House of Commons

Public Administration Select Committee

User Involvement in Public Services

Sixth Report of Session 2007–08

Report, together with formal minutes

Ordered by The House of Commons
to be printed 24 April 2008

The Public Administration Select Committee

The Public Administration Select Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioners for England, which are laid before this House, and matters in connection therewith, and to consider matters relating to the quality and standards of administration provided by civil service departments, and other matters relating to the civil service.

Current membership

Dr Tony Wright MP (*Labour, Cannock Chase*) (*Chairman*)
Mr David Burrowes MP (*Conservative, Enfield Southgate*)
Paul Flynn MP (*Labour, Newport West*)
Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger MP (*Conservative, Bridgewater*)
David Heyes MP (*Labour, Ashton under Lyne*)
Kelvin Hopkins MP (*Labour, Luton North*)
Julie Morgan MP (*Labour, Cardiff North*)
Mr Gordon Prentice MP (*Labour, Pendle*)
Paul Rowen MP (*Liberal Democrats, Rochdale*)
Mr Charles Walker MP (*Conservative, Broxbourne*)
Jenny Willott MP (*Liberal Democrats, Cardiff Central*)

The following Member was also a member of the Committee for part of this inquiry: Grant Shapps MP (Conservative, Welwyn Hatfield).

Powers

The powers of the Committee are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 146. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at http://www.parliament.uk/pasc.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Steven Mark (Clerk), James Gerard (Second Clerk), Pauline Ngan (Committee Specialist), Louise Glen (Committee Assistant), Anne Woolhouse (Secretary) and James Bowman (Senior Office Clerk).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Public Administration Select Committee, Committee Office, First Floor, 7 Millbank, House of Commons, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 3284; the Committee's email address is pasc@parliament.uk.

Contents

Summary

This is the second of several Reports on our inquiry into *Public Services: Putting People First*. One of the key themes of this inquiry has been how public services could be improved by involving the people that use them in their design and delivery.

In this Report, we consider various forms of user involvement in public services, from consultation with service users to stronger variants such as user control over service provision (Chapter 2). We examine some of the arguments given for making public services more responsive: that it would be more democratic, that it would improve service levels and that it would be cost-effective (Chapter 3). We also explore some of the potential implications of greater user involvement—for staff working in public services, for service users and for how public services are organised and evaluated (Chapter 4).

Involving public service users by allowing them to control or influence the way in which services are provided can improve service quality, make for more appropriate services and increase people's satisfaction with public services. It is, however, still early days for many of the stronger forms of user involvement, such as individual budgets in social care. Initial evidence about such initiatives seems promising, but there is a need for comprehensive and rigorous monitoring and evaluation, particularly regarding their cost-effectiveness.

In addition, involving service users is not always appropriate. In some circumstances it could create inequalities of service, as well as being risky and expensive. In other situations people may simply be unwilling or unable to engage in this way. A key challenge for the Government and for public service providers will therefore be to establish where user involvement is desirable, and in what form. Service providers also need to ensure that user involvement complements—rather than conflicts with—the contribution made by public service workers.

In this Report, we have not intended to be prescriptive about the level and extent of user involvement, as this will depend upon individual circumstances. Where people do want to be involved in service design and delivery, however, the Government should ensure they get the support they need to do so. This will mean making sure public service workers understand the implications of deeper user involvement, and that they are equipped to deal with its demands. More broadly, the onus is on the Government to set the right conditions in place to help achieve public services that are truly responsive to the people that use them.

1 Introduction

Background

1. This is the second of a series of Reports by the Public Administration Select Committee resulting from an inquiry into *Public Services: Putting People First*.[1] Our inquiry has explored how public services could be improved by involving the people that use them in their design and delivery. It follows on from our predecessor Committee's Report on *Choice, Voice and Public Services*,[2] which considered how listening to and learning from the 'voice' of service users could make public services better.

2. We identified three key themes in the course of the inquiry that concern how public services could be more responsive to the people they serve:

- How government and public services handle and learn from complaints;

- How public service providers work together with service users in the design and delivery of services; and

- How standards of service are set in order to guarantee minimum levels of service provision.

3. This Report focuses on the scope for public services to engage people directly in service design and service provision. In the course of our inquiry, we took evidence from the then Cabinet Office Minister, Pat McFadden MP, and the then Head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, Ian Watmore, as well as from the then Department for Education and Skills and the Audit Commission. We also received valuable evidence from public service user groups and commentators on public services. In addition, we drew on over fifty memoranda submitted in response to our issues and questions paper; and we visited two innovative projects in Newham, east London—Newham community care navigators, a government-funded community care initiative, and a youth project run by the charity Community Links.

Transforming public services

4. The focus of public service reform has, in recent years, seen a change in emphasis from service providers to service users. There has been a shift from matters of service provision—such as choice among providers and performance against targets—to a more explicit concern with the needs of the people that use public services.[3] This can be seen in

---

1   The first Report in the series is Public Administration Select Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2007–08, *When Citizens Complain*, HC 409; and a volume of oral and written evidence is published as *Public Services: Putting People First*, Session 2007–08, HC 408

2   Public Administration Select Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2004–05, *Choice, Voice and Public Services*, HC 49–I

3   Strategy Unit, *Building on Progress: Public Services* (HM Government policy review), Cabinet Office, March 2007, paras 4.4–4.6

moves toward personalised public services and Sir David Varney's call for 'service transformation'[4] to improve government's responsiveness to citizens.

5. At community level, the Government has recently proposed plans to 'unlock talent' in local communities by giving citizens more power over local decisions and services. [5] From April 2009 local authorities will be under a statutory duty to inform, consult and involve local people in the running of local services.[6] NHS bodies in England are already under a recently strengthened duty to involve patients in decisions affecting the provision and operation of health services.[7] Active citizenship, as well as being a good in itself, is seen by the Government as a route to improving local public services and strengthening local accountability.

6. The greater emphasis on responsiveness to people can be seen in part as a logical extension of the public service reforms that have gone before. Increased choice (or the promise of it) has encouraged people to expect a greater say or even control over service provision. User voice is equally important, however, for public services where a choice of service provider is not feasible. The idea of user-driven services also has strong historical antecedents—notably the Citizen's Charter initiative, launched in 1991, which aimed to improve public services by taking the citizen's perspective and putting that at the heart of service delivery.

