communities and have set up family support groups, older people's luncheon clubs and social activity clubs, meaning the projects help to build community resilience and social capital. Directly involving the people who will be using services in their design and delivery is, I believe, a key way of achieving personalisation. Connected Care gives people more than a budget and a choice between

services, but a chance to shape the services that they want from the ground up.

The government has demonstrated commitment to integration and personalisation – which are undeniably two important elements of high quality services. I particularly welcome plans for a national minimum eligibility threshold, improved portability of care provision and putting individual wellbeing at the centre of the system and I look forward to seeing them implemented.

There is much to be optimistic about but I cannot avoid mentioning the issue of funding. The government's proposals must be accompanied by financial commitments, as the anxiety felt by those reliant on the system is only growing. We know that reform will be expensive, but the costs of doing nothing will be far higher. The government should ensure that its ambitious set of reforms that could greatly improve the whole system are realised. Recent news reports suggest that ministers may be close to agreeing too many of the Dilnot Commission's recommendations, so I remain hopeful.

We have the chance to turn our care system around, not only for the increasing numbers of older people who use it, but also for the many younger and working age people who require social care services. Clarity on funding will enable badly needed reform to happen, but of course the solution is not about money alone. Turning Point also remains aware that only through integration, personalisation and responding to the wishes and needs of the people that use our services will those services remain relevant and effective.

Victor Adebawale will be speaking at 'Choice in social care: Making care personal', a ResPublica public fringe event co-hosted with Home Instead and KeyRing at Liberal Democrat Party conference: Tuesday 25th September, 12.30pm – 1.45pm, Holiday Inn Brighton. A corresponding event will take place at Conservative conference.

Micro-scale and mutual solutions: Meeting the ever growing need for care and support for older and disabled people

Alex Fox, Chief Executive, Shared Lives

There's no doubt that we can't afford social care as we know it. We can't afford to provide care to the people, who receive it now, nor to the people who need it, but are judged not 'vulnerable' enough to be eligible, let alone to the growing numbers of older people who will need care in future.

So it is not surprising that the debate about social care often focuses on how to cut costs, increase efficiencies and scale up effective interventions. But social care, even less than health care, refuses to conform to the economics of mass production.

UK health policy makers are learning from 'the Henry Ford of heart surgery', Dr Devi Shetty, whose 1,000-bed hospital in Bangalor last year carried out 6,000 operations. Performing surgery at high volumes has not only driven down the price of an operation to as low as \$1,500 (through making constant use of expensive equipment, for instance), but has driven up quality: doctors performing many more surgeries a week can become more practiced.

Scaling up makes sense for surgery, but can be disastrous in social care. Southern Cross provided residential care to around 30,000 older people, with a half-billion turnover, before collapsing last year. Successive reports into home care have found large providers being commissioned for 15 minute slots and in one case a woman recorded 106 different care workers sent to support her husband with dementia, who needed consistency above all.

Whilst advances in mobility equipment, telecare and online technology can help streamline some areas of social care, social care's key interactions -

one person assisting, listening to or talking with another person - resist automation and standardisation. The 'personalisation' of social care reflects this, embedding facilitated choice-making and individual tailoring of services. Service users are increasingly recognised as experts in their own lives. In the development of choice and control within social care, the desire to improve 'customer' relations and experience reflect the private sector's recognition that, whilst a large offshore call centre may have a cheaper unit cost, customers are more likely to be loyal to a company which offers personal customer relations and personalised services.

Good customer relations, whilst an improvement on a 'take what you're given' philosophy, still do not capture, however, the kinds of interactions we look for when we need social care support. Social care professionals are not only called upon to meet basic needs with warmth, professionalism and dignity. We also need social care interventions which can tackle an older person's isolation, a care leaver's lack of confidence and the barriers someone with a learning disability can face to employment. Supportive relationships which can hope to achieve those goals cannot be one-way. If the root cause of an older person's increasing support needs is their isolation, even an expensive package of professional support is unlikely to replace their need for friendships with people not paid to be with them.

