2020 Public Services Trust
at the RSA

What do people want, need and expect from public services?

Prepared by

Ipsos MORI

About the 2020 Public Services Trust

The 2020 Public Services Trust is a registered charity (no. 1224095), based at the RSA. It is not aligned with any political party and operates with independence and impartiality. The Trust exists to stimulate deeper understanding of the challenges facing public services in the medium term. Through research, inquiry and discourse, it aims to develop rigorous and practical solutions, capable of sustaining support across all political parties.

In December 2008, the Trust launched a major Commission on 2020 Public Services, chaired by Sir Andrew Foster, to recommend the characteristics of a new public services settlement appropriate for the future needs and aspirations of citizens, and the best practical arrangements for its implementation.

For more information on the Trust and its Commission, please visit **www.2020pst.org**

To share your views on the Commission's ideas, please visit **www.your2020.org**

About the RSA

The RSA is a registered charity (no. 212424). The RSA's central belief is its faith in the power of civic action. At the heart of the RSA's mission is the desire to bridge the social aspiration gap: the gap between the society people say they want and the way they behave. Our principal challenge is to develop a dynamic, credible and persuasive account of what the future citizen needs to be if we are to deliver the world we want.

The RSA engages practitioners and thinkers in concrete, practical action and the development of ideas aimed at creating the kind of state, civic and commercial institutions we need to enable active citizenship.

More information can be found at the RSA website: **www.theRSA.org.uk**

Published by the 2020 Public Services Trust in partnership with RSA Projects, March 2010

2020 Public Services Trust at the RSA
8 John Adam Street
London WC2N 6EZ

ISBN 978-0-9565031-4-5 Ipsos MORI Literature Review Paperback
ISBN 978-0-9565031-5-2 Ipsos MORI Literature Review PDF

© 2020 Public Services Trust, 2010

2020 Public Services Trust
at the RSA

In partnership with RSA Projects

What do people want, need and expect from public services?

RSA Projects

Contents

Acknowledgements 3

Foreword | Paul Buddery and Henry Kippin, 2020 Public Services Trust 4

Executive summary 8

1 Introduction 10

2 What do the public want public services to be like? 12

Main priority 1: Fairness 13

Main priority 2: Customer service standards 16

Priority 3: Local control 19

Priority 4: Accountability 20

Priority 5: Personalisation and choice 21

3 What do the public want their relationship to public services to be like? 24

The relationship between citizens and public services 27

4 Influencing public services 32

5 Improving public services while reducing spending 37

6 Implications for the Commission on 2020 Public Services 41

Afterword | Julian Thompson, RSA 43

Acknowledgements

The 2020 Public Services Trust and the RSA would like to thank the Department for Communities and Local Government for its generous support through the Empowerment Fund. Without the Department's support, this partnership project would not have been possible. We believe that it will contribute to the Fund's objectives of giving people real power, control and influence over the decisions that affect them and their communities.

We would also like to thank Ipsos MORI for their professionalism and insight in preparing this report.

Ipsos MORI

Foreword

Paul Buddery, Research Manager, 2020 Public Services Trust
Henry Kippin, Commission Manager, 2020 Public Services Trust

Whose public services?

Ultimately, the public will decide the future of public services. The only question is how they will do so: actively, by stepping forward as participants in robust and informed debate, or passively, by stepping back and allowing politicians to take decisions on their behalf.

The 2020 Public Services Trust strongly believes in a future shaped democratically through inclusive public debate, asking what people really value for themselves, their families, and the society they live in. The Trust has tried to build its work around democratic principles, making citizen engagement a central element of everything it does. Online debate through your2020.org continues to test specific ideas; and within the last few months discursive groups with people from widely different backgrounds have been held in five towns and cities across the country to explore in detail what really matters to the public.

Maintaining a focus on citizens has been challenging in an environment dominated by fiscal crisis and pressure for cuts and quick fixes. Yet without properly understanding what the public want and value, and how they relate to today's services, it will be impossible to design services for tomorrow that fit the lives they live, and develop the capabilities they need to fulfil their aspirations.

This report is part of our ongoing work to articulate a citizen-centric vision for public services. In it, Ipsos MORI present their data on public attitudes and aspirations, providing a comprehensive overview of the state of current public opinion. Their evidence should be of interest to anyone concerned about the meaning and impact of public services today, and their democratic reform in the future. It shows that the public:

- want public services to be based on notions of the public good, rather than just what's good for me;
- understand the public good largely in terms of universalism, with equality of access to benefits;
- are prepared, with prompting, to consider types of equality that relate to outcomes rather than access;
- see more potential in playing a strong adult role in public service development locally rather than nationally; and
- struggle to see a compelling or urgent case for reforming public services to cope with economic pressures and social changes, and divide evenly on whether to support service cuts or tax rises.

Why Public Services?

Why, in the public's view, do we have public services? The alternative – not having public services – seems to be unthinkable and even alarming for many people. Our recent series of deliberative groups showed that the prospect of no public services

raised fears of 'chaos' and people being 'at each other's throats'. Their reaction illuminates crucial questions about what we value from public services – individually consumed benefits, yes, but also a notion of common benefit and public good. Ipsos MORI finds that half of the public believe that the Government's top priority for public services should be what is good for everyone in society as a whole, while less than a third believe the top priority should be the amount of tax people have to pay. Most people are even willing to trade off service quality against public good, with only a fifth believing that the quality of service received by individuals should be the Government's top priority.

Citizens feel that public services help to level the playing field in an otherwise unequal society. The public like the idea of people from whatever geographical or social background being free to access support from public services, without privilege or prejudice. For example, over 70% believe that treatments should only be available on the NHS if they are available to everyone, regardless of where they live. Similarly, there is very little appetite for varying the provision of essential services or entitlements according to individuals' behaviour - good or bad. Such strong attachment to equality of access is striking, especially given recent evidence of ebbing support for income egalitarianism and a less sympathetic attitude to some welfare recipients.[1] But the findings of Ipsos MORI's report suggest that these attitudes contain contradictions that merit unpacking.

On the one hand, the public's concern for equal access is that those in need should be able to access support. On the other hand, the public are concerned that none of their fellow citizens should be able to access more support than they themselves are entitled to. In other words, the public's primary concern is not necessarily the level of outcome equality deliverable by public services, but procedural equality in the distribution of benefits. For example, there is wide support for universal services provided for the whole of society, services used by everybody – or almost everybody - such as health and education. But there is much less support for services such as social services that directly assist only those facing hardship or difficulties.

At a time of diminished public resources, the public's preference for fairness-as-equal-shares poses a real challenge to government, especially where extra investment targeted at particular groups or localities might be needed to address damaging inequalities. Ipsos MORI's qualitative research suggests that the door is not completely shut on reform. Although the public likes an equal shares approach, it is open to thinking about outcomes models of fairness once the case is made.

Citizens' relationship to public services

A fascinating – and crucial – element of the Trust's research programme is the way in which the values described above play out across key strands of public service reform. Decentralisation and local variation clearly cut against the idea of standardised, universal

[1] The 2010 British Social Attitudes Survey published by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) finds that 'Public support for increasing taxation and public spending is now at its lowest level since the early 1980s.' See Park, A. et al (2010) 'British Social Attitudes: the 26th report' London, SAGE Publishers. See also Page, B. (2009) 'The New Tribes' in Hampson, T. & Olchawski, J. (2009) 'Is Equality Fair?' London, Fabian Society.

access. But choice and personalisation can also be seen as a challenge to the fair and level playing field we value so highly – as both, in their different ways, pluralise the provision and individualise the consumption of certain services.[2] Qualitative evidence suggests that the public is worried that this offers advantages to the most able and advantaged, but is less likely to protect the most vulnerable. At best, the public believe that the benefits of competitive arrangements can translate into private benefits for some, but more limited public benefits overall. At worst, they appear to believe that quasi-market arrangements risk putting citizens, rather than suppliers, in competition with each other, undermining the public good as well as the private benefits citizens get from public services.

Does this uneasiness in the face of quasi-markets, and dislike of local variation mean that the public favours a unitary model of public services, fixed by central government and dispensed on a 'done to' basis? Or is the public's relationship with its services more demanding and dynamic than this might suggest? Most crucially, are the public prepared to become more active partners in the planning and delivery of services?

One way of understanding why this question matters is to go back to Julian Le Grand's seminal analysis of motivation and agency in public policy, in which he uses the analogy of chess pieces to show how traditional welfarist approaches to public services have cast service users as pawns whose role in the game is subordinate to that of more powerful pieces.[3] Where the public are simply pawns to be moved by others – either for high-minded or selfish reasons - the benefits of the service conferred on them are unlikely to be fully realised. Services 'done to' people are not only inefficient, they do little to encourage positive behaviour change, encourage future responsibility or build resilience.

But does the state of public opinion suggest pawns poised to become queens? Ipsos MORI's research suggests that Le Grand's analogy is too clear cut to accommodate the public's ambivalence around agency and responsibility. The public do not appear to relish either the role of compliant pawn or commanding queen. Instead, the public want a more flexible, context-specific relationship with government. Ipsos MORI analyse this in terms of Transactional Analysis, showing how citizens (adults of any age) generally look to the government (the parent) to play an enabling, protective and sometimes authoritative role, while respecting our agency and autonomy.

The balance of power in the relationship shifts in different circumstances. How far the adult takes an active role, and how far the parent is expected to take the lead differs in relation to the complexity of the needs and the intensiveness of the service required, how confident and informed we are about the issues addressed by the service, or whether the service in question feels close enough to influence, or distant and removed.

---

2 See for example Taylor-Gooby, P. & Wallace, A. (2009) 'Public Values and Public Trust: responses to welfare state reform in the UK' *Journal of Social Policy* 38: 401-09.

3 Le Grand, J. (2003) *Motivation, Agency and Public Policy: of Knights and Knaves, Pawns and Queens* Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

More local, better informed?

Distance and scale matter to the relationships the public have and want with public services. Local service variation is generally distrusted, but citizens appear to recognise that when centralised authority steps back, a space opens up in which a strong 'adult' relationship with services can be developed. How?

The public are generally more positive about local services than about services nationally, more likely to feel that they can have a say in how local services operate, and more likely to feel good about their area if they feel able to affect its decision making. So engaging with the 58% of the public who say that people should be more actively involved in shaping public services seems much more feasible at a local than a national level. This evidence shines light on a much debated set of policy questions, some of which the Trust is exploring in depth through a series of research projects. What is clear from our work is that, although the barriers are substantial (at all levels), the appetite for more local engagement and 'closeness' to public services is real and could be developed.

This appetite for change is partly a consequence of declining trust in our politicians.[4] There is a widespread belief that Westminster is not open and honest. The findings of this report suggest that the public does not feel invited into an honest debate about the options ahead for public services. Information about the scale of the approaching challenges has not reached citizens; or at the least, has not reached them in a form they understand. When we raised the issue with 2020PST's deliberative groups – which have included a wide range of adults in terms of age, ethnicity and socio-economic status – few people were aware of growing pressures on services, and the likelihood of hard choices in the near future.

Only 24% of the public believe that spending on public services needs to be cut to address the level of national debt, and 75% believe that efficiencies can deliver the required savings without damaging the services people receive. One problem with this low level of awareness is that debate is restricted to blandly optimistic aspirations over 'efficiency', or narrow discussions about which departmental budgets should be protected from cuts. A richer discussion – which engages with the needs and responsibilities of citizens over the long term – is urgently needed.

But as we call for a new approach to public services, we should recognise that change is inherently difficult for even many well informed adults to contemplate. The reason goes back to why we have public services at all. When asked how public services help them in getting what they need to live a good life, participants in our deliberative groups emphasised security – the flip side of the 'chaos' that threatens if they are withdrawn. Security and change will always be awkward bedfellows. But without fundamental reform that realises citizens' potential to be responsible adult partners in the services that support them, long term security simply cannot be delivered.

---

[4] Ipsos MORI & Royal College of Physicians (2009) 'Trust in Doctors 2009: annual survey of public trust in professions' available at http://www.ipsos-mori.com/DownloadPublication/1305_sri-trust-in-professions-2009.pdf.

Executive summary

This review has been undertaken by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the 2020 Public Services Trust. It summarises what is already known about the British public's views on public services, primarily drawing on Ipsos MORI's own data but also bringing in secondary sources where relevant. The aim is to identify key themes in public attitudes to services, as well as identifying areas for potential further exploration as part of the Commission on 2020 Public Services' citizen engagement work.

People's priorities for public services

The key priority for the public is ensuring that a good basic standard of services is available locally. Fairness is seen as important in delivering this, but this does not preclude greater help being available for those more in need. There are also different types of fairness that are important to the public. Much research focuses on fairness in terms of universal provision, but evidence suggests that fairness in outcomes is also viewed as important, and fairness is also valued for its perceived social benefits.

- **A number of factors that drive satisfaction with customer service across public services can be identified: delivery, timeliness, information provision, professionalism and staff attitude.** However, the importance of different factors can also vary for different types of service; in health, for example, being treated with dignity and respect is seen as especially important by the public.

- **More local control, personalisation and choice are seen as less vital as ends in themselves.** The public say these are important when asked directly, but if they have to make trade-offs then they prioritise core service standards over these principles. The tensions in the public mind between fairness of provision, on the one hand, and both local control and choice, on the other, remain unresolved and are important to bear in mind when communicating with the public on these issues.

- **Accountability is seen as important in principle, both in its positive and negative senses** (whether about ensuring that outcomes reflect public priorities or about ensuring that public services deal effectively with situations where things have gone wrong). However, less is currently known about how the public sees accountability in practice than in principle.

Our relationship with government and public services

- **While the public doubt authority, they nonetheless do look to government to take a lead** – and this is likely to be even more the case in the economic hard times. The public is often sceptical about the role that the private sector would play in delivering services, but there is also support for pragmatic approaches; for example they are more open to private sector involvement if it can be shown that it means patients are treated more quickly. Voluntary sector involvement is seen as a good idea in principle, although there is little public awareness of how it works in practice.

- **There may well be scope for a new relationship between government and citizens, which could be conceptualised as**

an adult-adult relationship model.[1] It would recognise that not everyone will want significant involvement in public services, but would nonetheless encourage members of the public to take responsibility and potentially change their attitudes and behaviours, where to do so would benefit society and public services.

- **This adult-adult relationship requires the state to play a supportive role.** The public believe there is room for government to enable, encourage and enforce behaviour change as part of a supportive relationship between citizens and the state (recognising that which mechanism is appropriate will depend on the situation).

- **The public want to have more say over services in principle. In practice, though, few actually get involved; instead, there is a spectrum of interest among the public in getting involved with how services are designed and delivered.** There is evidence to suggest that feeling they can influence services if they need to may be more important to the public than actually getting involved in practice.

- **There is a particularly acute need for an adult-adult dialogue about public services when thinking about tightening public spending.** The need for tough choices to be made on public spending has not yet filtered through to the public, and convincing the public will require both a clear rationale for cuts and reassurance about maintaining the quality of public services.

Looking forward

Less is currently known about four areas of public wants, needs and expectations, which may be worth exploring as part of the Trust's continuing work programme:

- What would a supportive, adult-adult relationship with public services look like? What would the public be saying about their attitudes to public services if this type of relationship were felt to be in place?

- What are the public's attitudes to taking greater responsibility for themselves and their communities? What are the implications of these for public services?

- How can services create effective information that people pay attention to, use and act on?

- At a time when difficult decisions will need to be made about the future of public services, building a greater understanding of how the public prioritise when asked to make 'unpalatable' choices is likely to be valuable. What can we learn from how the public approach difficult trade-offs around issues such as co-payment for services, or taking greater individual and collective responsibility?

---

[1] The adult-adult characterisation is a conceptual model for thinking about the relationship between citizen and state. Unless otherwise stated the data used in the report is based on adults.

