

Drivers of Responsibility

Report of a consultation held at
St. George's House
Windsor Castle

June 28-29, 2004

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Supported by:

Comino Foundation
Gordon Cook Foundation

“So you can add value from one scheme into another, support each other, and learn from one another ... a bit like joining up the outside bits of the jigsaw first. You don't know what the middle's going to look like, it's not as though it's going to be very tidy, but it's an awful lot easier if you get the edges to meet up to work on what's going to go in the middle. It's going to take time if we do it, but I think it could get to a point where it reaches a critical mass that makes it unstoppable, it becomes a given, it becomes part of the culture of the United Kingdom or wherever.”

Comment from participant

Executive Summary

This report is a synopsis of the key findings from a recent consultation held at St. George's House, Windsor Castle, and convened by the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust. The consultation was the third in a series¹ exploring the current climate of responsibility and looking at how a culture of increased personal responsibility might be encouraged throughout the UK.

In this consultation, participants were brought together from a wide variety of organisations. The event opened on the Thursday evening with Sir John Whitmore, co-creator of the *Be the Change* initiative "in conversation" with Sheila Bloom, CE of IGE UK

On Friday morning, four examples of good practice in encouraging responsible behaviour were presented, as well as illustrations that were less successful. Participants were then encouraged to think about shared experiences, and suggest joint actions to take forward this work.

Discussion about how to encourage personal responsibility inevitably touched on a number of similar themes to previous consultations:

Inclusiveness

There was emphasis on engaging energies, and creating systems where reflection can take place at all levels. Many people stressed that we need to tap into some kind of enlightened self-interest as the mechanism for driving change, as exemplified in the case studies presented.

Top down/bottom up leadership

Another issue that was brought up by many was the continuum from top-down approaches to ground-up leadership. To encourage personal responsibility, self-initiated projects are clearly preferable, and there is a definite danger in a separation of action and idea in the grand plans that can emerge from a consultation like this.

Locality

Pride in one's local area is obviously a rich context in which responsible action can potentially flourish.

Suggested Actions

From these and other considerations, the following suggestions for ongoing development emerged –

Mayors

Mayors are committed volunteers with a strong sense of civic pride, immensely relevant experience and ready access at all levels not only to local government, but also to other institutions, networks and individuals in their patch. Due to their non-party position they are often able to reach places that other political figures cannot. It was thought that they could be key players in this movement.

It was proposed that IGE UK should convene a further consultation at St George's House that would bring together a group of mayors to develop a shared strategy for encouraging personal responsibility.

Networks

Extensions of the aim of the June consultation of joining organisations together under the umbrella of Personal Responsibility included:

Further groupings

A recommendation was made to bring together further groupings of organisations that work either explicitly or implicitly to promote responsibility, who would not normally be meeting under a shared concern. All present agreed, that meeting with those doing similar work in a totally different context is often extremely useful for sharing experiences and generating new ideas.

¹ Sept 2-3 2003, March 29-30 and June 28-29, 2004

Personal responsibility seems to be a core value that underlies an extremely wide spectrum of activities in many different fields, and certainly it is in the interest of most organisations, from community level to governmental, to encourage and promote responsible behaviour.

Sharing Specialisms

Perhaps it would be possible not only to enable an information exchange, but also to encourage organisations to work together to combine their specialisms. Organisations work to target different groups, and some are better placed to carry out particular tasks than others. Working together, or contracting out, could potentially be more effective and cost saving.

Networks could also help small organisations influence policy creation and development – and add value through strength in numbers and provision of an intermediary voice.

Maybe we could invite some forums that have already developed successful networks to advise on how this model could be developed. They might also be interested in further joint action.

Television

A further suggestion was to raise interest in a series of programmes documenting several of the many transformations that have happened in different areas around the country. These could illustrate catalysts and processes that have led to regeneration, and demonstrate increased civic pride and an ethos of mutual responsibility and care for local environment.

And finally...Evaluation

Participants felt that we need to be aware of ways to evaluate the progress of this campaign, whilst acknowledging the obvious concern about formal assessment potentially distorting a programme. However, we do need to be able to work out whether there has been any change in behaviour, in order to secure continued support. It was noted that the Home Office has recently developed some 'community

measures', and these will be explored further. The idea of a 'responsibility index' was suggested again and this will also be considered for further development.

Be the Change

In encouraging the group present to engage with the task ahead, Sir John touched on the old expression “every journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step” and emphasised that the thinking behind the *Be the Change* event was very much the idea of people taking personal responsibility to take the first step.

