

## NCIA Inquiry into the Future of Voluntary Services: Reports now available – January 2015

[Fight or Fright: Voluntary Services in 2015](#) This summary report brings together the material assembled and presents a summary and the overall conclusions that can be drawn from this material.

[The Ideological Context](#) by *Dexter Whitfield* examines the changes brought about by the commitment of successive governments to the principles and practice of neo-liberalism, explains what neo-liberalism is, how this has reshaped the environment in which the UK voluntary and community sector now operates and its impact on voluntary agencies.

[The Rise and Influence of Social Enterprise, Social Investment and Public Service Mutuals](#) by *Les Huckfield* documents how New Labour and Coalition governments, within a framework of neo-liberal thinking, have introduced business concepts and quasi markets as a way of re-engineering voluntary services. The report shows how, using 'capacity building', and with the support of sector leadership bodies, the voluntary services industry has been reined in as 'governable terrain' and led to adopt private sector assumptions and ways of working.

[Outsourcing and the Voluntary Sector](#) by *Laird Ryan* documents the Coalition Government's drive to privatise public services and evidences the damage being wrought by competition and marketisation, shows where the money is going, and uncovers the growing trend of Voluntary Services as sub-contractors to profit-hungry corporations like Serco and G4S

[The Devil That Has Come Amongst Us](#) by *Andy Benson* looks in detail at the procurement and commissioning regimes through which this progressive enslavement of voluntary groups has been achieved, and the ways this has diminished interest and capacity to take their mandate from users and communities and speak out against injustice.

[Does Size Matter Paper 1](#) and [Does Size Matter Paper 2](#) by *Ursula Murray* and *Linda Milbourne* include new research findings and examine the changing ecology of the voluntary sector, paying particular attention to the emerging differences - and fortunes - of small and large voluntary services groups. Paper 1 looks at the trends in income distribution across the sector and the evidence from area-based studies on the extent to which size is a factor in influencing experiences and approaches. Paper 2, drawing on in-depth interviews with 17 voluntary groups, explores the specific experiences of competition between larger and smaller providers in specific service areas. The paper concludes by setting out the practical and ethical dilemmas for groups caught up in this turbulent environment.

[Ordinary Glory: Big Surprise not Big Society](#) by *Mike Aiken* looks at the impact of the changed environment on small volunteer-based community groups, shows how the influence of contracting and marketisation has damaged all levels of voluntary action but describes how, with a little encouragement, these groups and their activities might discover the seeds of a positive future.

[Inquiry into the Future of Voluntary Service Support to BME Older People](#) by *Valerie Lipman* demonstrates that little has changed for BAME older people over the last 30 years in terms of inequality, access to services and unmet needs, as mainstream bodies persist in neglecting this group of people. This has created a situation in which the contribution of small BAME groups is crucial but these groups are undermined by cuts in spending and further marginalisation.

[Refugee and Migrant Group Action on Xenophobia and Public Policy](#) by *Lisa Roden* looks at the response of VSGs working with migrants and refugees to rising xenophobia within public policy and concludes that co-option and bureaucratisation has decreased solidarity amongst potentially radical factions within the voluntary sector concerned to defend the position of refugees and migrants.

[The Impact of Contracting and Commissioning on Volunteers and Volunteering in Voluntary Services Groups](#) by Colin Rochester examines the contemporary volunteering, showing how contracting and commissioning have accelerated the rise of the 'workplace model' and the formalisation of volunteer management that *"threatens the untamed and often maverick expression of free will that defines the authentic spirit of the volunteering impulse"*. This view of volunteering as unpaid labour serves *"to separate and distance the work of VSGs from those volunteers and voluntary groups that occupy the world of activism."*

['More for Less' – Public Sector Outsourcing and Cuts to Spending: the Impact on Voluntary Sector Workplace Conditions and the Role of the Trades Unions](#) by Rosie Walker and Frances Sullivan looks at the effects of outsourcing and cuts to funding on those who are paid to work in VSGs, and on the role and response of the trades unions, exposing the damage being done to the voluntary sector workforce by the 'race to the bottom'. This includes *"...lowering pay at the bottom while increasing it significantly at the top, the casualisation of contracts, the exploitation of weaker employment rights and heavy-handed managerialism that frowns upon union activity, political activism of any kind and even, in some cases, on professionalism."*

[The Position and Role of National Infrastructure Bodies Concerning the Cuts to and Privatisation of Public Services](#) by Lis Pritchard and Andy Benson looks at the record of six national infrastructure organisations (ACEVO, NAVCA, NCVO, Locality, Clinks and Homeless Link) to show how they have implicitly or explicitly supported the outsourcing of public services. Most have committed resources to encouraging and supporting voluntary groups to bid for public services contracts.

[Homes for Local Radical Action: The Position and Role of Local Umbrella Groups](#) by Penny Waterhouse. This report shows how many local CVSs and other infrastructure groups have actively assisted with the outsourcing and privatisation programme, despite mounting evidence that their own local voluntary groups are losing out to national charities and private sector contractors. Voice is given to the frustration of many frontline workers and others who want to resist these changes, gives examples of alternatives that are emerging and sets out an agenda for change.

[Lenin's Useful Idiots? Voluntary Action and Public Service Reform in Northern Ireland](#) by Nick Acheson reviews recent developments in relations between voluntary agencies and the devolved administration, showing how the familiar pressures of cuts, privatisation, reliance on state funding, fashions for impact measurement and self censorship have played out against the background of the province's distinctive history. It reveals *"a profound sense both of discomfort and disempowerment among many, reflecting a loss of belief in their capacity to effect change in line with mission.... It is difficult to identify sources of potential resistance."*

[What is Happening in Scotland](#) by Nicola Gunn. Written before the independence referendum this report offers a brief review of the current context on which future decisions and directions will be built.

[Voluntary Services and Campaigning in Austerity UK: Saying Less and Doing More](#) by Mike Aiken examines whether voluntary agencies providing services to disadvantaged groups are also campaigning for those people's rights. How far are they presenting evidence - gathered from their day-to-day work with people facing poverty and destitution - to policy makers and the general public? Are they confident, able and assertive in 'speaking truth to power?'

[Struggling to Survive – Independently: Stories from the Frontline of Voluntary Services](#) by Bernard Davies presents five examples of locally-based Voluntary Services Groups struggling to survive in the environment of cuts to funding and moves to the use of contracting approaches by public bodies. They illustrate the difficulties and dilemmas experienced, and some of the responses being adopted, by groups operating within this scene.

These reports are downloadable at our website - <http://www.independentaction.net/ncia-leaflets-and-research/>. If you would like more information about the Inquiry or would like to contribute your views to it, please contact Andy Benson – [andy@independentaction.net](mailto:andy@independentaction.net); 0208 800 7509.