Introduction

In the drive towards achieving 'world class' public services, recent policy thinking has emphasised a radical reshaping of the relationship between citizens and public services. Important themes include giving people more control over services, ensuring people have a greater say, strengthening partnerships between users and professionals and improving the availability of information to the public. Underpinning this agenda is the belief that public services work best when their design and delivery are centred on the needs of the people who use them, rather than the providers responsible for supplying them.

'People power' in one guise or another looks set to continue to be a key element of public service reform in the coming years, irrespective of which party wins the next general election. However, ensuring that the people who use public services have greater control and say over how those services are designed and delivered will not be easy, especially since it will need to take place against the backdrop of a new 'age of austerity' for the public sector.

Policymakers are only too aware that the next government will have to make some extremely tough choices about public spending, as a result of the harsh pressures brought by the global economic crisis. Hard times are ahead for public services, although this reality appears not yet to have filtered through to the public, four in five of who still believe that the public sector can save enough money through efficiency savings alone without the need for cuts. At a time when government and service providers will have to do more with less, there is a growing sense in policy circles that people themselves may also need to be encouraged to take on more - and different – responsibilities in order for public services to work effectively in future.

About this review

The Commission on 2020 Public Services is a major inquiry into how public services can respond to the myriad challenges facing them over the next decade. An important part of

the Commission's work programme is to explore what a new settlement between citizen and state might look like: what responsibilities and entitlements should people have, and what should be the role of government?

This report is intended as a brief overview of what is already known about what people want, need and expect from public services. If public services are truly to be designed and delivered around citizens' needs, we need to understand what people's needs, wants and expectations of public services are and how these are changing. In order not to reinvent the wheel, the first step is to summarise what we already know, before identifying where any knowledge gaps lie.

The majority of the data that informs this report is based on findings from the Ipsos MORI omnibus: a weekly survey representative of British adults (England, Scotland and Wales aged 18+). Dates of data collection vary and are provided throughout the report: we have drawn from the most recent data available to give a picture of current public opinion. Where relevant, we have also included qualitative findings and have indicated where this is the case.

2 What do the public want public services to be like?

This chapter explores what the public want public services to be like. It begins by discussing public expectations of public services and the state, before looking in more detail at five key areas of importance for the public.

Among the five key areas of importance for the public, two clear priorities emerge:

- The meaning of fairness (uniform standards, outcomes and help for those in 'legitimate' need)
- Customer service standards

Three are seen as important, but not as important as the key priorities:

- Local control
- Accountability
- Personalisation and choice

That the public's expectations of public services are rising has become a truism, particularly when arguing the case for public service reform. Commentators point out that, as the best organisations in the private sector have improved their responsiveness and customer service over recent years, people want their schools, hospitals, local authorities and the rest of the public sector to achieve similarly high standards of service, while making efficiency savings in the process. Furthermore, even after years of investment, the public still do not think 'too much' is spent on public services, despite concerns about the level of public sector debt.

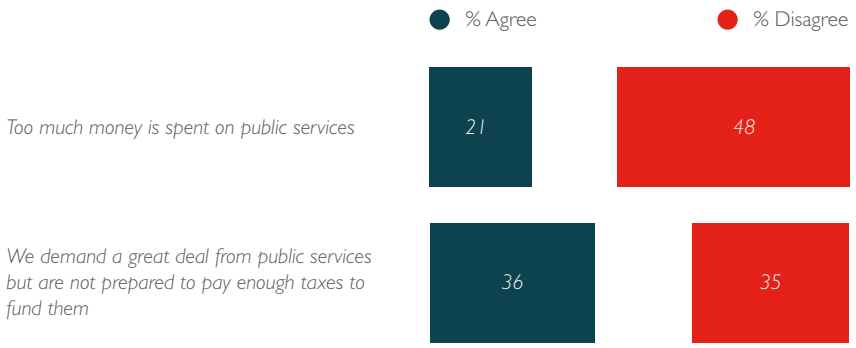
However, it is worth pointing out that Ipsos MORI has no clear-cut quantitative evidence that expectations have risen over time. Many studies demonstrate that increased spending and/or measurable improvements in services do not necessarily result in more positive public perceptions (for example with regard to crime), but there is no long term trend data on public expectations per se. This gap is at least in part because of the challenge of measuring 'expectations' using a perceptions survey.

Much of the debate about what 'good' public services look like can be traced back to the underlying discourse about how involved the state should be in the lives of individuals and communities, on which point the public appear to be fairly evenly split (see chart below). Those who favour collectivism and support a significant role for the state are more willing to pay for services they may not use themselves, for example. Others who back greater individualism argue for less state involvement, preferring that individuals and communities take greater responsibility for their own affairs. These views about society are similar across demographic groups, with fairly even splits by gender, age group and social grades. However, views of how involved the state should be are strongly linked to party political affiliation, and it is clear that these political views will shape expectations of public services.

It is also worth remembering that, in some areas at least, the level of public demand on services is very high, and may exceed what can realistically be paid for given the amount of taxation people are willing to

Spending too much?

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about public services in Britain?



Ipsos MORI Base: 1,041 online British adults aged 16-64, 4-7 Sept 2009

We don't know whether we want to be American or Scandinavian...

People have different views about the ideal society. For each of these statements, please tell me which one comes closest to your ideal.

Source: Ipsos MORI Political Monitor Base: c. 1,000 British adults (18+) each month

pay. For example, a large majority of people (72%) think that the NHS should provide drugs and treatments no matter what the cost.

Bearing these issues in mind, what are the public's expectations? Do they want services that simply mirror the best of the private sector? Or is there a different set of shared concerns that distinguish good quality public services from anything offered by businesses?

Across our work, we find that not all the issues policymakers argue are important for reforming public services resonate with the general public. Considering these in turn below, we also point out some of the tensions in the public's demands on the services they use and, ultimately, pay for:

- The meaning of fairness
- Customer service standards
- Local control
- Accountability
- Personalisation and choice

The public's key priorities are the first two aspects: public services should be provided in a way that is fair, but that also meets good quality standards of customer service. When asked, the public support greater local control, personalisation, choice and accountability, but these things are seen as 'nice to have' rather than essential, especially as people do not necessarily automatically make the links between accountability or choice and their potential for driving higher standards.

Two main priorities

The following emerge as people's main priorities when considering optimal public service design.

Main priority 1: Fairness

When discussing public services with members of the public, perhaps the strongest theme that emerges is a near-universal concern that they should be 'fair'. Our work across world cities highlights that fairness and equality is one of the two key

'principles of public value' broadly shared across many cultures[2]. However, what the public mean by fairness is not straightforward. Both self-interest (services should be fair to me/my family) and altruism (services should act as a safety net to prevent certain groups from falling behind the rest of society) underlie concerns about fairness in service provision. These different aspects of fairness can be in tension, and the public's difficulty in reconciling their competing priorities is reflected in much of our work.

Fairness as uniform standards

Almost two-thirds (63%) of the public think that standards of public services should be the same everywhere in Britain, with just one in five preferring greater local decision-making (20%).[3] This commitment to uniformity in standards of public service cuts across party political affiliation.[4] Furthermore, our qualitative work shows that uniform standards are preferred to minimum standards[5], and that this is not altered by deliberation.[6]

In fact, this sense of a shared entitlement to public services is a strong theme of our qualitative work in different policy areas.

2 Accenture Institute for Public Service Value (2009) Accenture Global Cities Forum: Exploring People's Perspectives on the Role of Government.

3 Ipsos MORI (2009) Public Services and Public Spending, RSA Slide Pack.

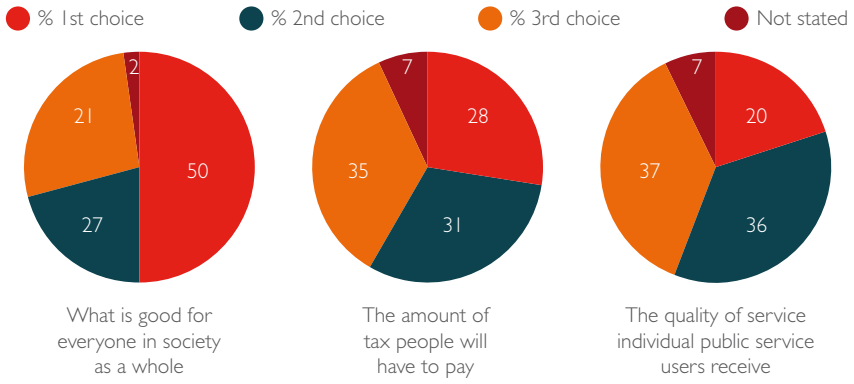
4 Ibid.

5 Ipsos MORI (2007) Public Service Policy Review: The Public View, Slide Pack.

6 Deliberative research involves presenting participants with information and stimulus material that gives a balanced account of different aspects of an argument. Participants are then asked to debate the issues at stake with one another, enabling them to reach a more informed and thought-through view. It is especially well suited to research on complex or abstract matters which those participating are unlikely to be very aware of, and helps to move beyond 'knee-jerk' reactions to an issue based on little or incomplete information.

Half think government's priority for public services should be society as a whole

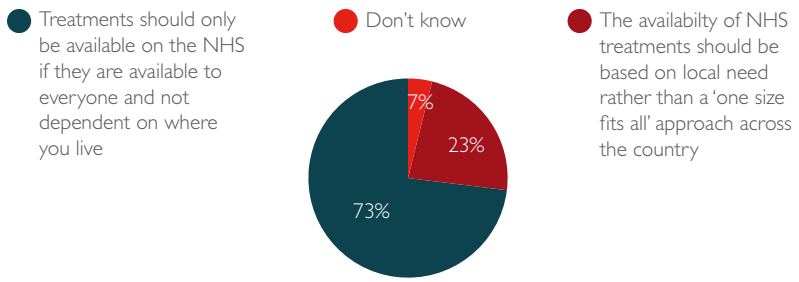
Below are three things that govt could bear in mind as it plans and delivers public services. Please select which should be govt's 1st, 2nd and 3rd priorities:



Ipsos MORI Base: 2,019 British adults 15+, 9 May - 5 June 2008, self-completion and on line.

Most want standard treatment available across the country

Q And thinking of the treatments that are available on the NHS, which of these statements most closely matches your opinion ?



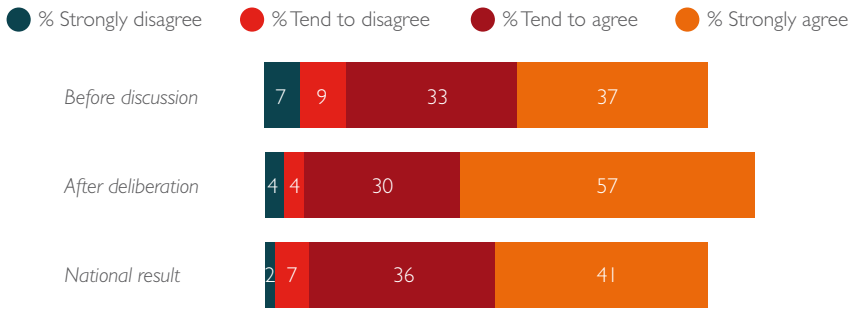
Ipsos MORI Base: 988 English adults (18+), November 2008

Fairness and uniformity appear to be indistinguishable for many members of the public, who emphasise their concern that the same level of service should be available wherever they live and whatever their contribution to the state via taxation.

Supporting this, when the public are asked to choose what the Government's priority for delivering public services should be, more opt for prioritising services for the good of society as a whole (50%) rather than bearing in mind the amount of tax people pay (28%)

Strong support for varying non-essential aspects of a service depending on behaviour - increases with deliberation

Q People who persistently fail to turn up to GP appointments on time should only have the option of 'turn up and wait' appointments ?



Ipsos MORI Base: 54 forum participants, March 2007; 1,984 GB adults (15+). March 2007

or prioritising the quality of individual services (20%)[7]. A key example of this is healthcare; a large majority of the public feel that treatments should either be available to everyone or no one, strongly rejecting any form of postcode lottery.

A commitment to uniformity of service availability for vital services is demonstrated by public reluctance to make access to services dependent on behaviour. However, as we discuss in Chapter 5 of this review, the public are more willing to accept differences in entitlements when this is traded off against cuts to core services.

Fairness as inputs or outcomes: accepting service variation for non-essential services

While it is thought important to provide uniform availability to core services, variation in access to less vital aspects of service provision is deemed more acceptable. In fact, support for the idea of varying non-essential services depending on behaviour is very strong at a national level (77% agree). Moreover, our qualitative work indicates that following deliberation, people are even more likely to support this; nine in ten people are in favour of the principle after deliberation (87%), compared with seven in ten beforehand (70%). However, what constitutes a 'non-essential' service is difficult to define and will vary across and between different services. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Initially, when discussing what they want from public services, the public tend to focus on outputs (e.g. waiting lists, school grades) rather than outcomes (e.g. higher survival rates, better employability), and do not place these in the context of broader social or economic benefits. After deliberation, people begin to see that the quality of services can have an impact on quality of life for people more generally, rather than just service users.[8] But, even after deliberation, the importance of outputs is not diminished in people's minds; rather, the public feel that outcomes are important in addition to outputs.

There is some evidence to suggest that, in certain circumstances, people will accept that different inputs are sometimes required to achieve similar outcomes and they are not particularly interested in how those outcomes are achieved. An example might be a situation in which one area might need more frequent bin collection than another in order to avoid a specific problem with rats. This lends support to the idea of accepting variation in service provision if resources are utilised where they are most needed.[9] However, this is an area in which less research has been done, and it would potentially be interesting to explore further the relative importance of fairness in inputs, outputs and outcomes and, in particular, developing our understanding of the conditions in which one or the other becomes more important.

Fairness as help for those in 'legitimate' need

Linked to the desire for public services to be a safety net, many people recognise that particular groups within society will need (or deserve) greater support from the State. Qualitative work for the Department for Work

[7] Ipsos MORI (2008/9) Real Trends Slide Pack.

[8] Accenture Institute for Public Service Value (2009) Accenture Global Cities Forum: Exploring People's Perspectives on the Role of Government, London Report.

[9] Ipsos MORI (2009) The Future of Healthcare, SMF Slide Pack.

and Pensions[10] highlights several important findings, which illustrate that public services being 'fair' does not rule out people receiving different levels of support:

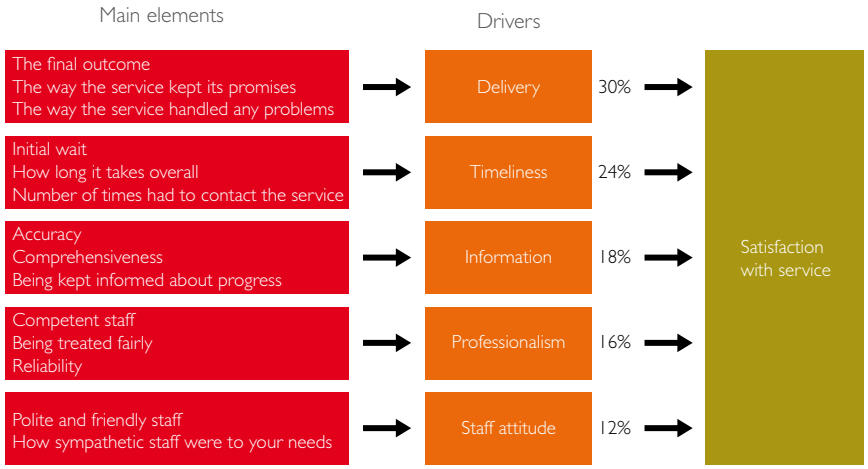
- All participants strongly supported the provision of state support and financial benefits for those in need.
- There was much sympathy for workless lone parents and this was driven by concern for their children.
- Participants tended to react negatively to workless couples with no children and felt they chose not to work and so should be subject to sanctions.
- Many advocated that fulltime carers, and specifically those who give up fulltime work to look after family members, should receive more money from the state to cover living costs and to compensate them for being taken out of the workplace.
- Many also advocated that disabled people who are unable to work should be paid more money in benefits to help cover the additional costs of living.

