

3. Listening in action

What you said	What the Government is Doing
<p>Community Support Officers: in every constituency they need to offer a more visible presence:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are now 16,000 officers across the country. • Since December 2007 they all have the same basic set of powers to use in their work eg to seize drugs. • There is also ongoing work to standardize uniforms, equipment and training.
<p>We want improved access to youth services, particularly to sports, music and drama facilities that are affordable, safe and run by young people.</p> <p>People overwhelmingly believe that the Government should focus resources on supporting such schemes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In July 2007 Gordon Brown announced a target for 5 –16 year olds to have 5 hours of sport a week • He also set a target of 3 hours for 16-19 year olds • Following former MP Oona King’s youth services review last year, the Dept of Children, Schools and Families launched its 10 year plan “Aiming high for young people”. This included provision of £53m over two years for investments in facilities for young people, like youth clubs. • In November Ed Balls, the Education Minister, decided to ring fence money for primary school music teaching and equipment so that all children are guaranteed a minimum of one year of music lessons. • In early February Ed also launched a £25 million “Find Your Talent” scheme to enable young people to access arts and culture with a target of 5 hours per week for each young person.
<p>Widening participation is critically important in education to improve everyone’s life chances</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 2013 young people will stay in full time education or training until they are 18 replacing the present optional leaving age of 16. The new arrangement will offer a variety of ways in which young people can acquire skills or educational qualifications. • Guaranteed apprenticeship places for all suitably qualified applicants by 2013. • 60,000 more students in higher

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<p>We want tougher enforcement action against parents that are unwilling to control unruly children through, for example, ASBOs, fines or benefits reductions.</p>	<p>education by 2010/11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 year national Neighbourhood Policing Programme launched in 2005. • The 16,000 Community Support Officers are an integral part of the Programme. • A range of behaviour control mechanisms are now in place for use including ASBOs, acceptable behaviour contracts, parenting contracts, parenting orders and individual support orders.
<p>We are worried about access to banking services and the future of the post office network, especially in rural areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Post Office network is losing £4 million/week with 4 million fewer people using Post Offices each week in 2006 despite the Government investing £2 billion between 1999/06. • In 2006 only 4% of villages had bank branches whereas 60% had Post Offices. • Government is committed to retaining the Post Office card account (similar to the commercial banks' Basic Bank Account) beyond the scheme's initial 2010 contract period. • New access criteria will mean some closures (18%) from Summer 2007 but 99% of people will still be within 3 miles of a PO. The Government will give priority support to vulnerable communities in both rural and urban areas. • New services like mobile Post Offices and internet based services are being supported by the Government.
<p>We need to think about taking more responsibility for ourselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Health Minister, Alan Johnson, commenting on the Foresight Obesity report in October last year urged everyone to adopt a healthy living lifestyle as a part of their personal responsibility for their well being. • Government will assist where appropriate with interventions to ensure informative food labeling

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	<p>is adopted, special interest groups eg pregnant women are catered for and public spaces eg playgrounds, open spaces promote exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “In Control” social care programme gives clients and their carers responsibility in the control of their own personal care budgets after assessment by professional staff.
<p>Lack of affordable housing is a real problem for young people.</p> <p>The Government should intervene to help alleviate some of the pressures faced by first-time buyers.</p> <p>The Government needs to ensure there is an adequate stock of quality housing to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In July 2007 the Government announced plans for 3 million new homes to be built by 2020. • Some will be built to high environmentally friendly standards with low carbon footprints in 10 new Eco towns. • We will be offering a wide range of occupancy packages to suit individual needs. Some people will want to rent and we will provide social housing via private and public bodies for this part of the market. • There will also be arrangements for a variety of shared ownership schemes to be made available for those wishing to get on the ownership ladder. • Rental and ownership schemes will include provision for family housing as well as homes for single or dual occupancy.
<p>We want better services and better value for money from public transport, especially including from private sector operators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved in Oct 2007, Crossrail will bring an extra 11/2 million people within 60mins travel time to key central London locations. It is expected to carry 200 million people a year by 2017. • A new Local Transport Bill will improve local control of transport including services provided by private operators together with the option of introducing charging zones • Ruth Kelly, the Transport Secretary, has endorsed the Eddington Report’s recommendations. These include