7. We have followed with interest as the Government has outlined its vision for public service 'transformation', much of which requires the use of information technology to respond more effectively to service users. The then Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office, Pat McFadden MP, explained it to us in this way:

> Putting citizens and businesses first in the delivery of public services is at the heart of transformational government. The 2005 strategy *Transformational government— enabled by technology* (Cabinet Office 2005) sets out three areas in which public services need to be transformed:
>
> - Services enabled by IT must be designed around the citizen or business, not the provider, and provided through modern, co-ordinated delivery channels;
>
> - Government must move to a shared services culture—in the front-office, in the back-office, in information and in infrastructure—and release efficiencies by standardisation, simplification and sharing; and,

---

4   Sir David Varney, *Service Transformation: A better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer*, HM Treasury, December 2006

5   Department for Communities and Local Government, *Unlocking the Talent of Our Communities*, March 2008

6   Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, section 138

7   National Health Service Act 2006, section 242 (as amended by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007)

- There must be broadening and deepening of government's professionalism in terms of the planning, delivery, management, skills and governance of IT enabled change.[8]

8. In this inquiry, we have explored more widely the issue of how public services could be made more responsive and user-oriented. This includes changes to the way that service users see their role in service design and delivery, the role of service professionals and practitioners, and whether the way in which public services are currently organised enables effective user involvement and participation. We believe the challenge for government is to ensure that, where appropriate, public services are as responsive as possible to the people that use them. This Report therefore examines the scope for public service users to influence, direct or control the public services they receive.

2 What are 'user-driven' public services?

9. Traditionally, government bodies have involved users of public services through consulting directly with users or with their representatives about the services received. We are concerned in this Report with forms of user involvement that go beyond consultation—what we term 'user-driven' public services. We shall, however, briefly consider the rationale for user consultation and the experience of it in practice, before going on to examine the implications of user-driven public services.

User consultation

10. Public involvement in policy development, including consultation with citizens and people that use public services, is a necessary part of a healthy democracy. Good consultation can also improve the content of policies and the quality of service provision, as the Government acknowledged in its 2007 paper *Effective Consultation*.[9] Consultation with people that use public services is particularly important because many users, understandably, have strong views about the services they receive—especially where those services significantly affect the quality of their lives. As Liz Stone of Mencap told us, "…for a lot of people with learning disability they want to be very active in the whole design and delivery of service because it is about them; it is about you; it is about your life".[10]

11. Unfortunately, much of the evidence we received on user consultation indicated a significant amount of cynicism—on both sides—about the effectiveness of actual consultations. From the Government's point of view, there can be a danger that the same people are heard from repeatedly—the 'usual suspects' syndrome. From the user perspective, there is often scepticism among people being consulted about whether what they say is really taken into account. (A prominent example was the Government's 2006 consultation on nuclear power, which the High Court ruled was "manifestly inadequate" as a consultation.[11]) This is especially so if people suspect that key decisions have already been

---

8 Ev 194 (This and all subsequent evidence references are to the oral and written evidence volume *Public Services: Putting People First*, Session 2007–08, HC 408)

9 Cabinet Office, *Effective Consultation*, June 2007, p 4

10 Q 370 [Ms Stone]

11 *R (Greenpeace Ltd) v Secretary of State for Trade and Industry* [2007] EWHC 311 (Admin)

taken, as the national service user network Shaping Our Lives and the Hansard Society suggested to us:

> …many people were concerned about tokenistic user involvement and taking part in consultations in which they do not feel that they are being listened to, which consequently means action/change does not result from their involvement.[12]

> It is best not to sponsor consultation where decisions have already been made. Engagement needs to be authentic. False engagement—consultation for the sake of persuasion—leads to more disillusionment not less.[13]

12. Pat McFadden MP accepted that the onus fell on government bodies to be clear about the purpose and boundaries of consultation, so that people's expectations were not unrealistic:

> Cynicism can be produced because of a lack of clarity about what is actually on the table here when we consult and I think it is legitimate for a government to say, "Look, we've made up our minds to do A, B or C but we want to consult you about how we do it"…I think my response to this would be to hope that government would be clear about what exactly was being consulted about, what is open for debate, what is not already decided and what is.[14]

13. New initiatives on user consultation and engagement have emerged in recent years, including those that have been enabled by developments in information and communication technology. Innovations such as ministerial blogs, online consultations and web forums extend the channels through which government engages with citizens.[15] The Government has also shown a renewed interest in citizens' juries and other deliberative consultations (for example, the deliberative events with young people, parents and others that fed into the development of *The Children's Plan*[16]). In the *Governance of Britain* Green Paper, the Government proposed a duty to consult on major decisions through mechanisms such as citizens' juries.[17] Depending on how they are constituted, deliberative mechanisms can enable people to make informed contributions to decision making and can enhance democratic engagement. Like other forms of consultation, however, this depends on whether the Government is genuinely committed to listening to and learning from the people it engages in deliberation.

14. **We are pleased to see the Government's initiatives for improving the effectiveness of consultations and for extending their reach. We support the underlying principle that government bodies need to make systematic efforts to collate and learn from the views of citizens and people using public services. Furthermore, government bodies**

---

12   Ev 152

13   Ev 139

14   Q 432

15   Ev 138; see also Hansard Society, *Digital Dialogues: An independent review into the use of online technologies to enhance engagement between central government and the public. Second phase report, August 2006–August 2007*, 2007, p 19 ff

16   Department for Children, Schools and Families, *The Children's Plan: building brighter futures*, Cm 7280, December 2007, pp 155–156

17   Ministry of Justice, *The Governance of Britain*, Cm 7170, July 2007, p 49

must do this in good faith: consultations should make plain what they are trying to do, and this understanding should be clearly communicated to the people being consulted.

15. We now consider forms of user involvement in public services that embody a deeper level of engagement on the part of service users: user-driven public services.

User-driven public services

16. User-driven services are those that actively involve the people using them in service design and delivery. They entail drawing upon the expertise, views and perspectives of service users to complement the skills and input of service professionals. User-driven services go beyond user consultation or user representation. As we have seen, consultation serves an important function in eliciting people's views about the services they are getting, but it can be a one-way process—there is no guarantee that services will actually change as a result. By contrast, the idea of user-driven services involves public service staff and users working together to determine what services are provided and how.