In this study, participants highlight two main differentials which separate someone from being 'deserving' or otherwise. These are the extent to which an individual has personal choice over his or her circumstances, and the amount of effort they put into changing their situation, assuming they are able to do so. Fairness also means more support for the 'deserving' as people recognise that otherwise there is not a level playing field.

[10] Hall, S. (2009) Spending priorities in the benefits system: Deliberative research with the public, DWP, Research Report No 559.

Key drivers of satisfaction across public services

This model explains 67% of the variation in satisfaction



Ipsos MORI

Main priority 2: Customer service standards

Alongside the key concern that services should be fair, the public also emphasise the importance of services being high quality and delivering effectively. What really influences whether people are happy with the service they receive from the public sector?

What drives satisfaction with public services?

Commentators often refer to people's expectations of public service standards being shaped by their experiences of customer service in the private sector, citing quick response times, convenient ways of accessing services and generally higher service standards from private companies. Certainly, our qualitative research shows that customer service is seen as a very important factor in service delivery, particularly when dealing with complaints. Across Ipsos MORI's public sector research, five factors have been found to drive customers' satisfaction with public services: delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude.[11]

[11] Key Drivers Analysis (multivariate regression) techniques measure the strength of the relationship between outcome variables (such as overall satisfaction) and other key variables within a survey. This enables us to assess the relative importance of different service aspects in driving outcomes such as overall satisfaction. Due to the nature of social research a model will never explain all of the variation in the outcome variable, therefore the amount of variation explained is quoted at the top of the charts.

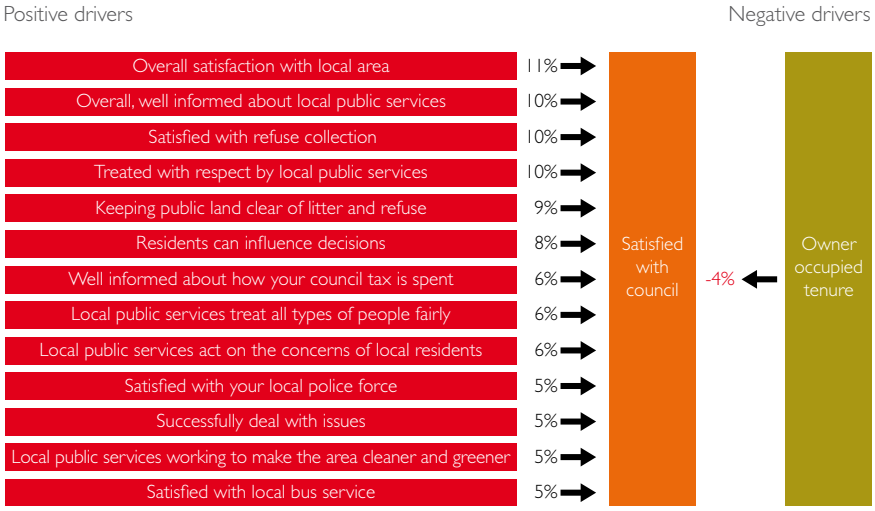
Inpatient care: being treated with dignity and respect a key relational benefit

This model explains 91% of the variation in satisfaction

Ipsos MORI

Key drivers of satisfaction across public services

This model explains 46% of the variation in satisfaction



Ipsos MORI

The five satisfaction drivers set out in this model together explain 67% of all variability in responses to the satisfaction with service statement – a fairly good fit for surveys of this kind. The quality and timeliness of service delivery are important in driving up or down public satisfaction with services, but the most important driver is delivery which is more than 1.25 (30%/24%) times stronger in driving up or down satisfaction than timeliness and nearly 3 times (30%/12%) more important than staff attitudes. This finding is echoed in another recent study, which finds that more than half (52%) of people agree that it is more important for the service they receive from companies and government departments to be 'professional and effective' than it is for it to be 'friendly and helpful.'[12]

It would be interesting to compare this model to those of public expectations of the private sector but in practice this is difficult because the models generated in the private sector are generally designed to focus on different outcomes and the key metrics are not comparable. In the public sector the emphasis is on drivers of satisfaction whereas in the private sector customer loyalty (and the intention to purchase) is more important.

More warmth required?

Some drivers of satisfaction are more important for specific public services than others. Much work has been done on the drivers of satisfaction in the NHS, for example. In healthcare, people want 'quality' in service provision, and the two cornerstones of quality are effectiveness and patient experience.[13] For health services specifically, it appears that while people still want delivery and timeliness, more importance is also placed on 'softer', more personal approaches to service provision than may be the case for other services.

This is further supported by research that aims to understand what drives good inpatient care ratings for hospital trusts.[14]

12 Ipsos MORI (2008/9) Real Trends Slide Pack

13 Ipsos MORI (2009) Quality Accounts patient and public engagement report on behalf of the DH and Care Quality Commission.

14 Ipsos MORI (2008) Frontiers of performance in the NHS II (chart based on 2006 data).

Our study found that the most important factor driving satisfaction with in-patient care was being treated with respect and dignity, followed by feeling involved in making decisions. These 'socio-emotional' benefits act as more important drivers than functional elements such as cleanliness, although this does drive satisfaction to an extent. In sum, people want health services that do more than just deliver – they also want services to treat the user well and make them feel that they are involved in the decisions about their care.

When public satisfaction with how local councils run services is examined in more detail, feeling well informed about local services emerges as a key driver of perceptions, as does being treated with respect. This illustrates that for local councils the importance of communications about what they are doing to deliver services should not be underestimated.

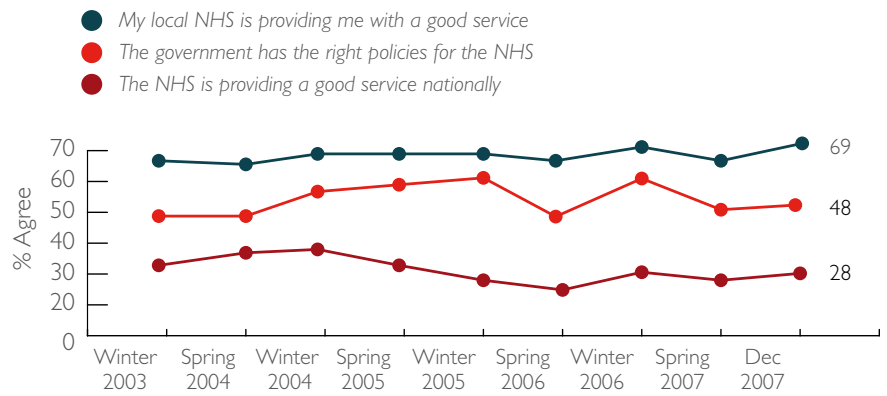
Clearly, feeling that you can influence local decisions is important in driving satisfaction with how councils run services (we will discuss this further in the next chapter). However, feeling well informed does seem to be a more important factor driving satisfaction with local councils than a sense of being able to influence decisions locally.

The perception gap

Another issue to highlight when considering how people rate public services is that Ipsos MORI has long witnessed a clear gap in public perceptions; people tend to be much more positive about *local* services than they are about how services are run *nationally*. Two key areas where this disconnect is particularly apparent are health and crime.

The perception gap - the NHS

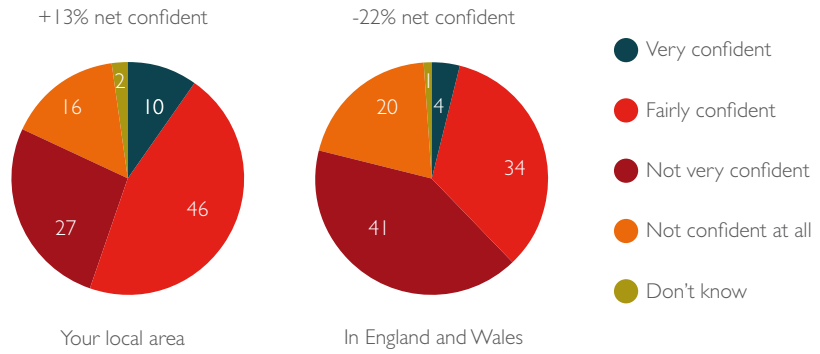
Q2 a-c To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Ipsos MORI English adults 16+ (c. 1,000 per wave)

The perception gap - crime

Q Overall, how confident are you about the way crime is dealt with?



Ipsos MORI Base: 1,011 members of the general public, UK, April 2007

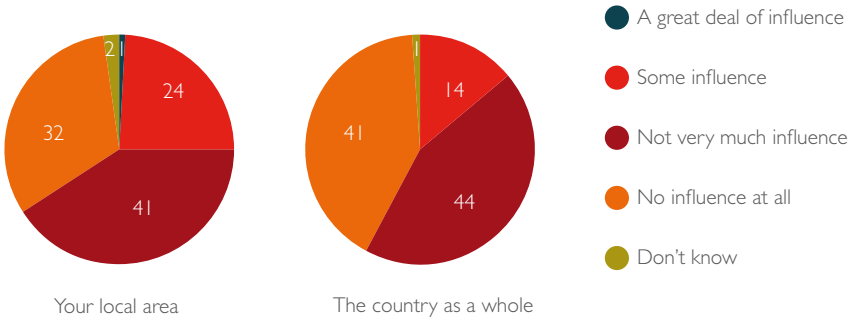
This suggests that the public do not associate experiences at a local level with political and management decisions at a national level. The perception gap has remained stubbornly persistent, despite measurable improvements in health service provision and reductions in crime levels over recent years.

Three secondary priorities

Local control, personalisation, choice and accountability are seen as secondary priorities by the public. When asked to trade off different priorities against one another, the public see these as important, but not

People feel they can have more influence at a local rather than national level

Q How much influence, if any, do you feel you have over decision making in?...



Ipsos MORI Base: 1,051 British adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 11th - 17th December 2008

as important as fairness or a good standard of customer service. The public tend to judge these issues on what is most relevant or has most direct impact on them; for example, choice tends to be seen in terms of what it means for them accessing a service rather than for its potential as a tool to drive up service standards. The argument can be made that greater local control, accountability, choice and personalisation may well be important ways of delivering outcomes that ***are*** seen as very important by the public, such as an improved standard of customer service.

Priority 3: Local control

The broad public consensus that service standards should be consistent nationally leads to an obvious question: how does this desire for uniform standards fit with the push towards devolving greater power to local communities? Do people want or expect to be involved in shaping services in their area, or that affect them?

The sense among the public is that greater local variation could be a positive development, provided this does not trump their main concern that people are able to access high quality services across the country.

The national/local tension

Our recent deliberative research for the Department of Health about the future of care and support in England showed that the public acknowledge a tension between national and local control of service provision[15]. Many participants struggled to reconcile their underlying feeling that national standards were the fairest way to ensure high quality provision with their recognition that some local variation is desirable; local service providers were thought to better understand the needs of their local communities.

No firm conclusions were reached on how this tension might be resolved. Instead, participants argue for a hybrid system whereby national standards are enforced but some local flexibility is retained (without describing in detail what this might look like). This further illustrates that the public find it difficult to engage with how services are structured and managed; they are much more interested in outputs (and after deliberation they again moved towards a concern for broader outcomes). As long as 'my local hospital' or 'my child's school' is of a good standard, the public are less worried about whether standards are driven by national or local institutions.

Influencing decisions locally

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the public feel they have greater influence over decisions locally rather than nationally, and people are also more enthusiastic about being involved at a local level (albeit only slightly more). This suggests that moves towards more local control in future could help to further the empowerment agenda.

Both locally and nationally, women are more likely to feel they can influence decisions than men, as are middle aged people and those from higher social grades.[16]

However, levels of perceived influence are low at both the national and local level (25% of people feel they have influence locally compared to 14% nationally). Overall, a large majority do not think they have much leverage over decisions at any level, and around half do not want to be involved either. As we outline later in this report, the

[15] Ipsos MORI et al (2009) The case for change – Why England needs a new care and support system - http://careandsupport.direct.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/295934_csi_engagementreport_acc.pdf.

[16] Audit of Political Engagement – Ipsos MORI and the Hansard Society.

important issue for the public is feelings of influence. People want to know that they can influence decisions if they choose to, rather than necessarily getting involved to influence local decision-making in practice. As well as feeling they currently have more influence locally, people also say that local involvement is more important to them than being able to get involved in national-level decision-making; just under half would like to be involved in decision-making in their local area (48% compared to 43% nationally). However, this still means that a similar proportion (50%) have little or no desire to be involved locally.

Findings from the recent Place Surveys[17] carried out in every English local authority highlight that, when given the choice, most people would prefer to get involved in local decision-making, although their interest is dependent on the issue: just one in four (27%) said they were generally interested in getting more involved. A desire to get involved is linked to how strongly people feel about an issue, and how much they think it will affect them, their family and their local area. This is discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4 below.

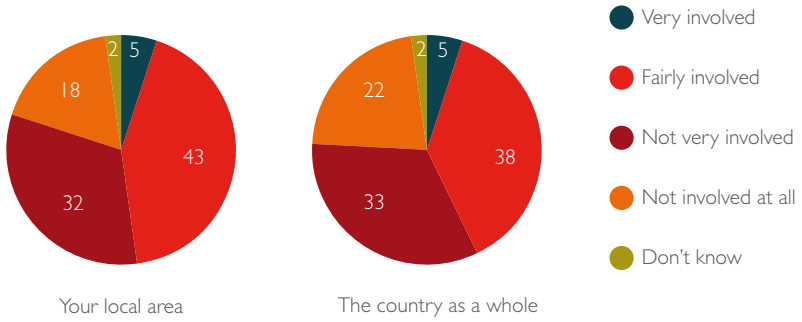
Priority 4: Accountability

While public sector accountability is something the general public say is important, how they feel this should work in practice is not well understood. However, we can draw some broad lessons from our research:

- Accountability is linked to broader feelings of involvement and influence;
- Redress and complaints procedures are clearly important, but issues around accountability are too often framed in a 'negative' sense (i.e. what to do when things go wrong); and,
- There should also be a positive sense of accountability, focusing more on outcomes: ensuring people's priorities are reflected and they get what they need.

People are more enthusiastic about being involved in local decisions

Q To what extent, if at all, would you like to be involved in decision making in?...



Ipsos MORI Base: 1,051 British adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 11th - 17th December 2008

"Reporting Performance Information to Citizens" (2008), a report produced by the Policy Research Institute on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government, tackles the issue of accountability directly. It explores how local authorities report their performance information to citizens and what support is available to assist them with this task.

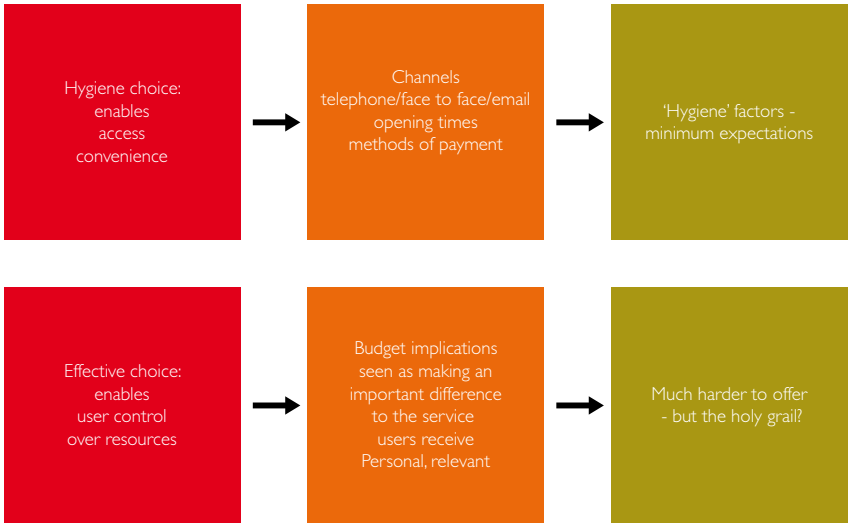
The report finds a great deal of variation, suggesting that accountability differs across the country. Most people appear to base their opinions on their own experience of services rather than measuring an authority against its targets (indeed, most people are unaware that central government sets local authorities targets in relation to performance).

