Putting people at the heart of public services
Now, on the basis of clear progress, is the time to accelerate reform. In simple terms, recasting the 1945 welfare state to end entirely the era of “one size fits all” services and put in place modern services which maintain at their core the values of equality of access and opportunity for all: base the service around the user, a personalised service with real choice, greater individual responsibility and high standards, and ensure in so doing that we keep our public services universal.

We are proposing to put an entirely different dynamic in place to drive our public services: one where the service will be driven not by the managers but by the user – the patient, the parent, the pupil, and law abiding citizen. 

Speech by the Prime Minister on public services, St Thomas's Hospital, 23 June 2004
The quality of public services are critical to all our lives. In an increasingly complex world, these services face big challenges. The argument of this leaflet is that we can face these challenges with confidence, born of significant progress in recent years, but that we can only meet those challenges with new relationships between central Government, local Government and the frontline.

This leaflet is designed to help develop that relationship. It is aimed at public service managers and outlines the Government’s strategy for the next phase of reform. It recognises the progress that has been made and explains how we want to deliver a more personal approach to services, one that is grounded on principles of:

- universal provision with personalised delivery;
- high standards flexibly delivered; and
- equity and choice.
We believe that by bringing together these features, our services will be fit to serve the diverse and changing needs of our citizens. I am proud of our public services. The hard work, and skill of public service staff should be an inspiration. The challenge now is to build upon this to deliver services of which we all can be even more proud.

David Miliband, MP
Minister for the Cabinet Office
Introduction

Following the Five Year Service Strategies published in July 2004, 1 a series of cross-sector seminars to discuss the next phase of reform were held with senior managers, chief executives chief constables, and head teachers. This leaflet outlines some of the main themes important to Government and managers working in public services as they meet the challenges posed by a greater emphasis on personalisation, flexibility, equity and choice.


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built on that vision of reform, highlighting four key principles: national standards; devolution; flexibility and choice. To communicate the implications of these principles in practice, *Leading from the Front Line* (2003) gave some case examples of innovative public services.

Performance data and inspection results provide clear evidence of dramatic success in improving public services, but this needs to go further. Surveys tell us that some of the public and service users do not yet recognise how much has been achieved. This may be due to an inevitable lag in perception, but it also argues for an emphasis on values and the importance of people’s experience and that satisfaction with local services is much higher than it is nationally, for example, 78% say they are satisfied with their GP in their local area, compared with 70% satisfied with GPs nationally. Similar findings are true of all public services.

To put people at the heart of public services we need further reform based on the principles of universal provision with personalised delivery; high standards which are flexibly delivered; and greater equity through choice. These inter-related principles are discussed in this leaflet.
The core values

Public service managers tell us that they share the Government’s ambitions for public services and believe in the values that underpin them:

- A belief in fairness and equity. Experience shows that equity does not result from giving everyone the same uniform service. Individuals do not start off with the same opportunities, so it is essential that specific support is provided for those who are particularly disadvantaged. This does not just mean how we distribute resources, where such difference has long been recognised, but also in the nature of the services offered to different people.

- A responsibility to make sure that every service does its best for each and every individual. Every provider must operate to clear standards, and be open and honest about its performance.

- A commitment to enable people to take decisions about the services they want, helping them to make choices between various options.
• A recognition that to achieve their wider social outcomes, individuals using public services have to take personal responsibility – for learning, for looking after their health, for taking care of their neighbourhoods.

• In order to offer a wider range of personalised services, public service organisations need to have more control over their management. They need the flexibility to join up with other organisations and to be able to attract and reward people with the right skills and attitudes.
Investment and reform

Sustained increases in investment have greatly increased the capacity of public services, with, for example, 77,500 more nurses and 28,500 more teachers than eight years ago, and new IT systems, premises and equipment. Major increases have been sustained for over five years and public investment plans have been set out for another three. It will continue to provide the resources for this next phase of reform.

Real growth in public spending Annual % growth in Total Managed Expenditure

Government Expenditure on Public Services 2003/4 – 2005/6, HM Treasury
Progress

There is widespread and significant progress in achieving public service delivery targets.

In health, doctor and nurse numbers are rising significantly. Deaths from heart disease are down by 27% and cancer mortality by 12%. Waiting lists are down by 300,000 since 1997. Waits of more than nine months have been virtually eliminated.

In education, teacher numbers are up, and literacy and numeracy have improved. GCSE results are the best ever and record numbers are going on to further and higher education.

Overall crime, as measured by the British Crime Survey is falling and the steep rise in robbery which took place in 2000–2002 has been reversed. Problems of course remain with violent crime and drugs, but the chances of being a victim of crime are the lowest since 1981.

All of this lays the foundation for further radical reform.
Putting people at the heart of public services – what this means for public service managers

The investment and energy already directed into improving public services has built the base from which they can be transformed for the future. Public services should be available universally, but each customer should receive a personalised service. High national standards must be maintained as control is devolved locally. And there must be equity in giving users choices about where, when, how and from whom they receive their services. There are, of course, tensions and challenges here when set against traditional ways of providing services. However, there are already excellent examples of the vision working in practice, providing positive outcomes for those using, working in, and leading our public services.

