

THE COLLABORATIVE CITIZEN

REPORT 2014



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The independent survey data contained in this report was prepared by Ipsos MORI, who interviewed a representative sample of 985 adults aged 15+ across Great Britain. Interviews were conducted face-to-face between 31 January - 6 February 2014. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population.



ABOUT COLLABORATE

Collaborate is an independent CIC based at London South Bank University that promotes effective and sustainable collaboration between the public, business and social sectors to secure improvements in public service outcomes, build sustainable communities and foster a strong civil society.

Collaborate has been established as a place for creative thinking, policy development and practical action. We aim to be a centre of leadership and skills development and a 'shared space' for conversation, debate and problem solving between the business, social and public sectors. You can find out more about Collaborate at www.collaboratei.com

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THE COLLABORATIVE CITIZEN AND SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC

**LORD VICTOR ADEBOWALE & DR HENRY KIPPIN,
MARCH 2014**

This report is an important intervention at a critical time for public policy. It highlights the voices of citizens in a debate that is dominated by public finance and rising service demand. It is a debate in which we are crying out for long-term thinking that matches the scale of the challenges ahead.

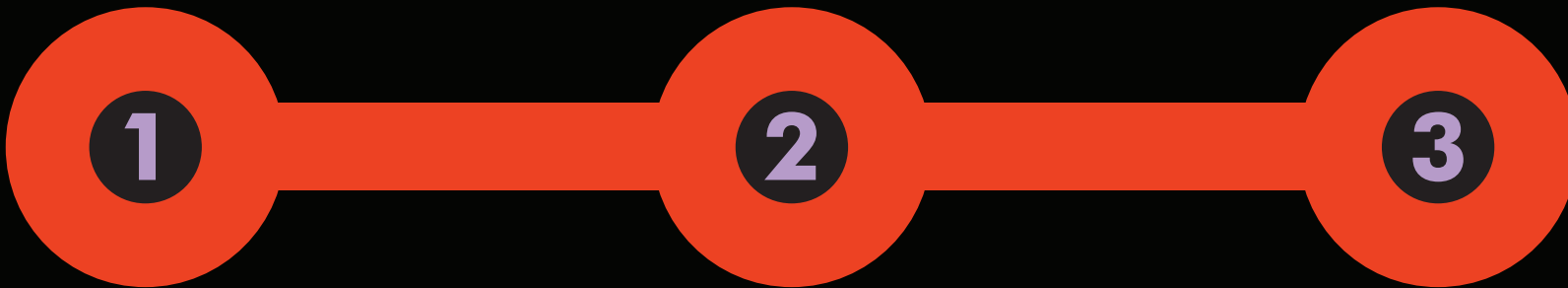
We think that this long-term thinking should be centred around collaboration for better outcomes – with and between citizens, across service silos, and between sectors of the economy that have too long behaved as adversaries, rather than allies of the public. What we argue – drawing on the findings of new and important Ipsos MORI citizen survey research – is that we need a new system of ‘services to the public’ that has the collaborative citizen at its heart. We use the term ‘services to the public’ markedly and deliberately, because debates on public service reform are too narrow, and too constrained by short-term agendas for efficiency and improvement. The problems faced by society are multi-layered and complex. They require us to get beyond linear notions of change, think outside the service lens, and

embrace what the sociologist Richard Sennett has called our ‘capacity to co-operate in complex ways’.¹

‘Services to the public’ is a way of signifying such an approach, and Collaborate was established to explore this territory. We focus on thinking, culture and practice because it is not enough to think creatively about the future; we also need to make it happen through changing culture and practice today. It all needs to start with citizens. So what are they telling us? The following pages set this out in some detail. We think that three strong implications emerge.

1. Sennett, R. (2012) *Together*. London: Allen Lane





Citizens' notions of 'public good' appear increasingly out of step with reforms being made to our current public service model. New social risks cut across traditional sectors, and service provision is not keeping pace. Without rethinking how we work together against shared goals, we risk further marginalising communities and atrophying public value.

Citizens want to be treated as human beings: with dignity, respect, competence and understanding. In public services, both state and market are falling short against this goal – particularly for those already at the sharp end of society. Future providers of 'services to the public' should be held to account by these processes and outcomes. This is just as important as cost and risk to future sustainability.

The Collaborative Citizen is alive and well – but policymakers and public service providers don't know how to engage her. We need new partnerships and a focus on relationships and engagement to leverage the public's skills, energy and capability. This is not about pulling back or 'letting go' – but getting serious about investing early and co-producing to turn today's service demand into tomorrow's social capital.

THE FUNDAMENTAL CHOICES AHEAD

The findings above pose some fundamental challenges and present a fork in the road for policymakers, public managers and practitioners. Ignore their implications, and we risk heading into a future in which the role and purpose of the state, market and society is transformed – but not in ways we would recognise as progressive.

CHOICE 1 – the Path of Least Resistance?

The risk of sustaining the status quo is immense. Professor Mariana Mazzucato was on to something when she asserted that we have “socialised the risk and privatised the rewards” of innovation.² Perhaps the same could be said for public services, fiddling while Rome burns as society and economy change rapidly around a foundational yet creaking model that was designed for another time. As reform agendas look further inwards, the worst case scenario is that public services will be forced into retreat to rump provision of a steadily decreasing set of entitlements, with quality eroded and welfare further stigmatised. Far from being ‘locked in’, social gains go quickly into reverse.

The public service market doesn’t work. It is dominated by too few players, it is too resistant to social innovation, and it systematically shifts unacceptable levels of social risk to the citizens and communities that can least bear it.³ The state’s moral high ground is similarly suspect. Top-down policy is still largely designed behind closed doors amidst the dying embers of the same New Public Management framework that has reduced people to ‘econs’, playing out the designs of those seeking to lever change from the comfort of government departments.⁴

In the post-crisis world, reform is framed almost exclusively in terms of the financial bottom line. This has created massive – but myopic – imperatives for change based on efficiency, productivity and cost control. Where local actors have improved social outcomes through collaboration, creativity and innovation, they have worked against the grain, in spite of vested interest, and outside the mainstream.

2. Mazzucato, M. (2013) *The Entrepreneurial State* London, Anthem Press

3. See for example findings from recent research from Collaborate and the Institute for Government at Crowe, D., Gash, T. & Kippin, H. (2014) ‘Beyond Big Contracts: commissioning public services for better outcomes’ online at <http://www.collaboratei.com/media/4617/Beyond%20Big%20Contracts%20Report.pdf>

4. See for example Stoker, G. & Moseley, A. (2013) ‘Motivation, Behaviour and the Microfoundations of Public Services’ in Griffiths, S., Kippin, H. & Stoker, G. (2013) *Public Services: a new reform agenda* London, Bloomsbury

CHOICE 2 – the Collaborative Alternative?

It doesn't have to be like this, but the alternative will not happen by accident. Imagine: Financial crisis and ensuing period of austerity has served as a wake up call to government and public services. Awesome projections of demand driven spending (£14.4 billion by 2020 is the LGA's estimated expenditure gap for local government) have created a new enthusiasm for creative thinking around some of the most intractable and 'wicked' problems. Commissioning is diverse but radically improved, with the Public Services (Social Value) Act spearheading a renewed focus on co-production that places citizens at the centre of new commissioning models encouraging dynamic social markets.

