



*together***wecan**

*People and government,  
working together to make life better*



# together **wecan**

A government action plan led by the Home Office

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The Civil Renewal Unit is part of the Home Office's Communities Group.

We promote the active involvement of citizens, communities and public bodies in working together to improve people's quality of life.

## The government departments contributing to Together We Can are:

- Cabinet Office
- Department for Constitutional Affairs
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Department for Education and Skills
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Department of Health
- Department of Trade and Industry
- Department for Transport
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Her Majesty's Treasury
- The Home Office
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

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*“There’s a lot right about our society, but there is a great deal more that can be done to make it better.”*



We believe that local people working together with government at every level have the imagination, talent and common sense to solve problems. But more than simply fixing what’s wrong we believe that local people have the capacity to innovate, improve and enhance local services and facilities. The best ideas often come from the people at the sharp end.



We want to transform the relationship between citizens and the state, to pass more power, control and influence from the centre to local communities.

The Home Office has led the creation of the Together We Can action plan and we are delighted that our colleagues across government - twelve departments in all - are taking part with us.

The Together We Can action plan is an important benchmark in giving people control over their own communities. It demonstrates where significant and often inspirational progress has been made. It shows how local people with the proper support and guidance can transform their own lives.

It’s not easy, but it’s not impossible either. This document shows us how. ”

Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP  
Home Secretary

Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP  
Minister of State



# together we can improve our quality of life

In many ways our quality of life is improving all the time, but for many people, this is hard to believe. Many people feel powerless to do anything about the issues that affect their daily lives; issues such as vandalism in their streets, the lack of anywhere safe for children to play, or not being able to get the health care they need.

Statistics such as crime figures may fall, but if the public announcements don't reflect people's own personal experience, they are unlikely to believe the official record. Making improvements to the 'bigger picture' is no consolation to the person who feels unable to walk the streets safely, or feels isolated and disconnected from their neighbours.

For some, the organisations which take the decisions seem beyond their influence, so people are left with a diminishing sense of confidence and responsibility. Increasingly, they believe that public authorities – such as councils, police, the Government – are not interested in their concerns, let alone their opinions. They feel that nothing they can do will make a difference, so they stop trying and so, often, does the public body responsible for providing services.

How did we get here? Part of the reason is increasing mobility within society. We move around a lot more than our parents and grandparents did. We move to new jobs, leaving our extended families and social ties behind us. Our sense of belonging to a single community has changed.

Another factor is the way public services now operate. The power which used to reside in stable communities able to deal with a wide range of local concerns is now spread across a diverse range of complex public agencies and organisations. It's hard to find the way in, even if you know which door to knock on.

Between 2001 and 2003, the Home Office's Citizenship Survey found that fewer people thought they had any influence over the decisions affecting their local areas: a fall from 43 to 38 per cent. And in the 2005 General Election, although more people turned out to vote than in 2001, the trend is still downward, especially among young voters.

It all points towards a spiral of declining trust and engagement in finding public solutions to public problems, and a chasm opening

between government and citizens. But this problem can be solved when people work together, pool their collective wisdom and resources, and share the public responsibility for decisions. The chasm can be bridged.

## Power to the people

Just because people feel powerless and don't get involved, it doesn't mean that they are apathetic about public problems. In fact most people will say they would like to play a role in the decisions affecting their communities, if only they felt that their views would really count. The challenge for us is to tap into people's real desire to make a difference and engage them in a constructive manner in shaping public policies and services.

Then, when they see that their contribution is really valued by the public bodies concerned, they feel a greater sense of ownership of the results and they are more willing to make the solutions stick.

When people feel empowered and become more involved, other benefits follow. People literally feel better. They are healthier, their educational attainment rises, crime falls and so does the fear of crime. People have more confidence in the criminal justice system, there are fewer social tensions and neighbourhoods that were once run down, become better places to live – even sought after.





## Empowerment does work

Throughout the country there are shining examples of how communities have been turned around through empowerment and co-operation. In this introduction to Together We Can we've highlighted some of the examples where a real difference can be seen. We want to learn from what has been done and share the best ideas so that more communities can benefit.

Many of the examples we use here are taken from the experiences of statutory and community organisations in local authority areas called Civic Pioneers. These local authorities have been working with the Home Office since 2004, having signed up to work together in a network to share their practical experience of what works in engaging local communities more closely and effectively in designing and providing local services.

Other examples have been provided by other government departments involved in Together We Can. They also cover a range of experience drawn from different types of community. Each has its story to tell, but they have in common the guiding principle behind Together We Can – the essential involvement of local people in shaping the public policies and services that affect their communities.

