



## What we want from politicians and what we can offer society

### *Working towards Scotland's voluntary sector manifesto*

Scotland's voluntary sector brings people together to make a difference to their communities and to the lives of others. There are over 45,000 voluntary organisations, with an annual turnover of £4.1 billion and assets of over £8 billion. We employ 5% of Scotland's paid workforce, and over 1.3 million people give their time freely as volunteers.

Voluntary organisations can help society meet the big challenges we face today locally, nationally and globally. But what do we need from our politicians and government to help us meet these challenges?

Over the next few months SCVO will co-ordinate a sector-wide discussion to produce a Scottish Voluntary Sector Manifesto for the UK Elections 2010 and Scottish Elections 2011 (it will also form the basis for the local government elections in 2012). This discussion document is the start of this process. It pulls together some of the commitments we may want to ask of politicians to enable us to deliver even more for society.

Please take this opportunity to get involved in the discussion. With three elections in the next three years, your views are really important. You can inform the direction of the manifestos. We look forward to receiving hearing from you, email your thoughts to: [manifesto@scvo.org.uk](mailto:manifesto@scvo.org.uk)

### *Government should value, protect and nurture civil society*

A thriving voluntary sector is essential for a flourishing society. By investing in our sector, Government can strengthen Scotland's rich culture of networks, communities and institutions through which people play an active part in society.

#### *Our asks to Government:*

- Make tax work for charitable giving – reform and simplify Gift Aid. And allow charities to claim back excess VAT in the same way as other sectors
- Ensure 100% of good cause lottery funds goes to voluntary organisations
- Explore with us new ways in which people can invest financially in the voluntary sector
- Ensure the profits from major energy companies and other natural resources contribute to communities through both local and national charitable foundations.

#### *Our commitments:*

- We will work closely as a social partner to Government to identify areas of opportunity and concern for society but where necessary we will also challenge Government
- We will support our sector to spend wisely and make efficient use of any funds invested but we will take calculated risks to try out new ideas.



## Discussion Paper November 2009:

### ***Ensure equality of access to delivering public services***

Public sector funding is going to get a lot tighter. We need to reform public services to increase efficiency. Our communities need a complete transformation of public services.

#### *Our asks to Government:*

- implement Fairer Funding for voluntary organisations - make the commissioning, reporting and auditing of public services more transparent
- put users at the heart of public services by supporting and genuinely engaging with their voluntary organisations.
- ensure the voluntary sector is a full partner in community planning for both the design and delivery of public services

#### *We will continue to campaign for:*

- equal treatment of services contracted out to our sector with services that the public sector keeps in-house
- a fair, consistent and transparent commissioning process, and an end to compulsory re-tendering and auctioning of public service contracts.

### ***Protect the independence of our sector***

The voluntary sector values its independence. Through the sector, communities take a lead for themselves on solving their problems and making life better for local people. Often we provide a channel for voices on the fringe of society to articulate their concerns.

#### *Government needs to:*

- ensure a balanced approach to regulation – cutting back on duplication
- let the voluntary sector represent its own interests

#### *We will continue to lobby to ensure that:*

- the sector is led and controlled by itself: putting the needs of front-line organisations first, working to the highest levels of transparency and quality; and sharing resources to provide sustainable services.

### ***Sustainability of our society and environment: a more progressive view of economy***

The global financial crisis is challenging the view that all problems can be solved by the market. Our economy should be a means towards a sustainable society and environment, not an end in itself.

#### *Government needs to:*

- create and stick to explicit targets for the reduction of poverty and inequalities
- move from GDP to an index of well-being and sustainability as our official measure of progress
- support mutualism and self-help and recognise its role in addressing financial exclusion, employability and better health.



## Discussion Paper November 2009:

We will continue to campaign for:

- for an equitable and more democratic economy with an emphasis on community solutions

### ***Empowering Scotland's communities***

Through the voluntary sector people learn about mutual interdependence and responsibility to their wider community and environment.

Government needs to:

- recognise and support our sector's role in addressing health and social inequalities from a person-centred perspective
- support community-owned assets and resources, and provide more opportunities for communities to take control of assets

We will:

- challenge society's attitudes to health and where necessary campaign for behaviour change
- be responsible custodians of community assets and put the users of our services at the centre of their services

### ***Build equality and human rights, and protect civil liberties***

Equal opportunity, non-discrimination and a respect for human dignity and diversity must be at the centre of all government policy, legislation and service delivery. The voluntary sector is an essential partner in achieving these goals.

Government needs to:

- integrate a human rights based approach into all aspects of public policy, legislation and public service delivery
- make its own processes fully transparent and accountable, including how it decides its budgets at all levels

We will:

- adhere to the highest standards of equality and human rights, transparency and accountability to the general public
- protect and promote the human right of freedom of association, allowing people to come together



## Discussion Paper November 2009:

### ***Sustainability of our planet and dealing with climate change***

Tackling climate change is a global imperative. Action now to reduce emissions is vital. Scotland must play its full part in addressing this for the sake of generations to come.

Government needs to:

- remain committed to its target of 42% emissions reduction by 2020, and as part of this, invest in community-led renewable energy
- work with the voluntary sector to build resilient communities ready to meet the impact of a changing climate
- help us develop the potential for voluntary organisations to play a major role in providing green jobs

We will:

- play our part in moving towards a low-carbon economy, by reducing our own carbon footprint
- campaign for raising awareness of climate change and keep the pressure on government's to ensure its policies are sustainable.

### ***Work with us to support civil society internationally***

Between 2006 and 2008 Scotland hosted the CIVICUS World Assembly, the largest gathering of the global civil society community. It is our obligation to help other countries gain the same freedoms of association and rights as enjoyed by voluntary organisations in Scotland.

Government needs to:

- work with voluntary organisations rather than just the public sector to tackle poverty and climate change, and build transparency
- ensure the international development agenda is focused on the most urgent social and environmental needs
- work with the voluntary sector in Scotland to build a global hub for civil society learning.

We will help:

- strengthen our links with voluntary organisations internationally
- open our sector to ideas from other countries that could work in Scotland, and highlight to other countries what works for us