



Happy New Year and welcome to the monthly Office for Civil Society newsletter. My highlight this month is the new social investment tax relief. There are also updates across [social action](#) and [sector support](#) which I hope you will find interesting.



Cabinet Office

Nick Hurd
Minister for Civil Society

Social investment



More opportunities for mainstream investors

From April 2014, we will introduce a new **tax relief** for social investment. The relief will be available for equity and certain debt investments in charities and other community organisations. The summary of responses to the Social Investment Tax Relief consultation can be found [here](#) and the [draft legislation](#) is open for consultation until 4 February 2014.

We will also shortly publish our plans for social investment, including seeking state aid clearance for a larger tax relief scheme, looking at options for supporting indirect investment and making changes to regulations for community interest companies to make them more attractive to investors and social organisations.

More and more, people are telling us that they want to invest their money into organisations that make a difference. This has been too difficult for mainstream investors in the past and we have been working with the sector to address that. We can now announce that people can invest in a social investment fund via a stocks and shares ISA with investments from £2,000. The city firm [Threadneedle Investments](#) and [Big Issue Invest](#) (a part of The Big Issue) have created a new social fund that will invest in organisations including the disability charity Scope and property social enterprise Places for People. Big Society Capital (BSC), has provided an initial £10m investment to kickstart the fund – supporting these sorts of developments is exactly what we set BSC up to do.

Social action



Community organisers

Through listening to their communities, community organisers identify local leaders, projects and opportunities, empowering the local community to take action on the issues that matter to them.

Tulse Hill Community Organisers Jonny, Graham, Jurema and Fanon are hosted by High Trees Development Trust and their full time community organiser posts are funded by the Cabinet Office.

Richard Heaton, Permanent Secretary for the Cabinet Office and First Parliamentary Counsel, visited Tulse Hill and met volunteer Shirley, who has been listening to other residents and taking action with them to address the poor maintenance of their estate. Shirley said that before Jonny listened to her, her concerns were not taken seriously and she felt very isolated and alone in her concerns about her home. Now, calling the housing association to complain as a

member of a community group, her complaints are taken seriously and maintenance issues addressed quickly.

Click [here](#) to find out more about how community organisers are inspiring action in their communities.

Centre for Social Action

Over the next two years we will invest £40m in social action to tackle important public service challenges, like improving outcomes for vulnerable young people, improving hospital patient satisfaction or reducing re-offending rates.

We have [published the slides](#) from our latest workshops on the 'theory of change' to help organisations understand exactly how volunteers lead to improved outcomes for vulnerable young people. These may be useful to any organisation seeking to develop their own 'theory of change' and to think through how they how they achieve their objectives or outcomes.

Sector support

Have your say: Consultation on the powers of the Charity Commission and trustee disqualification

Serious abuse or mismanagement in charities is rare, but where it does occur we need a regulator to take quick and decisive action to protect the sector. We are running a public consultation until 12 February 2014 on proposals to strengthen the Charity Commission's legal powers and extend the range of criminal offences that disqualify people from being a charity trustee.

[Respond to the consultation](#)

Get involved: Workshops to support organisations compete to deliver victims' services

From 1 October 2014, the majority of support services for victims of crime will be provided locally through Police and Crime Commissioners. This means there will be new opportunities for organisations providing these services to bid for funding. To support this, the Ministry of Justice has selected social enterprise [Pulse Regeneration](#) to provide a series of free skills workshops to support providers to bid for grants and contracts.

The current arrangements for referral of victims to support services provided by Victim Support have been extended to April 2015, with some areas moving to locally commissioned arrangements in October 2014, and all areas by April 2015.

[Sign up for the workshops](#)

Challenge us: Mystery shopper

The Cabinet Office has a Mystery Shopper Service, which allows providers to anonymously raise concerns about public procurement practice. The service investigates cases of poor practice by public authorities and contractors working with government, and helps these bodies to improve. So far, we have investigated 528 cases and 79% have been resolved successfully. Please see our [guidance on raising a case with Mystery Shopper](#) for more.

[Raise a challenge on Mystery Shopper](#)

What you said: Reporting public sector spend within the voluntary sector

We recently ran a [consultation](#) on changes to public procurement. As a result, we have announced that public authorities must report how much they spend on

contracts with voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises. We will also make other changes, such as a standard pre-qualification questionnaire to minimise bureaucracy when tendering, and prompt payment to subcontractors.

[Read our interim response](#)

Feedback

Please let us know what you think of this bulletin. If you have any comments, or know anyone who would like to subscribe, you can [contact us here](#).

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