

10 February 2016

The Rt Hon David Cameron MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister

Anti-advocacy clauses

We are writing following the publication of Cabinet Office guidelines to prohibit organisations in receipt of grant funding from influencing government or parliament. The proposed guidance would prevent the use of funding to inform public policy and bans organisations also from discussing issues related to the work funded by the grant with government officials or parliamentarians.

You have long recognised that voluntary organisations play a much needed role in policy development and regulatory reform. Facilitated by the open policy making approach you have championed, voluntary organisations bring the real-world experience of users and evidence-based expertise into public policy debate.

We support the principle that taxpayers' money must be well spent. And it is because of this that these proposals are flawed in principle, for they may actually cost the taxpayer more money through limiting the range of insight that policy makers can draw upon.

Organisations funded by government have helped to reform and improve public services. They have held providers to account and brought to public attention failures that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Much of this work can and does save taxpayers money, contrary to the assertions of the report cited as evidence for the introduction of the proposals. The clause itself (published on 8 February on Gov.uk) is drawn incredibly widely and could have a far broader impact than your original intention.

For example, in October 2015, you announced a £5million grant fund for charities as part of the government's counter-extremism strategy. As currently drafted, the new clause will undermine the ability of these charities to feed in valuable insights that may help government – those working on programmes receiving any grant funding would be prohibited from speaking to MPs

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about developments in their local area, suggesting improvements to policy or legislation, responding to your government's own consultations, meeting ministers to discuss broader issues and evidence from their programme or even from giving evidence if called by a select committee.

Another example is that of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Awareness of FGM, and the action which has subsequently been taken against this, has occurred primarily due to the work of key charities which, thankfully, were in receipt of government funding. This clause would almost certainly have prohibited that vital initiative.

In your first speech as leader of the Conservative party you set out how you wanted to '*set free the voluntary sector and social enterprises to deal with the linked problems that blight so many of our communities, of drug abuse, family breakdown, poor public space, chaotic home environments, high crime*'. You have repeatedly reiterated your commitment to social justice, which depends upon building alliances of grassroots organisations. To say to those organisations that government will work in partnership with them but if they do, they will not be heard, is surely contrary to those commitments. And only this week you set out your ambitions for the reform of the prison service. Charities have been at the forefront of campaigning for such reforms for decades. It would be a tragedy if in future such critical advocacy work were inhibited.

Both Parliament and government play an important role in addressing these issues, and it is important that they remain well informed about how policies and programmes are making a difference on the ground.

As Prime Minister you have recognised that voluntary organisations play a crucial role in our democracy. Indeed, these proposals are at odds with the entire framework under which your government has sought to develop sound working relationships with voluntary organisations.

The Compact, which you signed in 2010, remains an important signifier of government commitment to working effectively with the voluntary and community sector. In signing it you committed government to:

Respect and uphold the independence of civil society organisations to deliver their mission, including their right to campaign, regardless of any relationship, financial or otherwise, which may exist.

We believe that a strong, effective working relationship between voluntary organisations and the state, based upon mutual respect and understanding, is beneficial to the people of this country and beyond. The ability of voluntary organisations to campaign, regardless of any

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financial relationship, is a defining characteristic of this relationship. Abandoning this protection is surely not the intended consequence of these proposals, as their impact runs contrary to the relationship you have sought to develop. As such, we urge you to reconsider them and work with the voluntary sector to find a constructive way forward.

Yours sincerely

Sir Stephen Bubb,	Chief Executive	Acevo
Sir Stuart Etherington	Chief Executive	NCVO
Dr John Low CBE	Chief Executive	Charities Aid Foundation
Caron Bradshaw	Chief Executive	Charity Finance Group
Sally Light	Chief Executive	Motor Neurone Disease Association
Tracey Bleakley	Chief Executive	Hospice UK
Bridget Doogan	Chief Executive	St John of God Hospice
Julie Bentley	Chief Executive	Girl Guiding
Barbara Frost	Chief Executive	WaterAid
Richard Leaman	Chief Executive	Guide Dogs
Janet Morrison	Chief Executive	Independent Age
Tim Cooper	Chief Executive	United Response
Mark Goldring	Chief Executive	Oxfam
Paul Streets	Chief Executive	Lloyds Bank Foundation
Jeremy Hughes	Chief Executive	Alzheimer's Society
David McCullough	Chief Executive	Royal Voluntary Service
Matt Hyde	Chief Executive	Scouts Association
Susan Daniels	Chief Executive	NDCS
Heidi Travis	Chief Executive	Sue Ryder
Rob Owen OBE	Chief Executive	St Giles Trust
Mark Simms	Chief Executive	P3 Charity
Girish Menon	Chief Executive	ActionAid
Debbie Bannigan	Chief Executive	Swanswell
Michael Adamson	Chief Executive	British Red Cross
Jonathan Senker	Chief Executive	VoiceAbility
Mark Atkinson	Chief Executive	Scope
Nick Caplin	Chief Executive	Blind Veterans
Martin Houghton-Brown	Chief Executive	DePaul Charity
Campbell Robb	Chief Executive	Shelter
Jon Sparkes	Chief Executive	Crisis
Malcolm Shepherd	Chief Executive	Sustrans
David Hughes	Chief Executive	Learning and Work Institute
Beccy Speight	Chief Executive	Woodland Trust