A culture of shared risk and responsibility pervades the public sphere. In response to a changing political economy and labour market, perceptions of the 'welfare state' have shifted. The safety net has become a supportive cushion – that supports livelihoods and fosters resilience with active and preventative investment, underpinned by a recognition across the income spectrum that societal cohesion and social inclusion matter profoundly to us all.

Collaboration for the public good is commonplace, with unthinkable alliances producing exciting results. Shared value is the watchword for business, whose realisation that social outcomes and shareholder value are not mutually exclusive has been transformative. The social market is alive and well, with a mix of social enterprises and forward-thinking charities trading on the richness of the experience they bring to citizens, and recognised for the role they play in improving the long-term productivity and economic viability of UKPLC.

In this post-crisis world, reform and renewal is driven not only by the numbers, but by a stark realisation that we need to move towards a shared notion of 'services to the public' – and that the future security, prosperity and wellbeing of communities is a shared commitment that needs a cross-sector response.

The second future sounds better than the first, right? The reality is that both of these scenarios are already playing out to some extent, and they represent real-time, competing tensions for practitioners, public managers and policymakers. What is clear is that the second future will not happen without a fundamentally different approach, in which citizens are at the centre. So what can we do about it?

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE: PRINCIPLES FOR SERVING THE COLLABORATIVE CITIZEN

We think there are tangible things we can do now to start shifting the dial towards the issues citizens point to. They speak to principles that Collaborate is trying to embed into everything it does.



1. THINK 'SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC', NOT PUBLIC SERVICES

- **BUILD INSIGHT WITH COMMUNITIES** – Services to the public must be based on real insight into the needs, wants, assets and aspirations of communities, with citizens themselves leading this process. We cannot effect demand management, behaviour change, prevention or collaborative commissioning without this. Creating the right conditions and methodologies to do this is a vital first step which the public sector should lead.
- **LOOK BEYOND TODAY'S SERVICE LENS** – We need to use this insight to pull policymaking beyond individual services. Problems of political economy (like poverty and worklessness) need a cross-sector response. For public agencies, this requires an account of how to partner, engage and influence as much as directly provide. Private and social sectors need to recognise the role they play in creating (or stifling) social and economic value beyond the terms of their contracts.
- **CHALLENGE PROVIDERS TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY** – 'Services to the public' is a massive challenge to the private sector in particular. Commercial players are *de facto* public services when they capture big market share – particularly when public patronage contributes to the profits they are making. This is clearly true inside the public services market, but also more

broadly. We need to get real about shared responsibility, and start holding the private sector to account on principles of inclusiveness, redistribution, fiscal integrity and public value. In this sense, recent comments by PAC chair Margaret Hodge and the ‘transparency’ agenda of the CBI are to be welcomed.⁵

2. IMPROVE READINESS TO WORK TOGETHER

- **ADDRESS VALENCE TO COLLABORATE** – We don’t pay enough attention to our readiness to collaborate – and this is a crucial barrier to making it happen in practice. In the health service for example, working across care settings and the health/social care divide has been a policy goal for years. It continues to be a central and vital plank of reform. So it is curious that far less attention has been afforded to the individual and collective valence of clinicians, managers and public leaders to work together. Without this, structural change will struggle to change cultures and frontline practice.
- **RE-THINK PUBLIC LEADERSHIP** – Collaborating with citizens and across sectors requires a different form of leadership – less command and control, more adaptive and distributed, and more attuned to the need for give and take without complete control. This is well-trodden ground in theory, and in the private sector

in particular.⁶ For the public sector (in which management is arguably more complex),⁷ adopting this stance in a period of extreme uncertainty is difficult. Yet we are seeing emerging examples in local government, and a groundswell of enthusiasm for the value of ‘leading across the sectors’, as a recent Collaborate report sets out.⁸

- **FOSTER AN ENABLING RISK CULTURE** – We need a new approach to risk in cross sector partnerships. This must signal a shift from a mindset of management and aversion, to one of enablement and innovation, as Lewisham Council CEO Barry Quirk has argued. Our research with the Institute for Government and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation suggested that this is rarely apparent. That is partly because we rely on contracting as our means of building partnerships. Our forthcoming risk framework, conversely, starts with trust and relationships, and values the aptitude it takes to create adaptive and learning cultures that frame the contracting process.

5. Hodge, M (2014) Public Accounts Committee Meeting, 14 March 2014, online at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/news/public-services-private-contractors-report/>

6. See for example Goleman, D. & Boystzís, R. (2008) ‘Social Intelligence and the Biology of Leadership’ HBR; and Ibarra, H. & Hansen, M. (2011) ‘Are You a Collaborative Leader?’ HBR

7. Stevenson, A. (2013) The Public Sector: managing the unmanageable. London, Kogan Page

8. Hukins, C. & Kippin, H. (2013) Leading Across the Sectors: the new career pathways for social change’ online at http://www.collaboratei.com/media/4011/leading_across_the_sectors_report_collaborate___clore_social_leadership_prog.pdf

3. PRACTICE COLLABORATION BY DEFAULT

- **DEVELOP COLLABORATIVE COMMISSIONING** – Collaboration for social outcomes should feel like a challenge and a risk – yet this must be properly shared. It is not good enough to create mechanisms for service provision that transfer risk from the state, but leave public accountability wanting when providers respond to short-term market incentives. We need balanced incentives for the private and social sector to compete on the basis of social and public value; and financial mechanisms that allow local agencies to pool budgets and work across silos. Most important of all is that the practice of collaboration is accountable to the citizens who stand to benefit – a challenge to all commissioners and providers.
- **EMBRACE SOCIAL INNOVATION** – Without valuing public spending on collective goods, we will sleepwalk into the malign future we described. But the case for investment has to be based on a different kind of state and services, better aligned and co-produced with the citizens we are today. This inevitably means working across traditional lines of demarcation in the pursuit of holistic ways to support people. We need to learn from social innovations that have worked and build these lessons into mainstream practice. Collaborate will be working with the Social Innovation Exchange to develop these ideas in Autumn 2014.

- **USE EVIDENCE TO ADAPT AND CREATE** – The use of evidence is vital – yet the way we understand it, collect it, and deploy it in policy and practice needs to change. Initiatives such as The Social Innovation Partnership’s Project Oracle point the way to a more integrated approach, linking academia to policy and practice in a way that front-line workers can use. Big data affords a massive opportunity, but it is not a panacea. Services to the public require deep and meaningful insight and multi-methodological evidence into what matters for communities.

TAKING THIS AGENDA FORWARD – BOLD STEPS FOR TESTING TIMES

The survey data in this report is all the more powerful for showing how the public view can belie easy and often binary solutions put forward by policy makers. Private good, public bad (or vice versa) is too simplistic. The public cares about outcomes more than provider, and the values of the provider over the nature of their business model. In changing times, they expect things of government that go beyond its wit to directly provide. If public goods are indeed still defined as things that benefit the whole community and not just individuals or ‘consumers’, then we need a different approach.