A raft of emerging micro-scale and mutuality-influenced approaches are creating two-way relationships in which people have the opportunity to contribute as well as to receive: in other words to have friends as well as volunteers and to be citizens rather than service users. These include Shared Lives (in which a registered Shared Lives carer shares their family home and community life with an older or disabled person);

Time-banking; Local Area Coordination (coordinators with an intimate knowledge of their small locale, help people to navigate systems and connect with or build informal community resources); Homeshare (in which a young person who lacks affordable housing moves into the spare room of an older person who needs some companionship or a little help) and very small social care 'micro-enterprises', some of which are set up or jointly owned by people who use services themselves. These approaches find economies in being small (low overheads, no back offices) and bring in voluntary and informal contributions which would not be offered to large organisations with weaker links with local people.

But if the best and most sustainable social care is small and mutual, how does that help us tackle the macro-scale challenges of public service cuts and an ageing population? Small and personal initiatives can't be scaled-up without destroying what made them valuable in the first place. But they can be 'scaled out': creating the conditions in which many more people are able and motivated to do similar things. Thousands of people are members of time banks and there are attempts to create a national 'care bank' which would see us all encouraged to deposit hours of care now, which we could cash in, in later life. Shared Lives is used by 15,000 people and is growing whilst other service sectors shrink. There are tens of thousands of micro-enterprises, many unknown to councils.

For micro solutions to social care to become as common as, say, small independent hairdressers, there is a role for local and national government,

but a different role from that of central planner and purchaser.

It lies in bringing new providers, including micro-providers, into the market place and bringing them together with people who hold personal budgets or wish to spend their own money.

Councils need to nurture support systems for people to make all kinds of contributions, from unpaid family carers to volunteers and community groups. Regulators need to be pragmatic in the application of regulations often designed with large systems and providers in mind.

This new approach to social care, which gets to know individuals and seeks to build on their gifts, skills and relationships with those around them, could be described as a 'networked' model of care. It is an approach which has learned from the innovations of social networking, but retains a belief in the primacy of 'real world' interactions and relationships. We are some way from seeing it become the norm, but it is the only affordable way in which we will be able to construct a society in which everyone, including those with long term conditions and support needs, can live well, as fully responsible citizens.

Alex Fox will be speaking at 'Making care and support personal', a ResPublica public fringe series at Liberal Democrat Party conference: Tuesday 25th September, 12.30pm – 1.45pm, Holiday Inn Brighton, and at Conservative Party conference: Monday 8th October, 12.30pm - 1.45pm, the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone).

Getting down to the nitty-gritty about choice

David Boyle, Leader of the Independent Review of barriers to choice in public services

Choice? What does it mean? And in practice, do we actually get it when it comes to the public services we use? If you happen to have children the state school system, then more than 85 per cent get their first choice of school. That's a success, but what about the ones who didn't? What did they feel and is there anything that can be done about it in future?

Those are the kind of questions I have to answer over the next few months as Independent Reviewer for the government, and there is no doubt that it is a difficult debate. For one thing, the word 'choice' has become rather politically contested. Is it a method of driving up the quality of our schools and hospitals by forcing them to compete for clients? Or is it a conspiracy to hand over public services to the private sector? Or is it, as many people have told me, something they don't actually want – they just want their local school or hospital or social care package to be good? And then again, what if it isn't any good?

The other reason the debate is difficult is because nobody has much idea what people are actually doing with their choices. People have been given the right, in some circumstances, to choose hospitals or GPs, hospitals, schools or social care packages, and other services too – but do they actually choose? In practice, do they get the choice they want? Or does something stop them?

There have been hundreds (maybe more) of pieces of learned research about the theory of choice and competition – but remarkably little about what people are doing with their choices. That is why the government has asked me to find out, to run a review – independently of Whitehall departments – to see what is really happening on the ground. I know a little about this myself. I had

to fight an appeal to get my eldest child into my local school. I'm currently battling with my PCT to get a choice of consultant for chronic eczema. So I'm under no illusions that choice is a simple matter of just asking. I'm also aware that, even where there isn't a choice, people still tend to choose – if they can afford it. House prices rise around the best schools, even perhaps the best healthcare, and then choices become unaffordable to anyone without the correct income.

