

Opening public services



Making public services better:
giving individuals and communities
more choice and control

Why **open** public services?

Making public services better for everyone is a top priority for this government.

We know that some of our public services are among the best in the world and that public sector professionals are often leaders in innovation. But too often these services – and the people in them – are held back by the way they're run. The old-fashioned, centralised approach means that there's too much 'take what you're given' and not enough focus on improvement and accountability.

That's why we want to open public services – to encourage innovation and put control in the hands of individuals and neighbourhoods so that everyone can benefit from high-quality public services.

This approach builds on progress already made...

In the past year alone, more than 1,000 schools have applied to become Academies and 20 groups of public sector employees have created their own new public service ventures. Everyone eligible for adult social care will have access to a personal budget by 2013 allowing them to buy the services they need. Another good example is the Government's Work Programme which aims to tackle long term benefit dependency by helping people get back to work. Work Programme providers and their subcontractors come from businesses and from voluntary organisations. They link together to win contracts to get the unemployed back into lasting employment. Their support is based on individual need and what's right for the local area, and a substantial amount of their payment is based on how well they do in getting people back into long term work. They have complete flexibility to innovate, rather than having to follow one size fits-all approaches set by central government.



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Open public services principles

Creating open public services is a promise of better public services for everyone.

People should have access to the best services, no matter where they live or what their circumstances. We will make this happen by applying five key principles:

- ▶ **Choice** – Wherever possible, we should increase choice by giving people direct control over the services they use.
- ▶ **Local control** – Power should be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level, including parish and neighbourhood councils where possible.
- ▶ **Diversity** – Public services should be open to a range of providers competing to offer a better service.
- ▶ **Fair access** – The state’s role is to ensure fair access.
- ▶ **Accountability** – Public services should be accountable to users and to taxpayers.

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85% of Britons want
more **control** over
how **services** are
provided locally.

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Do the Public Know What They Want?
Ipsos MORI for *The Economist*, 2010

More choice for individuals

Increasing choice and control.

A key principle of open public services is increasing choice by giving people more direct control over how and where they access these services.

Choice lets people tailor services to best suit their individual needs, giving them more direct control over how and where they access services.

It will help to raise standards as people demand better for themselves and their families.

That's why we are extending choice across our public services: giving patients the right to choose which hospital they get treated in; helping parents choose where their child goes to school; rolling out personal

budgets across health and social care; and giving people the choice between landlords.

In doing this, the Government will make sure that everyone has fair access to services, no matter where they live or what their circumstances.

Choice is of limited value if people don't have the ability to use it, or the services available aren't of a high standard. So this shift in power to individuals will not mean that they are on their own. Elected and unelected consumer and citizen champions will take a prominent role in scrutinising providers, supporting the most vulnerable and pushing for better quality.

For example...

Personal budgets

Elaine and John have been married for 23 years and have three children. John was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2004. 'Our days were filled with visits from doctors, nurses, physios, occupational therapists... It was like looking after a 6 foot, 16 stone newborn baby.'

More independence

Elaine and John felt very strongly that he should be in control of his care needs. 'We didn't want different people coming in and out of the house at times to suit them.'

The outcome

Although Elaine and John's transition from 'normality' to the sheer terror of serious illness and disability has not been easy, they quickly learned that one of the biggest advantages an individual budget gives is the freedom and flexibility to be in control and do what you want.

'We are now in control and making sure we get the most out of each day. An individual budget is tailored for the individual; everyone is an individual, regardless of their disability and need. Never before has there been the opportunity to tailor a care package to suit each person.'



More power for communities

Just as individuals should have more choice, we believe local communities should have more say over their public services.

We've already started by giving communities new rights to buy assets such as village shops and pubs. And we're looking at extending control over things such as schools, street improvement, parking rights and recreational services.

We believe this power should be held at the lowest appropriate level – through the local parish, town or neighbourhood councils – whichever

is best. We will make it easier for people to set up neighbourhood councils where they don't already exist.

We're also looking at giving more powers to local government over things such as public transport and environmental issues, and we're expanding local democracy, through elected mayors and police commissioners.

For example...