Sara Llewellyn	Chief Executive	Barrow Cadbury Trust
Neil Cleeveley	Chief Executive	NAVCA
Jacob Tas	Chief Executive	NACRO
Loretta Minghella	Chief Executive	Christian Aid
Ben Jackson	Chief Executive	BOND
David Cutler	Chief Executive	Baring Foundation
David Emerson CBE	Chief Executive	Assn of Charitable Foundations
David Warner	Chief Executive	London Funders
Jeremy Taylor	Chief Executive	National Voices
Julian Corner	Chief Executive	Lankelly Chase Foundation
Kathy Evans	Chief Executive	Children England
Moira Sinclair	Chief Executive	Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Peter Holbrook	Chief Executive	Social Enterprise UK
Susanne Rauprich	Chief Executive	National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
Jon Barrick	Chief Executive	Stroke Association
Mark Lever	Chief Executive	National Autistic Society
Samantha Goodwin	Mktg & Comms Mgr	Real Life Options
David Miller	Director	Spinwatch
John Knights	Head of Operations	Sheila McKechnie Foundation
Janine Tregelles	Chief Executive	Mencap
Stephen Deuchar	Chief Executive	Art Fund
Mandy Gardner	Chief Executive	Fairtrade
Alexandra Runswick	Chief Executive	Unlock Democracy
Chris Sherwood	Chief Executive	Relate
Ratna Dutt	Chief Executive	Race Equality Foundation
David Bull	Chief Executive	UNICEF
Martin Wyn Griffith	Chair	UnLtd
Michelle Mitchell	Chief Executive	MS Society
Michael Ryan	Chief Executive	St Luke's Community Centre
Steve McIntosh	Dpty Head of Gov Rel	Save the Children
Mark Castle	Chief Executive	Victim Support
Stephanie Hilborne	Chief Executive	Wildlife Trust
Polly Neat	Chief Executive	Women's Aid
Simon Antrobus	Chief Executive	Addaction
Stephen Hale	Chief Executive	Refugee Action
Paula Braynion	Chief Executive	Future Directions CIC
Sophie Livingstone	Chief Executive	City Year UK
Shirley Moore	Chief Executive	The Befriending Scheme
Sue Walton	Chief Executive	Pestalozzi
Karen Walker	Chief Executive	Multiple System Atrophy Trust
Mark Winstanley	Chief Executive	Rethink Mental Illness
Stephen Hale	Chief Executive	Refugee Action
Oonagh Aitken	Chief Executive	Volunteering Matters
Jonathan Jenkins	Chief Executive	Social Investment Business
Alex Fox	Chief Executive	Shared Lives Plus

Adam O'Boyle	Chief Executive	Hub Ventures
Kate MacDonald	Chief Executive	YPSF
Allison Ogden-Newton	Chief Executive	Keep Britain Tidy
Andy Winter	Chief Executive	Brighton Housing Trust
Sara Mitchell	Chief Executive	Carers Network
Cathy James	Chief Executive	Public Concern at Work
Robert Longley-Cook	Chief Executive	HfT
Lynne Regent	Chief Executive	Anaphylaxis Campaign
David Warner	Chief Executive	London Funders
Andrew Waite	Chief Executive	Greenwich MENCAP
Beth Gardner	Chief Executive	Fair Train
Simone Enefer-Doy	Chief Executive	Lifelites
Tony Okotie	Chief Executive	Liverpool VCS
Menai Owen-Jones	Chief Executive	Pituitary Foundation
Simone Spray	Chief Executive	42 nd Street
Paul Martin	Chief Executive	LGBT Foundation
Gail Scott Spicer	Chief Executive	Carers Trust
Matt Dymond	Chief Executive	South Gloucester Youth Housing
Lisa Lenton	Chief Executive	ARC England
Dr Kay Miller	Chief Executive	Dr Hadwen Trust
Claire Periton	Chief Executive	Helen & Douglas House
Nick Hartshorne Evans	Chief Executive	Pumping Marvellous Foundation
Dr Mike Heyworth MBE	Director	Council for British Archaeology
Richard Barritt	Chief Executive	Solent Mind
Alison Garnham	Chief Executive	Child Poverty Action Group
Maureen Falloon	Chief Executive	Age UK Bromley & Greenwich
Jenny Saunders OBE	Chief Executive	National Energy Action
Cheryl Ward	Chief Executive	Family Fund
Ellie Munro	Policy Officer	Motor Neurone Disease Association
Jan Tregelles	Chief Executive	MENCAP
Pamela Ball	Chief Executive	Knowsley CVS
Judi Rhys	Chief Executive	Arthritis Care
Caroline Mason	Chief Executive	Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
Keith Starling	Interim Chief Executive	Big Society Capital
Bharat Mehta	Chief Executive	Trust for London
Gillian Caldwell	Chief Executive	Global Witness
Jo Wells	Director	The Blagrave Trust
Rick Henderson	Chief Executive	Homeless Link
Tony Armstrong	Chief Executive	Locality
Rosemary Macdonald	Chief Executive	Community Foundation for Wilshire & Swindon
Sue Milman	Chief Executive	Ataxia UK
Sharon Coyle	Chief Executive	Children's Heart Surgery Fund
Kirsty Smith	Chief Executive	CMBUK
Amanda Hedley	Chief Executive	Norwich & Central Norfolk Mind
Anna Feuchtwang	Chief Executive	National Children's Bureau

Clare Wightman	Chief Executive	Grapevine
Mike Wild	Chief Executive	MACC
Paul Morrish	Chief Executive	LandAid
Dr Mike Clarke	Chief Executive	RSPB
Mark Flannagan	Chief Executive	Beating Bowel Cancer
Shane Ryan	Chief Executive	Working With Men
Andrew Langford	Chief Executive	British Liver Trust
Wendy Thomas	Chief Executive	The Migraine Trust
Peter Poole	Chief of Staff	Combat Stress
Shaun Griffin	Exec Director	Terrence Higgins Trust
Jules Hillier	Interim Chief Executive	Brook
Amanda Batten	Chief Executive	Contact a Family
Alison Taylor	Chief Executive	The Children's Liver Disease Foundation
Robert Johnstone	Chair	Access Matters