# Our strategy

Together We Can sets out the Government's commitment to empower citizens to work with public bodies to set and achieve common goals. By having this shared plan of action, we can ensure the key initiatives from all relevant Government departments are carried out so they make a real difference to

people's lives. The plan helps us join up our initiatives across government. It enables us to share and review what we learn as the plan progresses, and it provides a basis on which we can build partnerships outside government to take our policies forward.

## The three essential ingredients of the Together We Can way of working

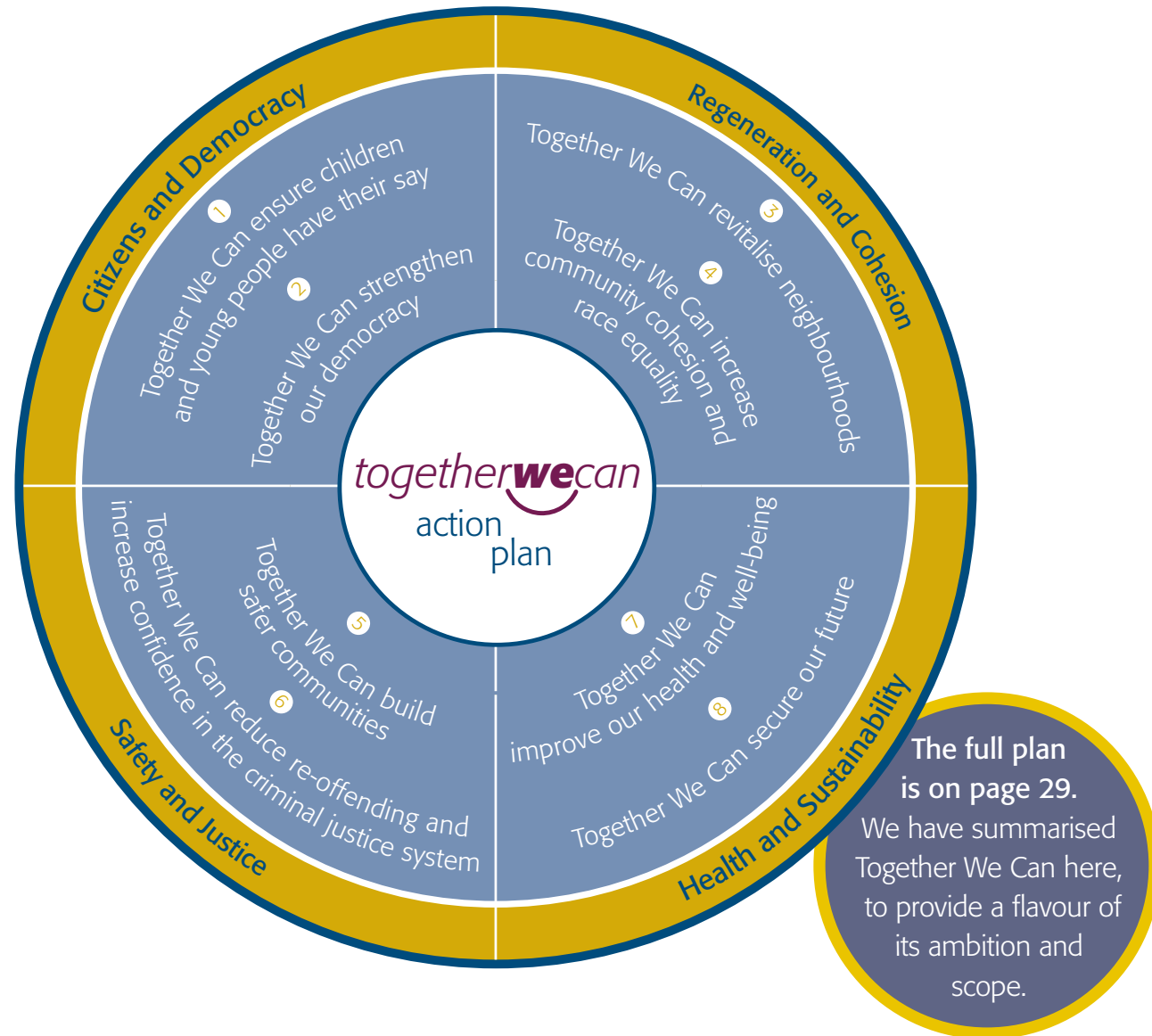
- 1. Active citizens: people with the motivation, skills and confidence to speak up for their communities and say what improvements are needed**
- 2. Strengthened communities: community groups with the capability and resources to bring people together to work out shared solutions**
- 3. Partnership with public bodies: public bodies willing and able to work as partners with local people**

In every example and in each action point in the Together We Can plan, these three ingredients work together. It's more than individual citizens getting together to do good things in their communities; it's more than a public body trying to tackle a problem on its own; and it's more than a community organisation campaigning on a local issue.

