

Baroness Newlove
Our vision for safe and active communities:
Government Progress Update



In March 2011, Baroness Newlove published
Our vision for safe and active communities.

This report provides an update on the Government's
progress in achieving Baroness Newlove's
challenges to action

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Foreword

by the Prime Minister



Helen Newlove is a remarkable person.

She brings a special brand of passion, determination and common sense to public life. She has demonstrated true courage in turning a tragic act of violence into a force for good.

She has achieved this through her campaigning voice in the House of Lords and, more recently, through her work as the Government's champion for active, safer communities. Grassroots community activists across the country can take confidence from having such a strong voice in Whitehall and Westminster.

I'm delighted therefore with the progress she continues to make, as set out in this report. Like Helen, I am passionate that we work in partnership with communities across the country to develop strong families and strong neighbourhoods as the foundation of a bigger, stronger society.

This progress report demonstrates that, with Helen, this Government is committed to practical action that strengthens the hand of those communities who want to help themselves. They are the ones with the energy, creativity and insight needed to tackle the problems they experience. We in Government are here to help them in that task.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Cameron". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Cameron
The Prime Minister



Foreword

by Baroness Newlove



I am very pleased to have reached this milestone. I promised I would not let my report gather dust in some Whitehall filing system. It will be an active document, the platform for work in progress. I was immensely relieved at the favourable response to it, and hope this update takes us further on our journey to 'Safe and Active Communities' across the country.

Since joining the Department for Communities and Local Government to carry on the work I began at the Home Office, I have been able to identify my priorities for the months ahead. This report explains these priorities and commits the Government to further action.

I am delighted to be part of that effort. DCLG is a great place to continue championing community activism. This Department is the home of localism (returning power and choice to local people) and barrier busting (removing unnecessary red tape that prevents individuals from participating in their local communities).

It is also the home of housing policy, through which so much can be done to make communities safer and more active. And the Department also leads the way in offering staff six days per year to spend out of the office, helping communities and voluntary groups.

As we go forward, I am clear about where I will continue to go for inspiration and insights. I will look to all of those people, including the young and old, who have seen their neighbourhoods deteriorate because of crime or anti-social behaviour, and who have decided to do something about it. They seek to breathe new life into their communities through their own efforts, rather than simply waiting for someone to fix things from the outside. I will also never lose sight of the victims of violence and anti-social behaviour, and try to be a voice, and champion, for them.

I've met inspirational local activists such as SuperGran Ann Timson of Northampton who saw off six armed robbers with her carrier bag. This grandmother aged 73 has been active fighting crime in her community for years, turning it around to be a good place to live. She's now, rightly, an international heroine. I've also visited estates and families blighted by deep-rooted generational social failure, intimidation and quality of life crimes, but where young people cry out for help to turn their lives around.

This is what drives me on in our search for the key to safe, happy and active neighbourhoods and establish at least one Ann Timson living in each of them.

With all of this in mind, I will continue to call on agencies to be clear, respectful and honest when they deal with the public. It is still the case that one of the biggest barriers in the way of local people who want to get things done is the language and bureaucracy they sometimes come up against. They must have a clearer pathway to resources and knowledge or they will stumble at the first hurdle. We will waste much needed innovation and energy by not seeing to this as a priority.

I am excited by what lies ahead. There is a great common effort to put local people in charge of their own destinies. To all those interested in changing your communities for the better I say: "You are not on your own". There are others like you striving to achieve the same goals. Unity is strength, as has been demonstrated when groups have come together for a united cause, and club together skills and resources. You can learn from one another. The Big Society has existed for years and years without a label. I hope we continue to make it a **Bigger** Society. As Government champion for active, safer communities, I will do everything in my power to help YOU make this happen.

My very best wishes to you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Helen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline.

Helen, Baroness Newlove

1. Introduction

In October 2010, Baroness Helen Newlove was appointed the Government champion for active, safer communities. For the next six months, she worked with grassroots activists in seven neighbourhoods across the country. These were people who, in their own free time, were doing everything they could to make their neighbourhoods safer, happier places, and to rally others around them to this cause. Baroness Newlove was able to find out what motivates these activists. She was also able to find out what helps or hinders them in getting things done.