That's another question. In practice, who gets the choice? Is it everyone, or is it so far only the preserve of articulate, sharp-elbowed people. I have no ideological axe to grind here. I'm neither a rabid free marketer, nor am I one of those people who think everyone should be happy with what they are given.

But I'm aware that, behind the choice debate, lies questions about the culture of services, which can still sometimes treat people with disdain when they are too big, inflexible and impersonal – in the private and public sector alike. But I do have one bias. I believe that we may get to the nub of the question from successful stories about choices offered and used, rather than just from stories like mine where it was denied. You have to meet people, face to face if possible, and ask them.

So if you have anything to tell us about your own experience, do come along. But if you can't make it, it would still be good to hear from you. You can write to me direct at choice.review@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk

David Boyle will be speaking at 'Choice in social care: Making care personal', a ResPublica public fringe event co-hosted with Home Instead and KeyRing at Liberal Democrat Party conference: Tuesday 25th September, 12.30pm – 1.45pm, Holiday Inn Brighton. A corresponding event will take place at Conservative conference.

Making a transformational change with personalisation

Karyn Kirkpatrick, CEO, KeyRing

Total transformation is a phrase which should leave little room for ambiguity. Total: concerning the whole, the entirety and all aspects.

Transformation: change in form, appearance, nature or character.

I asked a few people what they thought the phrase meant. Their answers included a paradigm shift, a move from one level to another, a complete reorganisation which resulted in different outcomes. The phrase was used by InControl to name a project which ran between 2007 and 2009.

Within the context of InControl's project, total transformation meant a whole-system change which allowed self-directed support to be embedded across a local authority's care system. The whole thrust of the project was to provide the change model and the tools to make a personalised life possible through people having their own budget.

In short, the goal was total transformation - an organisational process - providing total transformation - a personal outcome.

So, how in 2012 are we in the position that Personal Budgets are sometimes merely a different pot of money paying for the same old services? How is it that this innovative and potentially life transforming idea has become reduced to a different method of paying for the same support options? How is it that some service users with the capacity to choose their support, don't even understand they have a personal budget?

Some recently-experienced rules from local authorities might elucidate the situation:

"We won't cover the cost of volunteers through Personal Budgets"

"We don't recognise the input of volunteers"

"If someone's Personal Budget is being managed by the Local Authority, they can only have services from our approved provider list"

"You can only be on our approved provider list if you can get your costs below £13 per hour"

So, within the short examples given above, we can see a double whammy of exclusion: Services which use volunteers to offer greater flexibility and choice or which have higher costs because they refuse to provide a service where staff get the minimum of supervision and training are effectively excluded from the approved provider list. In addition, the service user is offered a range of basic services from the approved provider list. These tend not to innovate because in order to get to the desired price they are usually high volume providers.

When systems governed by such rules are put in place, the outcome is rarely going to make a transformational difference in someone's life. We have the opportunity for Personal Budgets to be a watershed moment for social care; however, what has often been experienced has been a tinkering around the edges as new ways are shoe-horned into old thinking, providing few new choices and little room for the imagination. Put in this light, Personal Budgets are not always an attractive proposition to a service user and may understandably be met with apathy.

There is also some fear that Personal Budgets are a way of cutting costs and reducing support. This is getting in the way of a full and frank discussion about how we can provide people with the

opportunity to develop the skills to have a life which requires less support. For example, time spent improving people's shopping skills may well mean that less support is subsequently required. Developing people's skills in this area involves more than just traipsing around the local supermarket with them, it involves teaching people about healthy eating, meal planning, budgeting and travelling. In the short term it is cheaper just to do the shopping with them but ultimately the cost in both monetary and human terms is much greater.

In order for Personal Budgets and personalisation to really work we need to see a willingness to think laterally and to allow people to select the right support from the right provider. We need to embrace the local community and all that it has to offer, to value volunteers and providers whose support is more expensive because they offer greater quality and better opportunities for the

development of skills. And we need Local Authority systems which free people up to make the right decisions. This doesn't mean unbridled risk-taking: it means evolving systems which fit the new landscape.

We call on decision-makers to scrutinise personalisation within their area of responsibility and ask to see evidence of transformational change in people's lives, to dig behind the one or two exceptional case studies which may be offered, and to ensure they have an understanding of the system as it is experienced by the majority.