The challenge is thus set – to government, to today’s spectrum of providers, and to the public services industry as a whole. Those organisations that have blindly put private profit or producer interest over social purpose must change. And the contracts and relationships that have enabled them to do this are clearly no longer fit for purpose.

We opened this introduction signalling a cognitive shift towards ‘services to the public’, and argued that this should frame how we think about the next steps of reform. A small tweak in terminology has potentially profound implications, opening up what we consider to be a public service, challenging the basis on which we hold the market to account, and re-thinking the social contract that underpins it all.

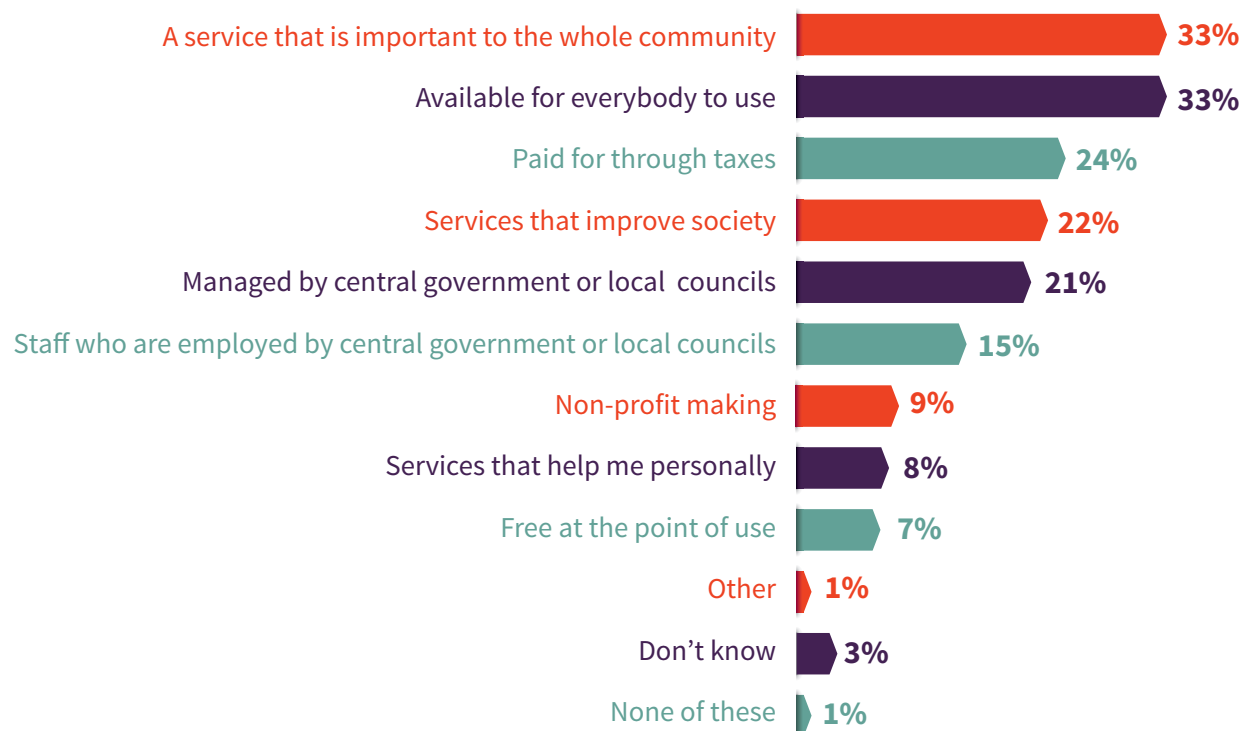
To the market, we must ask: at what point does a private service become a public utility, with its attendant externalities and responsibilities? Perhaps when market share puts the ‘socialisation of risk’ at such a level that failure is not only a risk to shareholders, but a critical risk to the public good. The banking crisis shows how quickly this notion can flip from theory to reality: at a stroke, institutions that had been accumulating profit with “no socially useful purpose” (as FSA chief Lord Adair Turner noted) were bailed out at huge cost to citizens and taxpayers. Their failure has been borne by us all in the shape of public spending cuts that are the deepest and widest for generations.

The public service market has been equally flawed, with some of the biggest and highest-profile private providers held inadvertently to account for putting the incentive to accumulate above the responsibility to provide. We urgently need to re-discover a sense of public service ethos that goes beyond the contract, transcends the business model, and that prioritises the public desire to be listened to, understood and treated like human beings. As the citizens surveyed for this report make clear, delivery, competence and financial integrity is not enough.

Predictions of rising demand and shrinking budgets make all too clear that the status quo in public services is unsustainable. If we want a future in which the bottom line is a cohesive society and communities with a proper stake in their economy, we need to get serious about working together more effectively for the public good – across the sectors; in partnership with citizens. Adaptation, innovation and collaboration must drive the new social settlement without exception based on sector prejudice. Services to the public must contribute to social good or they should not recover the patronage of public support or funding. On this, the public are likely to agree.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE? – OUR VIEWS OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Q. WHICH ONE OR TWO OF THESE, IF ANY, ARE CLOSEST TO WHAT YOU MEAN BY 'PUBLIC SERVICES'?