Together We Can brings the three together. Together they can go further, use their resources more effectively and find solutions that last.

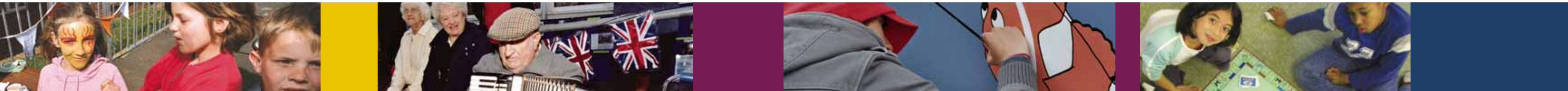
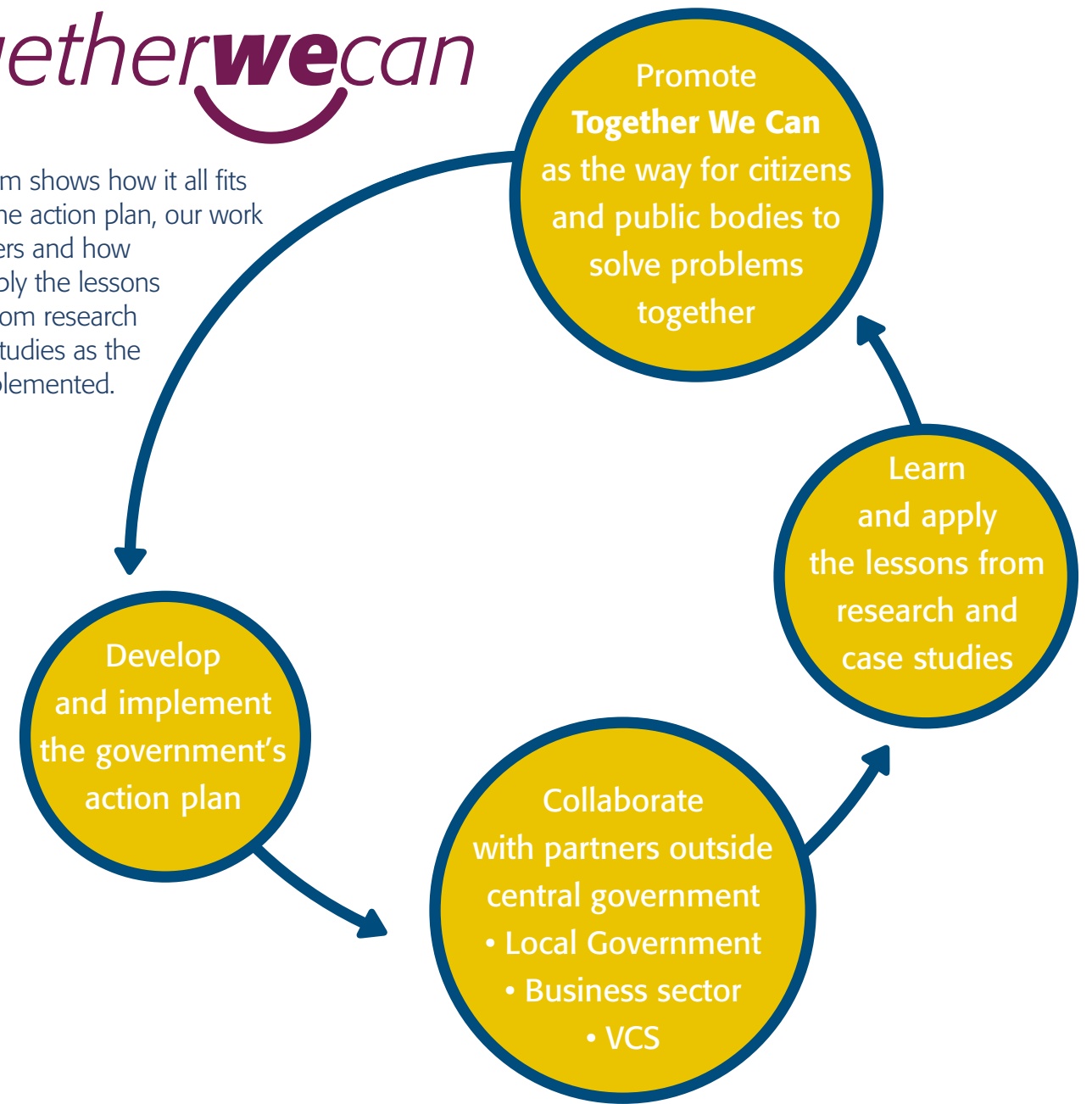


How the Action Plan is structured



togetherwecan

This diagram shows how it all fits together: the action plan, our work with partners and how we can apply the lessons we learn from research and case studies as the plan is implemented.