In March 2011, Baroness Helen Newlove published *Our vision for safe and active communities*. This report set out her advice:

- to local people on how to make their communities more active
- to local agencies on working with their community
- to central Government on how to let communities lead the way in improving the neighbourhoods they live in and care about

In April 2011, Baroness Newlove joined the Department for Communities and Local Government from the Home Office to continue her work as Government champion until March 2012. She has identified three key priorities on which she now wishes to concentrate, and to help the Government and others to achieve:

Key Priorities

- 1) A central information hub for community activists, complemented by local hubs that give activists the material they need to get things moving where they live
- 2) Getting civil servants and public sector workers out into their communities – helping civil servants who want to volunteer to put their skills and time at the disposal of grassroots activists
- 3) Improving the prevention and tackling of anti-social behaviour caused by binge drinking and under-age drinking

This report sets out these priorities in more detail and how Baroness Newlove and the Government are going to pursue them. It also contains updates on Government action on other ideas raised in *Our vision for safe and active communities*.

2. Priorities

Baroness Newlove has identified three key priorities that she wishes to concentrate on. She will look for opportunities across Government and beyond to pursue these priorities and to bring about positive change. She intends to consult continually with a range of community groups, agencies and local partnerships, to gather best practice, and to ensure she is speaking for communities, not at them.

1: Hub for community activists – ‘two clicks to success’

Activists have told Baroness Newlove how difficult it is to find and share information.

In her March report, Baroness Newlove set out her criteria for a successful, effective online ‘home’ for community activism. This hub would make it much easier for people to get the information they need and generate a sense of a national community of activists.

The hub would include ‘how-to’kits allowing anyone with an interest to get started; links to useful organisations; and a mapping device to enable them to find their nearest community group.

The hub would also showcase what works and enable different areas to explain how they have overcome problems. It would encourage the sharing of ideas through a discussion forum. The emphasis would be on enabling peer-to-peer discussion and support, with content provided by activists and practitioners, rather than Government.

Baroness Newlove has also spoken of the need for *local* hubs. These would allow community activists to get their hands on the information unique to their area that will allow them to make the difference. They include, for example, up-to-date information on budgets and funding; latest neighbourhood data on key issues like education and crime (including updates on what agencies and the community are doing to tackle crime); contact details for key personnel; details of local facilities for community usage and how to get use of them; and an opportunity to recruit volunteers to help them realise their dreams, and meet others that share them.

As with the national service, local hubs would need to be highly transparent. They would be easy to find and navigate and always up-to-date. And they would use language that everyone can relate to and understand.



In *Our vision for safe and active communities*, Baroness Newlove picked out some promising services that are already working well. These included the “**hyperlocal**” website established by Will Perrin for the Kings Cross neighbourhood in London (www.kingscrossenvironment.com) and the DCLG barrier busting portal (www.barrierbustingcommunities.gov.uk)

Since then, she has continued to look for examples of good practice. She has, for instance, been encouraged by some of the services already available through www.direct.gov.uk and www.info4local.gov.uk¹; by ‘Take Part’ guides published on the 10 Downing Street web-site; and by the potential of developments such as <http://alpha.gov.uk>, the prototype of a new, single UK Government website.

Baroness Newlove has made clear that she wants a service that is clear and simple for the end user. The information they need should be just a couple of clicks away. Also, if there are promising models already out there, or in the pipeline, it makes sense to explore their potential. We must not waste time and money re-inventing the wheel. In light of this, the Government and Baroness Newlove

- will identify current or planned online services with the potential to help realise her ambitions for local and national hubs
- will work with existing services to find the best way to provide the support that activists need and deserve
- will work with community activists themselves to make sure that new developments genuinely meet their needs

action

¹ More than 45,000 people get daily updates of information from across central Government through the one-stop www.info4local.gov.uk web portal and email alert service. It covers more than 60 departments and agencies in one place. Baroness Newlove would like to see far more people signed up to receive this highly useful information. You can sign up for the free service at: www.info4local.gov.uk/email-alter?type=register

2: Getting public servants out into their community

Our vision for safe and active communities argued in favour of getting civil servants “out there”. This means making a difference in streets and neighbourhoods across the country, as well as in Whitehall. Many civil servants are already doing this. There is potential for even more to get active.