Social housing

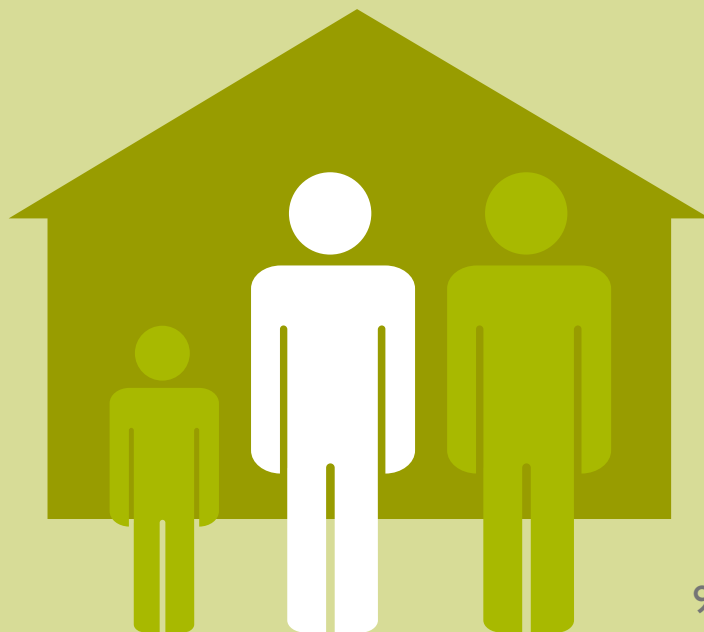
The 1960s Bloomsbury Estate in Birmingham, with over 650 homes, is among the UK's poorest communities. The estate had a high level of social problems, rent arrears and empty units.

More local control

Tenants set up a tenant management organisation to take over the running of the estate from the local authority. Using existing funding and voluntary effort, they transformed it, building some new flats and adding a play area, open space and a health centre. They also built a community leisure complex with National Lottery funding and improved the quality of services.

The outcome

Since taking responsibility for the estate, the tenants have boosted rent arrears recovery, reduced re-let times and saved £750,000 over five years through better productivity.



Opening Opportunity to new providers

To get better public services, we need a range of providers that people can choose from.

Independent providers are already offering excellent services in many areas, such as helping ex-offenders and providing home care to the elderly.

We will expand this, opening up to new providers from the public, voluntary or private sectors who want to innovate, improve quality and deliver better services for everyone.

We will encourage new providers across our public services, in areas such as health, social care, education, training and housing. And we will help new providers to compete and challenge by giving all providers access to public sector contract and procurement data.

For example...

Prisoner rehabilitation

Many serving prisoners have little if any experience of the world of work. As a result, they are likely to have many misconceptions, unrealistic expectations, fears and doubts which can hinder their chances of gaining employment after release.

New ideas from the private sector

A company called BeOnSite, established by property firm Bovis Lend Lease, is working with government to help ex-offenders learn skills in real work settings. Through its relationships with companies in Bovis Lend Lease's supply chain, BeOnSite is able to offer practical workplace training, teaching the specific skills needed for a variety of jobs. This helps to ensure that ex-offenders have realistic expectations about the road to employment.

The outcome

This fresh approach not only supports ex-offenders into sustainable employment, it also helps to regenerate communities, address industry skills gaps and save money for the taxpayer.



Opening **Opportunity** for public sector professionals

Opening public services means giving public sector professionals more freedom and control over their work.

It means ending the old model of top-down targets and restoring professional discretion and responsibility.

It will give the people who deliver our public services new opportunities to innovate and improve services. Professionals will be able to start their own new enterprise if they think they can deliver a better service.

For example...

Healthcare

Jo Pritchard, a health visitor and nurse, and Tricia McGregor, a language and speech therapist, wanted to explore a new model of delivering healthcare to put patients' needs first.

Employee ownership

They set up a new social enterprise, Central Surrey Health, in 2006 to provide therapy and community nursing services. The enterprise is co-owned by 750 staff, who all have a say in how their services are run, so they can put patients at the heart of everything. Employees are more motivated and confident to use their initiative and be more innovative.

The outcome

For example, despite a reduced budget, the team reduced waiting times for the musculoskeletal physiotherapy service from 13.4 weeks to 6.7 weeks by working together to remove wasteful processes.



Get involved

The Government is committed to open public services, but we recognise it will not happen overnight.

We want to hear from public service professionals, members of the public and independent providers who want to help us shape the future of our public services.

Please give us your ideas and suggestions at **www.openpublicservices.cabinetoffice.gov.uk**. Your input will feed into a listening exercise that will continue throughout the summer, including a series of open public services events. This will become part of an ongoing national dialogue about improving public services.

www.openpublicservices.cabinetoffice.gov.uk



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Publication date: July 2011
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Ref: 406853/0711