

Restoring Responsibility, Strengthening our Communities: Discussion Guide

This guide is a brief summary of key points within the Policy Review document "Restoring Responsibility, Strengthening our Communities", covering the key things we've learned from conversations with Labour Party stakeholders and the public during the course of the New Politics Fresh Ideas consultation and the Policy Review. You can find the full document at fresh-ideas.org.uk/annual-conference-2011-documents.

Introduction

Britain is a great country where most people understand that we all have a responsibility to one another. This sense of responsibility was the foundation stone of the Labour Party a hundred years ago and is the glue which binds our communities together. Labour's vision is of a country where people can provide for their families, look out for each other and act together to strengthen civic life. But people also know that the values which bind us together have become frayed in recent years and, as ever, it is the decent hard-working majority which has been left to pick up the pieces.

Most people were horrified by the riots of last summer, disgusted by the behaviour of bankers who awarded themselves huge bonuses despite destroying people's savings, outraged by MPs who fiddled their expenses, and sickened by a newspaper which hacked the phone messages of an abducted child. This kind of behaviour does not reflect the values of Britain. But it seems to many people that, all too often, those who do the right thing are not rewarded - while those who do the wrong thing are allowed to get away with it. We all know that on the doorstep, for example, people were calling for us to go further and faster with welfare reform and for a welfare state that treats people fairly.

What people have told us to date

In thousands of conversations this year, we have heard loud and clear how worried people are about what they see happening to their communities. Four themes stand out:

- A desire to see a stronger sense of responsibility at the top and bottom of society and a concern that the very British 'something for something' ethic is being undermined by the irresponsible minority.
- Anxiety about the effect of police cuts and the potential for rising crime rates.
- A concern about immigration weakening the fabric of our communities.
- An appetite to strengthen the values and institutions that hold communities together, keep streets safe and define what it is to be British.

We want to know what you think... Suggested questions for discussion:

- How should we foster a sense of responsibility at both the top and bottom of society?
- How best do you believe we can work to build stronger, safer communities?
- What should the police service look like in your area? How might we establish a more responsive police force that can better engage with local communities?
- 2012 is the 70th anniversary of the Beveridge Report - how do we modernise the welfare state for new times?
- How can we ensure the right balance of strong, fair and effective measures on immigration to address people's concerns in this area?
- How best can Labour work to strengthen the values and institutions that hold communities together, keep streets safe and define what it is to be British?