# Citizens and democracy

It's important for power and responsibility to be shared fairly in our society. Each new generation should want to have its say and should be able to, in order for our democracy to flourish. We want to make sure children and young people have their say and that they grow up to become confident and responsible citizens.

**Together we can ensure children and young people have their say**

## How?

We're doing this by involving them more in designing the services they use; whether public services in general or services specifically for them, through proposals in the Youth Green Paper and the work of Children's Trusts and Connexions, for example. Social inclusion programmes such as Positive Futures, which uses sport to help young people learn skills and get involved in their community, will help some of the most marginalised among them take better control of their lives – and through the recommendations of the Russell Commission, we can help more of them design the kind of volunteering activities they would like to take part in.

## Southey and Owlerton Area Regeneration

Young people in Sheffield have been at the heart of Southey and Owlerton's regeneration strategy. The regeneration board asked them about their priorities, ring-fenced funding and involved them in the decisions. They've set up the North Sheffield Youth Forum and young people also take part in city-wide decisions through the Children and Young People's Area Parliament. They've run participation training for Sheffield Futures, Connexions, PCTs and hospital staff – and many service organisations now have action plans to enable more young people to have their say.

Through their active involvement, young people have gone from being perceived as part of the problem to being among those who are making the solutions. The residents of Southey and Owlerton have seen crime come down and house prices go up – making it a better place to live for everyone.

*"It's made me feel like I could stand up in front of anyone. I've got loads of knowledge out of it"*

Callum McKayle  
Member of UK Youth Parliament  
and director of Connexions South Yorkshire

**Together we can strengthen our democracy**

We want people of all ages and backgrounds to feel confident and motivated enough to be active in society and to have a better understanding of how public policy and the governance of public institutions and services, works: services such as schools, health authorities, the police and the courts.

## How?

Part of the answer lies in giving more people, whether at school or as adults, the chance to learn citizenship skills and discover how to take part in making the decisions that affect their lives. Alongside that we'll work to improve people's understanding of political processes and encourage them to register as voters. We're looking at ways to improve the recruitment of school governors, patients forum members, magistrates and probation boards, and how to encourage people to stay in those roles. We will work with local government to develop the relationship between councillors and people in their wards, and we are learning from local authorities, such as those in our Civic Pioneers network, to build on their success in working with communities.

Just as with children and young people, we will do more to enable older people to be actively involved in designing services and in





telling us what works best for them. We will create new ways for people to debate and inform important developments in areas such as science and technology: issues about which many people care passionately and which have a real impact on their daily lives.

### CamdenTalks

The London Borough of Camden has come up with a novel way to find out what local people think about life in the borough and about local public services – the CamdenTalks Panel which enables a representative group of residents to contribute their views. Members don't have to take part in every debate, but they can get involved through questionnaires, telephone or internet surveys, in-depth workshops, focus groups and online discussions. With such a choice it's hard not to get involved.

And when CamdenTalks, the council listens. 'Mystery shopping' by panel members with disabilities has led to practical changes and improvements to many of the council's public buildings. The Safer Camden Strategy has picked up on the panel's suggestions, and local people's ideas for the regeneration of the King's Cross area are being tested out.

*"CamdenTalks makes a real contribution to decision making in Camden. It helps us understand what residents want and make sure our decisions deliver what they need"*

Dame Cllr Jane Roberts  
Leader of Camden Council

## regeneration and cohesion

Different communities can find they have more in common than they realised when they tackle a problem together. By coming together to talk about it and decide the way forward, they get a sense of collective strength and solidarity which they didn't have before.

Whether they live in cities, towns or the countryside, local people have a vital role to play in decisions about their communities and the resources they need – and an equally important role in actually carrying out some of those services and supporting them.

### Together we can revitalise neighbourhoods

#### How?

There are many ways in which people can become more engaged in the decisions about the quality of life in their neighbourhoods. We are learning from the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's experience of community empowerment to help more neighbourhoods tackle deprivation. In rural areas where affordable housing is an issue,

we will encourage parish planning and enable people to work with housing associations and local authorities to build affordable housing.

We will build on the success of the Home Zone Pilot and Challenge programmes which have involved people in making improvements in their own streets, and we will increase people's involvement in the cultural elements of local regeneration strategies. Any community needs its own voice and community radio stations will be promoted as a good way to create direct links with local listeners, in some cases even getting them involved in running the station.

