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## **NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR NEEDED**

Opportunities for a “new social contract” between civil society and government could be lost if urgent action isn’t taken to break down barriers to joint working, sector leaders warn today.

In *Civil Dialogue*, a series of specially commissioned think pieces published today to mark the launch of the Civil Exchange think tank, key figures from in and around the sector give their views about how government and the voluntary sector could work better together. Civil Exchange aims to help government and civil society work better together to find fresh solutions, unlock new potential and provide innovative services which meet different needs.

Civil Exchange’s founding Director Caroline Slocock said:

“*Civil Dialogue* contains many different perspectives and views but what stands out is that many believe this is a pivotal moment. There are fears that the impact of recent spending cuts and longstanding barriers to effective working could lead to serious damage. But it is also recognised that this is a moment in which a “new social contract” could be forged between government and civil society, provided urgent action is taken.

“Some of the changes need government action, for example, greater clarity about the purpose of the Big Society and new commissioning and funding arrangements. But other changes fall to civil society itself, particularly the call for charitable trusts to help set up new networks and alliances to make it easier to work with government to address cross-cutting social issues. Joint development of leaders would also be a positive step. *Civil Dialogue* is a new, informal, network too and one we hope will grow and extend across sectors to help make the new social contract happen.”

*Civil Dialogue: ideas for better working between government and civil society* is published today by Civil Exchange and DHA, a specialist agency working wholly in the voluntary and public sectors.

Daniel Harris, Managing Director of DHA, said:

“If civil society is to remain a vibrant and positive force for change within communities, and to give voice to their concerns, it must continually seek to understand and shape the environment in which organisations operate. This new

series of essays challenges policy makers and practitioners to think about their role, and to secure and strengthen their relationships with the people they serve, and the other sectors with whom they partner.”

*Civil Dialogue* features contributions from leaders from a wide range of individual organisations from across the voluntary and community sector; umbrella organisations like Locality, the National Association of Community and Voluntary Action and the Law Centres Federation; and charitable trusts.

Between them they highlight key barriers to improved working with the Government – from silo working in both government and the voluntary sector, different cultures, counterproductive funding and commissioning arrangements and short term government planning horizons.

Ideas and principles to underpin strong civil dialogue include:

- Clarity of purpose on both sides, for example “Does government want small scale community engagers and advocacy organisations or large scale deliverers?”
- Respect for independence which is the foundation of effective relationships.
- Establishment of new funding and commissioning arrangements including a progressive shift in the balance of government spending away from acute to early action; broader based commissioning to provide services that focus on outcomes and the whole person, not just individual symptoms; and a new fund to reward organisations that help solve social problems.
- Sharing of experience and development across the two sectors.
- Creation of a new Compact drawing on “what works.”
- New collaborations and networks within civil society and beyond to help combine forces around cross-cutting issues and make dialogue with government easier.

Ends

### **Note to Editors**

#### *Details for media enquiries*

1. For more information please call Jim Minton at DHA on 020 7793 4013 or 07837 240 234. Copies of *Civil Dialogue* can be downloaded from [www.civilexchange.org.uk](http://www.civilexchange.org.uk)
2. Civil Exchange is a new think tank founded earlier this year which works with other organizations and individuals to bring together existing expertise and knowledge , acting as a “link tank.” Its aim is to help civil society and government work better together. It is a resource for research, policy development, capacity building, awareness-raising and exchange. For more information, see [www.civilexchange.org.uk](http://www.civilexchange.org.uk)

3. Civil Exchange was founded by its Director, Caroline Slocock, former Chief Executive of Refugee and Migrant Justice and the Equal Opportunities Commission and Treasury senior civil servant, and Associates, Daniel Harris, Managing Director of DHA, Lynne Berry, Chief Executive of WRVS, and David Harker, formerly Chief Executive of Citizens Advice.
4. Civil Exchange is publishing Civil Dialogue jointly with DHA, a specialist agency with over 11 years' experience, wholly in the non-profit and public sectors ([www.dhacommunications.co.uk](http://www.dhacommunications.co.uk)) . In 2010 DHA published 'Twenty for Twenty' a collection of essays looking at prospects for the voluntary and public sectors over the next 10 years.
5. The full list of Civil Dialogue contributors and essays is:

**Andrew Barnett**, Director of the UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation  
*Putting trusts and foundations at the heart of the Big Society*

**Chris Bath**, Director of Operations & Development at UNLOCK  
*What lies at the heart of an effective relationship between the voluntary and community sector and government?*

**Lynne Berry CB**, Chief Executive, WRVS from 2007 to September 2011 and Associate of Civil Exchange  
*Regulating the Big Society: understanding the current civil contract*

**Julie Bishop**, Director of the UK Law Centres Federation  
*Civil society is in trouble*

**Dr Douglas Board**, Chair of the Refugee Council and senior visiting fellow at the Cass Business School  
*The strategic impact of personal experience*

**Shankari Chandran**, Head of Pro Bono and Community Affairs for Allen & Overy LLP, 2000 - 2009.  
*An unlikely (and unholy) coalition*

**Daniel Harris**, Managing Director of DHA and Associate of Civil Exchange and **Tamsin Cox**, Head of Policy and Research, DHA  
*Reform without accountability: the zero sum game*

**Kevin Curley**, Chief Executive of the National Association of Voluntary and Community Action  
*Staying positive as the cuts deepen*

**Richard Gutch**, Associate of Prospectus, freelance consultant and former Secretary to the NCVO Funding Commission in 2010  
*Financial barriers facing the Voluntary Sector*

**Joanna Holmes**, Chief Executive Barton Hill Settlement  
*Independence at the heart of successful working: lessons from Barton Hill Settlement*

**David Harker CBE**, Chief Executive of Citizens Advice 1997-2010 and Associate of Civil Exchange

*There is no such thing as the voluntary sector*

**Simon Johnson**, AdviceUK

*Working together to make a real difference: the potential of independent advice to support public sector reform*

**Dame Mary Marsh**, Founding Director, Clore Social Leadership Programme

*Government and the social sector: leadership challenges for working together*

**Sir Bert Massie CBE**, Former Commissioner for the Compact and Chair of the Disability Rights Commission

*The Compact and independence of the voluntary sector*

**Joyce Moseley OBE**, Chief Executive of Catch 22

*Working successfully with government through promoting civil dialogue*

**David Robinson**, Chair of the Early Action Task Force and Senior Adviser, Community Links

*A stitch in time*

**Caroline Slocock**, Chief Executive of Civil Exchange

*Making the connection*

**Julia Unwin CBE**, Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust

*Tackling poverty in a time of austerity: a new social contract for the common good*

**Nick Wilkie**, Chief Executive of London Youth

*Government and civil society: a youth sector perspective*

**Steve Wyler**, Chief Executive of Locality

*Tipping the balance towards community*