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	<p>using price, regulation and planning to make the transport system work effectively without inflicting too much damage on the environment.</p>
<p>People want public services that listen and respond.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extension of GP's surgery opening hours is in response to demands from people whose working hours result in their not being able to visit surgeries without taking time off work. • The importance of involving, listening and responding to parents over the course of their children's passage through school is recognized and enhanced by the Extended School programme which seeks to embed and integrate schools into the local community. • The Choose & Book system for hospital appointment times and consultants is an example of public service provision being driven by the decision making process of a client base.
<p>We want fairness – meaning access to the same quality services and exercising the same rights and responsibilities as everyone else, irrespective of age, gender, colour, background or where one lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government created the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) last year. • This combined existing Disability, Equal Opportunities and Race Relations bodies into a single organization. • The new organization's purpose is to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people and protect human rights using existing legislation. • The new Schools Admission Code applies to all State School intakes from September 2008. It gives all parents an equal chance of sending their children to schools of their choice by removing covert and overt forms of discriminatory selection. The ultimate expression of this policy

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	<p>is admission by lottery to oversubscribed schools.</p>
<p>People want a system that can support quality public services and help those who need it most, but is not seen to reward those who are not contributing.</p> <p>We want a more ‘personalised’ approach to welfare.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This year James Purnell, the Minister for Work & Pensions, will introduce the Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) which will replace Incapacity Benefit . • It will aim to focus on what people <u>can</u> do rather than what they cannot do using a new method of assessment called Work Capability Assessment. • This will build on the various welfare to work reforms the Government has introduced including Jobcentre Plus and the range of Pathways to Work schemes targeted at specific population groups eg lone parents to get people into work.
<p>The administration of some benefits is too complicated and, as a result, they are prone to fraud or error.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government has introduced various internet based initiatives to reduce the administration and complexity of benefits (eg Working Tax Credits) • There have been difficulties with implementation because of fraud carried out by professional criminals. • The gradual introduction from later this year of a National Identity Register including ID cards, biometric technologies etc will assist in reducing fraud.
<p>We want more opportunities to participate in decision-making and feel we can make a real difference.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the programme to revise the Constitution, Gordon Brown has published a Green Paper on British constitutional reform. • He has also introduced citizens’ juries to examine specific policy areas such as local education. • He has pledged to involve community & voluntary groups in delivering services that people usually expect Government to control.
<p>The Government’s done a lot for parents, but I think carers have been a bit forgotten about.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the Pensions Act 2007 people who look after someone with a disability for more than 20 hours a week or children under

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	<p>the age of 12 now qualify for a weekly credit to enable the carer to work towards amassing the qualifying timespan for a pension.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who look after someone with a disability for more than 35 hours a week can qualify for a Carers Allowance subject to certain qualifying conditions and eligibility criteria.
<p>We can't leave the state pension to wither on the vine.</p> <p>Women and carers feel penalised for the career and financial sacrifices they make to care for children or loved ones.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased life expectancy (now 30% of adult life is spent in retirement compared to 18% in 1950) and the growing post 65 population (12.7M in 2020) have required us to rethink pension provision. • To provide adequate pensions on a universal basis we need to phase in delayed retirement ages rising from 65 in 2024 to 68 in 2046. • Pensions will be linked with earnings rather than prices from 2010. • Qualifying years will be reduced from 39 to 30 for both men and women to prevent many women being excluded. There will also be a new weekly carer credit system. • There will also be new Personal Accounts pensions for people on moderate to low incomes. These will be simple low cost pension saving schemes.
<p>We're concerned that tuition fees will put lower income students off higher education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top up fees for university education were introduced in September 2006. • There is no sign of falls in numbers applying to go to university. Bill Rammell, the Higher Education Minister, has confirmed that applications to universities are up 7% this year and that students from poorer families are applying in record numbers.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gordon Brown is committed to ensuring that 50% of pupils enter the university system.
<p>The Government could do more to promote alternatives to academic study, including apprenticeships and vocational courses.</p> <p>We should be doing more to promote the benefits (especially the financial benefits) of further education and training and in making clear how much our economy relies on these skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100,000 apprentices graduated in 2007 compared to 40,000 in 2001/02 • 63% of recruits on schemes completed in 2007 compared to 24% in 2001. • The last spending review allocated a 25% increase in funding over the next 3 years. • For students from poorer families, it's possible to get up to £8,000/year living and accommodation costs in addition to having all tuition fees paid. Some but not all of this will be a repayable loan but repayments do not start until you are earning £15,000/year. • In addition many universities offer non repayable bursaries averaging £1,000/year to students from poorer families.
<p>Trust would be gained by carrying out more listening exercises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gordon Brown has initiated a series of Citizens Juries as a part of the Government's programme to involve more people in the policy making process. • The first was convened in Bristol and discussed/investigated education and childrens services. There have been others in Leeds, Portsmouth and Birmingham that featured other topics such as crime. • The Number 10 petitions website has proved very popular with 29,000 petitions being submitted and the most popular (National Remembrance Day national holiday) attracting just under ½ million votes.
<p>There is a disconnection between the national debate and local issues'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gordon Brown has recognized that local issues are often not amenable to resolution by the use of inflexible central Government direction. • New Local Area Agreements will help this situation by allowing