Baroness Newlove believes this potential goes wider than Government departments. There are excellent people with a great deal to offer in, for example, the police, local government and the wider public sector. Continuing her theme of our joint journey, she wants people to ‘walk a mile in each other’s shoes’ to understand and appreciate other viewpoints and demolish the barrier that exists between state and citizens.

Building on her original report, Baroness Newlove has identified three key points that ministers and civil servants should bear in mind as they strive to create a ‘civic service’.

- 1 Civil servants should be encouraged to volunteer with small community groups and grassroots activists, as well as more established charities or institutions. Baroness Newlove recognises the value that more established organisations provide, but the impact of volunteering directly within enthusiastic but hard-pressed local communities can be enormous.
- 2 Grassroots activists would benefit enormously not just from the time but from the expertise of civil servants. This expertise includes things like IT, administration, project management, policy making, their knowledge of funding and business processes, and their understanding of how to deal with complex bureaucracy. Putting these skills at the disposal of activists will release the positive energy of local people. It will provide the key to unlocking the system for them and remove barriers to successful activism.
- 3 Volunteering should be sustained. Baroness Newlove recognises the good that can come from one-off engagements like painting a school or clearing overgrown play areas. However sustained engagement – e.g. an hour or more a week looking at the books of a struggling charity, or mentoring a child or teenager – can have a greater and deeper impact.

walk a mile ...



going live at Civil Service Live

Baroness Newlove spoke to hundreds of civil servants at **Civil Service Live 2011** about these guiding principles. She was joined by Ruth Owen (Chief Operating Officer, Jobcentre Plus), staff from the Department for Communities and Local Government who are active volunteers, and Hayley Bell, a mother of eight and a community activist from Offerton, one of the seven neighbourhoods featured in *Our vision for safe and active communities*. This event demonstrated both the breadth of the partnerships that can spring up when people think creatively about volunteering, and the enthusiasm this can inspire.



In times of reductions in public sector spending, brought about by the need to tackle the budget deficit, Baroness Newlove believes more than ever in building on the wishes of public servants to serve the public – not compelling them but encouraging them to look into the choices available. She would like a more unified policy and equal opportunity for civil servants across Government. This would remove barriers and allow those who wish to take part to do so. Her belief is that as Government is asking ordinary people to step up and become active, it must lead by example and support its own employees to be part of this national movement.



True Volunteer Foundation

Going forward, Baroness Newlove has made clear that she would like to build on the best of the volunteering opportunities going on outside or in partnership with Government, such as the *A Day in the Life* programme run by NCVO, True Volunteer Foundation (www.truevolunteer.org) and 'v' national young volunteers service (www.vinspired.com).

ncvo

The logo for NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations), featuring the letters 'ncvo' in a purple sans-serif font next to a graphic of four overlapping circles in green, blue, and purple.

The National
Young Volunteers
Service

The logo for The National Young Volunteers Service, featuring a large white 'V' on a dark purple background, with the text 'The National Young Volunteers Service' to its right.

DCLG will support Baroness Newlove in working across Government and with external partners to increase the momentum on public service volunteering, taking forward the principles set out in her speech to Civil Service Live 2011.

action

3: Tackling problem drinking

The crime and anti-social behaviour that springs from underage and binge drinking is one of Baroness Newlove's biggest concerns. It has an enormous negative impact. It can make life unbearable, particularly for the most vulnerable, the elderly and disabled.

Alcohol was a major factor in the murder of Baroness Newlove's husband, Garry. The Baroness is convinced it exacerbated the severity and viciousness of the unprovoked attack.