17. The Minister for the Cabinet Office, Ed Miliband MP, has described it in this way:

> …responsive public services look not just at needs but also at strengths and abilities. Public services must respond to and mobilise the expertise, ideas, time, and willpower of people using them. What I call the "letterbox model"—where the service was just delivered to the user—doesn't see us as participants who can shape our own lives.[18]

18. This is echoed by Sophia Parker of Demos, who told us:

> [It] is very much a way of understanding how you achieve some of the outcomes we are talking about, recognising that if you want to create a society of life long learners, if you want to create a healthy population, that is not something that can be delivered by some institutional public service. It needs to engage all of us and motivate all of us not to smoke, to eat healthily and so on.[19]

19. Under the general heading of 'user-driven services', we consider what is termed 'co-production' in public services—the notion that service users work *with* service practitioners and professionals to 'co-produce' desired outcomes such as good health or safe communities. We also examine 'user-directed' services, where service users are able to control or direct (often by financial means) the services they receive. 'User-driven services' is a useful catch-all term to cover the different forms of deeper user involvement in public services. The core underpinning idea is the same, however: that successful public services will both enable and engage the people they are designed to serve.

20. Public services that put a central emphasis on involving people are still far from common. Moreover, user involvement is more relevant to those public services that people consume as personal, client-based services (such as health, education and housing) than those provided on a more collective basis (such as policing or fire and rescue). Some of the

---

18   Speech by Ed Miliband to 5th annual Guardian public services summit, 7 February 2008

19   Q 397 [Ms Parker]

few practical examples of user-driven public services that we encountered in the course of our inquiry are described in the table below.

Examples of user-driven public services

Health and social care: expert patients, individual budgets, and community care navigators

The area of health and social care has seen many developments in user-focused services. This is particularly so in relation to patients with long-term conditions, who often become expert at managing their own conditions. Co-produced health services are based on developing the partnership between health professionals and patients in order to determine the best course of care.

The **expert patients** programme enables patients with long-term chronic conditions to gain the skills needed to manage their conditions better on a day-to-day basis. Expert patients are also able to provide peer support, advice and information to others with the same condition.[20]

Individual or personal budgets and **direct payments** entail giving patients financial control over the health and social care services they receive, so that they can direct the support or services they get. These sorts of financial mechanisms recognise that patients are often best placed to understand what they need and to make decisions about their own care accordingly. Under the 'Putting People First' initiative, the Government has stated that by 2011 it intends to make personal budgets available to all people receiving publicly funded adult social care.[21]

Community care navigators (CCNs) are health service staff who have been specifically trained to engage with patients in community settings, in order to offer help and advice with their (usually long-term) conditions. We visited a CCNs project in Newham, east London, which worked with people locally to identify chronic illness at an early stage, increase knowledge of long-term health conditions and support self-management of conditions.

Housing: tenant-led management

Since 1994, council tenants in England have had the statutory right to manage their own properties. Under the right to manage, groups of tenants are able to form tenant management organisations (TMOs) to collectively manage their homes. TMOs undertake housing services such as rent and service charge collection, cleaning of communal areas and are responsible for repair and maintenance work. There are over 250 TMOs managing some 85,000 homes between them.[22]

---

20   Ev 170, 180

21   Department of Health, *Putting People First: A shared vision and commitment to the transformation of adult social care*, December 2007, p 3

22   Ev 278

Education: personalised learning

Personalised learning is, according to the Government, "high quality teaching that is responsive to the different ways students achieve their best".[23] It involves schools and teachers tailoring education to individual needs and aptitudes, in order to fulfil each pupil's potential. Under 'Assessment for Learning', a component of personalised learning, teachers work with pupils to identify educational needs and goals. Teachers and pupils can then agree on what needs to be done to promote progress towards those learning goals.

21. The Government's support for user-focused public services is evident in its promotion of the greater personalisation of services.[24] The Strategy Unit, in its recent survey of the future strategic challenges facing the country, noted that: "World class public services will only be achieved by actively engaging with citizens in achieving more personalised public service outcomes".[25] Personalised public services include many of the examples listed above, such as personalised learning in education, and personal budgets and direct payments in health and social care.

22. We have been interested in how greater personalisation links with what we have termed user-driven public services, given that both are directed at improving public service provision to the individual. We note, however, that personalised services are not quite the same as services that engage and empower people: a service can be individualised without actively involving the person concerned (e.g. a teacher tailoring an education plan for a pupil without reference to the pupil's or parent's wishes). **We welcome the Government's support for public services that focus on service users. We believe that achieving high-quality, responsive public services requires empowering and engaging with service users as much as addressing their needs. We urge the Government to foster a public service culture of working *with* the people that use services in order to ensure that moves toward greater personalisation result in excellent public services.**

---

23   Department for Education and Skills, *A National Conversation about Personalised Learning*, 2004, p 6

24   Strategy Unit, *Building on Progress: Public Services*, chapter 4

25   Strategy Unit, *Realising Britain's Potential: Future strategic challenges for Britain*, Cabinet Office, February 2008, p 153

3 Why user-driven public services?

23. The case for increasing the extent of user involvement in public services rests on several different arguments. One type of argument is principle-based, and proceeds from the belief that involving citizens is the right thing to do on moral and political grounds. The other type of argument is more outcome-based: that user-driven services result in better service quality, and as a result will bring about better outcomes for people using those services. They may also prove more cost-effective for the state. We examine each of these arguments in turn.

The moral and political case

24. Citizen participation in decisions about the design and delivery of public services is often seen as a good in itself.[26] It empowers people by allowing them to shape services that affect the quality of their own lives, and it connects them with the wider public realm. In this way, it encourages people to identify with public services—the sense that public services are 'theirs'. User-driven services can therefore strengthen people's feelings of citizenship and belonging in a democratic society.

25. We recognise that there are contrary views which argue that increasing the level of user participation in public services could undermine representative democracy.[27] This concern is related to a broader question about what place more direct forms of democracy, including participatory initiatives, should have in a system of representative government. The apprehension is that user participation in decisions on public services opens up the possibility of diverging from the policy direction decided by elected representatives, who have a popular mandate for their policies.

26. Citizen participation, unless taken to extremes, should not be seen as undermining representative democracy. As David Bell, Permanent Secretary at the then Department for Education and Skills, told us:

> …I do not see any necessary contradiction. Clearly you have got a democratically elected authority that will have responsibility, amongst other things, for deciding the structure of the youth service but, it seems to me, alongside that you can quite legitimately say, in coming to your decisions about the services for youth, you have to take account of what young people say, and that is what we have said within our schemes…The more general point I would make, for local and for central government, [is] I do not think we can just rely on the legitimacy of the democratic process if we assume by that that citizens have no engagement between elections.[28]

27. We too believe there is a clear place for user involvement and participation in our system of government. An elected authority, whether at national or local level, determines

---

26   Ev 177, 187

27   Ev 194

28   Q 522

the overall shape of public services. Within this framework, and where appropriate, there is then the space for service users to influence or direct the services they receive.