Karyn Kirkpatrick will be speaking at 'Choice in social care: Making care personal', a ResPublica public fringe event co-hosted with Keyring and Home Instead at Liberal Democrat Party conference: Tuesday 25th September, 12.30pm – 1.45pm, Holiday Inn Brighton.

Achieving personalisation: Moving from personal budgets to real personal choice

Dr Moira Fraser, Director of Policy and Research, Carers Trust

The push towards personalisation of care is little by little is moving towards more of an observable reality. By March 2013, all eligible people in England in receipt of social care from their local authorities should have this delivered via the use of a personal budget – whether managed by the local authority or provider, or whether it is through a payment made to the person with care needs and managed directly by them someone such as a carer on their behalf, or a mixture of these two. Regardless of the method chosen, the key point is that delivery should be firmly based on the principles of self-directed support.

Research from the National Audit Office and the National Personal Budget Survey have shown that, where it works well, positive outcomes are achievable, and higher satisfaction is reported than the standard commissioned services. Work with carers and people with care needs; however, shows there is still a way to go to ensure that the personalisation which the Government seeks to achieve is something that exists in more than name only.

A high proportion of the increase in the numbers of social care users with personal budgets fall into the managed care category. There is no problem with this in and of itself. However, there is a genuine concern that some of these are people who have simply been administratively switched from a commissioned service to a nominal

personal budget. This is highlighted by research from Think Local Act Personal that found that individuals with managed care were less likely to know that they had a choice in the care services they received, or to have been offered any choice. There are serious questions to be asked as to whether this can be considered a personal budget in any meaningful sense.

Not everyone wants the responsibility of handling a direct payment. As well as the complexities of achieving release of funding, there is the challenge of agreeing the detail of exactly how the funds are to be spent – in which a whole range of hitherto unknown restrictions upon what local authorities will allow and not allow suddenly materialise. For carers managing a personal budget for their own support needs, the common restriction on using funds for replacement care is source of enormous frustration. For them, there seems no point in giving them a budget for a break when they can't pay for the replacement care to enable them to take the break in the first place. And then for those with larger budgets, the issue of becoming an employer of a personal assistant, and the payroll and paperwork which goes along with that can feel incredibly daunting. Whilst a personal budget can be the route to greater autonomy and independence, getting the right care from the right person at the right time, it can also leave you at the mercy of service breakdown or a lack of options to choose from in the first place.

Whilst liberating for many people, it is unrealistic to expect that everyone will want to manage their own budget through a direct payment. We therefore must find ways to maximise the opportunities for promoting choice and creativity using the managed budget route. Perhaps it is inevitable that there will be limitations due to the responsibility to ensure safeguards and effective procedures. If you are managing your own budget you take these risks yourself and live with the consequences, but perhaps it is fair to expect that

a local authority may have to play it slightly safe if it's taking the risk on your behalf. However, this shouldn't mean you get no choice or a very limited choice.

Local authorities need to consider the parameters they place around their procurement processes to ensure they are not artificially limiting the choices people can make in their care. Information and advice are also at the heart of choice – carers and users still regularly cite a dearth of appropriate information to help them weigh up some of these choices. In addition, more streamlined ways to promote innovative approaches to care and support and ways to ensure these can make it through local authority procurement processes will be crucial. We need imagination, creativity, and to finding ways to make the process work to achieve aspirations rather than limiting our aspirations because the processes don't allow it. We still allow the procedural tail to wag the dog far too often.

The draft Care and Support Bill suggests placing a responsibility on local authorities to build diversity in provision, but it remains to be seen how successful they will be in achieving this. The positives which we know can be achieved shouldn't be the preserve only of those with the confidence, skills or time to manage their own budgets. If people are to achieve the most they can, the challenge to the sector is to let go of standardised care models and let new ideas take root at the centre of service models rather than being tacked on as exceptions at the periphery.

A representative from the Carers Trust will be speaking at 'Choice in social care: Making care personal', a ResPublica public fringe event co-hosted with Carers Trust and Advance UK at Conservative Party conference: Monday 8th October, 12.30pm – 1.45pm, the ResPublica Marquee, the ICC Birmingham (secure zone). A corresponding event will take place at Liberal Democrat conference.