She is positive that more could be done to help communities get on top of problems tied to drugs and alcohol; and to help parents and young people understand the risks they take and the responsibilities that are theirs alone, not someone else's.

In addition to her role as Government champion for active, safer communities, Baroness Newlove has recently agreed to chair the Advisory Board which will lead the expansion of Community Alcohol Partnerships. These local partnerships, aimed at tackling underage drinking, are an initiative of drinks retailers and producers themselves. They have been endorsed by the Home Office and an industry pledge has been agreed by the Department of Health under the Public Health Responsibility Deal. This pledge is to provide additional support and to work with health and education partners in local government.

There are currently 35 Partnerships operating in 13 counties around the United Kingdom. Each partnership brings together local retailers, trading standards, charities, health practitioners, teachers and the police to tackle the problem of underage drinking and the anti-social behaviour that comes with it. Partners work on education, information and enforcement and resolve local problems swiftly and effectively. In areas where it is operating - for example St Neot's and Maidstone - it is understood to have helped to drive down antisocial behaviour by up to 40 per cent.

As part of their commitment to the Government's Public Health Responsibility Deal, retailers and producers are investing £800,000 over three years in Community Alcohol Partnerships. This is with a view to extending the reach of current partnerships and increasing the overall number of partnerships bringing benefits to more communities.

tackling
underage
drinking

There is also action across Government departments to address problem drinking and to help young people to understand.

- The new drug strategy launched on 8 December 2010 set out the Government's approach to addressing the damage that drug and alcohol dependence causes on society. The Government is legislating via the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill to increase the penalties for persistently selling alcohol to children and to give local communities a greater role in determining local alcohol licensing.
- The Government will also be publishing a strategy on alcohol later this year. The document will address the full range of harm from alcohol (both health and social impacts) and speak to all those with a direct role to play in tackling them.
- The Department for Education has issued discussion papers on young people's health and well-being, and on preventing youth crime and substance misuse, as part of its preparation for a cross Government policy statement on services for young people to be published in the autumn. (www.education.gov.uk/positiveforyouth)
- The Home Office has also recently announced the creation of the Choices Fund. This will be used to tackle and prevent the abuse of drugs and alcohol, and the crime that comes in their wake, amongst young people aged 10-19. Grant funding of £4m is available in 2011-12. Applications are being invited from alliances or partnerships of national and local voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/reducing-reoffending.
- There are five central coalition commitments which focus on granting more powers to refuse or remove licenses from problem premises; allowing authorities to permanently shut down premises persistently selling alcohol to children; allowing local councils to recoup costs of additional policing via late night licenses; doubling the maximum fine for underage alcohol sales; and banning the sales of alcohol below cost price.



In addition to the work Baroness Newlove will take forward as Chair of the Community Alcohol Partnerships Advisory Board, we will work with her on ways of supporting action in DCLG, across Government and beyond, that targets problem drinking and anti-social behaviour through education and partnership working.

action

3. Challenges to action

Our vision for safe and active communities contains other challenges for action for central Government that go beyond the issues covered by Baroness Newlove's priorities. These include ideas about data transparency and crime reporting, about getting the justice system out into communities, and about how communities could be given greater control or influence over the budgets used to tackle crime – and indeed over the money recovered from criminals.

There is a range of activity underway across Government departments, including the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, which could help to meet these challenges. Some of this action is summarised below.

meeting the challenge

- The Home Office is currently looking at how the funds from the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme could be better used. As part of this work, it will thoroughly consider Baroness Newlove's suggestion that some of this money would go directly to communities, if they play a role in providing information that leads to arrest or prosecution. This scheme currently returns 50 per cent of the money received from the proceeds of crime and drug dealing directly to the delivery partners involved, with the other 50 per cent being used by the Home Office to fund front line services. Changes to the scheme therefore need careful and detailed work with delivery partners to get it right. This includes making sure they do not have an unintended impact on front line budgets and services. To ensure value for money, Home Office will also consider the lessons learnt from a previous Ministry of Justice scheme to return the proceeds of crime to communities.
- The Home Office will be supporting community activists to showcase to new Police and Crime Commissioners the kind of action that reduces crime. A new Community Action Against Crime Innovation Fund with £5m available in 2011/12 has recently been announced. This will be used to pay for a wide range of action at the grassroots.
- The Government is also committed to making it easier to report crime and disorder to the police through the introduction of the national '101' non-emergency number. This is being rolled out on a phased basis between July 2011 and early 2012. Over time, and with local agreement, the '101' number could help local partners and the police working together to provide communities with easier access to a wider range of local services.