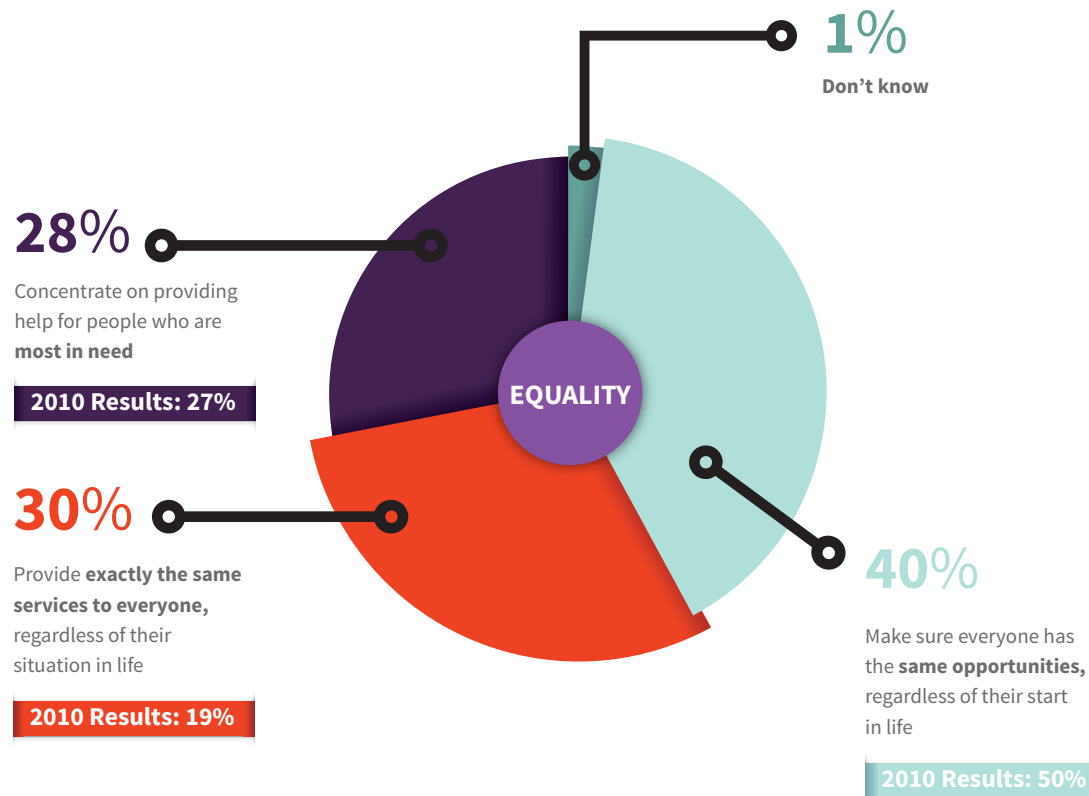


Base: 989 GB adults 15+; 31 January – 6 February 2014

- The public still clearly value public services as collective, universal goods – things of ‘benefit to the whole community’, and ‘available for everyone to use’. Remarkably, this has hardly shifted since 2001 – the crisis and austerity agenda have had little effect.
- These findings run at odds with the current political discourse, which has been about targeting, efficiencies, cuts and, at the extreme, debates over ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ welfare recipients. They show us that strong narratives about citizen-consumers, and the ‘rise of the individual’ should be seen in the context of public goods that need to work for everyone.
- No major party talks any more in terms of universal entitlements or the ‘same services for everyone’ – partly because of public finances, but also because a batch of studies tell us postcode lottery is already a reality. When Julia Unwin argues that ‘local shops and businesses are the new front line of public services’, she is pointing to a broader truth: that we need to think beyond traditional notions of what we consider to be a public service, and how we meet our collective needs in a challenging new context.

EQUALITY, UNIVERSALISM AND THE PURPOSE OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Q. WHICH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU SAY IS MOST IMPORTANT FOR GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES TO DO TO BE 'FAIR'?



Base: 989 GB adults 15+; 31 January – 6 February 2014

Where results do not sum to 100 this may be due to multiple responses or computer rounding.

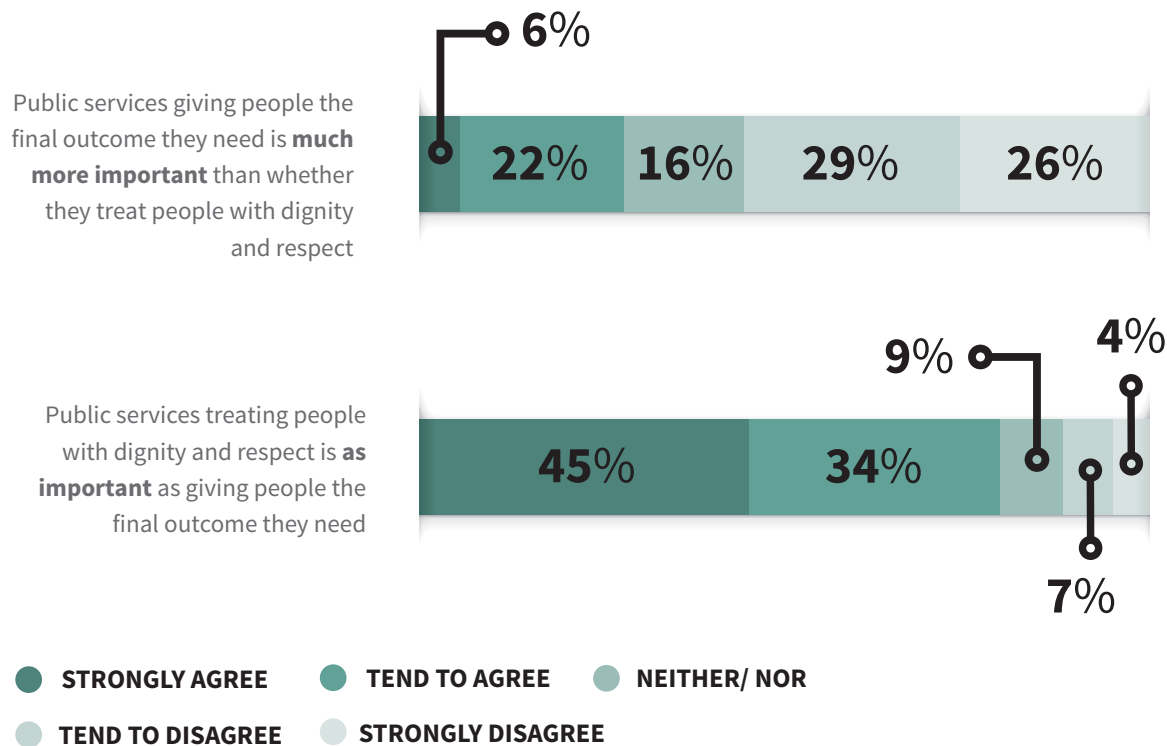
- When it comes to our understanding of fairness in public services, there is a marked – and perhaps surprising – shift away from support for equality of opportunity (40%, a decrease from 50% in 2010), and towards universal provision (30%, up from 19% in 2010). Almost three in ten people think that public services should be targeted at those who are most in need. This reflects underlying differences in people's views of how public entitlements should be distributed, but with a number of post-crisis trends potentially making an impact.
- Tentatively, we might wonder if loss aversion may explain some of the shift towards universalism. People may want to protect what they have in response to austerity and the squeeze on living standards – this fits with the finding that the oldest and youngest age groups are most likely to support universalism. A higher percentage of broadsheet readers advocate 'equality of opportunity', which perhaps reflects their position as (generally) less intensive service users.
- Equality has been somewhat downgraded as a political priority,⁹ and this may be having an impact on public perception. The Coalition government's focus on fairness and social mobility reflects a shift in ideology and a concern for 'individuals' over the 'identity politics of the past'. The economist Milton Friedman famously wrote that 'a society that puts equality ... ahead of freedom will end up with neither equality nor freedom'. But recent evidence contests that most people are uncomfortable about high levels of societal inequality, and some argue that more equal societies perform better against most indicators of social and economic progress.¹⁰

9. Kippin, H. (2013) 'Public Services and Equality: why it matters and why we need a new approach' British Council, online at http://www.britishcouncil.org/dk_d160_book_3_public_services_and_equality_henry_kippin.pdf