Schools sit at the heart of many communities. We are encouraging people to get involved in extended schools, where their facilities are made much more accessible to everyone in the area. We will make it easier for parents to have a say in where new schools are placed, and we are doing more to help people in disadvantaged communities decide what they need in terms of education and learning opportunities in their local areas. Following the success of Sure Start we will devise a



template for children's centres so that parents can be involved in the design and provision of services for families.

Communities need the right skills to enable them to help themselves: our Guide Neighbourhoods programme is already helping successful residents organisations pass on their expertise to others, and the Firm Foundations report's recommendations on how to build the capability of communities are being applied to the development of new policies.

The Government wants people to have the opportunity to act in their neighbourhood, but without imposing a 'one-size-fits-all' model. Therefore we are developing a neighbourhoods framework, building on existing good practice and working through councils, not around them, to offer more opportunities and powers for people to get involved in their neighbourhoods.

### North Benwell Neighbourhood Management

North Benwell, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was high on the national index of deprivation, so there was much to be done. The people who lived there knew what they wanted. They knew, for example, that they didn't want their

houses demolished and they had clear ideas about how to regenerate their streets. The Council and residents meet regularly now and they have created a system of evaluation so the community can say what they think about the way the area is developing. Then, they go further and involve local people in deciding how local services are going to be managed.

Everyone can see the difference. Crime fell by 30 per cent between December 2003 and December 2004. Plans to demolish houses were torn up and residents helped remove 10.5 tonnes of rubbish in a single clear-up week, and then helped re-plant and landscape the tidied-up area. They know they got it right - new residents are moving into the area and half the homes that stood empty and neglected are now lived in again.

*"Our emphasis has been to build positive relationships with the community - all while having fun and increasing their self-satisfaction from our joint successes"*

Christina Gates Neighbourhood Manager

### Together we can increase community cohesion and race equality

#### How?

In today's world, we live in more than one community simultaneously: the place where we live, our network of family and friends, the community we share with people of the same faith or cultural background, for example. The challenge is to ensure that communities have a shared sense of belonging and mutual respect for each other's diversity.

Some of the tensions between communities arise because of misinformation and fear of the unknown. To help counter this, we are encouraging local authorities to work with local people to expose myths, confront racism and involve residents in preparing for new arrivals and helping them settle into their new community.

Cultural activities are being promoted to bring people together to develop a new shared sense of community, for example, by sharing stories about the history of a place or community and deciding what to display in the local museum. And on an individual level, volunteer mentors from the community can help refugees settle into their new home area.

### Safer Areas for Everyone - SAFE

SAFE was set up after the Bradford riots in 2001 with a grant from the





# Safety and justice

Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. What started as a local initiative to train women in personal safety has grown to become Bradford-wide. Nearly 1,000 people have received training in Community, Personal Safety and Empowerment Skills: people of all ages, genders and ethnic groups.

In its early days, SAFE helped local women become more empowered and assertive in challenging crime on their streets. It worked because the women involved were less confrontational than men might be in similar situations.

Four years later, courses are run for all types of people, with a focus on reducing the fear of crime and building people's confidence as individuals and as members of their community. People who take part in SAFE have no more powers than any other citizen, but because of their training they know what to look out for, who to call on and how to take action.

*"The people taking part in SAFE are doing it because they want to. It's empowered people and made them more aware of what they can do for their community."*

Elizabeth Hellmich SAFE Founder/Manager

SAFE has certainly helped local women and other people overcome their fear of crime - but there is another positive result: people from different communities have been brought together and there is now a better understanding between them.

For some people, crime and disorder are among the biggest concerns in their everyday life. When people feel unsafe in their own area, their trust in the ability of the police and the criminal justice system to tackle the problem can be seriously affected: even if crime figures are going down, people still lack confidence that anything is being done about the problems they experience on their own doorstep. It's vital for public agencies to work closely with the communities affected by criminal and anti-social behaviour. The public should be able to feel confident in the criminal justice system, have a better understanding of it, and co-operate with it as trusted partners.

**Together we can build safer communities**

## How?

The key to success is building a relationship of mutual trust and respect between people, their communities, the police and the other public bodies involved in making our communities safer places to live and work. This means a police service which works with

communities and individuals to identify their needs; public agencies that listen and respond to what communities, families, victims and young people tell them about anti-social behaviour; and willingness from all to share responsibility for tackling the problem.

We are supporting the development of Neighbourhood Watch to more parts of the country; we will make sure the involvement of communities is part of the steps we take to tackle gun and Class A drug-related crime; and we will involve the voluntary and community sector's expertise and networks more as part of our strategy to tackle drug use.

## Safer Neighbourhoods in Birmingham

Crime Concern took five neighbourhoods in Birmingham and asked local people what should be done to prevent crime in their areas. Then they drew up short, medium and long term action plans and involved residents in the decisions that were taken following their suggestions.