Improving public services

28. Proponents of user participation in public services claim that there are obvious benefits to service users from involving them in service provision. We were told that it reduces the risk of providing unsuitable or inappropriate services, as users will often be in the best position to judge their own needs.[29] In addition, user involvement can encourage people to better understand their own service needs and improve their confidence. This, in turn, can have positive effects on the outcomes they want to see, such as improved health or educational progress.

29. The public service users that we heard from expressed this view very forcefully. Members of Shaping Our Lives, the health and social care user network, stated:

> We are the experts! We know what we need.[30]

30. David Holmes of Mind told us that user-directed services were necessary because user consultation did not go far enough. For him, user control was the only way of guaranteeing that services would actually meet his needs:

> In our experience the reason people have started to seek user control is that the mechanisms and involvement do not seem to have brought about the changes they would like. They have been consulted but they seem to have been excluded from the real decision making…they tell people what they want and they do not get it. If service users were truly heard and services were truly responsive to their needs then I do not think that the issue of control would come up.[31]

31. We heard that greater user involvement and control benefits practitioners and professionals working in the public services as well. Encouraging service users to help define and direct the services they receive should allow professionals to share some of the responsibility for achieving desired outcomes such as better health—relieving them of the burden of unrealistic expectation, and avoiding creating or perpetuating a culture of dependency.[32] Matthew Taylor of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and Sophia Parker of Demos explained that this can increase job satisfaction for people working in public services:

> I think there is an agenda here which again is not about placing more demands on public servants; it is about that job of public servants being one which feels much more useful to them.[33]

---

29   Ev 156, 159, 170

30   Ev 153

31   Q 368

32   Ev 176–177

33   Q 401 [Mr Taylor]

…when you start talking about involving people, about some of the principles implied by co-production, it taps right back into that value set that got people into the public services as a professional in the first place.[34]

32. Formal evaluations of user participation and direction provide evidence of tangible improvements to services. In social housing, a government-commissioned evaluation of tenant-led management concluded that it resulted in improved delivery of housing services such as rent collection and repair work, as well as higher tenant satisfaction and longer-term retention of tenants. Indeed, in most cases, tenant management organisations performed better than their host local authorities.[35] The General Teaching Council informed us that personalised learning has beneficial effects such as higher pupil self-esteem and positive attitudes to learning.[36] Research by the (then) Department for Education and Skills found that, in schools with a strong commitment to personalised learning, individualised assessments of pupils' learning needs had improved pupil progress and raised educational attainment.[37]

33. The evidence we received suggests that increasing user involvement has distinct benefits for both service users and service professionals. Improved service delivery and higher satisfaction with the services provided are, in turn, likely to translate into better service outcomes. Initial evaluations should, however, be treated carefully as some early assessments of user involvement consider small pilot schemes where participants are typically enthusiastic and well-informed. As this will not always be the case, it is difficult to extrapolate from these studies the effects of extending user involvement more widely. We turn now to consider the issue of how to assess the cost-effectiveness of user-driven services.

Cost-effectiveness and value for money

34. Advocates of user-driven services sometimes refer to cost-based arguments—that increased user control can bring about cost savings in public service provision. We have seen little systematic evidence so far about the cost-effectiveness of user-driven services. Liz Stone of Mencap did suggest to us that individual or personal budgets that allow people to choose and purchase the care and other services they want are cheaper than other forms of provision.[38] We also heard anecdotal evidence from our visit to the Newham community care navigators scheme that their service resulted in people needing fewer GP visits and less hospital treatment.

35. Systematic evaluations of user-directed services are still quite rare, given that there are few established programmes of user control over services. An initial evaluation of the 'In Control' programme, which piloted greater user control over social care provision through the use of individual budgets, suggests the initiative was cost-effective:

---

34 Q 401 [Ms Parker]

35 Liz Cairncross, Caroline Morrell, Jane Darke and Sue Brownhill, *Tenants Managing: An evaluation of tenant management organisations in England*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, November 2002, paras 4.10–4.54

36 Ev 267–269

37 Department for Education and Skills, *Assessment for Learning: 8 schools project report*, May 2007, pp 29–40

38 Q 369

The evaluation of the first three years of the scheme indicates that satisfaction has risen hugely, even though costs have stayed stable and in some cases gone down, indicating that often user involvement can lead to much smarter, more efficient as well as more personalised forms of resource allocation.[39]

36. Nonetheless, in some circumstances it will be more, not less, expensive to tailor services around the individual. This is especially likely to be the case where service delivery moves away from cost-conscious block provision, or where there are economies of scale from large institution-based provision. Cost savings may also be constrained by the extent to which the labour of service professionals or practitioners can be substituted for that of service users—for example, in making assessments about the suitability of care packages.

37. Public service users put to us very strongly that moves toward user-directed services should not be about cost cutting or the transfer of costs to service users. In their view, user control is not a replacement for adequate public funding of services.[40] Indeed, *additional* funding would be needed where user-focused services are more expensive to provide due to higher administrative and staff time costs. The logical conclusion of this view is that better value for money will hinge on the improved outcomes that can be expected from increased user involvement in service provision, rather than on potential cost savings.

38. **There are many advantages claimed for user-driven public services, including strengthening citizenship and improving public services. An evaluative evidence base is starting to emerge, indicating that user-oriented services have resulted in higher satisfaction with services and better outcomes. There is little evidence as yet on their cost-effectiveness, however. We recommend that government departments overseeing public service provision put in place rigorous and coherent programmes to monitor user-driven initiatives (such as individual budgets in health and social care). These should identify both the costs and the outcomes of user-driven initiatives, in the short and the longer term.**

---

39   Ev 193

40   Q 388 [Mr Harrop, Professor Beresford]

4 Towards responsive, user-driven public services

39. Responsive, user-driven public services are as yet far from common. A more extensive application of user-driven services would have significant implications for the organisation of public services. This is because the elements of user-driven services—people directing and controlling the services they receive, and people taking greater responsibility for 'co-produced' services—represent what has been called a "Copernican revolution"[41] in the nature of public service provision. Matthew Taylor was very clear about the scale of the challenge to be faced:

> …this is not a tactic at the edges; this is a fundamental change in the organising principles of public services.[42]

40. In this part of our Report, we consider how public services would need to change in order to become more responsive and user-driven. We examine first the issues that public service provider organisations need to weigh up in deciding where user involvement will be appropriate. We then consider implications for the relationship between service users and service professionals. Finally, we look at how the organisation of public services would need to adapt in order to meet the requirements of responsive, user-driven services.

