

## Open Public Services White Paper - Summary

### **5 principles for modernising public services:**

- **Choice**- Wherever possible choice will be increased. People should either have direct control over the services they use or, where this is not possible, elected representatives should have more choice about who provides services and how.
- **Decentralisation**-Public services should be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level.
- **Diversity**-Public services should be open to a range of providers.
- **Fairness**-We will ensure fair access to public services – where required disadvantaged people should be given extra help and resources targeted in their favour.
- **Accountability**-Public services should be accountable to users and to taxpayers.

### **For the purposes of applying these principals, 3 categories of public services have been defined:**

- **Individual services** e.g. housing support, education, skills training- power to be given to service users using mechanisms such as personal budgets, direct cash payments to individuals and vouchers. A framework will be put in place to ensure choice, fair access, that quality standards are maintained and the right to redress where choice is not given. Providers will all be licensed or registered by the appropriate regulator. Key data about satisfaction and performance of all providers will be published.
- **Neighbourhood services** –provided locally on a collective basis e.g. grounds maintenance, community safety- power to be given to elected councils, at neighbourhood level if communities wish. DCLG will be working with two areas to enable local residents to play a part in commissioning neighbourhood level budgets and service solutions, giving them more power to shape their communities and acting as an example for other areas that are interested.
- **Commissioned services**-local and national services that can't be devolved e.g. tax collection- the government will open up and where appropriate, decentralise commissioning. In these areas the state will stop providing services and instead commission them from a wide range of providers. A minimum of 3 providers should be sought and fully considered and payment linked to results.

The government will consult about opening up locally commissioned services in the following areas that are currently delivered by local government ; customer contact, planning, property and facilities management, back office transactional services, family support, support for looked after children, trading standards and environmental services and housing management. The government would also like to consult on opening up commissioning for national services including; court and tribunal administration, payment processing, prevention, detection and investigation of fraud, debt management and enforcement services,

identity related services, land and property information services, customer contact services, back office functions for prosecutors and immigration and visa administration. Further consultation will be undertaken in decommissioning in areas where value for money could obviously be improved including; natural environment support, public transport support, skills and services for families with multiple problems. Where local areas come forward with proposals to do things differently, these will be seriously considered. Consultation will also be held on how best to ensure greater accountability as services are opened up.

## **Benefits**

- **Individuals** will have more choice
- **Communities** will have more opportunity to take control of local powers and services
- **Local government** will have more freedom to innovate in services they control and opportunities for influence across services such as helping families in multiple need
- **Public service staff** will have new opportunities to innovate and be encouraged to start their own enterprises
- **Independent providers of all sizes from all sectors** will be able to compete to deliver public services

## **Ensuring diversity in provision**

There are already a number of autonomous providers in the public sector including local health trusts, Academies, leisure trusts and Arms Length Management Organisations who compete for their income and with each other. The government wishes to consult on how this status could be extended to most organisations in the public sector that provide services, while ensuring transparency and accountability.

The option of introducing legislation to guarantee choice is being explored.

Public service workers will be invited to share their ideas on how staff could be enabled to work smarter and identify areas where central government could reduce bureaucracy.

Barriers to new providers will be addressed such as early disclosure of TUPE liabilities. Consultation will be held on whether companies should be able to appeal to an independent body where they feel they have been unfairly precluded from a commissioning process.

## **Consultation Questions**

### Individual Services

How best, in individual services and on a case-by-case basis, can we ensure that people have greater choice between diverse, quality providers?

Consistent with the Government's fiscal plans, what further opportunities exist to target funding to help the poorest, promote social mobility and provide fair access to public services?

Are there additional areas where personal budgets would be appropriate and could existing initiatives on personal budgets be accelerated?

How can the principle be implemented that providers (from whichever sector) who are receiving public money for individual services should collect satisfaction data in a standardised form to enable comparison and put it into the public domain?

How can we ensure that people are aware of, and can exercise, their right to choice effectively in specific services, through choice champions, choice prompts, data and a possible new role for Ombudsmen?

What is the appropriate role for elected and unelected office-holders in championing individuals' ability to exercise choice and ensure accountability from service providers?

How can we ensure that our approach to opening public services protects and enhances accountability rather than dispersing it?

### Neighbourhoods

What is the scope for neighbourhood councils to take greater control over local services?

What help will neighbourhood councils need to enable them to run any services devolved to them?

What would make it easier to establish new neighbourhood councils in areas where local people want them?

Do additional checks and balances need to be created to ensure proper financial control?

How can we improve the delegation and financial framework for neighbourhood councils?

How do we ensure appropriate accountability for services run by communities to ensure that those not involved directly are not disadvantaged?

### Commissioned services

What is the scope to extend and/or deepen the commissioning approach across public services?

What further potential is there to decentralise central government commissioning to locally elected individuals and authorities?

To which areas should we apply the open commissioning policy?

What else can government do to overcome any traditional boundaries between public service providers, which get in the way of solutions to people's needs?

How can we ensure that commissioners and providers are best held to account?

What new skills and training will commissioners need?

### General

How can we stimulate more openness and innovation in public services through new types of provision?

What more could we do to support and catalyse new enterprises (e.g. mutuals) spinning out from the public sector?

Where and how should we extend autonomous status for public sector providers?