It worked because Crime Concern was creative in the ways it reached out to



members of the community. Instead of just talking to established resident and tenant groups, they knocked on doors, used surveys, brought focus groups together and held workshops. So there were many ways people could take part and have a say, including people who had never taken part before.

Some of the residents became members of the project steering group and for the first time they had meetings with police and council workers at which they were treated as equal partners.

The project was set up in 2002 and they've achieved a lot in a short time. In the first 18 months, crime in the five areas fell by an average of 14 per cent – compared with only 7 per cent in other comparative parts of the city. Burglary in people's homes fell by 41 per cent, compared to 13 per cent across the city, and crime by young people fell by 29 per cent, compared with 12 per cent elsewhere in Birmingham.

It was good value too. The city invested £600,000 in the Safer Neighbourhoods programme and by the end of its first year it had saved £6,406,840 on the cost of crime.

*"We sat down and talked to police and housing and they talked back to us. We were part of the set-up."*

John Clarke local resident

## Together we can reduce re-offending and increase confidence in the criminal justice system

### How?

People start to feel more confident in the steps being taken to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour when they get involved themselves in the decisions about them. The same is true for measures to reduce re-offending and bring offenders to justice. Local Criminal Justice Boards are committed to involving local people, especially people from black and minority ethnic communities, and will continue to build on existing networks such as the community safety partnerships. The Community Justice Centre pilot in Liverpool and the Salford Community Justice initiative will help us learn how to make the criminal justice system more responsive to local needs and apply these lessons to other areas of the country.

Victims of crime will be reassured that justice has been done, when they have the opportunity to see how offenders are prepared to atone for their crime. And when offenders work, under supervision, on local clean-up campaigns and other improvements to a local area, residents will have a say in the type of work they carry out.

## The restoration of Courage Park

The public park at Edenham Crescent in Reading had become a sad sight – vandalised, uncared for and unsafe. Thames Valley Partnership's Creating Confidence in Justice project brought together the borough council, the prison service, the national probation service and the Inside Out Trust which works with offenders in the community: all partners with an interest in bringing the park back to life.

Their idea was to use the restoration of the park as an exercise in 'restorative justice' – giving offenders the opportunity to make reparation to the community by putting something back; in this case, creating a safe, pleasant park for the community to enjoy again.

The results went even further than the partners had hoped. The offenders involved in doing the hard work were rehabilitated. Anti-social behaviour fell and the park was no longer inhabited by people abusing solvents and drugs. Residents who were involved in deciding how to improve the park have continued to take part in regular community steering group meetings to put forward further ideas for the area.

*'We have made incredibly good contact with the local community. The project has repaired the relationship between the council and community.'*

Adrian Lawson  
Reading Borough Council Parks and Open Spaces  
Development Officer



# health and sustainability

Science and technology bring constant innovations which can improve our lives – but the benefits should be available to all and they shouldn't create problems for future generations, whether in health or environmental terms. The pace of change is rapid and the expertise it involves is highly specialised. This makes it all the more important for us to ensure that the people on the receiving end of policies and services that affect their well-being are listened to by the professionals and have opportunities to shape their decisions – for the benefit of us all now and in the future.

**Together We Can improve our health and well-being**

## How?

People with health problems, whether physical or mental and from all types of community, are especially vulnerable, but their recovery can be helped by a sense of empowerment – the sense that they are able to take control of their own lives. For the public bodies responsible for health care the challenge is to empower local communities, as well as

individuals, to deliver change for themselves. The Choosing Health White Paper shows that this can happen, with examples like the pilot Communities for Health and the 'healthy communities collaborative' technique which enable local people to identify their community's needs and then actually help to carry out the improvements.

NHS Foundation Trusts are devolving more power and responsibility for delivering NHS services to local people, and with that goes greater accountability to local stakeholders including NHS patients. There is more that can be done, for example through Patient and Public Involvement Forums which can influence local health priorities, and doing more to involve people in deciding where to site new NHS buildings – decisions that can make a crucial difference to their ability to use the health services they need.

## St Matthew's Estate

**St Matthew's Estate in Leicester had become a 'no go' area, plagued by high unemployment, violence and poverty. Many of its 4,500 residents suffered from**

depression and by the mid-1990s the waiting list to move out was so long that many lost hope of ever being able to leave. But today the waiting list is for people wanting to move in. St Matthew's had turned itself around.