Deciding where user involvement is appropriate

41. The first decision that public service provider organisations need to make is whether greater user involvement is feasible and desirable. In some cases, service users themselves may rule it out: people may simply not want to be involved in decisions about the services they receive. The mental health service users we heard from told us they just wanted good quality mental health services, not control over services for its own sake.[43] In other circumstances, people may not have the capacity to decide what services or courses of action are in their best interests, or may find this sort of responsibility onerous.

42. This suggests that user participation will not be appropriate to all situations; nor will it work to impose user involvement on people. Age Concern made the point that people will get involved when the issue is one that is important and relevant to them:

> Mechanisms for involvement should be driven by what users want and operate on a scale that is relevant to them. The relative success of tenant management in social housing, compared to the lack of enthusiasm for public involvement in NHS foundation trusts, may be partly explained by the former being chosen rather than imposed, and by the very different geographic scales on which they operate.[44]

---

41   Ev 193

42   Q 406

43   Q 368

44   Ev 171

43. There may be other reasons why user-driven services are not appropriate. Three key considerations that came up in the course of our inquiry were concerns about fairness, risk and cost. These concerns will need to be taken into account even where service users and professionals are otherwise enthusiastic about the prospect of user-driven initiatives. We consider each of these in turn.

Fairness

44. Virtually by definition user-driven services imply differences in what services will be provided to individual users, as well as how they are provided, given that individuals themselves will have different preferences about service provision. This could give rise to equity concerns. As with the choice agenda, user-driven services have been criticised for potentially benefiting articulate, well-off service users.[45] Services that focus on the user *should* mean that individual circumstances and needs—whatever those circumstances and needs—are identified and then addressed. However, it would be prudent for public service providers to build safeguards or provisions into service design so that less articulate users are not disadvantaged.

45. Pat McFadden MP suggested to us that there is a role for government to help less articulate or confident service users:

> We are probably all familiar with, for example, parents in our own constituency who really want to do the best by their child, get the best education and so on, but maybe they are not as forceful in making their views known and having all this information and so on. I think if the state in some capacity can help those people in a world where there is choice then that is a benefit to empowering people who perhaps at the moment are not empowered.[46]

We agree that it is important for the Government to pay particular attention to reaching and helping less forthcoming service users. We explore later some of the specific ways in which it might do so.[47]

Risk and accountability

46. User-directed services suggest that service users would take on some of the responsibility for assessing and bearing the risk of things going wrong. In many services this would require a major culture shift in attitudes toward risk. At the same time, people will need to be supported so that they understand the nature of the risk that they are taking on, and there may need to be appropriate regulatory safeguards against people bearing unreasonable risk.

47. A related point concerns the need for safeguards where there is the potential for a power imbalance to occur between service providers and service users. For example, people receiving long-term care provision are often vulnerable and dependent on the people

---

45   Q 444

46   *Ibid*

47   See para 58 ff

providing their care. As a result, it may be extremely difficult for them to raise issues with their care providers if they are unhappy about aspects of their care, or to change 'suppliers'. In such circumstances, it may well be inappropriate or unfair to expect vulnerable service users to bear the responsibility for decisions about service provision.

Cost

48. As observed earlier, we received varying evidence on the cost implications of user-driven services.[48] Some evidence pointed to the potential for cost savings from user-directed services. Another view is that tailoring services to individual need is expensive, and can encourage people to demand more. Service provider bodies trying to assess cost-effectiveness may find they come to different conclusions depending on the time period they consider, particularly in those cases where desired or expected outcomes are experienced over the long term. Finally, as noted earlier, we heard a very clear view from service users that user-directed services such as direct payments and individual budgets should not be used as a covert means of cost-cutting or cost-shifting.[49]

49. It is difficult to talk about the fairness, risk and cost of user-driven services in the abstract. They are, however, important considerations that will almost inevitably arise in any consideration of increased user involvement in public services. **Public service provider bodies need to consider issues of cost, fairness and risk in deciding whether user-driven services are appropriate in particular instances. Where increased user involvement is being pursued, provider organisations will need to determine how they assess and handle these issues. Departments overseeing public service provision should develop guidance on cost, fairness and risk issues arising out of increased user involvement, so that public service provider bodies can make informed decisions about how best to encourage user participation.**

50. Where concerns about user willingness, fairness, cost and risk have been evaluated and addressed, user-driven public services might then be considered both achievable and desirable. We turn now to examine the implications of making services more responsive and user-focused, and how government might encourage the conditions for user-oriented services to succeed.

Rebalancing the relationship: the role of service professionals

51. Greater user involvement implies a rebalancing of the relationship between people employed in the public services and the people using those services. Ed Miliband MP has acknowledged the shift that needs to occur:

> The first challenge is to involve users as people who shape and contribute to the service…It is about the nature of the relationship between user and professional. Of course, doctors will often have greater information and expertise—we will always be

---

48   See paras 34–37

49   See para 37

dependent on them. But the question is whether that relationship recognises the users' role.[50]

52. The New Economics Foundation informed us that:

> Co-production requires professionals and service managers to move out of traditional roles as 'experts' and 'providers' into partnership models that work with 'clients' and 'communities'. This enables them to find a solution together to the complexity of their problem and sometimes requires that the 'problem' be redefined.[51]

53. There are several ways in which the role of professional staff would need to change in order to adapt to the demands of user-oriented services. The New Economics Foundation suggests that professionals need to adjust from being 'fixers' that focus on problems to 'catalysers' who seek to encourage people's abilities.[52] The commentators Charles Leadbeater and Hilary Cottam have proposed a variety of roles for service professionals:

- **Advisers**: helping users to assess their needs and forge plans for their future care.

- **Navigators**: helping users find their way to the services they want.

- **Brokers**: helping users to put together a package of services that meets their needs, where services might come from different sources.

- **Service providers**: retaining a role in direct service provision to users.

