

# We believe in the good society. What do you believe in?

NCVO's manifesto for the  
voluntary and community sector

You make a living by  
what you get. You make  
a life by what you give

WINSTON CHURCHILL

**We are the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). We are the largest umbrella body for the voluntary and community sector in England with 7,500 members.**

**For 90 years we have been working to build an environment in which voluntary organisations of all kinds can flourish, from community groups working in local neighbourhoods to large national organisations.**

Today, we work with and support a whole range of organisations, including registered charities, voluntary organisations, community groups, arts and sports organisations, housing associations, social enterprises, co-operatives and trade unions.

**Our vision**

NCVO's vision is of a society in which people are inspired to make a positive difference to their communities.

**Our mission**

A vibrant voluntary and community sector deserves a strong voice and the best support. NCVO aims to be that support and voice.

# NCVO'S MANIFESTO FOR THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

## WE ARE FACING A CHALLENGING TIME, FOR SOCIETY AS A WHOLE BUT ALSO FOR OUR SECTOR

The 2010 election will see a significant change in the UK political landscape. Over one third of all MPs are standing down this year. Therefore, whatever the political hue of the next government, there will be a large number of new faces in Parliament. We need to build understanding of our sector, and of the issues that concern us, with politicians of all sides.


We need to manage economic and social pressures as we emerge from recession. We need to address major social issues, such as climate change, growing inequality, and how to strengthen our democracy. And we need to address the specific challenges for our sector, how we manage our relationship with government and how we ensure our financial sustainability.

This manifesto sets out our vision for the good society and what is needed to achieve it. NCVO will work to achieve this vision throughout the life of the next parliament: it will form the basis for our policy and advocacy work and the services we provide to our members.

*It is not the strongest of the  
species that survive, nor the most  
intelligent, but the one most  
responsive to change*

CHARLES DARWIN

**BUILDING THE GO**  
BELIEVES IN THE G  
SOCIETY WHICH PR  
AND SOCIAL JUS  
PEOPLE ARE INSP  
POSITIVE DIFFER  
COMMUNITIES.



Alone we can do so little;  
together we can do so much

HELEN KELLER

# GOOD SOCIETY NCVO

## GOOD SOCIETY – A PROMOTES FAIRNESS JUSTICE AND WHERE NEEDED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THEIR

We believe in a society where we seek to reduce the inequalities in income and in opportunity, where we put people before profits and where the interests of society as a whole come before the market.

We believe that a strong and healthy democracy works in the public interest, furthering the common good, protecting our rights and freedoms and creating a sense of belonging.

**We believe that voluntary action is at the heart of the good society.**

### **The role of the voluntary and community sector**

To achieve this good society, we all need to work together to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing us: addressing climate change, creating financial security, strengthening social cohesion and ensuring the well-being of individuals and communities.

Voluntary and community organisations must address these challenges, not simply because of who we are but because our organisations make real differences to the lives of individuals and communities.

Our sector can provide a different approach and different solutions to those offered by the state and by the market. If we are really to meet the challenges facing society we need to get a better balance – to allow all three partners to play their part.

### **What do you believe in?**

# SUSTAINABLE

We believe that people's actions are contributing to climate change. We must all act now to mitigate the consequences of climate change and adapt to a changing environment:

- Government, business and civil society must reduce their own carbon emissions
- Green choices must become easy choices
- Communities must be empowered to take a lead in identifying solutions and creating opportunities for change.

We believe that the consequences of climate change will be felt most by those who have least. Responses to climate change must be socially just:

- Positive action must be taken to ensure that the poorest communities are not disproportionately affected
- We support the campaign for a 0.05% tax on wholesale financial transactions (Robin Hood tax) to fund action on climate change and millennium development goals.

We believe that all public policy decisions must take account of economic, social and environmental issues. Government actions must explicitly address this triple bottom line:

- Government must take a lead internationally to ensure that real progress is made on commitments to reduce carbon emissions
- Government must pursue sustainable procurement and commissioning
- There must be investment in public transport
- There must be safe routes for cycling and walking
- There must be investment in renewable energy sources, with increased opportunities for community ownership of these assets.