**How did they do it? In the early 1990s, an assessment of local people's health needs revealed a severe mismatch between what residents wanted and the services on offer. The Tenants' Association worked alongside the St Matthew's Area Forum, chaired by a Ward Councillor and with representatives of local front-line services. With their help, the Area Forum set up four groups involving residents, so they had a direct say in what was decided.**

**In 1996, the St Matthews' Project got a new home, the £1.7million Prince Philip House. This is a multi-agency health and community centre built and designed by 100 local people. It houses a police office, a drug and alcohol service, health facilities, a children's play area and the education centre – all the things residents said they wanted.**

**Leicestershire and Rutland Healthcare NHS Trust has moved its headquarters, its Speech and Language Therapy Services, its Community Dental Services and Chiropody**





Services into Prince Philip House: a sure sign that it is here to stay. Medical and social work students at the centre are trained to work with residents to assess their needs, putting the patient at the heart of the service.

Everyone's felt the benefits. In the past five years, the neighbourhood regeneration programme has helped find work for more than 40 local people and provided others with computer training. It runs Sure Start, Neighbourhood Watch and a youth theatre. Domestic burglary on the estate has dropped by 37 per cent. GPs talk of a tangible improvement in people's health – and as well as feeling better, people feel confident and empowered. Patients have even gone on to study for degrees and become social workers.

*"Engaging the community and letting them decide makes our life as GPs much easier in the long run – and what it does for the community is fantastic."*

Dr Angela Lennox

## Together we can secure our future

### How?

People care deeply about the future of our environment, locally, nationally and globally. Through its Sustainable Development Strategy, the Government is committed to do more to enable local people and community groups to take part in decisions to do with local planning and services and ensure the decisions reached are going to be of lasting benefit. The public bodies involved will benefit from training, information and best practice advice to help them work with the communities concerned – the role of local people in helping to shape a more sustainable future for their area through local Sustainable Community Strategies, parish plans, neighbourhood engagement opportunities and Local Development Documents, will be strengthened.

The Community Action 2020 programme will encourage communities to save energy, recycle, play their part in tackling climate change, improve local neighbourhoods, support healthy eating and exercise and a range of other sustainable development issues.

Investment is vital too – we must ensure there are appropriate resources to enable communities to be involved in economic and regeneration projects, locally and regionally.

## Martock's Parish Plan

Nearly 3,000 rural parishes have produced their own Parish Plans in the past four years – plans that provide the decision makers with a clear picture of what local people want.

The village of Martock is just one parish that has involved its community in creating its plan and the district council, South Somerset, has helped it by providing extra resources through 'Moving Parish Projects Forward'. As a result of their involvement, local people have acquired useful new skills and are now able to handle substantial project funds to bring their plan to life.

The village has seen the benefits – it has a new reception area with a skate park; the Martock Business Association was set up and hosts a business fair in the village; plans are afoot for a new community centre due to be completed by 2008, and £167,000 of funds has been drawn into the village.

*"Creating a plan is one thing but making it happen is quite another. We have a strong team and over 100 local volunteers to help – great local involvement"*

John Marshall  
Chair of m3 group (Making the Most of Martock)



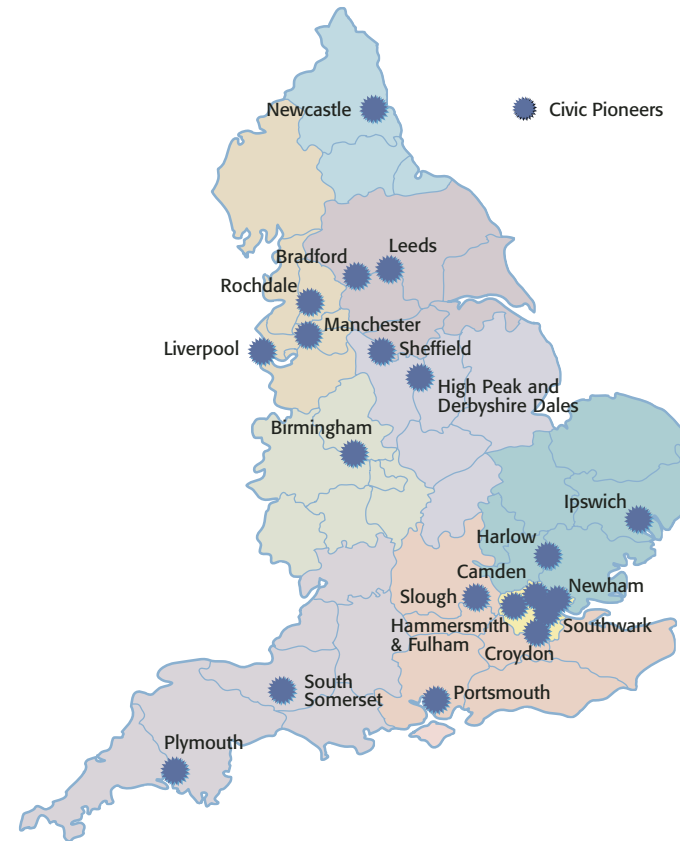
# Our partners

As well as working together across government departments, we must collaborate with partners outside Government to make Together We Can a reality. Our partners share our desire to empower people to shape public policies and services, to provide the learning and skills to help them do that, and to share good practice so that more people benefit from techniques that work.