- **Risk assessors and auditors**: helping users assess risks that may arise (this will be particularly relevant in the case of vulnerable people).[53]

54. Increasing the extent of service user involvement and control would mean a major change in the role of service professionals, which in turn would require careful management. Service professionals are likely to be wary about any perceived threats to their autonomy and expertise, and as a consequence might resist moves to give users a bigger role in public services. During our visit to the Newham community care navigators, we were told that GPs were initially sceptical about the scheme, though in time they came to recognise that their patients were benefiting from it. The National Consumer Council cites an example of successful collaborative working using its 'Shared Solutions' approach to involving both service users and staff:

> …social housing tenants and housing officers were brought together to discuss existing services, identify problems, build relationships and agree shared priorities. *Shared Solutions* showed that, although users and staff initially regarded each other with mutual suspicion and open hostility, by the end they had identified common

---

50   "Putting users and communities at the heart of public services", speech by Ed Miliband to Unison and Compass, 18 January 2007

51   Ev 177

52   Ev 178

53   Charles Leadbeater and Hilary Cottam, "The User-generated State: Public Services 2.0", *Public Matters: The Renewal of the Public Realm*, (London, 2007), p 102

aspirations, diagnosed shared problems and come up with agreed suggestions for improvement.[54]

55. These illustrations suggest that as user-driven services become more widespread, increased familiarity will go some way toward bringing about the cultural shift needed among those working in public services. Nevertheless, both professional bodies and the Government have important roles to play in promoting greater user responsiveness. Strong leadership from professional bodies, along with changes to professional training requirements and professional standards, would help to foster a culture of public service professionalism that is focused on involving users. As Peter Beresford of the user network Shaping Our Lives told us:

> …what is crucial is that real involvement starts with practitioners and professionals, that they learn to work, to practise…in a way where they are always asking, checking out with the service user: 'What do you want from me? How can I usefully help?' They do not have their own agenda which is then imposed on the service user. It is a process of co-production because that is the only place that naturally and routinely service users all have contact with the services and the people who work in them. It gets neglected but it is awfully important. It raises big issues there about training and the future of training.[55]

56. The Government, equally, has a key part in changing the culture of public service. All staff working in public services should be driven by a strong belief in public service and a sense of personal commitment to the people they serve. We believe that the public service ethos is as important and relevant to user-driven services as it is to all other public services. Greater user involvement should complement the public service ethos rather than conflict with it. This was also a conclusion of the Report by our predecessor Committee on *The Public Service Ethos*, which emphasised the importance of the principles that underpin public service. Two of the principles proposed in that Report bear repeating because of their relevance to our present discussion. The principles, which are directed at people and organisations providing public services, are as follows:

- Treat public service workers and users fairly and equitably, and involve them as much as possible in service issues.

- Remember at all times that public service means serving the public, not serving the interests of those who provide the service, and work collaboratively with others to this end.[56]

57. We agree with our predecessor Committee that these principles should be upheld by the Government and by public service providers. **As part of their adherence to an overall ethos of public service, we believe public service workers should give due importance to involving and engaging with service users. This is what good public servants do. The Government should actively promote principles of public service that recognise the**

---

54   Ev 215

55   Q 371 [Professor Beresford]

56   Public Administration Select Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2001–02, *The Public Service Ethos*, HC 263–I, para 75

value of involving users. **It should ensure that an understanding of service user involvement is reflected in programmes designed to develop public service skills, such as Professional Skills for Government. Professional bodies also need to identify how they can promote responsiveness to public service users among their professional members, and make the necessary changes to, for example, professional training and standards.**

Enabling and empowering: the role of service users

58. For those services where people are able and willing to take on a more active role, user-driven services are an exciting development. We believe that, in these circumstances, the Government should positively encourage greater user involvement in service design and delivery. People will need sufficient support, advice and guidance to play a larger part in service provision, and particular attention should be given to the requirements of vulnerable individuals. There are likely to be situations where people become less able or willing to make decisions about service provision over time—for example, as they become older, frailer or more ill. Staff working in the public services therefore have a crucial part to play in providing necessary support and monitoring people's ability to remain involved in service decisions.

59. Experience suggests it can be worthwhile to create dedicated personal advisers who provide individual support and advice to users. An increasing number of schools now have parent support advisers that work with parents to improve children's behaviour and school attendance.[57] A National Audit Office evaluation of Jobcentre Plus personal advisers has found that advisers have contributed to the high employment rate in the UK, by enabling jobseekers to develop the confidence and skills to find work.[58]

60. Peer networks of other service users can also empower people so that they are in a position to direct or influence services, as this evidence from a Sussex member of Breakthrough Breast Cancer's advocacy network demonstrates:

> We also set up our own, task-focused working groups that take up issues. We prioritise, like follow-up appointments for breast cancer patients and training staff to treat newly diagnosed patients sensitively. We also identified that some GPs were unaware that a genetic test for breast cancer is available and are working to communicate better with GPs to end this.[59]

61. David Holmes of Mind gave us another example relating to the guidelines on self-harm used by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE):

> NICE's own guidelines on self-harm are almost entirely stolen from the self-harm network which service users got together, a brilliant example because there was not a medical model of self-harm. There was no doctor to tell you that you were self-harming so you needed this drug. Self-harmers got together; they worked out what

---

57   Department for Children, Schools and Families, *The Children's Plan*, para 1.20

58   National Audit Office, *Jobcentre Plus: Delivering effective services through Personal Advisers*, HC 24 Session 2006–07, 29 November 2006, p 5

59   Ev 291

they wanted; they worked out what worked for them; they worked out what they needed and, because there is no medical model alternative, it has been adopted and it is now clinically approved by NICE and is effective.[60]

62. Our witness panel of public service users cautioned about changing the role of users too quickly or without adequate support. They told us that if users have relied on a certain mode of provision and are then suddenly expected to assume greater control, this can create fear and a desire to stick with the existing service—even if that service does not work very well. David Holmes gave us a pithy illustration of this:

> If I have spent twenty years going to a day centre being told that all I am capable of doing is drinking tea and doing a jigsaw and then someone tells me the day centre is closing and I am going to get a job, I am going to fight to keep the day centre.[61]

63. In contrast, Peter Beresford of Shaping Our Lives told us that blanket assumptions should not be made about people's capacities, and that people can often handle the demands of participation if given the necessary support:

> If I could give one example, it is an example where people have sometimes said perhaps they should not be involved; it would be inappropriate, unfair and burdensome. It is people who use palliative care services, people who are facing life-limiting terminal illnesses. We did a big project where we spoke to more than one hundred people in depth who used such services to ask them what they wanted from social workers. It is clear that people do want to contribute their views and they can contribute them if they are sought in appropriate and sensitive ways…You have to make sure, for example, that perhaps the oxygen is there for somebody and so on, but people do want to be involved in all sorts of ways.[62]

64. In order for service users to take on a larger role in public services, they need clarity about what is expected of them and what they can in turn expect of others. The Healthcare Commission told us that successful user-driven services were more likely where there was a good understanding between users and professional staff about what the service was intended to achieve.[63] Peter Beresford agreed that people needed to be clear about what they could expect from user-directed services—and, further, that service users should have realistic expectations about what such services involve:

