How Big is Society? 
The Citizen Perspective
How Big is Society?
Shifting social values?

Do you think the quality of life in Britain is best improved by…
(a) Looking after the community’s interests rather than your own
(b) Looking after ourselves which ultimately raises standards…”

[Graph showing trends from 1986 to 2009 for “Community” and “Ourselves” with data from 1996-2009 by Henley Centre/The Futures Company; 2010 data by TNS omnibus Base: All those with an opinion (1952).]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helped a neighbour with shopping or errands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attended a local community event</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed a petition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attended a religious service or regular place of worship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undertaken voluntary work or activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Been a member of a local community sports team or club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supported a local campaign (e.g. attended meetings, displayed posters etc)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organised a local community activity (e.g. for school, council, religious group)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attended a local community group to discuss a topic of interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attended a local planning meeting consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taken an active part in an online community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
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</tbody>
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% done in the last year

Source: TNS omnibus 2010, Base: All respondents (1990)
How involved in our community are we?

21% Community organisers

**What they do:**
- Organise local community activities
- Attend a local planning meeting

**Who they are:**
- Most likely to be middle aged women
- AB social grade
- Part-time workers

57% Community participants

**What they do:**
- Attend community events
- Attend religious services
- Sports club member
- Active in online community
- Supported a local campaign
- Help neighbours

**Who they are:**
- Equal spread across gender and social grade
- More likely to be younger
- Slightly more likely to work full-time

22% Not involved

**What they do:**
- Maybe sign a petition
- Nothing else

**Who they are:**
- More likely to be male and of any age
- DE social grade
- More likely to be unemployed

Source: TNS omnibus 2010 for IIPS, Base: All respondents (1990)
Community activity can be very motivating

**IN INVOLVEMENT**

**Meeting new people / socialising**

I got involved with my brother and he enjoys it too – I meet all kinds of different people – it’s fun.

*Pre-family, Leicester*

**Satisfaction of ‘giving something back’**

It’s giving something back. My relatives in hospice were well looked after - I can’t give them money so I’m giving them time and helping out like that.

*Empty Nester, London*

**DRIVERS**

**Enjoyment**

**Improving something**

We wanted the school to succeed – it was something we could do and support and create something better for a larger number of people.

*Empty nester, London*

**Having more control over things**

I want my kids to understand that life isn’t all about them, life is a process. If you don’t put anything in you can’t have anything back.

*Older family, Leicester*
But the Big Society is demanding more

“The big society demands mass engagement: a broad culture of responsibility, mutuality and obligation.”

David Cameron

Elements of the Big Society

Engagement
Community
Responsibility
Public services
Barriers to Stepping up

What, if anything, is the main reason stopping you from getting more involved in their local community?

16% Could be interested, but will need guidance

10% are simply not interested

- Already involved
- Lack of time
- Don't know how to get involved
- Never really thought about it
- Not interested in getting involved
- Helping in the community wouldn't change things
- Others

Source: TNS omnibus 2010, Base: All respondents with an opinion (1972)
A behaviour change ecology helps to identify and understand barriers.

Barriers can exist at a personal, social and structural level.

- Personal barriers:
  - Confidence
  - Time
  - Red-tape

- Social barriers:
  - It’s not for me

- Structural barriers:
  - Information
Lack of time
Fear of over-committing
Fear of being taken advantage of

“If you’re looking after your family, then your free time is very much reduced.”
Empty nester, London

“If you can’t go every week you think it’s best not to sign up at all otherwise you feel like you’re letting them down before you’ve started.”
Pre-family, Leicester

“I had to give up taking an elderly women shopping because it started to demand more than I could give.”
Empty nester, London

These barriers are centred around perceptions of what kind of commitment people would be expected to make.
Lack of confidence can hold people back

PERSONAL BARRIERS

Lack of skills / expertise
Fear of taking responsibility
Fear of repercussions

People may not know where to start, or feel that they lack the necessary skills to help. There are also concerns around liability and responsibility.

“I’ve got no skills to run the police – that’s why people go to uni and train for specific jobs because that’s what they want to do.”
Young family, London

“The professionals need to do it – it’s like someone coming to my farm and saying ‘spend this much on cows, and that much on the sheep’.”
Older family, Leicester

“It’s sometimes difficult, and I can appreciate that someone might feel intimidated and feel reluctant to improve something that needs attention.”
Empty nester, London

Source: The Futures Company, August 2010
People worry that they will not be welcomed

**BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT**

**Lack of people like me doing it**

“A lot of the people that tend to do things like this actually think it is their life. If you try and go and help them, they’ve got nothing else to do.”

Young family, London

**The people who do it are unwelcoming**

“The church community are very cliquey – in the nicest possible way. They’ll help everyone out ... but if you’re not in that group ...”

Young family, London

“*It’s always the same people who do the all the same stuff. It’s always been like that.*”

Older family, Leicester

Concerns exist around what kinds of people get involved in certain activities, and whether newcomers are welcome
In some cases, support systems are lacking

**STRUCTURAL BARRIERS**

Don’t know what I can do

Lack of information

“How do you go about being part of something? You can’t just phone someone and go and help them, it’s not that simple.”

Pre-family, Leicester

“A lot of these things you wouldn’t know they exist in the first place.”

Older family, London

Some are limited by lack of direction, or desire a ‘rubber stamp’ for their ideas.

Source: The Futures Company, August 2010
Red tape and bureaucracy can be frustrating and take the fun out of getting involved. For some it can put them off all together.
The barriers to involvement with public services also mirror those for community involvement.

As fewer triggers exist, people lack of roadmap for involvement. This increases the effect of other barriers – particularly those around feelings of lack of expertise and fear of responsibility.

Source: The Futures Company, August 2010
4 ideas to address the barriers

1. INCREASE FLEXIBILITY
Give people options to get involved on different levels and build in flexibility so they can get involved on their own terms.

Increased flexibility allows people to fit their involvement around busy lives.

2. PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SUPPORT
Give people clear structures of responsibility.
Provide training and guidance where needed.

Avoiding the language of ‘responsibility’ for some will be key.

“You need guidance and procedure – you can’t do it by yourself. You need a phone number, someone you can get in touch with.”
Pre-family, Leicester

Source: The Futures Company, August 2010
3 PROMOTE INCLUSIVITY

Enable involvement through a ‘neutral’ organisation and context

Allow people to engage in activities with friends and hold open activities allowing people to get to know those involved

4 PROVIDE INFORMATION HUBS

Provide easily accessible information in ‘neutral’ and familiar locations

Be as clear as possible about what is involved

Making community involvement feel ‘normal’ and for ‘people like me’ is key to breaking down barriers

“With charities and religion there’s that weirdo aspect and that cliquey aspect, but if it was run by the council it would be better.”

Young family, London

“Instead of individuals go for groups of friends – confidence isn’t such a big issue because you can go with a friend.”

Pre-family, Leicester

Source: The Futures Company, August 2010
Thank you

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