Public interest in receiving information also varies. When asked what comes closest to their own attitude towards how local public services (such as the council, the police and local health services) work to improve their area, nearly half (47%) want to know more whereas a third (33%) want a say or to be involved and just one in six (16%) are not interested in knowing what local public services are doing to improve the area, as long as they do their job.[18]

[17] http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/placesurvey2008.

[18] Ipsos MORI omnibus survey, Aug 2009, Base: 1,009 GB adults, 18+.

Different types of choice



Ipsos MORI

Those who do want information only want information that is relevant to them[19], such as:

- Linked to the services they use;
- Financial information about local facilities;
- Performance information about schools;
- Progress reports on how well the council is meeting its targets;
- Regeneration initiatives; and
- Policing and aspects of community safety.

These findings highlight some of the key features of good information provision, but information provision is only one factor related to accountability. Further research to explore what the public want accountability to look like in practice is needed, particularly with the growing focus on individuals and communities taking greater responsibility for their local services.

[19] These findings are taken from a qualitative study, but this variation is something we often observe in our work for local authorities.

Priority 5: Personalisation and choice

The issues of personalisation and choice are integrally related; particularly in the way they have manifested themselves in public services. For example, personal budgets in social care could be examples both of choice (because the service user is choosing which services to purchase) and also personalisation (because they are able to choose a suite of services that best meet their needs).

The chart overleaf, based on research about choice, actually includes elements of both choice and personalisation. It suggests that the public's minimum expectations with respect to choice are that they are given a range of options of how to interact with a service. Of course this could also be seen as the desire to have personalised services. These aspects of choice are the 'hygiene factors': things that will cause dissatisfaction if they are missing or inadequate, but that will not tend to increase satisfaction if they are present because the public takes them for granted. The second way choice can be viewed is as a driver of improvements by giving the user control over resources (e.g. choices can be made on issues of importance to the individual and money/staff/facilities follows those choices). Again this can be linked to personalisation – with empowered choice leading to more personalised services. The public more commonly interpret choice in terms of the former (having a choice of how to interact), with only a limited number seeing effective choice as a driver of improved services.

Personalisation

Recent government policy has advocated greater personalisation of public services, so that services are tailored to the needs

of those who use them. Personalisation is seen as being driven by rising public expectations of services in both the private and public sector; people's daily lives are hectic and pressured, and they increasingly expect services to fit in around their lives rather than vice versa.

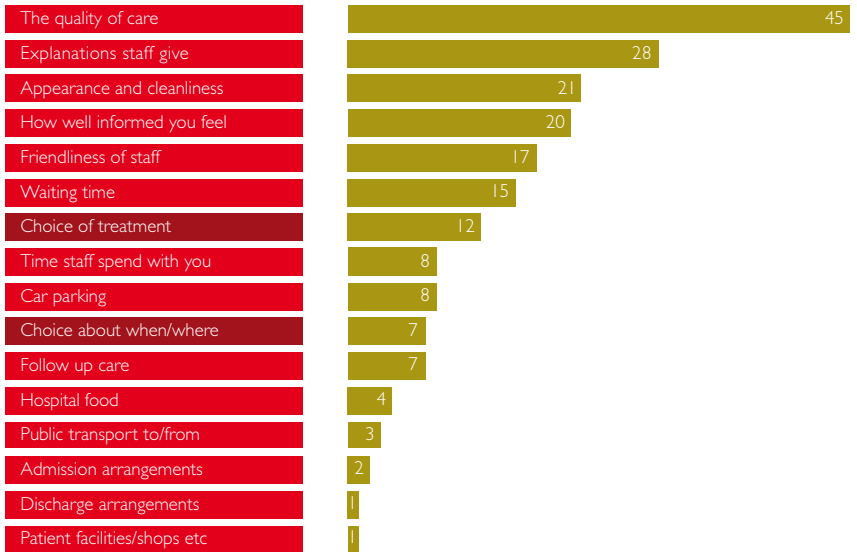
Being able to access public services using a channel that is convenient is now a 'hygiene factor' – something that is simply expected by the public as a matter of course in dealing with services. They expect services to fit in around their lives; for example, to be open outside working hours and to be located in a convenient place locally that they are able to access easily. There is strong support nationally (72%) for flexible opening hours and for local services such as GP surgeries or local council offices being open at times people prefer, even if this means the services would be closed during some weekdays. The evidence suggests that most people feel that this is being achieved by some public services; in health, for example, the majority say that they feel able to access health services at a time convenient for them (75%).[20]

Another type of personalisation, though, goes beyond basic questions of access and convenience, to a more far-reaching personalisation of services which aims to give people the power to decide how to allocate resources. There is evidence that many users of services want to be more involved in how services that affect their lives are designed and delivered, but require new types of support and encouragement. Personal budgets in social care are the most often-cited example of giving people the opportunity to shape the services they receive, and appear to have been achieving some success. Among those managing their own personal care budgets through the Government's In Control pilots, satisfaction increased[21] and almost half of those participating reported improvements in their general health and well-being since starting self-directed support.[22]

On a final note, the Government has argued that personalisation can 'if managed effectively, be part of the answer to rising needs and tighter resources'[23]. In this view, personalisation is both necessary and affordable, even in a time of straitened public finances. We know from our qualitative research that public sector workers do not necessarily share this view, instead questioning whether the higher level of service that personalisation implies also entails more money being spent on services. However, there is little evidence at the moment on the extent to which the public believes this is achievable, and further research would be valuable.

Choice is not seen as *the* answer to the problem

Q2 Which 2 things from this list are the most important to how you feel about the quality of service you would expect?



Ipsos MORI Base: Public, Nov-Dec 2004 (994)

20 Ipsos MORI/DH (2007) Public Perceptions of the NHS.

21 In Control (2007) Available at: http://www.in-control.org.uk/ referenced in Strategy Unit (2008) Realising Britain's Potential.

22 C Poll et al, 'A report on in Control's first phase, 2003–2005', in Control, 2006, available at www.in-control.org.uk/library/ a-z.php (accessed 19 Dec 2007); C Hatton, 'Phase II evaluation of in Control, 2005–2007' (forthcoming).

23 Cabinet Office (2009) Power in People's Hands.

People need advice

Q If your GP decided that you needed to be referred to hospital and offered you a choice of four or five hospitals, both in the local area and in the rest of the country, to choose from, which of the following would best represent your feelings?...

Ipsos MORI Base: General Public (1,208), August-September 2003

Choice

Ideas of choice in public services have been strongly associated with a Blairite reform agenda which advocates treating public service users as consumers and offering them greater choice and flexibility over the services they use. This aims both to empower citizens and to drive up service standards.

But do the public really want choice – or is their preference really for a good local hospital or school, rather than a choice of providers? When asked, the public say they want choice in health, for example, and 57% – based on findings from 2004 - feel they are given not very much or no choice as users of NHS services[24]. But when asked to trade off benefits for everyone in society (giving more money to all schools or all hospitals) against making more money available to help patients or parents have more choice, around three quarters of people choose the former. Moreover, when trading off increased choice against other priorities in NHS hospital services, choice ranks less highly than many other concerns such as the quality of care, the explanations from staff and the look and cleanliness of the ward environment.

When exploring what the public value about choice, it appears that they are in favour of choice because of the personal benefit it may provide to them and their families as users of services – for example, the benefits that come from having a doctor who I get on well with, or children being able to go to a good school in the local area – rather than because they think it will drive up standards for society as a whole.

However, our qualitative research shows that when people debate questions of choice in public services in greater depth, they tend to begin to perceive a number of potential problems. There is concern about the potential impacts on local areas, such as the risk of the 'good' schools and hospitals in local areas becoming oversubscribed. On another note, people point out that choice between providers may not always be a 'real' choice; if I have a choice of four schools in my local area, none of which are especially good, is that any choice at all?

When ideas of fairness and choice are explored in qualitative discussions, tensions similar to those that exist between fairness and local control can be found. Will greater choice go hand in hand with service provision being different depending on where you live or who you are? Related to this, the public worry that the worst services could be concentrated in more deprived areas because middle class families are able to move to be nearer the best schools and hospitals and are better equipped to use choice to ensure they get a good service.

Access to the right information to help with decision-making is seen as crucial if choice between services is to work well. For example, survey data shown in the chart on this page suggests that only 15% want to exercise choice without help.

It is important to note when offering choice that most people want to know that adequate help and support will be available to them when they make their decisions, and this is even more the case for pensioners, working classes and BMEs.

[24] Ipsos MORI (2004) Real Trends Slide Pack.

3 What do the public want their relationship to public services to be like?

This chapter focuses on the relationships that citizens want with public services. In particular it explores:

- the distinct roles of the public, private and voluntary sectors in delivering services
- how the public view their ideal relationship with public services

What roles should different organisations play in delivering public services?

Below we explore how the public view the ideal roles of government, the private sector and the voluntary sector in delivering public services. However, it should be noted at the outset that there is less information about what specifically the public believe government must take the lead on and where they are more comfortable with government taking a secondary role.

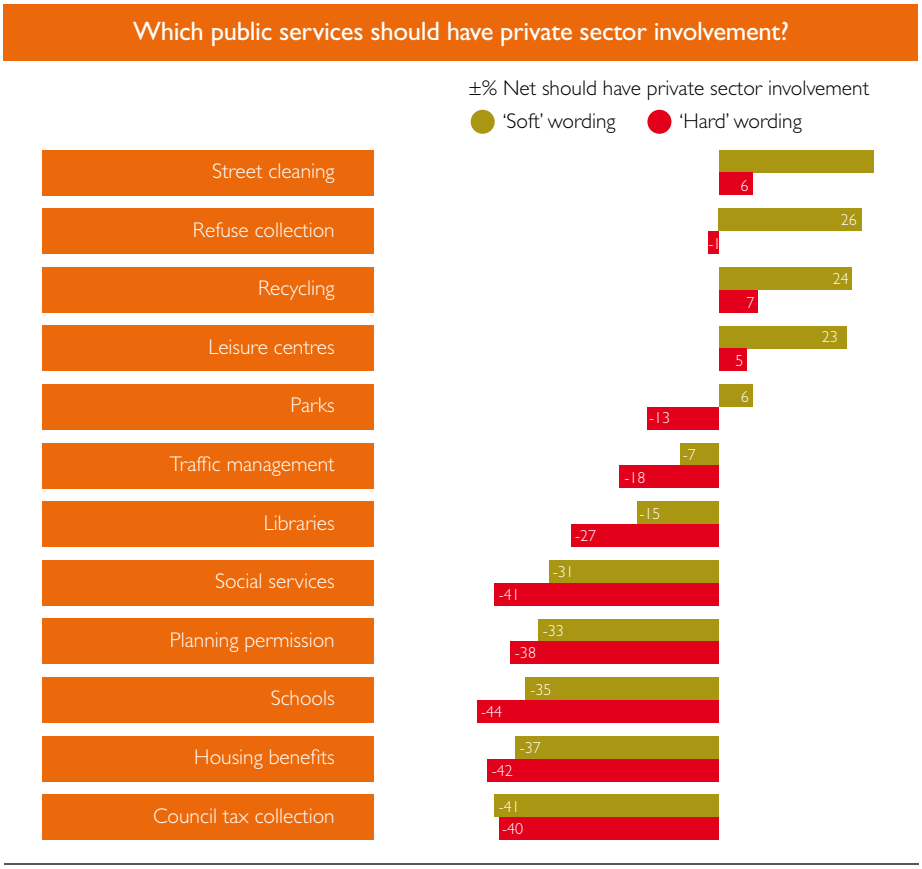
Government is considered to be uniquely placed

As discussed in Chapter 2 above, public expectations of government and public services are high; indeed, half of the public agree that theu now expect more of government than they do of God (52%).

While the public tend to doubt authority, and relatively few people believe that the 'people in charge know best' (17% agree), they also want government to take a lead on certain issues. For example, many more people are happy for government to take the lead in combating climate change (70%) than in taking responsibility for public health and welfare (20%).[25] Not only are the public likely to feel less well equipped and insufficiently expert to deal with climate change, but they are also less likely to feel responsible for it than they are for their own personal circumstances. They want the flexibility to choose in some instances and to be told or advised by government in others.

Our deliberative research with Accenture suggests that while the public views government as the key actor uniquely placed to plan and direct provision of public services it should not and cannot be the sole provider of public services. The research suggests that people recognise that 'government cannot do everything'; but rather than limiting

[25] Ipsos MORI (2008/9) Real Trends Slide Pack.



Ipsos MORI Base: 2,006 British adults 18+, September 2001

the areas of state involvement, after deliberation the public suggest a 'blended' approach which acknowledges the potential of other actors in public service provision may be more publicly desirable.

The suggested role for government in relation to public services has four main strands:

- To ensure *quality* of provision regardless of provider - such provision should guarantee minimum standards of public services for all in society, in line with public conceptions of fairness as uniformity of provision;
- To *regulate* through setting and managing the rules for public service providers;
- To act as an *educator*, providing a reliable channel of information to both user and provider; and,
- To act as an *enabler* of people to do more to engage with public services.[26]

[26] Accenture Institute for Public Service Value (2009) Accenture Global Cities Forum: Exploring People's Perspectives on the Role of Government.

Business ideally takes a supporting role

Some might suggest that the public's support for the treatment of service users as 'customers' implies a desire for private sector provision of public services. However, attitudes to this issue are far from clear cut. Our qualitative work suggests that the public are attached to the notion of public services being provided by the public sector and may be willing to tolerate inefficiencies or lower standards of service in order to preserve a public sector ethos. People are often sceptical about private sector involvement in public services, yet they can be pragmatic about its involvement if they can see that it will bring benefits.

While there is seen to be a role for the private sector in 'improving lives', there is considerable scepticism about what the private sector role would look like, and particularly in the motivations of business for doing this, given its likely interest in profit over people. The overall implication seems to be that people want public services delivered by the public sector but to private sector standards, especially around efficiency and flexibility.

Our research suggests that while people may value certain aspects of private sector service delivery some public services are perceived as more amenable to private sector involvement than others. It is noticeable that the public services considered suitable for private sector involvement tend not to be the 'people-focused' public services such as education and health, but rather those services which do not require any great contact between user and provider. Our qualitative research suggests that there is a view that 'things are private, people are public'[27],

[27] Ipsos MORI (2004) Public v Private Sector Provision, Research for the CBI.

which may shed further light on how the public perceive the appropriate spheres of activity for private and public providers.

It is worth noting that how acceptable the public deem private sector provision of services to be varies considerably depending on how the question is framed. There is a much greater acceptance of private sector provision when people are asked in a 'soft' way, i.e. when the private sector is positioned as providing services on behalf of the Government, than when a 'hard' wording is used, where private sector management of services alone is mentioned. This is likely to reflect public concern about private sector provision of public services, and indicates a need for reassurance of the public on this issue.

While there is some scepticism about private sector provision of public services, few are vehemently opposed to the idea. Only one in nine (11%) think the private sector should be prevented from providing public services under any circumstances, even if they are more effective.[28]

Our research also suggests that people may be more pragmatic than ideological when it comes to making real decisions about public service providers. The vast majority of the public are actually open to private sector involvement, even in core services like the NHS, if it means that patients are treated quickly (81% accept the treatment of patients in private facilities).[29]

Other research confirms this pragmatism in choice of service providers. When people in Birmingham were asked to choose which of several service providers they would choose if their child, or a child in their family, required an operation, most people opted for whichever provider would treat them quickest. Admittedly, support for treatment from a private hospital was low (6%) but this seems to suggest that while the provider is important, the rapidity of service provided is equally if not more important. It also implies that there is some room for more diverse forms of public service provision, provided the service is one that people value.

While there are clearly reservations about the private sector delivering core services, however, there is seen to be greater scope for the private sector doing more in an 'ancillary' role.[30] This would mean that government has a role in seeking active links with business to enable things like the provision of financial and material support for local communities and work experience and apprenticeship opportunities for young people.