> Getting involved as a service user does not mean you will get everything you want. It does make possible the negotiation of different interests.[64]

65. **We conclude that successful user involvement is more likely where people can see the relevance of getting involved to the quality of their lives. In some cases people will not actually want, or be able, to take a larger role in influencing or directing the public services they receive. If this is the case, people should not be penalised (e.g. by access to**

---

60   Q 380 [Mr Holmes]

61   Q 387 [Mr Holmes]

62   Q 371 [Professor Beresford]

63   Ev 252–253

64   Q 373 [Professor Beresford]

lower quality services) for not wanting to engage. Where people *do* want to take on a greater role in service design and delivery, they should receive the necessary support, advice and guidance from service provider organisations to do so. This means that public service providers and their overseeing departments should ensure that:

- **professional staff working in those services are able to provide the support that service users will need;**

- **there is regular monitoring of each user's ability to manage their own service provision, in case their ability or desire to do so deteriorates;**

- **where necessary, personal advisers are available to support individual users, along the lines of Jobcentre Plus personal advisers and parent support advisers in education;**

- **the development of peer networks of service users is encouraged; and**

- **there is clear communication to service users about what is expected of them, and, equally, of what they can expect from service provider organisations.**

Flexible and responsive services: implications for how public services are organised

66. As we have seen, successful user-driven services will require the efforts of committed service professionals and service users. This is not quite enough, however—what would also be needed is for the organisation of public services to allow this new kind of relationship to flourish. We heard that the situation is too often the opposite case. David Boyle of the New Economics Foundation told us:

> There is no doubt that that is a big challenge for professionals because what you are asking them to do is to look at the person in front of them, not entirely about their needs and what they cannot do, but also to sum up a little bit about what they can do and to have some kind of institution which allows them to exercise that. It is difficult to do that in the way that public services are currently administered.[65]

67. Sophia Parker of Demos went on to say that often professional staff had to go against normal procedures in order to involve people in service delivery:

> What is very interesting is that where it is working in practice it is usually working because of some extremely dedicated professionals who have done everything they can to circumnavigate the system as it is officially configured because that is what they have to do in order to achieve this way of working, this way of involving parents, kids and so on, whatever it is.[66]

68. Where greater user involvement in public services is desired, the Government has a role in ensuring that the organisation of services facilitates and encourages this. We heard from service users that, in their view, services should be organised so that people can be

---

65   Q 401 [Mr Boyle]

66   Q 411 [Ms Parker]

involved in service design and delivery at the points relevant to them. Members of Shaping Our Lives said this should include involvement in service commissioning and in the evaluation and monitoring of services, but that the type and extent of involvement would vary from person to person.[67] Andrew Harrop of Age Concern agreed that there was no one-size-fits-all model for involving people:

> …you do need to take a varied approach and fit the model to the circumstances: accept that different people aspire to different levels of engagement with the services they are using. I think the best example of this is the housing sector where you have a really wide range of approaches from direct tenant management through to much looser models of involvement, with things like representation on boards.[68]

69. This suggests that public service provider organisations will need to be rather flexible and creative in the services they offer. They may, for instance, want to give service users a menu of options for involvement from which people can choose—ranging from minimal participation through to complete user control over services (e.g. through individual budget holding and service commissioning). This scenario is quite different from the standardised provision that has characterised many public services in the past, as Peter Beresford of Shaping Our Lives observed:

> There is a lack of fit between the ideal of user involvement which is a very practical and workable ideal and the fact that policy tends to work in very uniform ways.[69]

70. There may be circumstances where the pursuit of other government policies or targets conflicts with greater user involvement and the flexibility of provision that that might entail. One example is the effect departmental targets for efficiency savings could have on flexible, user-driven service provision. Our predecessor Committee considered this issue as it arose in relation to the choice agenda in public services. Sir Peter Gershon suggested that limiting choice and diversity in service provision can increase efficiency:

> If you take, for example, the issue about electronic filing of employer PAYE returns, the Government has clearly set out a course now [under] which, by 2010, every PAYE employer will have to file electronically. That will be the only way of doing it; all other mechanisms will be removed…Yes, that is a restriction in choice; it improves efficiency. At the end of the day it is the elected politicians who have to make the decision about how far do you let one agenda run where it may start to impact on another agenda.[70]

71. The reverse situation will also hold true. It can be inefficient to provide a variety of service provision options, which is what many user-driven services would require. We agree with Sir Peter that the pursuit of potentially conflicting policy objectives will be a question of balance. However, we also urge the Government to be consistent in its support for responsive public services, and to ensure that relevant departments have the right

---

67   Ev 153

68   Q 365

69   Q 388 [Professor Beresford]

70   Oral and written evidence of the Public Administration Select Committee, Session 2004–05, *Civil Service Effectiveness*, HC 307, Q 67

incentives to encourage user-driven services where they are considered appropriate and desirable. **The Government needs to ensure that it is setting the right framework for service provider bodies to adapt to user-driven services. In particular, it needs to be careful that other policies or targets (such as requirements for efficiency savings) do not work against service providers and their staff having the freedom and flexibility to develop responsive, user-driven services.**

Evaluating the performance of user-driven services

72. Processes for evaluating government performance and capability will need to adapt to the demands of user-driven public services. At present, the model of capability for the Departmental Capability Reviews makes only passing reference to the need to "understand what your customers and stakeholders want".[71] It does not contain questions to check the efforts departments are making to enable people to get involved in public services, rather than simply understanding their needs. This is in sharp contrast to the statutory requirements that have recently been placed on local authorities and NHS organisations to inform, consult and involve people in the provision of local services.[72]

73. Similarly, evaluation frameworks need to be put in place to assess the effectiveness of user-driven services—a crucial part of which entails getting the views of service users themselves. To this end, we have been heartened by recent proposals for the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) framework for local services, which will replace the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) regime from 2009. The Audit Commission explained how the new framework is designed to involve people in evaluating local services:

> CAA, when implemented, will help to engage citizens and people who use services by:
>
> • concentrating on what local people care about most;
>
> • gathering intelligence about their experiences in order to assess local services…Such information will carry significant weight in CAA so that local people feel they have real influence in how local services are assessed;
>
> • assessing the quality of involvement of local people, including those in vulnerable circumstances, to check whether their voices are heard and heeded; and
>
> • providing information to people about the findings from CAA so that they can be better informed about the quality of local services and be better placed to exercise choice and influence.[73]

