



150 YEARS OF HELPING HOMELESS PEOPLE: 1860-2010

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Government cuts will destroy the Big Society, warns charity

The Big Society is already here and working but requires funding and may not survive the cuts, says homeless charity Providence Row.

The government recently removed protection of the £100m Homelessness Grant which helps to fund homeless charities, including those that depend on volunteers.

Chief executive, Jo Ansell said, 'We are seriously concerned that these cuts will spell the end for local community charities. We rely on a broad volunteer group including students, immigrants, vulnerable adults and homeless people themselves. They help us tackle homelessness in London but need proper training and support to ensure safety and good practice and this does not come for free.'

The Prime Minister has made his vision clear: everyone in society should be working together. Local charities make this possible by involving everyone in the community. Withdraw funding for these charities and this possibility will disappear.

Further to these funding losses, cuts to adult training and literacy will also rob the most vulnerable of their opportunity to join the Big Society. 'People come to us lacking basic literacy and work skills. The government has only ring fenced funding for adult apprenticeships but many need much more basic training than this,' said Ansell.

Providence Row runs an effective volunteering programme to equip these people with work skills but this costs £350 per person. Ansell added, 'Many of our graduates go on to permanent volunteering either here or elsewhere and give back many times over what we have put in.'

One graduate of the programme said, 'I was homeless for a long time and I know how tough life is on the streets. The volunteering programme helped me to improve my English and work skills so that I'm now doing an apprenticeship under a professional chef. I still volunteer though, I'm so happy to be able to help homeless people myself.'

Volunteers cannot deliver services to the needy without training and support. Charities are already making the Big Society work with a broad spectrum of volunteers. However, Cameron's cuts may destroy his big idea and leave the most vulnerable behind.

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Notes to editors

- Cuts to adult education / training will come from the Business, Skills and Innovation Department which has removed ring fenced funding any adult training other than adult apprenticeships.
- Last year 3,673 people slept rough on London's streets (according to the CHAIN 'Street to Home' Annual Report 2009-2010).
- Providence Row's services include hot breakfasts, showers, advice on housing and benefits as well as reconnection to people's local area or home country.

- To tackle the causes of homelessness Providence Row helps people with mental health issues and addictions as well as hosting a needle exchange.
- The client volunteering programme is a seven week course for homeless and vulnerably housed people. It costs Providence Row £350 to put each person through the course and includes health and safety training, food hygiene and team building work as well as one to ones with a trained professional to work on pathways into employment. Participants are measured against key competencies in order to graduate.

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