

Government announces £40m programme to support social action

Friday, 29 June 2012

The Cabinet Office has announced a £40m programme aimed at supporting social action as part of its response to the Giving Summit.

The programme, which does not have a name, is intended to build on similar themes to the government's Social Action Fund, which is allocating about £21m over two years to projects that encourage people to give time or resources to good causes.

The programme will "back ambitious social action campaigns that are looking to mobilise large numbers of people", a statement from the Cabinet Office said.

A Cabinet Office spokeswoman said she was unable to provide any specific details on what type of schemes might be supported by the money.

The cash, which will come from the Office for Civil Society's budget, will be allocated over three years. More details, including how organisations will be able to apply, will be available shortly, the spokeswoman said.

The announcement follows the Giving Summit last month. This meeting brought sector leaders and philanthropists together with ministers to look at ways to encourage giving, although it was overshadowed by the row over the abortive tax relief cap.

The Cabinet Office has also published a document reviewing the progress it has made since the Giving White Paper, published in May 2011, and setting out the priorities for the next 12 months.

It flags up government initiatives such as the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme, which will allow charities to claim Gift Aid-style payments on small donations totalling up to £5,000 a year without paperwork, the Innovation in Giving Fund, which has provided £2.5m to support 32 ideas aimed at helping people with business skills to find the right opportunity to use them in the charity sector, and the National Citizen Service, which the Cabinet Office said was "encouraging a new generation of givers".

Nick Hurd, the Minister for Civil Society, said: "If we can change people's attitudes so that it is normal for young people and employees to volunteer in their communities, so that it is routine for people to donate a small amount of their salary and standard to leave money to charitable causes in your will, we will be well on our way to becoming one of the most charitable countries in the world."

Hannah Terrey, head of policy at the Charities Aid Foundation, said ministers should be commended for trying to encourage more people to give time and money to charity, but added that Gift Aid administration must be improved.

"Initiatives such as Gift Aid can do a huge amount to help the charitable sector, so it is critical that the government moves quickly to sweep away antiquated rules that leave charities wallowing in unnecessary paperwork and bring Gift Aid into the 21st century and makes it fit for the modern era," she said.

"People are increasingly giving online and using mobile phones, and they don't want the hassle of signing paper forms every time they give a few pounds to charity. Ministers need to introduce a simple, one-off system to enable people to sign up to Gift Aid. This would cut red tape and allow people to make the most of new technology."

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