The voluntary sector's role needs to be clarified

While many of the people we talk to in our qualitative research feel strongly that the voluntary sector should have more of a role in achieving social outcomes, it is often difficult for people to outline how the sector might contribute. From our deliberative research with Accenture, there is some sense among the public that the sector might be able to support 'overburdened' public sector organisations, but little clear idea of how this would work in practice. The primary role for the voluntary sector suggested is in 'mobilising individuals', a role which was closely associated with discussions of active citizenship and encouraging civic behaviour. This suggests that people think that the voluntary sector may be best placed to play the 'encourage' role, alongside government.

Our research into the relationship between HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations sheds light on public views of the role the sector might play in delivering services. In 2007, over one in eight of the UK public surveyed had contacted a VCS organisation in the previous two years for help and advice, while 2% had contacted a VCS organisation with an HMRC-related issue. People tended to contact VCS organisations for help with tax credits, child benefit and claiming repayments of tax or National Insurance, due in part to negative perceptions of HMRC or positive perceptions of VCS organisations. There were various barriers to the involvement of VCS organisations, especially when it came to the public having confidence in any sort of advisory role. However, HMRC acknowledged the usefulness of VCS organisations in offering emotional support and help to people with interlocking problems.

In this example there was a clear public demand and a perceived role for VCS organisations, but barriers were also identified around effective communication between HMRC and VCS organisations and how they could best play complementary roles. Clearly there is perceived to be a role for VCS organisations in helping to provide public services but the nature of that role needs clarification to enable both user and provider (both VCS and in this case HMRC) to understand it better. Once the service role is better understood by all the parties involved there is, at least in theory, room for more effective collaboration and better 'blending' of service provision. The issue

[28] Ipsos MORI (2004) Public Services and Private Sector Involvement Slide Pack.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Accenture Institute for Public Service Value (2009) Accenture Global Cities Forum: Exploring People's Perspectives on the Role of Government.

of public service provision through voluntary providers could benefit from further research particularly in establishing what it might look like and how it might work in practice.

The relationship between citizens and public services

Public services are faced with a range of significant challenges and considerable constraints, not least the possibility of a marked decline in public spending. It is therefore vital that public services are realistic in their expectations of users and the kind of relationship people really want, just as it is important for individuals to have realistic expectations of public services.

Extensive deliberative research conducted by Ipsos MORI in 2004 explored the nature of the relationship between citizen and state and how it could be enhanced in future. The study used different types of relationship as a metaphor to help in understanding how the relationship between citizen and state might be improved and made more constructive. Post hoc analysis drew on Transactional Analysis (TA) to some extent as a useful tool in thinking about the interactions between citizen and state, making use of a Parent-Adult-Child model[31] to understand how people and organisations behave, communicate and relate to each other.

Citizens may desire a different type of relationship with the state depending on the context and the issues at stake. Indeed, there are times when citizens prefer a 'parent-child' relationship with the state, being told what they need to do and when, with little need for people themselves to take active responsibility. This corresponds closely to the model of representative democracy, whereby government has primary responsibility for taking decisions and citizens can express their views through the ballot box every few years.

There was a strong sense, however, that government can make excessive use of a controlling parent mode in its interactions with citizens, which citizens often respond to in turn in a recalcitrant way. At its extreme, this becomes akin to a 'step-parent-teenager' relationship, where citizens are told what to do but feel they should have more of a say rather than being treated as a child, without necessarily seeing it as important to take on more active responsibility for the services they use.

While a parent-child relationship may be inevitable in some situations – after all, it would be difficult for citizens to be actively involved in every sphere of their interactions with the state in practice – people feel a more preferable model may be an **'adult to adult' relationship** with the state. This kind of relationship would be characterised by clear language, compromise, respect and a degree of equality. In this model, government approaches citizens in a collaborative way, with citizens and service providers negotiating the solutions to service problems together and taking shared responsibility for public services and their direction. There are some important requirements for this type of relationship to work effectively; in particular, people must feel that the issues at stake are important enough for them to be involved, and there needs to be a sense that working collaboratively makes a genuine difference to the decisions that are taken.

A further type of interaction between citizens and the state can be characterised as a 'child to parent' relationship. In this type of interaction, people see politicians as engaging in adversarial politics and avoiding 'straight talk'. While the public are not keen on this type of transaction, they nonetheless recognise it is an interaction that sometimes takes place.

All three of these types of interaction between state and citizens are familiar manifestations of the relationship, and which takes place in practice will depend on the particular situation and context. For example, people may be keen for 'adult to adult' interactions with local services that are personally important to them, such as their child's school, but be satisfied with a 'parent to child' relationship with other services that they do not personally feel it is important to take an active role in.

From the state's perspective, however, it may well be desirable for citizens to take on a greater degree of active responsibility for improving services, especially when difficult times lie ahead in regard to public spending. Encouraging citizens to take more active responsibility for improving services is likely to present some challenges, especially since recent research suggests the public generally has a preference for a **passive yet consultative relationship** with public services (i.e. where people are not expected to be active citizens but are given the opportunity to be so). This is discussed in more detail in the next section.

Although there is certainly a desire among many citizens for a greater sense of an 'adult to adult' relationship with the state, it is important to note that there are also expectations for the state to take on certain roles. Below we discuss the three roles people expect the state to play: enabling, encouraging and (if absolutely necessary and socially desirable) enforcing. All of these suggest that people see the state as

[31] This model is a way to understand and conceptualise relationships. The Parent-Adult-Child model does not literally refer to age but rather is shorthand to describe the nature of the relationship.

having a role in supporting the citizen. In addition, the public often look to the state to take the role of protector, regulator and co-ordinator. While an 'adult to adult' relationship suggests treatment of citizens and public service users as 'adults' rather than 'children' through compromise, respect and a degree of equality, it also needs to reflect that people see the state as having a unique role to play in regard to public services, in particular in supporting people throughout the lifecourse. It is also necessary to recognise that an 'adult to adult' relationship will not be possible in every situation; not every 'adult' will want significant involvement in public services, and many people will be receptive to greater responsibility for some services but not for others.

The suggested adult-adult relationship is not intended as a reductive measure that ignores the considerable complexity and diversity of relationships between public service user and provider. One individual may want very different kinds of relationships with different public services across their life cycle. The model we use is simply intended as indicative. Our research suggests that people want to experience a supportive relationship with public services and this kind of relationship may be usefully understood as an 'adult to adult' relationship.

More work remains to be done to expand on what this kind of relationship might look like and how it might operate in practice, including for children and young people. For example, it could be valuable to explore the public's views on what service users would be thinking and saying about public services, in concrete situations, if this type of relationship were in place.

What a supportive 'adult to adult' relationship might look like

Our deliberative research shows that the public want the relationship between public service user and provider to be 'supportive'[32] when it comes to the co-creation of positive outcomes, and that a supportive relationship has three distinct but complementary roles for the state in relation to the citizen.

- The state should **enable**
- The state should **encourage**
- And, in circumstances where these actions are not enough to bring about socially desirable behaviours, the state should **enforce** (but only as a last resort)

The role of the 'supportive' state may be to provide awareness of and opportunities for participating in positive behaviours (enable); to help and advise (encourage) the service user in that relationship; and where absolutely necessary compel certain socially desirable 'adult' behaviours (enforce). Below we discuss each of these aspects of the relationship in more detail and explore some particular examples.

Enable: putting mechanisms in place to support positive behaviours

For the state to enable citizens it must understand the needs of 'adult' service users. In our research the public are keen that before the state looks to compel particular behaviours it should ensure that the mechanisms are in place which enable people to participate in those behaviours (i.e. do not penalise me for not recycling if you have not made it easy for me to do so). Where the state enables positive behaviours it is on the assumption that people will adopt an 'adult' role. In some instances this can mean that the 'adult' is expected to make decisions and exercise control to a greater extent than previously, or that they are expected to take greater personal responsibility for achieving outcomes.

Below we look in depth at two particular forms of enabling, through information and through devolving budgets and responsibility, as well as discussing some further ways in which the state can play an enabling role.

Enabling though informing

Our research tells us that most public service users want to feel informed about and able to influence particular services that they use – an example of them wanting to be enabled to play the role of 'adult'. They want to know how to contact the relevant service provider, how to access accurate information about that provider and want to have a feeling of agency – all of which enable the user to interact more positively with the service. Our 'Tell us Once'[33] research confirms the importance of these different elements: in contacting one's council, a service user wants access to a range of suitable channels of communication and knowledge about who to contact. The success of the 'Gateway concept'[34] in Kent suggests that a one-stop shop for information and advice is one example of what an enabling 'adult to adult' relationship might look like.

32 Ipsos MORI (2007) Public Service Policy Review: The Public View, Slide Pack.

33 Tell Us Once Citizens Advisory Groups.

34 Since the opening of the Ashford Gateway pilot in 2005 there are plans to 'roll-out' another sixteen Gateways across Kent. http://www.kent.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/about-the-council/council-services-in-kent/gateways.htm.

Enabling through devolving budgets and responsibility

When considering enabling by transferring control, it is important to take into account the public's willingness to take control. Our qualitative research suggests people have greater enthusiasm for decision-making where they feel confident making the decision in question. Generally this is in situations where they can draw on personal experience, they are thinking about issues which affect them directly, and/or in which they may have a personal interest. In contrast, for decisions outside of this 'comfort zone' there is more 'fear' or uncertainty about the legitimacy of exercising control. This is perhaps why people tend to support personal responsibility for decision making on health and welfare[35] or budgets for school services[36] but not on climate change. This insight has implications for the type of enabling opportunities that 'adult' users will want from different public services.

However, some devolved budget mechanisms do successfully operate at a wider community level through mechanisms like Haringey's Area Assemblies which have ring-fenced budgets to support community driven initiatives.[37] These are designed to enable people to play an 'adult' role in shaping their community. Barnet Council's Future Shape[38] scheme is currently experimenting with letting residents prioritise how money is spent on maintaining their street, for example on whether they want their street cleaned less, but the pavement cleaned more often and even providing the opportunity for residents to take over the running of green spaces themselves.[39]

Other ways to enable

Other simple forms of enabling mechanism may be linked to accessibility e.g. the idea of having services that fit people's changing lives, for example through flexible opening times, something that almost eight in ten people agree is important. Enabling mechanisms might be something as simple as ensuring recycling facilities are accessible and easy to use, creating opportunities for parents to meet other parents or supporting community activities.

In summary, enabling is important to the public as they do not feel that public services can expect them to behave in positive ways without first putting in place the mechanisms through which this can easily be achieved. In particular, the public may find it difficult to take an 'adult' role if they are being treated as 'children' and are not enabled to take control where appropriate. However, not everyone will take control just because it is offered and that is why the state is also perceived to have a role in encouraging citizens.

Encourage: telling people about enabling opportunities and facilitating their use

In its 'adult' role, the state will understand that while service users may often be in a better position to make judgements about their needs than service providers, encouragement will differ according to the particular public service and the user's desired involvement in that service.

In the example of contacting the local council it is likely that users of a particular service who want to be able to influence an issue will require an effective demonstration that their attempts to influence will be listened to in order to motivate them to engage [40] i.e. the removal of graffiti after a complaint.

Encouragement for more active involvement in public services is likely to look very different. The instances of devolved budgets mentioned above all have some element of personal or community motivation to take control of an issue but motivation is unlikely to be enough for meaningful engagement. Effective personal care budgeting relies on the user having genuine choice and control over the types of services they receive, and the assistance to be able to make informed choices. This assistance is the crucial 'encourage' element of the 'supportive' 'adult to adult' relationship because it gives people the confidence to utilise the enabling mechanisms available to them.

35 Ipsos MORI (2008/9) Real Trends Slide Pack for CLG.

36 OPM, Budget Holding Lead Professionals.

37 http://www.haringey.gov.uk/index/council/decisions/areaassemblies.htm .

38 http://www.barnet.gov.uk/index/council-democracy/future-shape-of-barnet-council.htm.

39 http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article6901606.ece.

40 Accenture Institute for Public Service Value (2009) Accenture Global Cities Forum: London.

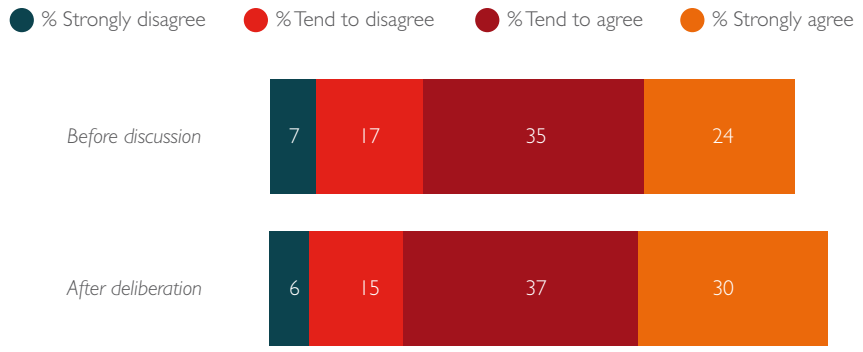
There may be a certain 'fear of freedom'[41] associated with more active involvement in public services and not all service users will necessarily want to engage in such a direct way. A typical 'fear' might be that if a neighbourhood starts removing its own litter the council might relinquish their role in maintaining the streets.[42] This might be transformed into a more positive situation if the enabling structure is accompanied by the right level of encouragement and support. Therefore there may also be a supportive 'encourage' role for the state in reassuring the user that a particular enabling structure has reached a sufficient level of maturity that it is 'safe' to use. This clearly links strongly with the principle of accountability discussed in Chapter 2 above – in order to encourage the state must be accountable.

More generally, our qualitative research suggests a clear public preference for encouraging good behaviour (i.e. by making opportunities available and making people aware of these opportunities) rather than for punishing and/or rewarding. Encouraging good behaviour is thought to be the best way to get people to recycle more (just under half of workshop participants), to ensure young people get the education they need (four in ten participants) and in getting people to be good parents (a third of participants). [42]

Encouragement may work best through collaborative approaches to service provision like neighbourhood policing which allows local communities to identify the problems they feel capable of solving but not those they do not see as their responsibility or feel insufficiently equipped to deal with. The challenge for effective encouragement is to find the level of appropriate autonomy for service users.

Some room for compulsion - especially in relation to parenting

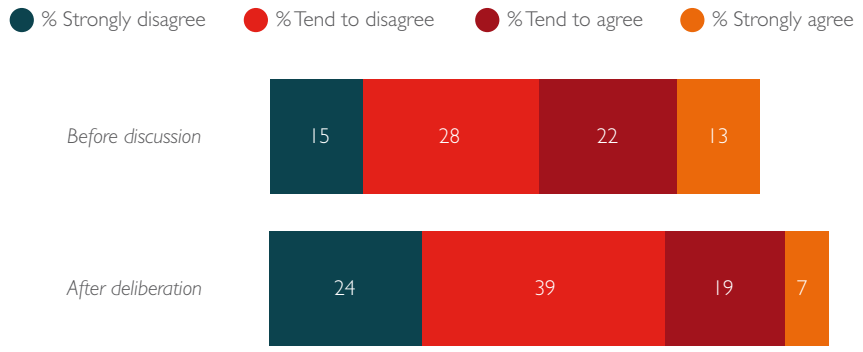
Q Parents of 'at-risk' children (e.g. children who are persistent offenders or who regularly play truant) should be required to attend parenting classes



Ipsos MORI Base: 54 forum participants, March 2007

Shift away from giving higher priority to people making healthy choices

Q People who make healthy choices (such as not smoking, eating a healthy diet, limiting their alcohol intake) should get higher priority when they get sick (e.g. getting organ transplants, expensive drugs)



Ipsos MORI Base: 54 forum participants, March 2007

41 Erich Fromm.

42 Ipsos MORI (2007) Public Service Policy Review: The Public View, Slide Pack.

43 Support for encouragement also increased across all these areas after deliberation.

Enforce: stepping in only when enabling and encouraging have failed

To 'enforce' means to compel service users into particular behaviours or actions. While compulsion is always a last resort our research suggests that there is a role for compulsion in a supportive service relationship, albeit a limited one.