Universal provision with personalised delivery

Our public services need to be there for the whole population. From criminal justice to social services to education and the NHS, our entitlement as citizens is services based on need. The challenge is to tailor those services to needs that are increasingly diverse.

This is the essential shift from the post war welfare state; from services designed to meet common needs of groups of people to services designed to meet particular needs of individual pupils and patients; from services that assumed the people would take what they are given to services that increasingly give people choice; from services that were governed by the decisions and customs of providers to services geared to the lives of citizens.
Ninestiles school is an inner city technology college with 1500 pupils, aged 11–18. The school has Leading Edge status and is a key partner in a three-school federation led by Sir Dexter Hutt. It has successfully increased its 5 A*– C GCSE results from 6% in 1988 to 75% in 2003 and the school has driven the change process through a number of strategies focusing on the core elements of effective teaching and learning, assessment for learning and curriculum entitlement and choice. This is combined with a service approach to pupils: as Sir Dexter says ‘We never think they have to come here’. Underpinning this, there is a rigorous, consistent and fair behaviour policy to ensure that pupils are safe and secure and that learning can take place effectively.

**Behaviour for Learning (BFL)** is a very transparent, focused, whole school discipline policy and lies at the heart of the school ethos. It was introduced to enable excellent learning to take place, at a time when pupils’ attainment was low and behaviour poor. The system has
clear boundaries and there are four levels of ‘consequences’ if the rules are broken. The policy also highlights the use of praise which is also given as a consequence of pupils’ actions. BFL is a powerful tool for getting members of the school community to respect each other. Because it is so fair, clear and consistent, pupils and parents strongly support the policy.

**Extensive use of ICT** – The Anytime Anywhere Learning (AAL) programme provides most pupils with leased personal laptop computers to enable them to tap into school resources, at any time and no matter when or where they are. Staff believe that this approach has increased pupil confidence and creativity, broadened thinking skills, encouraged independent learning, developed staff skills and embedded ICT into the curriculum. Staff and pupils believe that AAL is a key factor in their school’s success.

**Collaboration** – Being a key member of a federation of three schools has provided Ninestiles with opportunities for broadening curriculum choice, for teachers to work together across the schools and benefit from increased CPD, for sharing expertise and resources and participation in joint thinking. Federation has led to significant improvements in the two other schools this year.

These and other strategies combine to create a school where pupils are encouraged to learn and where excellent standards of behaviour lead to outstanding attainment.
High standards flexibly delivered

Clear accountability for delivering national standards has been fundamental in helping to drive up the performance of services over the last seven years.

- Cardiac deaths have fallen by 23%.
- Primary school standards have improved faster than in any other country.
- The package of new deals for the unemployed have helped over a million people into work.

This experience has shown that to achieve higher standards overall, managers and professionals need to combine clarity about standards and benchmarks of performance with the flexibility to cater to particular local and individual circumstances. It requires freedom to shape services around users, innovating to meet their needs. To bring this about, there will need to be intelligent accountability for managers delivering the service, and greater flexibility about ways of working, including new ways of working together with new types of provider from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Creative solutions are needed to deliver national priorities so that they are responsive to local circumstances.

The relationship between central and local delivery will be key to creating this circle of improvement. Policy development, target-setting, communicating with citizens and the public, advising ministers – will be done more effectively with the contribution of experts from local delivery as well as the centre. Streamlined planning, funding and delivery and lighter touch inspection will all help.
Social Enterprise Zone gives Government agencies local flexibility

Britain’s first Social Enterprise Zone (SEZ) has brought together local residents and public service staff to find innovative solutions to help people into work and out of poverty in London’s East End. A concept developed by the charity Community Links, the SEZ in the Forest Gate and Plaistow areas of Newham promotes social enterprise by freeing the community from rules and regulations thought to be obstructing it. It works along similar lines to the idea of Business Enterprise Zones. It was set up to reverse the fact that only 2% of spending by public agencies in Newham were ‘regenerative’, as revealed by research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1998).

The project employed a tool called ‘What if …’ to gather experience from residents and front-line staff from Jobcentre Plus and the Inland Revenue about what they would like to see if they let their imaginations run wild. Participants were invited to design and test changes to regulations and services and to pioneer new ways of working that would foster enterprise and reduce dependency. The SEZ made extensive use of Public Service agreements in order to demonstrate how their ideas could help Government meet its own objectives.

For example, a service staffed by volunteers helped claimants to fill in benefit claim forms at four local Jobcentre Plus offices. In two years, more than 1,800 people were helped to complete their benefits claims accurately and promptly. The staff time freed up was able to be directed to more positive support, with the result that Newham’s Jobcentres achieved the highest proportion of clients entering work in the country. The positive results have helped Jobcentre Plus to develop a national scheme to help people from minority ethnic communities into work.
Neighbourhood policing in Merseyside

In 2001 a survey of 12,000 residents revealed that, despite impressive results in reducing crime, confidence and satisfaction with the Merseyside Police was at an all-time low. In response, the service introduced a new style of neighbourhood policing to re-engage with the public.

