

Charity leaders welcome Big Society announcement but call for rhetoric/reality gap to be closed

July 20, 2010- Charity leaders responding to David Cameron's speech in Liverpool on the Big Society yesterday welcomed the Prime Minister's statement but warned of a widening gap between rhetoric and reality as public spending cuts start to bite.

Stephen Bubb, CEO of ACEVO (the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations, representing 2,000 of the UK's non-profit leaders) said, "the voluntary sector has a huge amount to offer in building a Big Society and delivering better public services, and the whole agenda will stand or fall on our ability to work with Government deliver it. We therefore welcome David Cameron's words today, and in particular the significant announcement that the Big Society Bank to support voluntary sector organisations to deliver public services will be capitalised with all the dormant account monies in England. That is a big leap forward from the position under the last administration."

"The Government will however have a job on its hands to close the gap between its heady rhetoric and current reality. Public spending cuts (national and local) are already seeing charities hit hard, and greater devolution to local authorities may well mean councils seeing voluntary organisations as easy targets for cuts, rather than as allies in building a big society. David Cameron has described cutting the deficit as his duty and building a big society as his passion. The challenge for him will be to ensure that his colleagues in central and local government share that passion, and don't carry out their duty in a way that inadvertently stymies it."

Notes to editors

ACEVO (Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations, www.acevo.org.uk) is the professional body representing charity and not-for-profit sector chief executives in the UK, with over 2,000 members. The broad not-for-profit sector now employs the full-time equivalent of 1.5m staff, with a collective annual turnover of £46bn. ACEVO is committed to improving third sector leadership skills worldwide.