One way to think about when government should take an enforcing role is to first of all think through the notion of who is deemed 'deserving' of state support. As discussed above in Chapter 2 our research[44] suggests that the two criteria used to determine whether or not an individual is deserving of support are 1) the extent to which an individual has personal choice over their circumstances and 2) the amount of effort they put into changing them.

This way of thinking about support sheds some light on what 'enforce' might mean in the context of our relationship with public services. While the public tend to feel more supportive of the 'deserving', they tend to be more willing to see a role for government to enforce particular behaviours for those groups in society they see as less deserving.

Government taking on an 'enforcing' role may also be more acceptable to the public where the issue is seen as having a significant benefit to society. For example, our qualitative research suggests the public feel there is some room for compelling parents of at-risk children to attend parenting classes. This may be an instance where the individual parent has little control over their circumstances and may have tried to change their circumstances but have been unable to do so. Intervention in this area may also be deemed more acceptable because young people are often perceived to learn behaviours at an early age.[45]

However, to 'enforce' effectively means being both subtle and constructive and therefore, according to forum participants after deliberation, any form of compulsion should try to avoid the possibility of stigmatising service users for being 'bad parents' or reinforcing existing forms of exclusion.[46]

The 'stick' of compulsion is clearly difficult to apply but another way to enforce good behaviours may be through the 'carrot' of reward. However, the idea of rewarding public service users for good behaviour holds limited appeal for the public, with most preferring approaches that 'encourage' rather than reward.

In the NHS, for example, people feel uncomfortable with the idea of rewarding patients with preferential treatment if they have lived healthy lifestyles (following deliberation on the issue of rewards, people's opposition increases). This is unsurprising given that living a healthy lifestyle will inevitably be easier for some than others; the sense among the public is that it is problematic to 'reward' healthy behaviours when this may mean discriminating against those who cannot, for whatever reason, lead such healthy lifestyles. For issues like obesity, people point out that it is often hard to say that it is solely the fault of the individual concerned that they are obese, and therefore there are seen to be potential problems in deciding what is fair. Furthermore, in the case of smoking and drinking, many point out that taxes already compensate for the additional stress on the health service.

Given the difficulty with the 'enforce' element of the supportive relationship, where possible the public think it may be better to try and focus on 'encouraging' approaches that require neither the carrot of reward nor the stick of direct intervention and compulsion.

---

44 Hall, S. (2009) Spending Priorities in the benefits system…DWP, Report 559.

45 Ipsos MORI (2007) Public Service Policy Review: The Public View, Slide Pack.

46 Ipsos MORI (2007) Public Service Policy Review: The Public View, Slide Pack.

4 Influencing public services

This chapter brings together Ipsos MORI's data on public perceptions of influence, exploring:

- *Whether* the public want active involvement in decision-making
- The *extent* to which the public want to be involved
- *Which* members of the public *actually* get involed and how.

In principle, the public think they should be involved

Today, all political parties in the UK talk of giving local citizens greater decision making powers to influence and shape the public services they use. The empowerment of citizens is seen as a way of improving the design and delivery of public services, a stance reinforced in the Community Empowerment White Paper which builds on measures already in place from other recent pieces of legislation.[47] This raises questions about the extent of empowerment people want, what empowerment looks like, and following on from these concerns, what kind of relationship people want with public services.

The empowerment agenda is not misguided in the attempt to give citizens greater decision making powers. Almost six in ten of the public (58%) say they want to be actively involved in decisions shaping public services through, for example, activities like deciding spending priorities. They favour the idea of more public control and greater active involvement in service design and delivery.

The data from the New Deal for Communities (NDC) evaluation (chart overleaf) suggests that satisfaction is higher when people ***feel*** they can influence. The NDC areas are unusual in that they were the 39 most deprived areas of the UK in 2002 – however, as a result of NDC funding they are also areas in which a lot of additional work has been done to improve feelings of influence and they therefore make an interesting case study. An important note here is that the same picture does not arise when looking at those who have or have not actually been involved. There appears to be little connection between actually being involved and satisfaction.

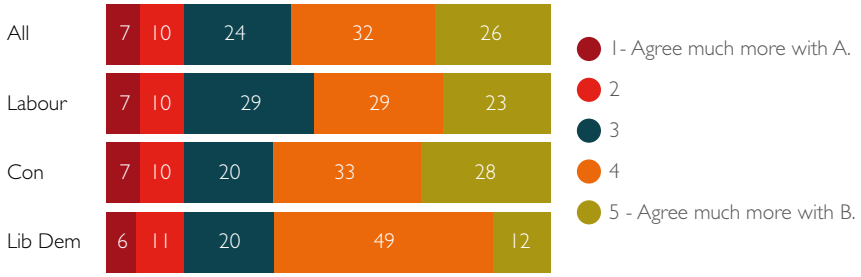
[47] CLG (2008) Communities in Control http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitiesincontrol.

In favour of more public control

Please read each pair of statements below and decide which comes closest to your own opinion

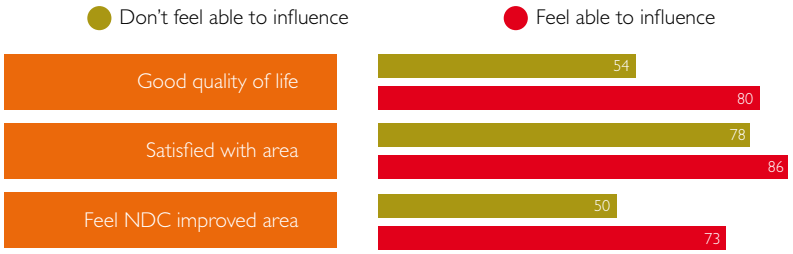
A. The experts who provide and manage public services know best - they should find out what we think and get on with it

B. The general public should be much more actively involved in shaping public services, through for example people deciding on priorities



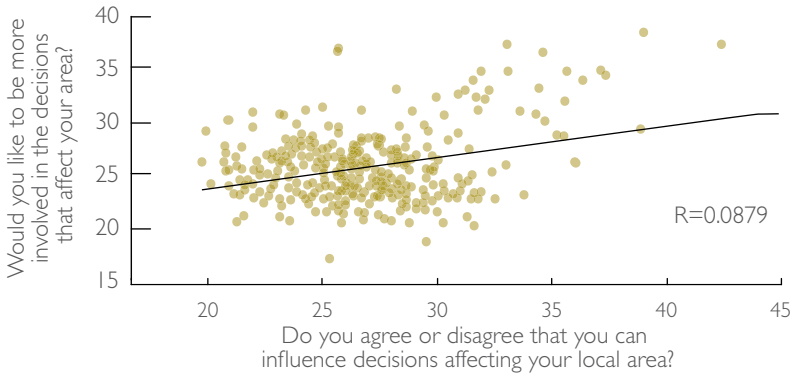
Ipsos MORI Base: 2,019 British adults, 9th May - 17th June 2008

Those who feel they have influence are happier with local area



Ipsos MORI Base: 15,792 residents of NDC aged 16+

Little relationship between can/want to influence



Ipsos MORI Source: Place Survey data 2009

The relationship between desire for influence, feelings of influence and active involvement is complex. Looking at the recent Place surveys there is little correlation between the proportion of those that express an interest in being involved in their local area and the proportion of those who feel they can influence decision making in their local area.

There is also a relatively weak relationship between feeling one can influence decisions and active involvement. Undertaking further analysis of NDC National Evaluation data we found that two-thirds of those who feel they can influence local decisions had not been involved in any NDC activities, and conversely, 51% of those who had been involved in NDC activities still did not feel they had influence over local decisions[48]. The relationship between influence and active involvement is complex and needs to be explored further.

Further, it is interesting to note that the proportion of people nationally who feel they can influence decision-making has shown a very slight decline since 2001. This is despite the increased emphasis that has been put on the importance of citizen engagement.

People don't necessarily want to be involved *personally*

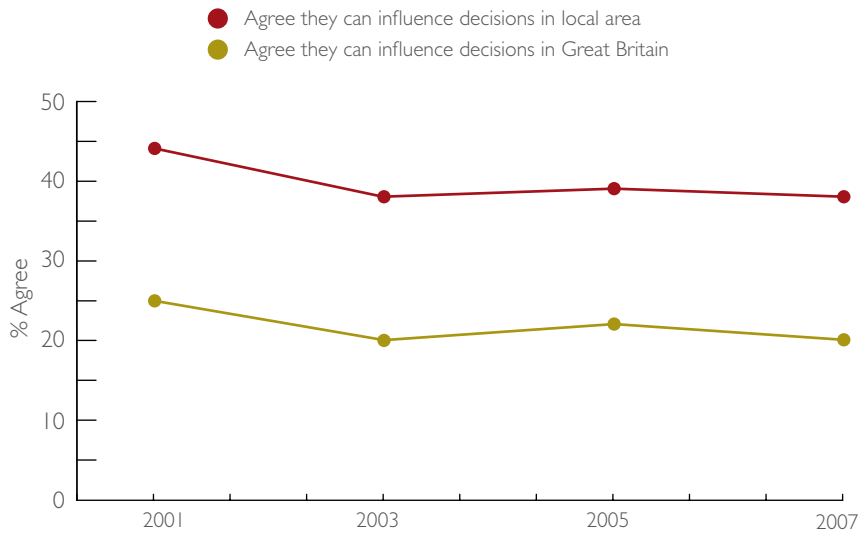
When it comes to the question of personally getting involved in local decision-making, rather than whether people in general should get involved, there is a noticeable reduction in commitment to involvement. Less than half the public (47%) actually want to get involved in decisions affecting their local area.

48 Ipsos MORI (2008) Searching for the Impact of Empowerment, http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/publications/publication.aspx?oItemId=1227.

Recent deliberative research suggests that enthusiasm for "shaping how public services are provided" is contingent on knowledge about the "opportunities that were available" for involvement and there being "help and advice on how to" be more involved with services.[49] An overwhelming majority of workshop participants (80%) suggested an appetite for involvement in shaping how public services are provided, with the majority of these (63%) expressing tentative agreement when the question was presented as 'I would get more involved in shaping how public services are provided if I knew more about the opportunities that were available and was given help and advice on how to…'.

The large gap between supporting the idea of involvement and the reality of getting involved with available structures for involvement is illustrated quite dramatically by attitudes towards the extension of Community Partnerships (meetings where residents come together to talk about how the area can be improved). More than eight in ten (82%) support the principle of extending community partnerships within a particular borough, but fewer than three in ten of these (26%) are personally interested in involvement while a tiny minority (2%) are actually prepared to attend a meeting about the extension of Community Partnerships.

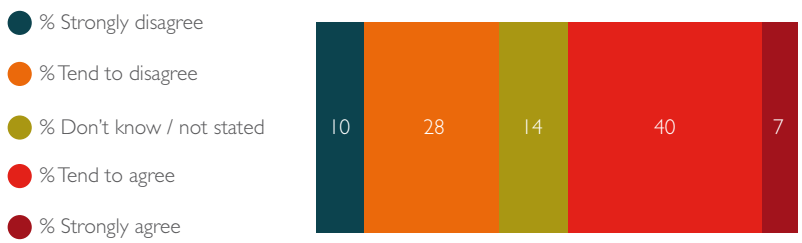
Little change in proportion who feel they can influence decision-making



Ipsos MORI Source: CLG Citizenship Survey

Personally less committed to getting involved

I want to get involved in decisions affecting my local area



Ipsos MORI Base: 2,019 British adults, 9th May - 17th June 2008

Different mechanisms for engagement hold varying appeal

The extent to which people wish to engage with public services is not clear cut. Our evidence suggests a spectrum of interest in engagement with only a very small minority at one end who want to be actively involved and a larger minority at the other end who have no interest at all, with most people somewhere in between.[50]

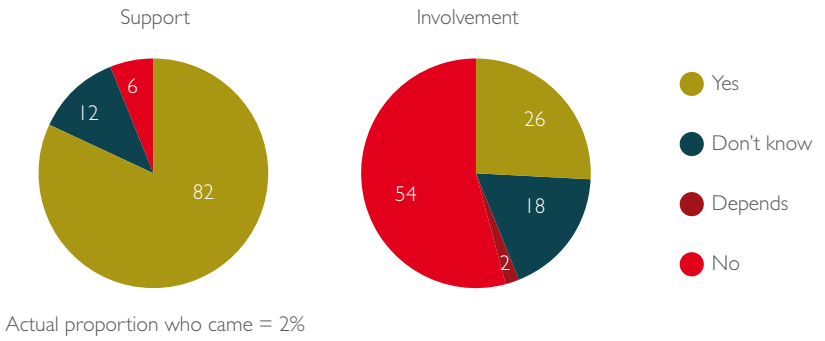
Taking the specific example of crime and anti-social behaviour, less than one in ten people (9%) say they are involved - or want to be - in how public services work to improve the area. Again, we find that the vast majority are more interested in having the opportunity to have a say (24%) or in knowing more (47%). This pattern appears

[49] Ipsos MORI (2007) Public Service Policy Review: The Public View, Slide Pack.

[50] Duffy, B. et al (2008) Searching for the Impact of Empowerment, Ipsos MORI.

But will the public really get involved?

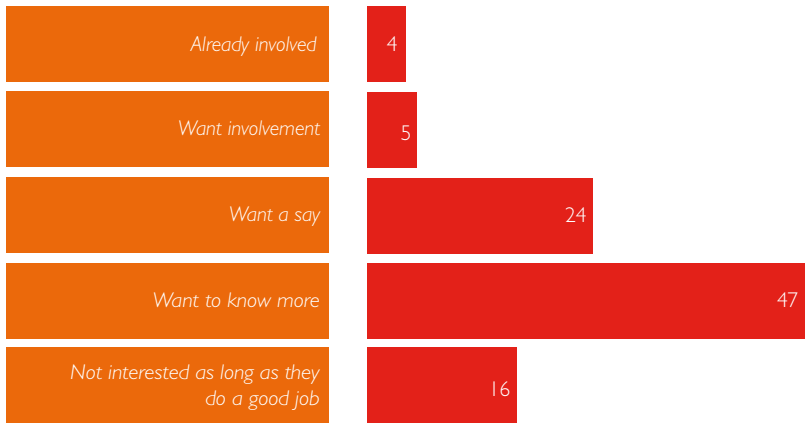
Q In principle, would you support or oppose extending Community Partnerships to other parts of the Borough?
Q And would you personally be interested in getting involved?



Ipsos MORI Base: All residents (1,021) Base: All reps who support the idea (835)

Not everyone wants to be involved

Q Levels of involvement / interest in involvement in crime / ASB issues



Ipsos MORI Base: 1,009 GB adults, 18+ August 2009

to back up the model of a spectrum of engagement, which indicates that those who really want involvement in local decision-making are in a small minority. It also makes clear, however, that information provision and communications remain very important to public service users.

This is reflected in the type of relationship many of us have with local communities and politics more broadly. For most, community involvement and political engagement is limited to individual, arms length activities such as voting in General Elections (63% say that they voted in the last GE), discussing politics with someone (55%) or signing petitions (53%).

When asked about more local level activities, fewer than two in ten[51] agree that they tend to play an active role in their local community. In the last two to three years, fewer than two in ten have held an office of an organisation or club, while less than one of ten have been involved in a tenants or residents association (7%), been school governors (3%) or been members of NHS Foundation Trusts (3%).