Investing in the next generation

Graham Allen MP, Chair, Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee

As every parent knows, the time, energy and love invested in children when they are young give them the social and emotional skills to make the best of themselves throughout their lifetime. No baby, child or young person should be denied these skills and face disadvantage in later life, especially when practical solutions are available.

The iron grip of the culture of late intervention tackles the symptoms, not the causes, of disadvantage. This is why we need to look to early intervention to break the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage and give the next generation the sort of start in life that most of us enjoyed and which all good parents and carers want to provide. In this way we can ensure that people reach their full potential and prevent expensive and debilitating problems in later life, such as crime and health problems.

Early intervention forestalls many persistent social problems and, in doing so, makes enormous savings in public spending. The term covers many tried and tested policies that impact on the 0-18 years life cycle to give children and young people the best possible foundations for future life. It includes well-tested policies for the effective parenting of babies and for primary and secondary children (secondary children?) which ensure that children are ready to face the challenges they may encounter and make good choices in life, policies which prepare them for school, work and to raise great families of their own.

By helping children and their main caregivers before problems arise, early intervention can provide the necessary social and emotional bedrock for current and future generations of children.

Currently, despite widespread recognition of the merits of early intervention by national and local government and the voluntary sector, the provision of such programmes remains inadequate and sparse. Late intervention is deeply rooted and commands enormous budgets, huge armies of personnel and organisational power which can deflect and outlive Prime Ministers. It is highly resistant to change despite the fact that it is financially inefficient and known to be of limited success. A fierce and cathartic political lead has to be sustained if we are to break out of this habit and embrace early intervention policies.

Much great work exists in isolation. For example as Chair of Nottingham's Early Intervention City I helped adopt this holistic approach for the last few years. However, to take such pioneering work to scale requires a national effort. A broad cross-party alliance has been working to set up an Early Intervention Foundation to assess early intervention programmes and their effects, and then advise on what policies central government and the localities should be implementing across the UK. This Foundation would lead the expansion and improvement of evidence-based early intervention programmes and attract investment to the cause. It would help create a new market of social finance and a localised system, shaped by informed consumers, based on the principles of early intervention.

If individuals, families, communities are to flourish in a healthy society, and if we are to remain an economically viable nation, we have to build an infrastructure for future generations that pre-empts waste and dysfunction of our people. Effective and replicable programmes should be put in place to improve health and well-being.

The localities are in the best position to apply the early intervention agenda for young people. The

constraints on public spending are another reason to invest wisely and not to delay action until problems have festered and become almost intractable and unaffordable. A reprioritisation of spending within current limits and the creation of access to external financing are essential to increasing investment in early intervention. The Early Intervention Foundation would look at what investments would be cost-effective for local commissioners and at what would achieve the desired outcomes for children and young people. The Foundation would provide clear guidance on how to re-direct investment to deliver the best outcomes.

To use another Nottingham example, as Chair of the Teenage Pregnancy Taskforce in Nottingham, where I am an MP, I experienced the problems that can hinder the creation of an early intervention infrastructure. In 2008 Nottingham had the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the whole of Western Europe and in some parts of my constituency, Nottingham North; the rate was more than twice the national average. There was a clear failure to address the intergenerational and socio-emotional factors that affect teenage

pregnancy. The taskforce worked within the Early Intervention infrastructure and is able to provide evidenced-based interventions and to adapt to the new challenges faced by young people in our most deprived communities. This approach has proven effective in raising young people's social and emotional capabilities, and empowering them to make informed choices about sexual activity. Through this we have made significant strides in reducing the teenage conception rates across Nottingham.

There is growing demand from local commissioners for evidence-based Early Intervention programmes and services for babies, children and young people. . They see how to build for the future in their communities and the Early Intervention Foundation will be able to help provide the assessment, advice and advocacy they need to take Early Intervention to scale.

Graham Allen MP will be speaking at 'What does independence for local government mean?', a ResPublica public fringe event at Labour Party conference: Wednesday 3rd October, 12.30pm – 1.45pm, Manchester Town Hall.



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