
CGAP Commentary
Giving White Paper, HM Government

‘Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue..’

23.05.2011

Cathy Pharoah

‘Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue..’ The Giving White Paper has all of this! Short of cash, government has not been too proud to mix old and borrowed ideas into those that are new and very ambitious.

- True to the government’s ‘nudge’ ambitions, the GWP focuses as much on changing behaviours in the long-term as on short-term fundraising targets.
- This paper aims at synergising giving, volunteering and localism, through, for example, the **Social Action Fund**; at firing up the use of new technologies; at creating new giving norms amongst the rich and powerful, and new opportunities in the deprived and neglected communities.
- The most important **new** ideas for giving are the initiatives aimed at **integrating donations into the electronic platforms** through which most of us now transact our daily finance – ATMs, payrolls, card payments. This would create an ambitious new platform for regular or frequent giving, but has the potential to reach out to millions. It seems as though some of the homework has been done, and Link is on board. It will be vital to ensure that platforms develop the capacity over time to generate support for the widest range of charities.

- The focus is transactional, on the assumption that the will to give exists and that more accessible methods of giving will surface all the existing concerns, passions and commitments which people have.
- Promoting **payroll giving** is one of the **old** ideas, and government is concentrating on getting a fundamentally good idea to work better. The key to its success is company buy-in, and the GWP is focussing efforts at this level. Let's hope this government manages better than its predecessors!
- Some may be disappointed at the lack of additional giving tax incentives to the ones already announced, but the fact is that limited use is made of the very good tax framework already in place. New initiatives bring new costs, so making what we've got work better goes with the grain of our economic circumstances. The **waiver of Gift Aid donor declarations** for community giving up to £5000 will save government and charities considerable costs, given that three-quarters of charities' Gift Aid claims are below this level.
- The paper was right to focus some of its limited new resources on a large grant to **Philanthropy UK and the Community Foundation Network** to help build up the local (and national) philanthropy infrastructure. It can be hard to give money away, and many potential philanthropists need an entry point and support.
- The paper is full of good **borrowed** ideas, such as **Spice**, the scheme to promote the exchange of credits of volunteering time and expertise, and **Islington Giving**, a successful model for mobilising giving around a common local cause. Such common interests are likely to be the key to building localism – look at the hospices, and the campaigns to preserve local woodlands and wildlife.
- Another borrowed idea is the future role for mobile phone applications, as featured in the Orange example 'Do some good', an application to encourage widespread small-scale volunteering of ideas, knowledge, information to charities. In a fast-moving technological world, charities will need fast access to new ideas.
- And the paper is, of course 'blue' to its roots, with a huge emphasis on private rather than public action, on the release of more private initiative for public good, with government's role mainly that of creating the framework for this to happen. But though there are limited hand-outs, and this paper is not about addressing funding gaps, the amount of resource which will be needed to bring people together and get frameworks in place to drive the new initiatives should not be underestimated. The Giving Summit will provide an important focus, but will not be sufficient in itself.