We believe that voluntary and community organisations can make a vital contribution to the challenge of climate change:

- Government and the sector must make a positive commitment to taking forward the recommendations of the Third Sector Task Force on Climate Change, the Environment and Sustainable Development
- Voluntary and community organisations must be involved in developing strategies to address climate change at national, regional and local levels.

*'A civilization flourishes when people plant trees under which they will never sit'*

Greek Proverb

## We believe that climate change is the biggest challenge facing us

# EMPOWERED

We believe that strong democratic government is the bedrock of the good society:

- To restore trust in elected politics, politicians must be more accountable to the electorate.

We believe that people should be supported to engage in a variety of ways with government, nationally and locally:

- We need to empower the many diverse groups that make up our society
- Greater use should be made of citizens' forums, different forms of consultation and on-line debates
- Government should ensure that there is no 'digital divide' and that all parts of society can access social media.

We believe that advocacy and campaigning by voluntary and community organisations strengthens democracy because it:

- Enables people to raise new issues
- Inspires people to get involved in causes they care about
- Ensures that a wider range of voices are heard – particularly those who can be marginalised or disadvantaged
- Informs and improves the development of policy and services.

We believe that government should encourage people to exercise their democratic rights, it should not discourage them:

- The right of voluntary and community organisations to campaign – within the law – must be respected and encouraged
- Counter-terrorism powers should not be used to limit peaceful protest. The restrictions on campaigning and freedom of assembly in Parliament Square must be lifted
- Policing of protests must be proportionate. We support the 'I am a photographer not a terrorist' campaign.

*'We were born to unite with our fellow men, and to join in community with the human race'*

Cicero

**We believe in a society where government at all levels listens to people and communities**

# ENGAGED

We believe that volunteers are the lifeblood of our sector. Their contribution to the good society should be celebrated, and people across society should be supported and encouraged to actively engage with and support the causes and organisations that they believe in.

To support and sustain community engagement, we want to see:

- The introduction of a Community Day bank holiday
- At least five days paid time off for volunteering.

We believe that voluntary and community organisations play a vital role in facilitating local action, creating opportunities for people to participate in community life and to support each other:

- Voluntary action must be supported for its own sake, and for the sake of local communities, not just as a means of achieving government targets
- Councils must be required to set out clearly how they intend to support and fund their local voluntary and community sector.
- Local volunteer centres must be properly funded
- Local community assets – such as community centres and town halls – should be endowed and transferred into community ownership or management.

We believe that people should have a real say in decisions that affect their lives every day. Power and decision-making should be devolved to the local level:

- Councils must work with their voluntary and community organisations to empower local communities to set the agenda and identify priorities for their area
- Local people should be able to see where their money is being spent and hold their council to account.

*'Governments arise either out of the people or over the people'*

Thomas Paine

We believe in  
a society where  
people are active  
and engaged in  
their community

# FAIR

We believe that more needs to be done to address the problems of inequality: we should seek to reduce the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots':

- Everyone is entitled to a living wage, not just a minimum wage
- Government should set up a high pay commission to regulate excessive salaries and bonuses.

We believe that all businesses should accept the need to act responsibly:

- Banks must ensure that everyone has access to financial services – including basic bank accounts, loans, insurance and savings schemes
- The Government should introduce a Community Reinvestment Act, requiring financial institutions to reinvest a proportion of their profits in activities that provide direct public or community benefit
- We need to promote the creation of mutuals, co-operatives and credit unions across the financial sector.

We believe that voluntary and community organisations need access to secure and fair funding if they are to play their full part in our communities:

- Gift Aid must be simplified and promoted to increase its use
- Government must offer an appropriate mix of funding, including both grants and contracts, according to the type of activity being funded
- A well-capitalised, independent, Social Investment Wholesale Bank should be set up to distribute unclaimed assets from financial institutions
- Lottery income to the sector must be maintained: 100% of Big Lottery Funding should go to voluntary and community organisations
- Taxation on lottery ticket sales should be reviewed after the Olympics.