- The sheer scale of public demand for street level crime and policing information via **www.police.uk** has been enormous. The crime mapping website has received over 420 million hits to date. In an open letter to Cabinet Ministers on 7 July, the Prime Minister has made a commitment that, from May 2012, the website will provide the public with information on what happens next with the crimes occurring in their streets – both police action and the outcomes from the justice system.
- The Government has committed to testing the Neighbourhood Justice Panel approach. Neighbourhood Justice Panels bring local volunteers, victims and criminal justice professionals together, using restorative and reparative approaches, to agree what action should be taken to deal with certain types of low level crime and disorder.
- The Government will continue to support the development of Community Budgets, which will give people more control over local services and budgets. In particular, the Government will be inviting communities in two local authority areas to work with local services and Whitehall on how to put in place a Community Budget and community commissioning that are led by the neighbourhood itself.

Baroness Newlove welcomes any source of funding which will improve life for communities and the people that live there. She has signalled that she will encourage smaller grass roots community organisations to apply for funding. She is keen that local people take a significant part in solving local problems as demonstrated by the impact of the seven neighbourhoods in *Our vision for safe and active communities*. She wants to ensure that the activity closest to people's everyday lives – such as a street party, or a football team for local kids, removing graffiti or establishing a vegetable patch offering fresh produce at reasonable prices, and allowing productive community payback for low level offenders – is given as much chance of getting hold of funding as big programmes from more established organisations.

it starts at
the roots



Street party as part of the BigLunch



She believes we need to stop going for safe options every time, and take a riskier approach to ideas that capture the imagination and involve all ages. This means a light touch in the application stage and not putting people off through endless red tape. It then means taking a keen supportive interest in the process and delivery – and even more so in what happens next to see what the outcomes teach us. Sharing good practice and learning from any small failures is the way to encourage more innovation and engage those not already active. Baroness Newlove is particularly interested in the potential of participatory budgeting – similar, for instance, to the *You Say We Pay* scheme adopted in Stockport – to light the touch paper of a new spirit and realise tangible change in troubled neighbourhoods.

Baroness Newlove will carry on using her role as champion for active, safer communities to

- press for action right across Government that will provide community activists with the information and resources they need to be effective
- encourage more joined up working from government to agencies to stop reinventing the wheel and to make it easier for communities to race forward without a hurdle course of competing opportunities (and endless applications)
- promote ways of working in and with communities that give local residents genuine power to turn their neighbourhoods around

action

4. Keeping in touch

Baroness Newlove believes strongly in the need for communities to learn from one another. This means ensuring local activists in different parts of the country, north and south, east and west, have the means to learn from one another simply and without fuss, through a single 'neighbourhood of best practice'.

She is determined to find other groups across Whitehall and agencies who have made strides in creating happier and safer neighbourhoods, and add them to this growing group, and promote their tactics.

This will be achieved in part through pursuing the priority for a national online hub described earlier in this report. However, it also means making sure that the full range of current award schemes are used to shine a light on great practice that others can learn and take inspiration from, and creating opportunities for activists to meet up in person. In September, we will be bringing Baroness Newlove back together with the activists from the seven neighbourhoods featured in *Our vision for safe and active communities* for a progress report on what helped and hindered their plans. This will allow us to catch up with the progress activists on the ground are making, the problems they are facing and the solutions they are finding.

To stay in touch, and to contribute to the learning and debate,
visit helennewlove.co.uk

Baroness Newlove will issue an update on all her challenges to action and
on championing active, safer communities more widely in spring 2012.

keeping in touch

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