Minister for the Cabinet Office John Hutton today made the case for further reform of public services to achieve social justice and equality of opportunity.

He announced a possible new way of measuring how well public services satisfy their customers, a project to be taken forward by the Cabinet Office.

He also announced a review of the Charter Mark scheme to recognise good customer service.

Addressing the Social Market Foundation in a speech entitled ‘Making public services serve the public’ he made the following points:

- The public services of the post-war welfare state brought great advances, but have not been responsive enough to tackle some of the social divisions in our society - in certain areas opportunity gap between rich and poor is actually widening. That is why the Government must continue to transform public services.

- Where the Government has broken down the old, monolithic model of public services it is succeeding in delivering better services for the socially disadvantaged.

- Now the Government can either truly embrace the goals of social justice in the twenty first century and be at ease with the modern world around us; seizing the opportunity to harness and manage the modern tools of competition and choice to create a public service delivery system capable of delivering levels of social justice and equality of opportunity that have always eluded us

- Or it can retrench – adopting a programme and a rhetoric that seeks to shield people from change by taking refuge in the language, structures and institutions of the past that are increasingly irrelevant to the modern world

- Empowering public service users themselves is an essential part of that - that is why the Government must now focus on customer satisfaction as a key driving force in public service improvement.

- Individual public services are investing more resources into measuring and improving customer satisfaction, but there is currently lack of a way of comparing customer satisfaction across the range of public services.
I can announce today that the Cabinet Office is exploring the possibility of developing a new standard measurement system that can identify, and then track, how satisfied customers are with the public services they get. If it can construct a successful model, this will be a powerful force for change from the ground up – showing which areas of public services are leading the way in providing a good service to customers and which need to improve.

And I will go further in spreading best practice in customer service across the public services. I have today appointed Bernard Herdan, Chief Executive of the Passport Agency to build on the success of the existing Charter Mark scheme, working with the Cabinet Office, to set new standards of excellence for services to aim at. Under Mr Herdan’s leadership, the Passport Agency shook off its troubled service history and now consistently beats the very best of the private sector in customer satisfaction surveys.

Full copies of the speech can be found at www.smf.co.uk
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