When it comes to thinking about who actually does engage through different mechanisms, according to the annual Audit of Political Engagement[52] eleven per cent of adults can be classified as 'political activists' i.e. in the last two or three years they have been involved in at least three political activities from a list of eight[53]. Over half the public (51%) report not having done any of these activities. Among the different age groups, people aged 18-24 are the least likely to be activists (4%) and people aged 45-54 are the most likely (18%). Readers of quality newspapers are significantly more likely to be activists than consumers of popular newspapers (27% versus 6%) and a similar pattern emerges with education

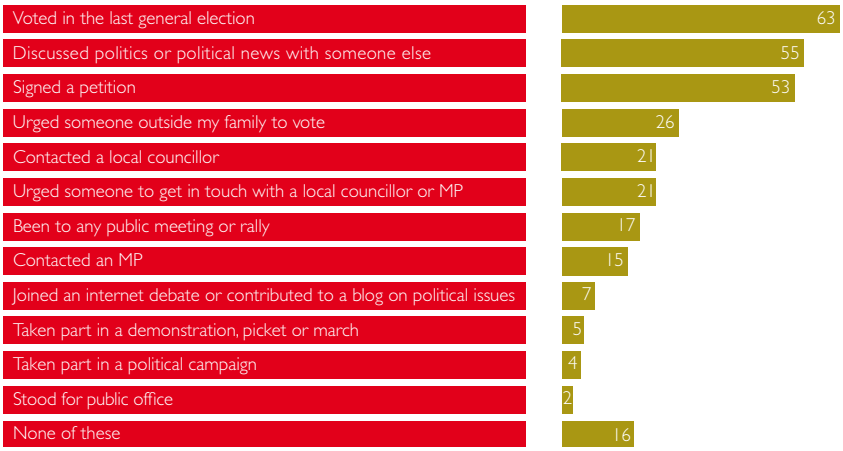
51 Community Involvement Questions, Real Trends 2009/2008 data.

52 Audit of Political Engagement 6 (2009), The Hansard Society and Ipsos MORI.

53 Signed a petition, Boycotted certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons, Urged someone to get in touch with a local councillor or MP, Presented my views to a local councillor or MP, Been to a political meeting, Taken part in a demonstration, picket or march, Donated money or paid a membership fee to a political party, Taken active part in a political campaign.

Mechanisms of engagement

Q Which, if any, of the things on this list have you done in the last two or three years?...



Ipsos MORI Base: 2,019 British adults, 9th May - 17th June 2008

levels: university graduates are more likely to be activists than those with no qualifications (23% versus 3%).

Can we have it both ways?

Clearly there is a spectrum of interest in involvement but it would seem that for many people, feeling they are able to influence decisions is more important than actual involvement.[54] This is supported by our wider data which suggests that many factors other than involvement are stronger drivers of public satisfaction with public services; for example, feeling informed about council services and benefits is a greater driver of satisfaction with councils than involvement.[55]

Bearing in mind the importance of feelings of influence, distinguishing between different types of empowerment may help in understanding the type of relationship that people want with public services. Our data suggests that the type of empowerment that people want in their relationship with public services is probably more *subjective* (feeling able to influence/control/affect a situation) than *de jure* (power manifested in rights provided by law) or *de facto* (actual control or influence over an outcome).[56] Nonetheless, there is a significant minority who do want more active involvement with public services.

54 Duffy, B. et al (2008) Searching for the Impact of Empowerment, Ipsos MORI.

55 Ipsos MORI (2008) What are World Class Public Services, Slide Pack.

56 McLean, S. and Andersson, E. (2009) Activating Empowerment, Ipsos MORI.

5 Improving public services while reducing spending

The quality of public service provision is inevitably shaped by the realities of public spending, whatever the public's expectations. What the public want from public services, and what can be provided are questions that can best be explored by encouraging people to trade off different issues against each other, in order to gain a clear sense of where public priorities lie. This chapter discusses how the public view the need for spending cuts and how they would prioritise budgets if forced to make tough choices on public spending.

While this review has focused initially on public wants, needs and expectations of services and on the type of relationship people say they want with public services, exploring people's attitudes to public spending reveals more about public priorities and helps us to understand what is relatively more important for the provision of public services in future. In health, for example, we know that public expectations of spending on the NHS are high; more than seven in ten people (72%) expect the NHS to provide drugs and treatments irrespective of what they cost (as discussed in Chapter 2). In this instance, public expectation exceeds what is possible, but at the same time gives a good indication of public priorities and how public spending should be prioritised.

Public spending: perceptions versus reality

First of all, it is important to establish the public's awareness of fiscal realities in relation to public services. The public say that the economy is the single most important issue facing Britain today but there appears to be a difference between perceptions of the severity of the economic situation at an individual and a national level. While people express concern about Britain's financial situation, they are much more confident about their personal finances: two thirds (67%) would rate their own financial situation as good, compared to nine per cent who are positive about the British situation[57] and are optimistic that the economy will improve over the next 12 months.[58] This is likely however to reflect a sense among the public that things have got as bad as they are likely to get, rather than pointing to a real sense of optimism for the economic future of the country.

[57] Ipsos MORI Public Spending Monitor (Sept 2009).

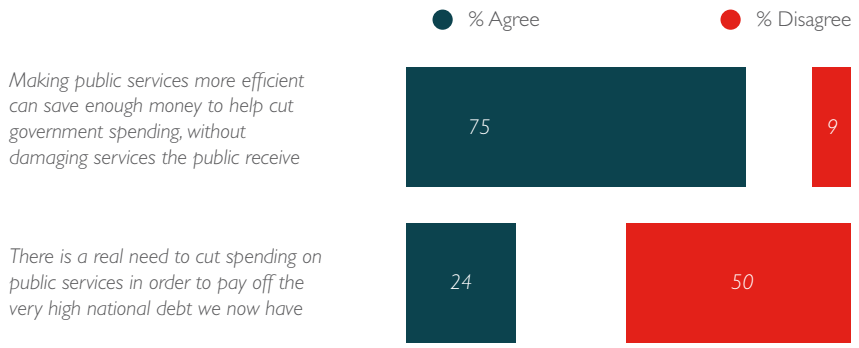
[58] Ipsos MORI Public Spending Monitor (Sept 2009) 43% say they think the economy will improve over the next 12 months, which is the highest measured since the same month 12 years ago, soon after New Labour came to power (Sept 2009).

Despite the widely reported large national debt, only a quarter think that there is a need to cut spending on public services to pay off the national debt (24%), while half do not think that cuts will be necessary (50%). And despite years of budget increases for public services, when asked more generally about spending on public services (rather than focussing on paying off the national debt) half of the country still think that more could be spent (48%).

Instead, more of the public want the spending gap to be closed through efficiency measures, without affecting the delivery of frontline services. Three in four think that public services can be made more efficient without damaging the services the public receive (75%). For the majority of the public, then, 'pain free' spending cuts are preferable – perhaps not surprisingly. However, this is not matched by the growing consensus among economists and politicians that action needs to be taken – and this means spending cuts or tax rises.

Public believe in efficiency savings - not cuts to frontline services

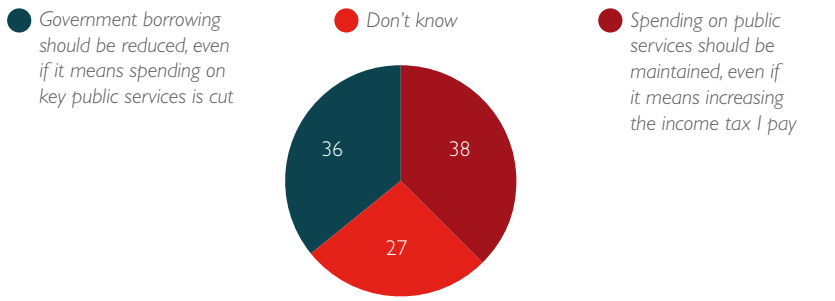
Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about public services in Britain?



Ipsos MORI Base: 1,041 online British adults aged 16-64, September 2009

Public split on hard choices: cut services or raise taxes?

Q Government borrowing is now at record levels, and will need to be reduced in future. Which of these statements comes closest to your own view?



Ipsos MORI Base: 1,041 online British adults aged 16-64, September 2009

Spending cuts or tax rises?

On the question of whether to cut spending or raise taxes, the public is split: roughly a third think that spending on public services should be maintained, even if it means an increase in the taxes they pay (38%), and a similar proportion say that borrowing should be reduced, even if it means that spending on key public services is cut (36%). A further three in ten simply don't know – or don't want to make the decision (27%).

"If you have to tax, don't tax me!"

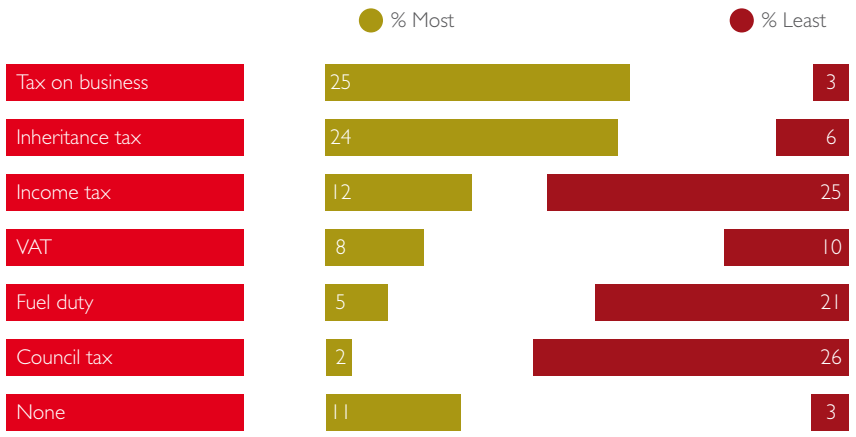
More pertinently, the public as a whole take the view that while some measures may be necessary, it should not be them personally that suffers. If taxes are to increase, self-interest is at the forefront of many people's minds. This means that taxes that affect nearly everyone – income tax, council tax and fuel duty – are much less acceptable candidates for rises than those which affect people indirectly or irregularly such as taxes on businesses and inheritance tax.

What to cut?

If cuts are deemed necessary, the public are adamant that certain services should be ring-fenced. There is a clear public sentiment that the basic frontline provision of services that

If you have to tax, don't tax me!

Q In order to bring the nation's debts under control, many experts think it is highly likely that the level of taxation will increase in future. If taxes were to rise, which of these , if any, would you be most/least in favour of being increased?



Ipsos MORI Base: 1,041 online British adults aged 16-64, September 2009

we all rely on and benefit from – the NHS, schools, care for the elderly and the police – should be sacrosanct. Secondary data backs up the idea that spending cuts to the NHS, local schools and services for elderly people are the least popular and likely to face most public opposition. Conversely, cuts to public services like local public transport, rubbish collection and street cleaning, support/training for the unemployed or for childcare support for working parents are deemed much more publicly acceptable.[59]

If cuts are to take place in core services the public have clear preferences for what should be cut and what should be retained. Public attitudes seem to suggest that services provided for society as a whole should be retained and exempt from cuts. However, any service deemed non-essential, peripheral, or that supports those deemed relatively less deserving or for the benefit of a minority are likely to be deemed acceptable to cut.

Rather than cut spending on the NHS or imposing charges for visiting GPs or hospitals, for example, smokers and the obese should change their lifestyle before being allowed to access treatment. Rather than cutting the number of police, there should be fewer education programmes in prisons. Rather than increasing class sizes, there should be fewer free pre-school places and higher university fees. Of course, if the public are asked directly about their views on these issues without having to trade off, on balance they do not favour preferential treatment for those who lead healthy lifestyles, and they support free pre-school places and low university fees. However, when they are forced to make trade-offs between priorities, these areas emerge as relatively less important to the public than core priorities such as NHS spending, police on the beat and keeping class sizes low.

[59] TNS-BMRB (2009).

This preference for cutting 'other people's' services is apparent on both global and domestic spending. Of all areas of public spending, overseas aid and benefits payments are the public's primary candidates to be cut (although it is unlikely that benefits payments would be such a high priority to be cut if broken down into its constituent parts, and this probably reflects anger at perceived 'benefit scroungers' rather than a desire to, for example, cut child benefit). For many of the public, it is clear that they are happy for savings to be made as long as they don't suffer personally.

Where do we go from here?

There is still a long way to go before the public accepts they will have to change their expectations of public services particularly given the likelihood of public spending cuts. While there has been a marked decline in support for the idea of extending services, a huge majority of the public (79%) remain in favour of either leaving things as they are, or increasing or extending services.[60]

The majority public perception is still that savings can be achieved through efficiencies and the cutting of peripheral services that will not affect core frontline provision. This suggests that the public are either not facing up to or are not aware of the hard choices facing the country.

Understanding spending priorities and how the public make trade-offs may help us understand how the public feel resources can best be allocated. In the case of health, while people are not keen on the idea of those who lead unhealthy lifestyles receiving less preferential treatment than others, it appears that they are willing to

[60] Ipsos MORI (2009) Public Services and Public Spending, RSA Slide Pack.

trade this preference off against more important priorities.

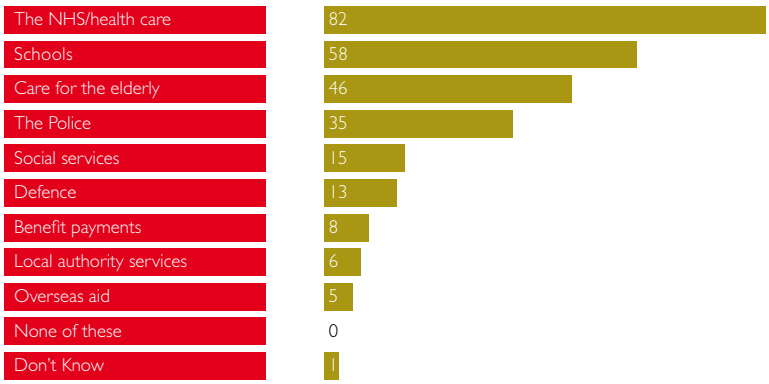
Other previously sacrosanct aspects of the NHS, such as ensuring treatment is free at the point of use, may also come under scrutiny. Interestingly, while the public tend to be averse to the idea of charging for GP appointments and minor or affordable treatments, our qualitative research suggests that older people may be more accepting of this in principle. Charging for minor treatment is also thought to be a way of funding 'ongoing or serious problems like cancer' more effectively.

The idea of co-payment in health, when a patient is treated on the NHS but pays for part of their treatment themselves, is a related form of compromise.[61] While relatively little research has been undertaken into public attitudes to co-payment for services, on the basis of previous deliberative research we would expect people to express a number of concerns about co-payment, particularly relating to the direct impact on their finances and the potential for a two-tier system to be created, where the wealthier can afford treatment and the poorer are left behind. There is a need for more detailed exploration of attitudes to co-payment, as well as wider issues of spending preferences and trade-offs.

Convincing the public of the need for tough choices will require not only an 'adult to adult' conversation; it will also require a clear rationale for cuts, an effective prioritisation of spending cuts when necessary, and reassurances about preserving the quality of services. This may mean negotiating the public's long-held ideal for high-quality services that are 'free at the point of use' and available for all regardless of wealth, and their intrinsic aversion to paying for services for 'other people' (i.e. services that they personally will never use).

...but NHS and schools should be 'ring fenced'

Q Which two or three, if any,of the following main ares of public spending do you think should be protected from any cuts?...



Ipsos MORI Base: All who think some services should be protected (773), June 2009

[61] Asato, J. ed. (2006) Charging Ahead, SMF.

6 Implications for the Commission on 2020 Public Services: a view from Ipsos MORI

What we already know about public wants, needs and expectations...

Public expectations for public services are high, especially for core services to which they have a strong attachment such as the NHS; more than half of the public agree that they now expect more of government than they do of God. It is clear that in difficult economic times, it will simply not be possible for Britain's public services to meet the public's expectations in full. Hard choices will have to be made – but how do the public want priorities to be determined?

The public's priorities for public services can be divided into core priorities, namely **fairness** and a **good basic standard of service provision**, and those which are seen as 'nice to have', such as **local control, personalisation** and **choice. Accountability** is also seen as important in principle, both in the negative sense in which it is more commonly thought of - ensuring that public services deal effectively with situations where things have gone wrong - and in a positive sense, where the focus is on ensuring that outcomes reflect public priorities for services.