10. Wilkinson, R. & Pickett, K. (2009) *The Spirit Level: why equality is better for everyone*. London: Allen Lane

OUTCOMES MATTER, BUT SO DOES DIGNITY AND RESPECT

Q. TO WHAT EXTENT, IF AT ALL, DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT ABOUT PUBLIC SERVICES?

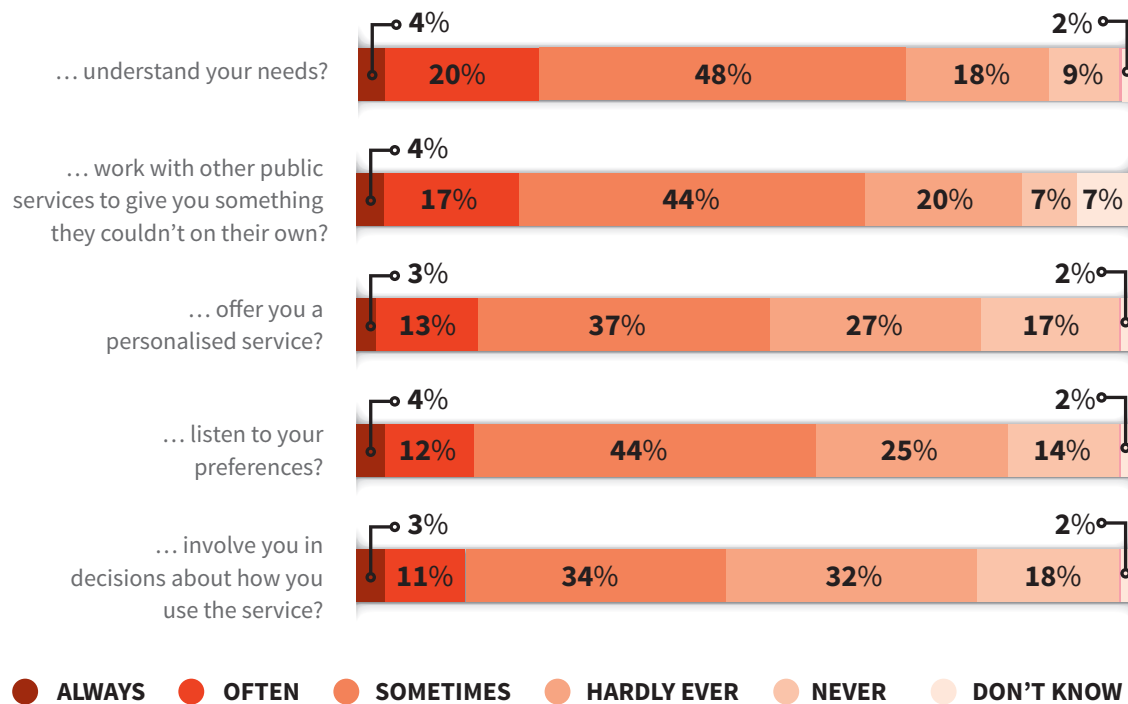


Base: 989 GB adults 15+; 31 January – 6 February 2014, split sample, c500 respondents per statement

- Eight in ten (79%) of the public agree that treating people with dignity and respect is as important as the final outcome of public service delivery and only 13% disagree. And even when we forced the issue, most people say outcome alone is not enough (55% disagree that final outcome is much more important than being treated well). This sends a clear message to government and public service providers: it is not enough to provide services that meet satisfactory outcomes or just ‘do the job’ at cost; the way people are treated through the process also matters greatly. The means must reinforce the ends – a challenge to some of our current ways of working.
- Perhaps more worryingly, opinions are more balanced among older people and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds when it comes to trading off outcomes and treatment– two of the most intensive service user groups. This is hard to fully interpret without further research but could suggest that (a) the expectations of this cohort are low because they are used to being treated with very little respect or dignity, or – for the most marginalised – not being treated at all; or (b) because of their greater reliance on public services, outcomes are more important for these groups. Either way, this is a concerning finding.
- Recent Collaborate research with the Institute for Government suggests that, as new commissioning and contracting mechanisms (such as outcome commissioning and payment by results) change old relationships and create new ones, the onus is being put on commissioners and service providers to understand and contract for more ‘relational’ services. Our research suggests that many are not well set up nor have the incentives to do this, with over 80% of public service providers we surveyed more concerned about financial sustainability in rapidly changing context.

DO PROVIDERS OF PUBLIC SERVICES UNDERSTAND AND ENGAGE THE PUBLIC?

Q. HOW OFTEN, IF AT ALL, DO YOU THINK ORGANISATIONS THAT DELIVER PUBLIC SERVICES...

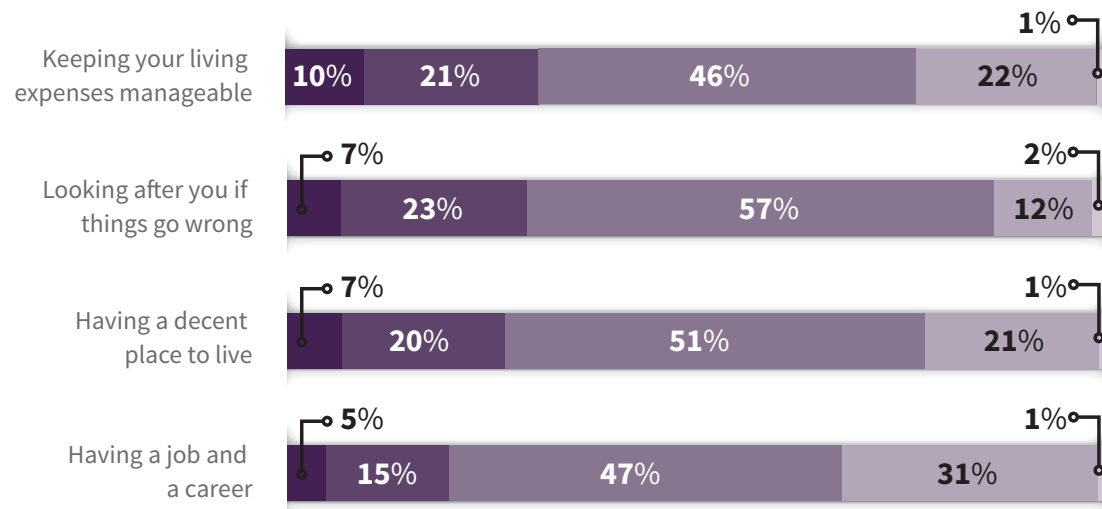


Base: 989 GB adults 15+; 31 January – 6 February 2014

- Our survey data shows that a minority of people (only 24%) feel that public services always or often understand their needs, and as we ask about higher quality relationships and engagement with public services (i.e. personalisation, understanding preferences as well as needs, involving you in decisions) this number gets progressively smaller.
- Despite the rhetoric around these issues, public services are seen to often fall short of understanding and engaging with citizens, and particularly when it comes to truly involving them in co-producing services. This is a challenge to providers, and also to the policy community who set the terms for providers.
- People with no access to the internet more likely to say they are hardly ever or never understood by public services (37% vs 27% overall) – suggesting serious ‘digital divide’ issues, particularly if citizen engagement activities are pursued via online or social media channels. Older people are also more likely to say they are not well understood, though people with young children are more likely to feel so – perhaps reflecting cumulative policy successes in primary education and early years.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES – WHAT IS GOVERNMENT’S ROLE?

Q. IN YOUR VIEW, HOW MUCH RESPONSIBILITY, IF ANY, DO YOU THINK GOVERNMENT HAS FOR THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE?