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	<p>more flexibility and accommodation to the situation on the ground.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They replace in that process the current 1,200 performance indicators with just 198 in June this year.
<p>More powers should be devolved to local authorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GLA 2007 Act devolves further powers from Whitehall to London. The Mayor is now able to call in plans for developments of more than 150 homes and can proceed with developments that Boroughs reject if they are consistent with the Mayor's London Plan. • The Act also devolves power to the Mayor to devise and implement his own climate change and health inequalities strategy. • The London Assembly is also granted new scrutiny powers and some control over appointments.
<p>We want to see more powers for Parliament</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Constitutional Reform Green Paper published in July last year lists 12 areas for surrender of executive power • These include the removal or limitation of the power of the executive to declare war. The same applies for a request for the dissolution or recall of Parliament and the power to make various appointments including judges.
<p>There should be more opportunities for young people to have an input into policy areas that affect them.</p> <p>The Government should be doing more to increase the number of female and BAME MPs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UK Youth Parliament has constituencies that match each Local Education Authority and annual elections of Parliament Members. This registered charity encourages young people to develop an interest in and engagement with the political process. Gordon Brown suggested in July that the Youth Parliament convene in the Commons once a year on a non-sitting day.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last September Gordon Brown proposed that a little used constitutional body, a Speakers Conference, be convened. It would have as one of its topics the under representation of women and ethnic minorities in Parliament. • Harriet Harman, has commissioned independent research to investigate how the number of ethnic minority MPs could be increased.
<p>There are too many initiatives (which are launched and then disappear) and too many targets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of Public Service Agreements (which set the government's broad goals) announced in autumn 2007 was 30 compared to 110 in the last CSR (multi year financial plan) in 2004. • Current PSAs are people and project oriented breaking the link with specific Whitehall departments. • They can be tied into the bottom up delivery of LAA (Local Area Agreements) to sustain Government policy in a flexible manner at community level.
<p>We should be able to do more to express our pride in being British.</p> <p>We should be more proud of our heritage'; 'we must capture pride, not apologise all of the time,</p> <p>We want to talk about a broad and inclusive identity that emphasises those positive attributes of Britishness</p> <p>We like the idea of a British Day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gordon Brown's statement on constitutional reform last July promised a Commission to review and make recommendation about citizenship education. • Citizenship classes have been part of National Curriculum since 2002. • The 2007 Ajebo Report suggests strengthening citizenship classes with an "Identity & Diversity: Living together in the UK" module which would stress core British values in addition to covering "difficult" topics like slavery.
<p>We want to positive perceptions of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration Minister Liam Byrne

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<p>immigrants and the benefits of migration. fostered and an inclusive sense of Britishness,</p> <p>But we want it properly and fairly regulated.</p>	<p>has introduced a new Points Based System for entry into the Country by non EU immigrants that ensures any skills shortages can be filled.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition the system allows people entry on humanitarian grounds. These individuals can go on to apply for citizenship at a later date if they stay for sufficient time. • The ability to speak English is now necessary to enable immigrants to take the “Life in the UK” test which they must pass in order to become British citizens. • Attendance at a local authority based Citizenship ceremony as part of the process of acquiring citizenship.