In addition, he commented that when we consider factors such as the environment, water and energy supply, and nuclear potential, the enormity of these problems can overwhelm people and leave them feeling helpless. “If you want to change the world” he said, “you have to begin with yourself.”

SYNOPSIS OF THE FOUR PRESENTATIONS

Alcohol Focus Scotland

Aim

To encourage people to take responsibility for their drinking and think about the choices available to them.

Programmes

Servewise – training licensees and bar staff in the responsible serving of alcohol.

Reasons for success

Servewise is run jointly with the Scottish Licence Trade Association, which has a commercial interest in promoting responsible behaviour in an increasingly competitive environment. *Servewise* has tapped into the individual licensee’s self interest - legally and commercially - to ensure responsible behaviour on their premises.

“we’re now evaluating the impact of this project.....most of the respondents (licensees and bar workers) say it’s actually changed the way in which they drink alcohol themselves so they now think about what they’re drinking, they think about how they’re drinking....”

Sanctuary Housing

Aim

To combat anti-social behaviour and ensure that the communities are safe and pleasant places to live.

Sanctuary Housing realized that a tough stance on anti-social behaviour (e.g. eviction) was actually not solving the problem, just moving it on elsewhere.

Method

Tenants in Sanctuary Housing estates were given the opportunity to sign up to a Good Neighbourhood declaration - a form of estate agreement - setting out what Sanctuary Housing as landlords can do for the residents, and what they expect residents to do in return.

Reasons for success

- Residents were consulted on the drafting of the document.
- The declaration shows commitment from landlord but is firm about the behaviour expected in return. (Relevant to rights and responsibility discussions throughout the series)
- Helps to kick-start mutual co-operation on the estates by conveying to residents that they are a community that can operate with values of mutual respect.

Crime Concern Prudential

Aim

To reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, with a particular focus on town and shopping centres

Programmes

Prudential 4 Youth: Young people were invited to think about what issues were important to them and tackle them in a way they see fit.

Example – Year 7’s raising awareness of mobile phone theft against and by young people through a touring drama group/production. This actually resulted in a significant reduction of theft.

Reasons for Success

- Crime Concern and Prudential acknowledged that young people *do* care about the environment they live in.
- Allowing young people to choose their own issue empowers and motivates them.
- The power of peer education is used.

Encams (*Keep Britain Tidy* campaign)

Aim

To combat litter and dog mess by changing behaviours.

Method

- National campaign to try and change these specific behaviours. Encams profile their target (for the described project – teenagers) and work out methods that will be most likely to influence them.
- Evaluation is practical ground-assessment, e.g. counting litter in a particular area and comparing results over time.
- Particular campaign involves: witty and provocative posters (internet sale); adverts on television (high teenage viewing times) and at bus-stops at Christmas; internet viral campaign using the ‘tidy man’.

Reasons for Success

- Doesn’t tell young people what to do.
- Appeals to self-interest (‘cool’)
- Attention-grabbing by humour and irony.
- Posters stimulate peer-influence

At the time of the consultation, two weeks after release of posters – 6,200 orders had been taken. Ground evaluation has not yet taken place.

DISCUSSION

In the light of the four presentations, participants were asked to consider what activities tended to be more successful in inspiring more responsible behaviour, and why.

Engagement

One of the main themes that came through was inclusiveness and engagement. This seems to be another way of expressing the theme of 'consultation' that was raised numerous times in the previous discussions at St George's House.

"The keyword seemed to us to be 'engage'. And we seemed to be talking about 'engaging energy' and 'engaging'..."

Stakes in the issue

The best way to engage someone's energies seemed to be to work out and tap into their stake in the issue, and allow them to develop ideas, actions and solutions themselves.

"And getting people to recognise not only that they had a stake but also that there were options in how the issue developed and the art was to help them to make the connection between the stake that they held and the options that were available that they could then help develop alone."

Frankly, it seems to be in everyone's self interest that a culture of personal responsibility increases; it is just a matter of finding the right method to stimulate recognition of this.

Part of the Problem – Part of the Solution

*"And we felt the way that engagement appears to be achieved from listening to the four speakers whom we heard, was that each in different ways had been tapping into self-interest, each in different ways had been helping to find common ground or in a sense as *** was saying - turning the problem into the solution' "*

It is especially important to engage those who are seen to be part of the problem in the solution. This is especially true in the case of young people, partly because their frustrations often manifest themselves in behaviour that is problematic to others; and partly because their ideas are often overridden with a 'we know better' attitude.

