

Transformational Government Consultation

Response from London Borough of Brent

We agree with and fully support the key concepts of the strategy and look forward to the establishment of a firm sense of direction for IT in all aspects of government in the UK.

We have the following areas of concern -

1. Emphasis on central government

At present the strategy seems to be oriented towards central government with only the occasional reference to local government and other public sector agencies.

Delivery of many central government services directly involves local government, health and the voluntary sector. A comprehensive strategy needs to encompass the whole range of public sector organisations.

2. Recognition of developments in local government and health

Over the last 5 years there has been considerable development and innovation in the local government and health sectors and there could be more recognition of the need to build on these and exploit them in the next phase.

In particular there is a need to get these initiatives joined up and interconnected. This will require appropriate standards to be formulated and enforced - in this context we regret the recent disbandment to the Local e-Government Standards Body.

3. Data sharing issues

We need to address the serious issues around data sharing in the public sector. Citizen and Business centric services just will not happen unless the current barriers to data sharing have been resolved. Previous attempts (such as the Performance and Innovation Unit Report and the ODPM Data Sharing Task Force have come to nothing). The differing views on the data protection issues are creating confusion and need to be resolved.

4. Systems integration

Real citizen and business centric services will not happen unless central/local government back offices systems are integrated. That integration cannot happen unless software suppliers open up their applications so that databases can be read and updated. The Adapters Club has tried and so far failed to resolve these issues. What we need is central government to take the lead and specify that all relevant public sector applications must have generic adapters with realistic costs. Currently some suppliers are charging each local authority more than £60k per adapter leading to unacceptable costs to fully integrate the key back office systems.

5. Connectivity

There is a need for clarity and standards for future public sector IT connectivity particularly between central and local government and the NHS. This will need funding support for local government similar to that provided for N3 in the NHS.

A common, standardised approach to a secure infrastructure (particularly for email and wireless) would be helpful.

6. Shared Services

This area needs more definition in relation to local government. There could be more emphasis on the opportunities for greater standardisation and efficiencies on a regional basis. Shared services potentially includes links between central and local government not just between local authorities.

7. Customer Need

There could be more consideration given to the requirements and mechanisms for identifying what our customers want and how we will provide services to them on both central and local levels.

8. Skills and competencies

We fully support the idea of some sort of accredited public sector skills framework but this area of the strategy primarily addresses issues regarding central government and there needs to be an equivalent vision for local government.

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