## Local government and other statutory agencies

Local authorities have a democratic mandate to meet the needs of their local constituents, and they draw together statutory agencies and other local partners through Local Strategic Partnerships. So they are in a unique position to enable communities to work with each other and with local agencies to tackle social problems.

Since 2004, the Home Office has been working with a growing network of 'Civic Pioneer' local authorities to capture their experience. They are showing us how a consistent approach to working alongside local people can inspire them to take part in



local governance and help transform the quality of life in their communities.

The Local Government Association's publication *Towards Self-governing Communities: The Role of Local Government in Civil Renewal* (LGA, 2004), sets out how local authorities can do more to give local

people the confidence, capacity and opportunities to exercise their power and responsibility as citizens. The Civic Pioneers will work with the LGA and the Government to help inform future policy.

The Government Offices for the English Regions deliver much of the action plan in the regions. In particular, they negotiate Local Area Agreements, manage Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes which include support for Community Empowerment Networks, and they help support effective community engagement by regional and local partnerships such as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Local Strategic Partnerships. Regional Development Agencies and other statutory bodies also play an important part.

## The voluntary and community sector

For many people, the route to having a voice in the decisions that affect the community is through getting involved in a community group. Many community groups and organisations exist to tackle local concerns and some are directly involved in providing services that respond to those concerns – such as the management of green spaces or providing street wardens who contribute to community safety.

The Community Sector Coalition, which brings together many of the national networks and





associations of community organisations, is working with us and other stakeholders to help create a national forum. This will give a diverse range of community-based organisations a strong collective voice and an opportunity to inform the future development of the Together We Can action plan: a contribution which will be vital to its effectiveness.

### Businesses

People who run local businesses often feel they have little influence over decisions and activities that affect them. National and global business institutions, on the other hand, have considerable power themselves and can play a major role in helping individuals and small businesses have a say in the decisions that are made around them.

Business in the Community has over 750 member companies, including 72 of the FTSE 100, and operates through a network of more than 100 local business-led partnerships. Its insight into the relationship between businesses and the communities they serve means it is well placed to involve businesses in Together We Can. BITC's programme Seeing is Believing, which enables business leaders to see for themselves how business can play a role in tackling Britain's most pressing social issues, is just one example of how we can work together.

## Learning and research

The Active Citizenship Centre was established by the Home Office in 2003 to draw together research findings and case studies to inform policy and good practice. Through its website, [www.active-citizen.org.uk](http://www.active-citizen.org.uk), it provides a meeting place and a resource for policy leads, practitioners, academics and think-tanks to share lessons and carry out research.

Its research programme is managed by the University of Manchester and findings will be published at the end of 2005. It is tracking

the progress of initiatives led by the Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit including Civic Pioneers, Active Learning for Active Citizenship pilots in seven parts of the country and Guide Neighbourhoods: residents organisations who have successfully improved their areas and are now sharing their experience with others who want to tackle similar problems; and the Citizen Governance Initiative: a study on how to encourage more people to take part in public governance.



# how will we know it's working?

The Together We Can action plan gives measures for each policy strand. Progress will be celebrated three times a year at a Together We Can conference.

The Civil Renewal Unit will also assess progress with the help of specific tracking studies and the Home Office Citizenship Survey.

For example, we will assess the impact of the Active Learning for Active Citizenship pilot programme on participants' ability to influence decisions by public bodies. We will evaluate the Guide Neighbourhoods programme to assess how it helps communities to become stronger and more able to contribute to the regeneration of their neighbourhoods; and we will be working with our Civic Pioneer local authorities to measure the impact of citizen engagement in their areas.

Every two years, through the Home Office Citizenship Survey, we will also be measuring:

- People's perception of their neighbourhoods' readiness to act for the common good
- People's sense of safety and trust in their neighbourhood
- The level of satisfaction with local services
- The level of engagement with public organisations and local affairs
- People's belief in their ability to influence decisions
- People's trust of local public institutions
- The level of participation on public bodies as lay members.

We are all responsible for the success of Together We Can. We can all, through our own policies and actions, enable citizens to work with each other and with public bodies, in a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation.

Together we can achieve the improvements we all want for our society, now and for future generations.

If you would like to know more about Together We Can, contact

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