The example from Crime Concern showed how general perceptions that young people don't care about issues like vandalism are misplaced.

In terms of harnessing individuals' interest in the issue (whether there is self-awareness or not) as a mechanism to drive action, there needs to be a general awareness by those working in authorities (e.g. housing, local government etc) that even those 'causing trouble' do have a stake in the solution.

Commercial Self-interest...

It was noted that self-interest can also be a commercial rather than a socially driven interest. When it is possible to align commercial and responsibility interests, this is obviously an extremely powerful driver to tap into.

Changing Behaviour... Changing Attitudes

The benefits of a responsible culture cannot be conveyed without experience. Those who are often 'trouble makers' may not be aware that they too will gain from an increased culture of mutual co-operation and responsibility. We should focus on putting people in a situation where they are naturally inspired to behave differently; the desired attitudes will often follow.

In support of this idea is the difficult but essentially *reciprocal* nature of mutual responsibility. A more responsible culture clearly requires (and is also in essence), co-operation – there is a disproportionately greater impact from many people behaving responsibly in comparison with just one. This indicates that putting people in situations where the system supports them exercising responsibility towards

each other is likely to be more successful than starting with the individual set apart from the social context.

“Our fourth lesson was to focus on getting people to act differently rather than focusing on attitude, so getting people to work together in partnerships so that they as it were, found themselves behaving differently and then had a chance to realise what that was doing for them and others.”

“if one could as it were almost trick people into behaving differently and working together, then you were by doing that enhancing their self-esteem, enhancing self-respect and enabling them to build a sense of achievement which might well then spill over into another action.”

Top-down vs bottom-up approach

There is a natural antagonism between the kind of behaviour and activities that we would like to encourage and a method that involves brainstorming and ideas from “on high”.

A top down approach means defining the situation either in terms of the problem we are facing or the outcome we require, followed by a series of rules or a programme put forward as a possible remedy. There are general pitfalls in this method; it defines at the outset who the stakeholders are, and can limit options for a solution. But, specifically personal responsibility, a top down approach must be wary of eliminating the characteristics that we are trying to develop i.e. initiative and ownership....

“(do) they really hook up to the people and the practical solutions and therefore the commitment?”

On the other hand, a bottom up approach (which is highly favourable in terms of ownership and commitment) has its own problems. There’s much good stuff going on but it can be uncoordinated and serendipitous –

“How do we know if we put this network together that in the field of responsibility, particularly personal responsibility, it is comprehensive, that we’re not missing

things or are we only working with whatever’s going on at the moment? And if we’re not, then what are we going to do to cover the areas that are not being covered at the moment?”

There was a particular concern that some important areas would not be tackled by initiatives if they were issues that are disturbing to some people – e.g. mental health, immigration... etc.

Networks - Building a critical mass...

It was agreed by many that strengthening ‘networks’ could be a productive way to build upon good work that is taking place without taking control. The network could define some key principles that connect wide-ranging organisations under the issue of responsibility.

Echoing the thoughts of the March consultation, participants felt that there was a definite benefit in cross-sector sharing of information and best practice. Building a context for this exchange would also help develop general awareness of ‘responsibility’ itself, or the lack of it, as a widely shared concern.

“Because we all agreed that getting to know what other people are doing - especially in a sense when it arises from quite different contexts from the ones that one is working in oneself, is stimulating and enlightening - and can have potential for something much bigger than we’re currently working on (though we mustn’t forget the lesson of working small as well).”

Sharing skills and specialisms

Inspired by the rather varied successful working methods displayed by the case studies, a different kind of working together was suggested. This involved not just sharing information, but actually assigning work between organisations according to their specialisms and accessible audience. So, the network could function as a kind of forum where it would be possible to exchange services as well as information.

“(the) kind of work done in the right way would actually be not just effective and increasingly effective, but also impact heavily on how much money and resources were spent on these issues. Were just literally millions of pounds being wasted, or potentially wasted, on using the wrong organisation and taking the wrong approach in the wrong place.”

Sharing research findings

“Every organisation needs to do research and not many of our individual voluntary sector organisations can undertake research individually. So if there’s any way of creating a research function, a research resource for the sector...”

National charities often have resource advantages, especially in terms of research. So, as well as sharing best practice and enabling an informal exchange of initiative ideas, the network could enable joint access to research. This could possibly help the evaluation problem (more later) – by providing evidence of what does and doesn’t work.

Not just the recipients of research would benefit from this - the author organisations would gain publicity and would amplify the impact of their research by enabling others to use its findings.