- ALL THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT
- MOSTLY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT
- PARTLY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT
- NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT AT ALL
- DON'T KNOW

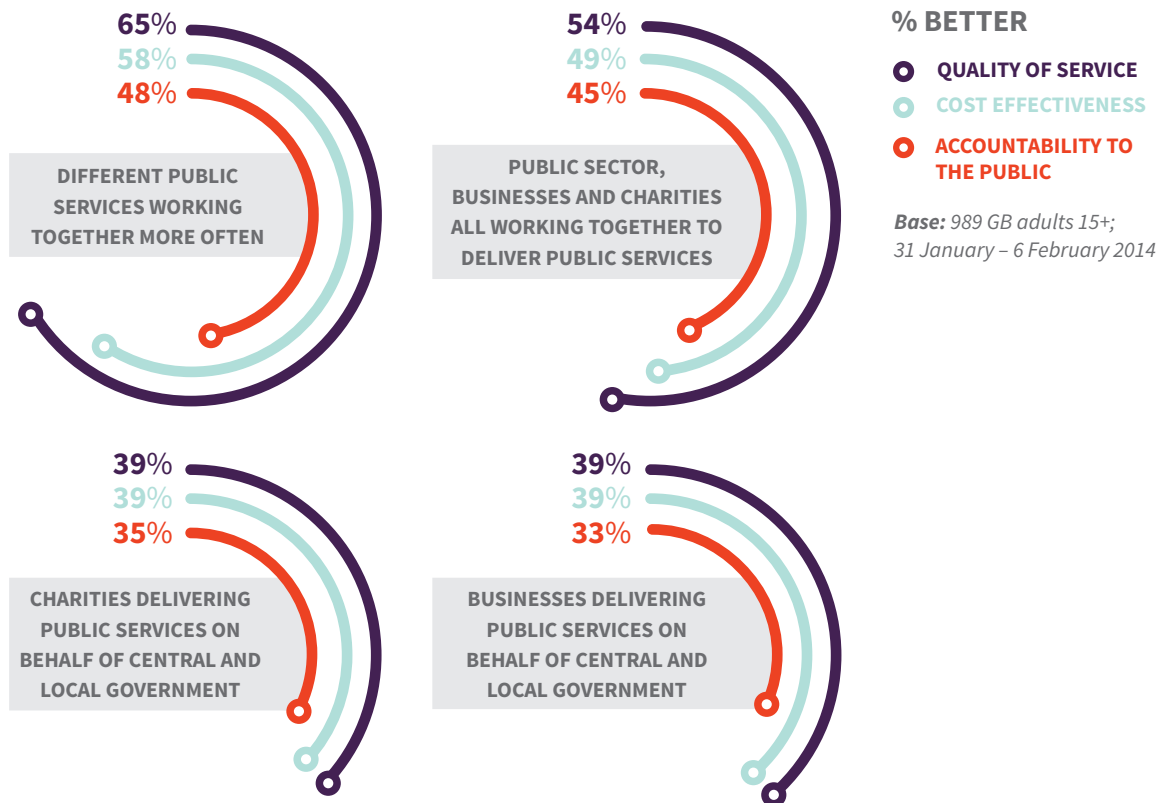
Base: 989 GB adults 15+; 31 January – 6 February 2014

- Our survey suggests that many people expect government to play a key role supporting them with the biggest issues in their lives. For example:
 - Around three in ten people (31%) think government is solely or mostly responsible for keeping their living expenses manageable. Only 22% think government has no responsibility to act. Young people and poorer people are also more likely to say government has responsibility in this area.
 - Almost everyone (87%) feels that government has at least some role in helping them things go wrong – the safety net is very much alive and well across social classes and different demographic groups – despite the wealthier cohort often effectively opting out of public services where they can.
 - Jobs are a key area in which government is seen to play a role, but has had obvious trouble acting against this. One in three (33%) of 15-24 year olds see government as mostly or wholly responsible for them having a job and a career. Overall, two in three (67%) see government as playing some role, even if this is less than for other issues – suggesting that it needs a different relationship with the labour market.

If government cannot, and perhaps should not, be acting alone against these issues, then we need government, civil society and the market to align more effectively against clearly stated issues of importance to peoples' lives.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC

Q. WHAT IMPACT, IF ANY, DO YOU THINK THESE DIFFERENT WAYS OF ORGANISING PUBLIC SERVICES WOULD HAVE ON EACH OF THE FOLLOWING? WOULD IT MAKE THINGS BETTER OR WORSE, OR WOULD IT MAKE NO DIFFERENCE?



- The research shows clear support for the idea of public services collaborating across silos to improve service delivery. Citizens view partnership working between public services as an important way of improving quality, cost effectiveness, and accountability. Significantly, 65% of respondents felt that doing this would improve quality.
- Around half of survey respondents feel that creating public-private-social partnerships to deliver services would have a positive impact on quality (54%) and cost (49%), with slightly less (45%) thinking that accountability would be improved – perhaps reflecting recent high-profile problems with third-party contracting and the behaviour of major private contractors.
- On balance, perceptions of charities or businesses delivering services on their own are more positive than negative, with more thinking that this would make things better than worse when it comes to quality, cost effectiveness and public accountability. However, views are more mixed than for partnerships within the public sector or across sectors – for example, two in five say that charities and businesses would improve both quality and cost effectiveness (39% in each case for charities and for businesses). And there are also more concerns about businesses on different aspects of service delivery (e.g. 27% think businesses running public services would make accountability worse, compared with 17% for charities).
- There are differences across demographic groups – broadsheet readers are more positive about the impact of improved public sector partnerships on quality (81% think this would make services better compared with 65% overall), but they are more negative about businesses (40% think businesses would make quality worse, compared with 23% overall). By contrast, older people are generally more likely than younger age groups to think that these alternative models of service delivery will make no difference.

ENDS, MEANS AND OUTCOMES – WHAT DO CITIZENS VALUE?

Q. WHICH TWO OR THREE OF THE FOLLOWING, IF ANY, DO YOU THINK ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR ORGANISATIONS DELIVERING PUBLIC SERVICES TO FOCUS ON?