Officers are deployed in dedicated teams in each of forty-three neighbourhoods. An Inspector is in charge of each neighbourhood team and personally accountable for policing his/her particular local community. Priority was given not only to burglary and the crimes reported to the Home Office, but the crimes that are just as real to local residents – abandoned vehicles, scrambler bike noise, graffiti and loutish behaviour. The Inspector is, in effect, their local ‘Chief Constable’ who will try to address all of those problems through a team typically consisting of three sergeants and sixteen constables, as well as community support officers.

The aim is to give residents in Merseyside a familiar and reassuring local police service, empowering communities to determine policing priorities. To achieve this, the force needed to change its structure and systems completely, and to focus performance measures on public satisfaction and confidence.

In the last three years, crime has not only been reduced, but surveys have shown increases in public satisfaction. Robbery has reduced by 25% and vehicle theft has reduced by 24%. Street interview surveys have shown levels of confidence and satisfaction in the police have risen by 10%.
Equity and Choice

The Government is committed to excellence and equity in our public services. The means to promote equity are varied; they require the engagement of the public – their voice and choice. Extending choice can both improve service quality and be the catalyst for greater equity. Choice isn’t being offered as an alternative to ‘a good local service’ – it is a means of helping to secure it.

This means offering a real say over the type of services the public want, as well as where, when, how and from whom they receive them. It also means a new way of working between the public and the providers of the service. There will be a greater responsibility on the individual for the decisions about their health, education and way of life..

Choice is already proving a successful mechanism for improving the quality of public services, for example choice of hospitals for important surgery in the NHS and choice based lettings in social housing. Research demonstrates public support for Choice (NCC’s Independent Policy Commission on Public Services, 2004), with evidence that lower socio-economic groups show the greatest support for increased choice (Audit Commission, 2004). Voice and choice are also shown to reinforce each other, rather than being in opposition (NLGN, 2004), drawing on examples such as direct payments and choice-based lettings in local Government. Indeed, the most disadvantaged are often worst served by a standardised service. Research by the SMF (2004) makes a positive case for choice, drawing on national and international evidence.
To ensure that choice delivers benefits for everyone, users must be able to get hold of reliable information, help must be available to guide them through decisions, and real alternatives need to be in place. Offering meaningful alternatives to users will allow new providers, from the public, private and voluntary and community sectors, to put forward new ideas and challenge existing ways of doing things.
Further Education in North East Sheffield

North East Sheffield is a deprived part of the city, with low numbers of students remaining in education beyond the age of 16 and more aspirant parents making the choice to send their children to other parts of the city for better educational provision. For the last seven years Sheffield City Council had been working to address serious challenges facing schools in the area, including the creation of a very successful Fresh Start school. The last piece in this jigsaw was to address the limited choice in the area for those at 16.

The Council attended to this by working jointly with all the stakeholders to garner support and build consensus for post-16 educational provision in this part of the city over a two year period. Though not without detractors, the Council worked with the Learning and Skills Council, local schools, parents and students in the area and local community organisations, particularly those working actively in regeneration.

The result of this endeavour has been Longley Park Sixth Form College and, through this, a significant impact on the aspiration to transform low staying-on rates at the age of 16. By giving parents and students choice, in the first year of operation, stay on rates from the local family of schools supporting the College rose significantly, and in two schools this was up by more than 20%.

The College attracts students from around the city and has a mixed academic and ethnic profile. It enjoys the commitment and support of parents, teachers and students who all feel a sense of ownership and pride in the College.
“You don’t realise what you have until it’s gone, she says.
I enjoy seeing bright colours around me again and being able to drive when I want.”
Offering Choice to patients

After waiting six months for a cataract operation at her local hospital, 81-year-old Kathleen Preston, from South Woodford, was given the choice of being treated more quickly at another hospital in London under the London Patient Choice Project.

A week after choosing to go for treatment at St Mary’s Hospitals NHS Trust, Kathleen had her pre-op assessment with her cataract operation being carried out the week after that. A patient care advisor talked her through the options and also organised free transport for all her visits.

Since August 2004, all patients waiting longer than six months for an operation have been offered a choice of an alternative place of treatment.

From December 2005, all patients needing elective treatment will be offered a choice of four or five hospitals once their GP has decided that a referral is required. These could be NHS trusts, foundation trusts, treatment centres, private hospitals or practitioners with a special interest operating within primary care. This is called ‘choose and book’.

As well as choosing where they go, patients will be able to choose when, thanks to a national electronic booking programme. Appointments can be made at the GP’s surgery, by calling a contact centre, online and eventually via digital television.
Conclusion

This leaflet is part of a continuing programme of communication with key managers of public services and those responsible for the policies that affect them. The principles set out here are those the Government intends to shape the next stage of the reform of public services. It recognises the need to enlist the support of managers in translating these values and principles into practical improvements in people’s experience of service delivery. It is crucial that staff see this agenda as their own, and materials will be developed that are targeted to a wider public service audience.

Further information is available at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/opsr