Warning...

“a perennial problem for us just now which is about knowledge management, and I think more websites are not the answer really. We’ve got to think much more deeply about how to make key information available to key groups of people in a smarter kind of way...”

“There are a number of bodies researching in the areas of community solutions to problems and so on. We can, certainly join that up, but I sense a bit of an intuitive danger here about disconnecting research and initiative...”

“I’ve got a notion that the model that’s being talked about where evaluation is part of the way that projects develop needs to tap into research and enquiry resources at a local level, university students or whatever, in a more organic

way. Otherwise we risk losing some of the potential of locally-based developments”

It was suggested that we should cast our thoughts wider when considering potential research resources. The government has an increasing focus on joined-up services and perhaps we could involve professionals in training, e.g. teachers, health specialists among others.

“Many of the issues we’re trying to tackle are relevant to the provision of those kinds of services so I think there’s a bit of an untapped resource in there if we take a broader view of it”

Getting the voices heard

It is important to enable those organisations working at a local level to get their voices heard at a policy making level, both local and national. This is another function that a network could provide.

There are organisations that already do this – e.g. Urban Forum (regeneration), and the Parenting Forum.

These networks could perhaps be brought together under the umbrella of personal responsibility – potentially giving them more resources and influence. The connection is especially relevant in light of the current rather heavy-handed anti-social behaviour campaign.

Practical matters

There could be potential for linking in some way with the Home Office’s virtual site – the Active Citizenship Centre. (Here there was a gentle warning that ‘personal responsibility’ should avoid getting subsumed into the language of citizenship)

Working locally

“Both in terms of people’s own attitudes and concerns, the specific issues that are troubling them and in terms of the locality, we felt there was a very strong theme coming through of working with the locality”

Pride in and care for one's surrounding environment and community is a natural and powerful thing, and is a good domain in which to try and encourage responsible behaviour. Secondly, and obviously, a message/order that comes from a local source tends to be more motivating than an order from a distant authority seemingly quite removed from its target.

Working with Mayors

This led to what was agreed to be one of the most potentially fruitful ideas of the consultation – working with mayors. It was thought that mayors could be invited to develop a strategy around the idea of 'our town', using the ideas on encouraging personal responsibility that have been raised over the last three consultations – helping to encourage systems which engage people and enable them to flourish. Mayors are in a good position to communicate with all kinds of people – they can command the attentions of their communities and, acting as a figurehead, enthuse and motivate people. They are also, potentially, in a position to influence policy and decision-makers.

“a mayor reaches places and people that other politicians and other people can't because they don't carry political baggage, they're non-political and under the normal civic mayor situation and therefore a mayor can go and talk to people, be instrumental in developing things and can encourage and make things happen where other people can't because they can't be accused of some ulterior motive or some other hidden agenda.”

It was decided that a practical next step would be for IGE UK to bring some Mayors together at a Windsor consultation to work on this strategy. This suggestion was supported by Stephen Bourne, a former Lambeth Mayor, and currently on the executive committee of the London Mayors' Association.

Television

To popularise the issue of personal responsibility perhaps we could explore ways in which a series of Channel 4/BBC programmes could be produced on towns/villages where something dramatic

has happened causing a transformation (for the better) of the place.

Demonstrating what has been achieved?

It is an inevitable fact that continuation of a project requires funding, and hence also evidence that the methods being employed are working.

It is possible that the 'network' could enable sharing of effective evaluation methods, and standards, as well as research and best practice.

A responsibility index

The idea of having an index of responsibility was also brought up again – certain measures that could be used to ascertain whether behaviour was changing over time. As stated in the previous report, this could also be a useful media tool.

There are some 'measures of community' that have just been derived by Gabriel Shannon working with the Community Development Foundation. The National Audit Office reduced these to four measures of community. These could be worth following up.

Media

Is there any way in which we could persuade the media to involve themselves as participants in this process? Perhaps, they could take on the role of encouraging people to take action and helping to support a good feeling rather than stirring up an atmosphere of fear / indignation.

A personal pledge

“(There was) a suggestion that we should each of us, each of us here, make a personal pledge to take responsibility for change in our own lives, and that if we wanted to do that we could perhaps do that partly as a follow-up to this event and share some of the personal pledges that we might be making”



“we ourselves, each of us, need to be responsible for our own actions as citizens and to look more carefully at the way that we use our time, we were thinking of the whole question of our energies and our time...so let’s unpick busy lives and look at what we do, and not just sit and think of advice for others as it were”

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