Base: 989 GB adults 15+; 31 January – 6 February 2014

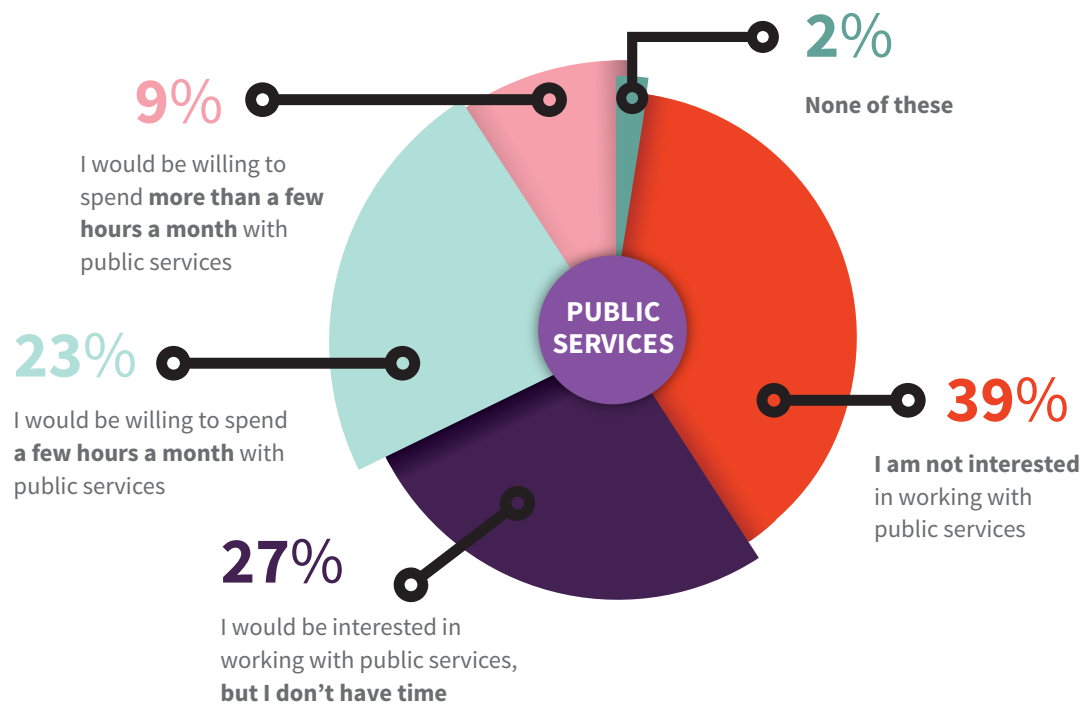
- It is difficult – but vital – to better understand the public's capacity for engagement in the design and delivery of public services. Our survey suggests that around one in three people would be willing to spend some time and effort improving public services with providers. This relatively low number perhaps reflects a consistent (and understandable) public perception that they have little influence. Previous survey data from Ipsos MORI suggests that only 14% of people feel they have influence over decisions made on public service delivery. This rises to 25% locally; still low, but suggesting more chance of change at a local level.¹¹
- As the previous pages make clear, public service commissioners and providers have problems engaging people to create the opportunities and the space to co-design and co-produce public services. Two-thirds of the citizens surveyed say they are either unwilling or don't have the time to engage with providers. We know that many – in the social care market, for example – experience the opposite of engagement and co-production, with Leonard Cheshire Disability finding that 60% of councils use 15 minute visits to elderly and disabled people, for example.¹²
- The challenge is thus set: Society is diverse, and those designing and providing public services need to find a range of better ways to understand, engage and co-produce with citizens. Generic consultation exercises will not work – and indeed contribute to a sense of disaffection and distance from policymakers. But neither will relying on choice and competition or citizen activism without capacity building, which we know will not change public services from below without strong cultural, financial and structural incentives pushing in the same direction.

11. 2020 Public Services Trust & Ipsos MORI (2010) 'What do People Want, Need and Expect from Public Services?' online at http://www.ipsos-mori.com/DownloadPublication/1345_sri_what_do_people_want_need_and_expect_from_public_services_110310.pdf

12. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24424785>

ARE WE READY TO BE COLLABORATIVE CITIZENS?...AND HOW CAN PUBLIC SERVICES ENGAGE US?

Q. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS, IF ANY, COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEW ABOUT WORKING WITH PUBLIC SERVICES TO HELP IMPROVE THE SERVICES THEY OFFER?



Base: 989 GB adults 15+; 31 January – 6 February 2014

- Public services must understand people's needs, treat them with dignity and respect, and deliver the outcomes that matter – these are clear public priorities that emerge from this and other research. There is less public focus on current policy priorities such as transparency (22%), accountability (22%), accessibility (23%) and strategic planning (19%). What does this imply?
- Firstly, we are seeing a disconnection between ends and means – government has not yet adequately articulated how agendas such as open data, open policymaking and localism translate into better treatment and outcomes for citizens. People don't see the connection; the policy world needs to get better at making it; and public service providers need to start embodying it more clearly.
- Secondly, we are seeing interesting differences in opinion across the population. Young people (for example) are more interested in local services, implying the possibility of a generational shift. More affluent cohorts are interested in the expertise of providers, perhaps implying less 'needs' to be met, and more concern about the way public money is spent. Readers of broadsheet newspapers – sometime used as a proxy for the most politically engaged – are similarly more concerned by what kind of organisations provide public services, and on what basis.

RESPONSE BY JULIA UNWIN CBE

JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION

The great challenge confronting public services in the UK is well recognised. How do we continue to provide a solid supportive foundation, while keeping pace with changes in the social, political and economic environments? But problems of scale – shrinking budgets, growing populations, national responsibilities and local risks – can often cloud attempts to construct a fresh vision of a future of public services to meet this challenge.

The public service as monolithic institution, anchored by central government and impervious to the ebbs and flows of society and politics has long had a powerful resonance in our society. This narrative has arguably protected services from the volatility of politics. It ensures that policymakers pause for thought before intervening in ways that may not reflect the iconic nature of some of these institutions (see for instance the Health and Social Care Bill controversy). However, it has also had negative effects: the post-war settlement, now nearly 60 years old, created a system of service provision rooted in its time. Its form and structure continue to hold residual connections to a proud history of welfare and the common good. These connections can make conversations about change difficult, limiting scope to re-imagine the way in which we collectively provide for each other.

But re-imagine we must. Demographic change and budgetary pressures feed a thirst for new thinking about what public services should look like – their relationship to each other and to us as individuals, communities and nations. A reliance on centralised, top-down planning has long been at odds with what we know about how people prefer to receive support. We live in a society more willing to challenge the institutions meant to meet our needs and more frustrated when services are unable to intersect with the patterns of our lives.

In drawing out some of the aspirations that the public have regarding services, Collaborate's analysis helps us to clarify which characteristics of public service provision we must hold on to as we move into a challenging period for these institutions. For example, the data shows that people want their needs to be understood by services and to be treated with dignity and respect. They also want a system that is accessible to everyone, regardless of personal circumstances, and that can be counted on when things go wrong.

The public also have strong opinions about what public services should look like structurally. Many support joined up delivery that crosses boundaries between public, private and voluntary and some are willing to contribute their time and effort towards strengthening existing provision.

Alongside the public's perceptions of services, the environment in which they operate is shifting. There is a new frontline emerging. It is now the shopkeeper who could recognise the signs of dementia in a local resident, the plumber alerting agencies to a freezing home, or the taxi driver who spots a distressed teenager. We rely on citizens to flag potential need.

This prompts a conversation about relationships. More than ever, it is relationships and the balance of risk and trust between service users, providers and their communities which count. Public services must be driven by these relationships if they are to begin to join up and identify interconnecting needs in a manner that increases efficiency and offers society security and dignity. This framework would amount to a new social contract between the public and services, starting from an active understanding of people's aspirations for themselves, their families and others, rather than a negative, disempowering discourse of dependency and passivity.