Many of these principles are contested. The majority definition of fairness, for example focuses on uniform standards of provision irrespective of who you are or where you live. But fairness for some also means identifying and prioritising those who are most in need of service provision and support. For others it can mean the belief that fair outcomes for all are the most important priority, even if the inputs are different for some groups in society than for others.

It is important to note that there are a number of tensions between these priorities that the public find it difficult to reconcile. For example, the public want public services to be fair – both for their own benefit and for their families', and for the wider good of all members of society – and see this as especially important in core services such as health and education that the vast majority will use over the course of their lives. However, they also recognise that both local control and personalisation of services are likely to mean that service standards and outcomes are not the same everywhere, and find it difficult to square the circle.

...and what we don't

Four knowledge gaps can be identified where less is known about public priorities. These are likely to be worth exploring further as part of the Commission's ongoing work programme, one element of which seeks to explore a new settlement between citizen and public services.

First, what would a supportive, adult-to-adult relationship with public services look like? Existing research suggests that there may be scope for reshaping the relationship with public services towards an adult-adult relationship, where individuals are treated as adults but still receive support from government and services where appropriate. Broadly speaking, there is a desire for a supportive relationship that recognises that different people will want different levels of involvement and engagement with services - although there is a universal need to feel that they ***can*** have influence, should they want to. Moreover, the type of relationship the public want will differ both between and within specific services; for example, many people are happy to have no involvement in setting priorities for waste collection, as long

as their rubbish is taken away every week, but desire more involvement in their children's education or a disabled relative or friend's social care arrangements.

Further work to identify what a supportive relationship with public services would look like for different groups in society, and how public services can best communicate with these different groups as part of this relationship, would potentially be valuable. For example, it would be possible to identify a model of what a 'good' relationship with public services would look like for different groups within the population, and whether there are broad themes that cut across public priorities. How would we feel about public services, and what would we be saying about them, if a supportive, adult-adult relationship were perceived to be in place?

Secondly, what are the public's attitudes to taking greater responsibility for ourselves and our communities? We know that existing evidence suggests a spectrum of engagement with public services, with some groups much more likely to take active responsibility than others. Most still do not get involved, which is unlikely to be enough for government in an 'age of austerity'. More remains to be done in exploring how people can be encouraged to take greater responsibility, in particular how those currently occupying the middle ground – wanting to have a say, but not getting involved in practice – can be encouraged to do so.

Thirdly, existing research tells us that 'feeling informed' is a key driver of satisfaction with public services. Yet the importance of communication and information provision can be lost at times amid the greater policy 'buzz' around issues such as empowerment. How can services create effective information that people pay attention to, use and act on?

Lastly, it is clear that hard choices lie ahead for government about future priorities for Britain's public services, irrespective of which party wins power at the next general election. In this context, building a greater understanding of the public's priorities when presented with 'unpalatable' choices for public services is likely to be important. What can we learn from how the public approach tough trade-offs around issues such as co-payment for services, or taking greater individual and collective responsibility?

Afterword

Julian Thompson, Director of Projects, RSA

The idea of a public actively involved in co-creating their public services is nothing new. And far from being a distant aspiration, it is very much a present reality.

This notion of shared involvement, with its new vocabulary, is sometimes framed in such a way that it is easy to forget a trite, but still powerful truth: that public services are nothing but the product of continuous, complex interactions between citizens.

The (necessary) oversimplification which sets in contrast the roles of *citizen* or *state* masks a richer reality of co-creation. This is the reality of everyday life, where public services only come into relief as people encounter each other in moments of need and in doing so adopt multiple identities, often in parallel: whether as teachers, patients, taxpayers, public sector employees, parents, crime victims, nurses, residents, litter louts, politicians, carers or countless others.

Every such interaction defines and shapes not only public services as they *are* but, to some extent, as they *will* be. The expectations and norms we build up in one encounter are carried into future ones, to continually shape the reality. Co-creation is the norm, not the exception. Rather like Molière's gentleman – who happily proclaims that "for more than forty years I have been speaking prose without knowing it" – this is a cause for celebration and optimism.

Reframed in this way, we are not trying to understand how to coax a recalcitrant public into something that looks and feels new and alien to them. Instead we realise that it is a case of enriching an existing set of practices - as the report's foreword puts it, "to realise citizens' potential".

If citizens are already co-creating their services through dialogue, (e.g. exchanging information between doctor and patient, or teacher and parent) how can we make this dialogue more fluent and balanced, more informative and beneficial?

If they are also doing so through activity and effort (e.g. applying expertise to fix a problem) how could this be enhanced and made more productive?

At the RSA we share the analysis of the 2020 Trust and Ipsos MORI, that the forthcoming spending squeeze represents both an imperative and an opportunity.

We must be more vigorous than we have been up to now in tapping the latent human potential of the system. Whereas the last decade of massive investment in public services could arguably have allowed us to tolerate some slack, the present state of the deficit and all that it implies for future funding means that this neglect is a luxury we can no longer afford.

Humans are by nature highly adaptive, and no doubt our society will adapt as best it can to its changing circumstances, as it has on many occasions before. But by tapping into hidden reserves of social productivity we may be able to at least minimise the pain, and maximise the benefits of adapting to a new settlement for public services.

Ipsos MORI's report gives us many clues as to where these reserves, if indeed they exist, may lie. But it also gives us some reasons to debate the value of what we may find, if not the value of the undertaking itself.

Firstly, we should to some extent take the public's concerns and priorities at face value. The argument - currently popular in the world of policy reform - that devolution, localisation, choice and variation is the way forward is clearly not one that is embraced by the majority of the public, beyond a rather tokenistic acceptance of the principle.

Ipsos MORI show that the majority of the public want services of a uniform quality, with universal, fair access and consistent provision - at least for those they regard as "core" services. Deliberation and information provision to challenge this position (e.g. the rising costs of care, local variations in service needs) may shift some sentiment, and the report's authors rightly argue that this case must be made more strongly. But ultimately people are moved by a combination of evidence and action. People need to see not just in theory, but in practice, how a devolved government and empowered citizenry would deliver better services than they enjoy today.

Secondly, choice and local variation are already facts on the ground, even if not in the ways intended by policy reformers. Local networks, grapevines and know-how will always channel information and inform choices about the best local GPs' surgeries, schools and other public services. Postcode lotteries are already a fact of life, as are the wide variety of personal strategies that citizens may use to make the best of their choices and assets. Again, we must start from where people are, and use this knowledge to everyone's advantage.

Thirdly, we need to recognise that not everything needs to be devolved and co-designed. There are still domains of expertise (e.g. equipping an Intensive Care Unit) in which user voice is at best redundant, and at worst inefficient or downright dangerous. In such cases, services can and should be left to draw on their technical expertise, albeit within an ac-

countable framework. Similarly there are perhaps some types of service provision (e.g. defence, public utilities, prisons) and some aspects of this provision (e.g. hard infrastructure, procurement) that are better conducted under central planning and control. The case is compounded when we consider the 'burnout' effect that too much deliberation can impose on individuals.[62]

Fourthly, as the report points out, talk of government encouraging 'adult' behaviour among citizens cuts both ways. Authorities must undertake joint service design in a genuine spirit of openness, uncertainty, devolution and partnership, without violating people's trust by conducting pseudo-dialogue with largely pre-determined outcomes. This is easier said than done. With a 24 hour news cycle hungry for political stories, the notion that government can lay bare its inner workings and invite the public to debate them without potentially serious fallout would require a major culture change.

But with these caveats in mind, Ipsos MORI's analysis suggests some possible paths to unlocking the potential of our public services. Below we outline what these might be, and where we at the RSA, in partnership with the 2020 Public Services Trust, are looking to trial them for real.

Ways to unlock civic potential

User-led Design

Whilst, as we have said, our system of public services is currently derived from constant acts of co-creation between citizens in society, it is not necessarily designed to *optimise* collaboration between agents. The default design, part-planned and part-emergent, may often place the provider institution and its needs, inputs, outputs and outcomes at the centre, rather than the priorities and needs of the service users.

A key part in any design process is to understand the current context and patterns of usage. How are the dynamics between services and their users historically and culturally constituted? Who are the key agents in the system? What are their strategies and tools? Methods such as ethnography and systems mapping can help to identify differences between agents' maps of the territory and thereby shift the centre of gravity away from the institution and towards the intended beneficiary.

As a result, user-led design, and the policies that flow from a user-centred approach, including 'effective choice' (e.g. personal budgets) may encourage better, more balanced dialogues, interactions and outcomes for the user as a result.

Motivation

Another dimension to unlocking co-creative potential is a strong understanding of citizens' motivations. It is not enough to say to citizens – to crudely paraphrase Ipsos MORI's much more nuanced analysis - that they must in effect grow up and be more 'adult' in

[62] John, P., Smith, G. and Stoker, G. (2009) 'Nudge Nudge, Think Think: Two Strategies for Changing Civic Behaviour' available at www.civicbehaviour.org.

their dealings with public services. While they like the idea of being more involved in civic life, the research shows that most people in reality hope someone else will do their civic work for them, and only a tiny fraction go out of their way to do so.[63]

Rather than bemoan this ambivalence and resultant 'lack of engagement', we must start where people are, and go with the grain of what motivates them. The research shows us that engagement can be strongly motivated when certain conditions are met such as immediacy (geographically and temporally); personal relevance and direct impact; a sense of efficacy and influence; interest; time and low barriers to involvement.[64]

Obviously the importance of these factors will be significantly shaped by people's personalities, demographics and lifecourse (e.g. interest in education when children are starting school) as well as externalities (e.g. a sudden onset of a chronic illness or the loss of a job).

We might infer from this that to motivate greater involvement in shaping services, we could develop loose demographic and interest-related typologies, on which to build engagement strategies, whilst at the same time amplifying the strength of the natural 'attractors' people feel towards getting involved at particular times in their lives. Where possible, when the motivation is strong, services need to try to connect a specific motivation into something wider: for example, connecting someone's interest in their child's school into wider children's facilities or local learning and education.

Attachment

One mechanism to amplify and extend motivation in this way is through what we might call 'attachment'. By creating links to other higher order needs and interests we might start to create a less sectional, and more vibrant civic life.

By attaching people more strongly to a sense of place, or to institutions, or to other individuals and networks, we can start to create the foundations for a resilient civic life. Attachment comes through bonds of reciprocity, trust and fellow-feeling which takes time and effort to develop and sustain.[65] This requires a socially-minded approach, for example by mapping, analysing and stimulating social networks, rather than a purely economic or political one. In this way people may start to build attachments, interests and motivation to engage with issues and people outside their own immediate sphere of self-interest.[66]

To build attachment to abstract concepts such as a place (e.g. a city, a county) may require a cultural approach, for example by harnessing the arts as a force for positive social change. François Matarasso for one has suggested that engagement in the arts opens routes into

[63] Only 5% want more involvement in public services. 47% just want more information. Ipsos MORI (2009) 'Understanding Society' London: Ipsos MORI.

[64] See CLEAR framework. Lowndes, V., Pratchett, I. and Stoker, G. (2006) 'Diagnosing and remedying the failings of official participation schemes: the CLEAR framework' Social Policy and Society, 5, 281:291.

[65] Putnam, R. (2000) '*Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American community*' New York: Simon and Schuster.

[66] *Putnam, R. (2000) ibid*

wider democratic processes and encourages people to take part in their community more widely.[67] Likewise, Korpela contends that activities like the arts can generate 'self-esteem' and a pride of place which provides individuals with a stake in their local area.[68]

Participation

A variety of activities involving active participation help to generate new connections between social networks, while structuring the process of engagement itself in a beneficial way. Methods can range from formal methods such as deliberative workshops or Town Hall meetings, to less structured support groups or social media spaces. Authorities need to create a rich enough variety of these social spaces to encourage and channel involvement productively.

Innovation

Ultimately, these kinds of activity must be leading towards beneficial outcomes. In many cases it may not be possible or worthwhile trying to anticipate these outcomes. However, at a minimum, activities should be guided by a broad hypothesis of what they intend to achieve. Here again the Ipsos MORI research helps us. For example, it tells us that subjective feelings of efficacy, rather than theoretical or actual ones can be more significant in driving satisfaction. If genuine service improvement is sought alongside perceived satisfaction something more is required: a real, public commitment to improvement and clear signalling of what the terms of engagement are between all parties concerned (i.e. central and/or local government, private and voluntary sectors, service providers, private citizens) so that the co-creation is real and no one feels disappointed or duped.

Information

Cutting across all these elements is the need for a continuous flow of information from, to and between service providers and users. Information about performance, perception and anecdotal experience provides rich feedback which sustains a process of continuous evolution and co-production.

Information in this process should act as both a "primer" to attract people towards involvement (e.g. by making them aware of opportunities to help their local school) and an enabler to support and maintain this activity. Research by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit on behavioural change theories has shown that well-informed feedback on an individual's actions can result in greater levels of self-efficacy which ultimately acts as a strong motivator for participation.[69]

Social media, open data and data visualisation provide powerful tools for genuine multi-partner dialogue and co-production in a way that has not been previously possible. Free websites that can host all published data as well as immediate user feedback provides total transparency and therefore the basis for the kind of "adult-adult" relationship the Ipsos MORI research advocates in many cases. In Victoria, Australia, for example, an online

---

67 See Corcoran's research in European cities. Corcoran, M. P. (2002) 'Place attachment and community sentiment in marginalised neighbourhoods: a European case study', *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, Vol 11, no. 1.

68 Matarasso, F., (1997) *Use or Ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts.* London: Comedia.

69 Korpela, K.M. (1989) 'Place-identity as a product of environmental self-regulation.' *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 9: 241-256.

visual mapping tool (http://www.vic.gov.au/visualplace/map.html) displays GIS data from education to transport. Closer to home, the establishment of data.gov has made public service data visualisation a real possibility.

Roles

In all these elements, authorities and service providers must identify the right 'political' stance to adopt depending on the expectations of the stakeholders concerned. Acting in either Parent, Adult, or even Child role will determine the extent or balance of enabling, educating, encouraging, regulating or enforcing activities that are conducted.

Doing it for real

So much for the theory. Working together the RSA and 2020 Public Services Trust believe strongly in testing academic ideas and abstract concepts in the real world to see what benefit they can bring to society.

As part of the RSA's research programme RSA Projects and Fellowship will be working over the next two years with 2020 Public Services Trust, Peterborough City Council and the Arts Council East to put many of these ideas into practice. We will be running a programme of experimental projects to enhance civic capability and improve services in Peterborough, based in part on these civic development principles.

Projects will include the development of a locally specific, user-led drug and alcohol rehabilitation service; the creation of an area-based educational curriculum that involves the whole city in the education of its school children; and a major local campaign to reduce waste, boost recycling and encourage sustainability. These and other projects will be underpinned by the use of social media to provide informative feedback, and a strong programme of public arts activities to cultivate attachment to the area and encourage active participation.[70]

This programme, entitled Citizen Power: Peterborough, will set out to answer the questions Ipsos MORI pose at the end of this report. What would an adult-adult relationship look like? What is the public's appetite for more active and explicit co-creation of services? What is the best way to provide information to link people up and empower them to act on what matters?

Whether or not they will work remains to be seen. Much of what may happen cannot be anticipated. But the promise of new kinds of social innovation and productivity, based on what people truly want, need and expect from their public services, makes it an exciting prospect.

---

[70] Halpern, D., Bates, C., Mulgan, G., Aldridge, S., Beales, G. & Heathfield, A. (2004) Personal Responsibility and Changing Behaviour: the state of knowledge and its implications for public policy. London, Cabinet Office: Prime Minister's Strategy Unit

2020 Public Services Trust
at the RSA

2020 Public Services Trust, RSA, 8 John Adam Street, London, WC2N 6EZ
telephone: 020 7451 6962 | charity no: 1124095 | www.2020pst.org

RSA Projects