**We believe in a society which is based on financial security and fairness for all**

*'We don't have to save the world. The world is big enough to look after itself. What we have to be concerned about is whether or not the world we live in will be capable of sustaining us in it'*

Douglas Adams

# WELL-BEING

We believe that public services are an important part of the good society. They are based on fairness, social justice and promoting equality of opportunity:

- Human rights, values and principles must be at the heart of public services
- There must also be a focus on wider activities that promote individual and community well-being.

We believe that public services are a public good – individual choice is important but it must be balanced against the wider community interest:

- Public services should be commissioned and delivered in partnership with the people and communities they serve
- There should be support for those who want to develop mutual or co-operative provision of public services
- Investment should be available to support community self-help and tackle the root causes of social problems.

We believe that voluntary and community organisations play an important role in the transformation of public services. In addition to delivering services, they can identify service needs, help design solutions and provide support, advice and advocacy to service users.

When voluntary and community organisations take on public service delivery they should be enabled to do so in ways that respect their independence and expertise and they should be appropriately funded:

- Contracts must be negotiated on the basis of a fair price
- Smaller organisations and local groups must be enabled to bid for contracts
- Grants should be used where most appropriate, for example to support smaller organisations, or to invest in the development of new services
- New approaches to funding, such as Social Impact Bonds, which could enable voluntary and community organisations to meet more complex needs, must be explored
- A national VAT compensation refund scheme to refund the VAT input costs of charities should be introduced.

*'There is no problem so complicated that you can't find a very simple answer to it if you look at it right'*

Douglas Adams

## We believe that everyone should have access to good public services

# RESILIENT

We believe that the good society cannot exist without a healthy, thriving voluntary and community sector:

- Voluntary and community organisations are independent organisations: our independence must be respected
- We must remain focused on our mission and our objectives
- We need to ensure that all parts of our sector are valued – large and small, local, national and international
- We have a responsibility to speak out, to campaign and advocate.

We believe that our sector can also work well with government at all levels. This helps us to deliver our objectives and is in the best interests of those we work with and for:

- Where we work with government, that work must be fairly and properly funded.

We believe it is essential that there is a strong and effective relationship between the sector and government, built on mutual respect and understanding. To strengthen this relationship:

- There must be a clear focus and accountability for the sector in government, including a Department for Civil Society

- We need to strengthen the Compact – with limited powers for the Commission or the Compact
- There must be ongoing investment in infrastructure organisations (nationally, locally and sub-sectorally) to ensure voluntary and community organisations have effective voice
- We need to strengthen understanding of the sector in Europe, and agree a European Compact
- Charity law must be applied fairly and equally to all parts of the sector.

*'Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success'*

Henry Ford

**We believe that voluntary and community organisations must be enabled to help build the good society**

## What do you believe in?

We believe that our society is better when people are active and engaged in their community. That is why NCVO has launched a national campaign to encourage people to support causes they care about – by giving their time or money, or speaking out and campaigning.

This campaign is being actively supported by voluntary and community organisations. To find out more about it – how your organisation can become part of the campaign, or how your members and supporters can get involved – visit the website: [www.whatdoyoubelievein.org.uk](http://www.whatdoyoubelievein.org.uk)

## How can you get involved?

What do you think makes the good society? What do you want to see the sector focus on? What do we need from the next government so that we can tackle the challenges facing us? Visit: [www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/election](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/election) and tell us what you think.

To find out more about NCVO's policy priorities and our current campaigns, go to: [www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/policy-research-analysis](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/policy-research-analysis)

If you want to receive our monthly public policy e-bulletin, contact: [policy@ncvo-vol.org.uk](mailto:policy@ncvo-vol.org.uk)



**ncvo**  
National Council for  
Voluntary Organisations  
Regent's Wharf  
8 All Saints Street  
London N1 9RL

T: 020 7713 6161  
F: 020 7713 6300

E: [ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk](mailto:ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk)  
[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk)

Textphone: 0800 01 88 111  
HelpDesk: 0800 2 798 798

Charity Registration: 225922

The paper used for this publication  
is sourced from sustainable forests.

SteersMcGillan Design Ltd 01225 465546

*It always seems  
impossible until  
it's done*

NELSON MANDELA