By approaching service design through the lens of relationships we can look more closely at the contradiction between users' trust in sturdy hegemonic providers and their desire for flexible, personalised provision. We can begin to embed more horizontal service structures, ones more at ease with accommodating and leveraging the dense networks of connections that exist within a community. Structures which may be better suited to solving symptoms and tackling drivers by looking at individuals as a whole and shaping services to meet their needs.

Collaborate's work contributes to an emerging evidence base on which to develop such a shift, helping us to untangle perceptions of public service institutions from users' sense of how services should engage with them. By starting with public perceptions we can better understand how to create efficient, dynamic services that have a closer relationship with the people and places using them and are more resilient to the challenges that they face.

More than ever, it is relationships and the balance of risk and trust between service users, providers and their communities which count



RESPONSE BY DANIEL CAMERON

IPSOS MORI

Most people do not understand the local authority funding formula. They are unfamiliar with the increasingly complex supply chains involved in managing public services. And they are almost certainly not up to date on the latest ideas for encouraging innovation and bringing new models of delivery to public services. But none of this should be understood as a lack of care. Our research consistently shows that public services matter to the public.

This report, and the research it draws on, is grounded in the political and policy debates about how public services should respond to the challenges and opportunities they face. But it is important not to lose the public's voice in these discussions.

Through our research we find considerable nuance in people's views about public services, depending on the service in question and the specific context in which we ask for their opinions. However, when we ask the public about public services at a more conceptual level a clearer story emerges. There are broad priorities most of us share, both as users of public services and as those who pay for them.

When people think about their own experiences they emphasise two things: getting the outcome they need and being treated well in the process. The importance of both outcomes and treatment is

highlighted by this research – eight in ten people agree that public services treating people with dignity and respect is as important as giving people the outcome they need. Concentrating on what public services deliver will not be enough; how they deliver is crucial too.

When people step back to take a citizen perspective on public services they again have two priorities: value for money and ensuring there is help for those who need it most. Political beliefs and personal circumstances shape people's views on what both of these ideas should mean in practice. But our qualitative research suggests that across the board there is an expectation that taxpayer's money will be spent wisely, and that there will be support for those who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

With all of this as context, the survey results point to a number of challenges and opportunities for future public services. While some of these may feel familiar, that does not mean their importance should be underestimated:

1. People don't feel understood by public services, let alone involved in shaping the services they use. Only one in four of us think that public services always or often understand our needs, and just one in seven say they are always or often involved in decisions about how they use public services. For more transactional

services this might not be that important. Yet the findings point to a deep-seated disconnect between the public and public services that needs to be addressed if reforms are to be successful. As we consistently find, there are some signs of willingness to get involved with public services to improve their services. But people need to be given real power and to see the impact of their involvement or they will quickly disengage.

2. Partnerships have potential. Better working across different parts of the public sector is seen as an obvious way to improve things (even if in practice this may be in tension with very strong concerns about issues such as privacy and data protection). Two in three of us agree that different public services working together more often would improve the quality of service we receive. And the public are generally open to partnerships across the public, private and voluntary sectors too, even if they have some reservations. The idea of different sectors working together reassures the public that the strengths and weaknesses they perceive in each can be balanced to achieve more than any sector could on its own.

3. Finally, despite (or perhaps because of) the way the world is changing, the safety net offered by public services remains a priority for the public. An overwhelming majority see at least some role for government in looking after them when things go wrong, and this cuts across age groups and different social classes. People can easily imagine a scenario where they or those they care about need to rely on public services. Reforming public services in a way that is not seen to undermine this safety net will be vital to secure public support.

People need to be given real power and to see the impact of their involvement or they will quickly disengage



RESPONSE BY DR GREG PARSTON

IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON

This new research by Collaborate presents important insights into the current role of the “collaborative citizen” and poses challenges to service providers to ready themselves for working across settings and sectors. But I believe the key challenge to those delivering services to the public in future lies in the more urgent need to ready citizens – first, through more intelligent public discourse about the direction of public policy and service provision and, second, in a more active co-productive relationship than is available in the current model of service delivery.

Politicians and the media personalities today argue about the role of government in health, education and public safety. The public, however, is noticeably absent or ignored in those debates, with 50% polled in this research saying that they are hardly ever or never involved in decisions about services. Changes in health services, in schools and in policing are imposed with little public engagement and sometimes in the face of strong public opposition.

Today, citizens are treated as objects of policy making and of service delivery decisions, rather than as active participants in the changes that will directly affect their lives. The consequence is apathy, disillusionment and even anger – with two-thirds of those polled saying they have neither the time nor the interest in working with public services to improve the quality of their lives.

An essential player

Citizens’ notions of public good may be “out of step” with our current public service model, as Victor Adebowale and Henry Kippin suggest, but citizens’ knowledge and access to detailed information about many public policy and service issues are often intentionally restricted, sometime distorted and almost always over-simplified. This disempowers citizens; and the culprits are shortsighted politicians, self-serving professional interests, a lazy media and service providers themselves.

The most noticeable public involvement today takes the form of reactionary protests against suspected privatisation; opposition to self-righteous efficiency cuts; demands for homogenous national standards that disallow local determination – a public discourse fuelled by inadequate information and poor understanding. Today’s public service debates are about access and waiting times, but not health; severity or leniency of punishment, not public safety; exam results and school ratings, not how to help children go on to further learning or employment. Recent debates on commissioning for social value do little to right the knowledge and power imbalances between provider and citizen.

Public services form a main component of a ‘social contract’ between people and their governments – a cornerstone of civil society. But that

requires collective action from players on both sides of the contract, built on social capital, trust and shared values that allow and enable citizens to be co-productive agents in the relationship.

The active citizen

The missing condition in the current health of what Victor and Henry call the “alive and well” collaborative citizen is the informed, enabled and active citizen. This requires a deliberate commitment from service providers that is very different from their current disposition to citizens. Citizens can not collaborate with partners that consistently don’t understand your needs, don’t offer you personalised services and don’t listen to your preferences.

Indeed, both sides in the current debilitating construct – citizens and service providers – lose by remaining ignorant of their collaborative potential: shared goals are impossible; working together is a myth. And without citizens’ active collaboration, many new or alternative providers currently diminish their own role too, with respondents not seeming to trust the non-governmental providers to deliver better outcomes for them than the present public sector lot.

Of course, there are differences and divisions in belief and values among citizens, service organizations and politicians. But if civil society is to be strengthened, each must be able to develop a good understanding of all the issues that influence social well being, to express opinions and concerns, and to collaborate in decisions about, and the manner in which, those issues are addressed. Today’s citizen is as weak a link in that type of collaboration as any other partner.

This research points to a number of principles to which service providers and commissioners should adhere in order to foster collaboration. But in addition to readying themselves, future providers of services to the public must work to develop the contribution of citizens with whom they can collaborate – by educating, supporting and including them in more informed discourse and in co-production of outcome improvement – a truly collaborative process that is aimed first at improving their health, learning and safety.

The key challenge to collaborative providers of service to the public is to help build now the collaborative polity it means to serve tomorrow.

Today, citizens are treated as objects of policy making and of service delivery decisions, rather than as active participants in the changes that will directly affects their lives



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