---

71 Civil Service Model of Capability, www.civilservice.gov.uk (see also Public Administration Select Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2006–07, *Skills for Government*, HC 93–I, Appendix 1)

72 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, section 138; and National Health Service Act 2006, section 242 (as amended by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007)

73 Audit Commission, *Comprehensive Area Assessment: A joint consultation by the Audit Commission*, Commission for Social Care Inspection, Healthcare Commission, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted, November 2007, p 13

74. According to the Audit Commission, CAA will "put the experience of citizens, people who use services and local taxpayers at the centre of the new local assessment framework".[74] This objective was supported by the service user groups that gave evidence to us. They informed us that service users have a key role to play in evaluating the performance of public services, in particular through defining the outcomes that should be used to assess service effectiveness.[75]

75. More broadly, user-driven services have some implications for how audit and inspection bodies evaluate public services. In particular, inspection bodies will need to adjust the criteria they use for assessing services. Evaluation frameworks should to some extent include service users' own assessments of the services they receive, as explained above. This will need to be done carefully, however, due to possible concerns about the subjectivity of user assessments such as customer satisfaction measures. At the same time, inspection bodies will need to ensure that standards of public services are safeguarded, so that people can be sure they are getting an adequate level of provision. Inspection bodies therefore need to consider how they would adjust their evaluation frameworks and measures to deal with the demands of user-driven services.

76. **Government bodies need to ensure that proper evaluation mechanisms are in place to monitor and assess the performance of user-driven public services. For departments that oversee public services, the relevant Departmental Capability Reviews should contain questions to test whether departments are creating the right environment for user-driven services to flourish. Inspection bodies should institute evaluation frameworks for user-driven services that ensure standards of public service provision are safeguarded, and which allow for direct input from service users into evaluation.**

---

74   *Ibid*, p 2

75   Q 367, Q 380 [Mr Harrop], Ev 153

5 Conclusion

77. **Involving people in public services—at least in the deeper sense which we have been considering in this Report—is still in its early days. It is as yet unclear whether user-driven public services offer better value for money or improved outcomes for all or most service users. What is clear is that stronger variants of user participation and control would have far-reaching effects on the shape of some of our public services. In particular, there would be fundamental implications for the role of public service professionals, their relationship with service users, and the way that public services are organised and assessed.**

78. **In the absence of firm empirical evidence about the effectiveness of user-driven public services, we have not attempted to be prescriptive about the ideal level and form of user involvement in public services. In any event, this will depend on the circumstances of each individual case: people should be involved in service design and delivery only to the extent that they want to be. Where deeper user involvement is both feasible and desirable, however, we believe that the Government should provide the necessary support to enable people to participate effectively in public services. This will help ensure the right conditions for user-driven public services—and the people using them—to flourish.**

Conclusions and recommendations

1. We are pleased to see the Government's initiatives for improving the effectiveness of consultations and for extending their reach. We support the underlying principle that government bodies need to make systematic efforts to collate and learn from the views of citizens and people using public services. Furthermore, government bodies must do this in good faith: consultations should make plain what they are trying to do, and this understanding should be clearly communicated to the people being consulted. (Paragraph 14)

2. We welcome the Government's support for public services that focus on service users. We believe that achieving high-quality, responsive public services requires empowering and engaging with service users as much as addressing their needs. We urge the Government to foster a public service culture of working with the people that use services in order to ensure that moves toward greater personalisation result in excellent public services. (Paragraph 22)

3. There are many advantages claimed for user-driven public services, including strengthening citizenship and improving public services. An evaluative evidence base is starting to emerge, indicating that user-oriented services have resulted in higher satisfaction with services and better outcomes. There is little evidence as yet on their cost-effectiveness, however. We recommend that government departments overseeing public service provision put in place rigorous and coherent programmes to monitor user-driven initiatives (such as individual budgets in health and social care). These should identify both the costs and the outcomes of user-driven initiatives, in the short and the longer term. (Paragraph 38)

4. Public service provider bodies need to consider issues of cost, fairness and risk in deciding whether user-driven services are appropriate in particular instances. Where increased user involvement is being pursued, provider organisations will need to determine how they assess and handle these issues. Departments overseeing public service provision should develop guidance on cost, fairness and risk issues arising out of increased user involvement, so that public service provider bodies can make informed decisions about how best to encourage user participation. (Paragraph 49)

5. As part of their adherence to an overall ethos of public service, we believe public service workers should give due importance to involving and engaging with service users. This is what good public servants do. The Government should actively promote principles of public service that recognise the value of involving users. It should ensure that an understanding of service user involvement is reflected in programmes designed to develop public service skills, such as Professional Skills for Government. Professional bodies also need to identify how they can promote responsiveness to public service users among their professional members, and make the necessary changes to, for example, professional training and standards. (Paragraph 57)

6. We conclude that successful user involvement is more likely where people can see the relevance of getting involved to the quality of their lives. In some cases people will

not actually want, or be able, to take a larger role in influencing or directing the public services they receive. If this is the case, people should not be penalised (e.g. by access to lower quality services) for not wanting to engage. Where people do want to take on a greater role in service design and delivery, they should receive the necessary support, advice and guidance from service provider organisations to do so. This means that public service providers and their overseeing departments should ensure that: (Paragraph 65)

- professional staff working in those services are able to provide the support that service users will need;

- there is regular monitoring of each user's ability to manage their own service provision, in case their ability or desire to do so deteriorates;

- where necessary, personal advisers are available to support individual users, along the lines of Jobcentre Plus personal advisers and parent support advisers in education;

- the development of peer networks of service users is encouraged; and

- there is clear communication to service users about what is expected of them, and, equally, of what they can expect from service provider organisations.

7. The Government needs to ensure that it is setting the right framework for service provider bodies to adapt to user-driven services. In particular, it needs to be careful that other policies or targets (such as requirements for efficiency savings) do not work against service providers and their staff having the freedom and flexibility to develop responsive, user-driven services. (Paragraph 71)

8. Government bodies need to ensure that proper evaluation mechanisms are in place to monitor and assess the performance of user-driven public services. For departments that oversee public services, the relevant Departmental Capability Reviews should contain questions to test whether departments are creating the right environment for user-driven services to flourish. Inspection bodies should institute evaluation frameworks for user-driven services that ensure standards of public service provision are safeguarded, and which allow for direct input from service users into evaluation. (Paragraph 76)

9. Involving people in public services—at least in the deeper sense which we have been considering in this Report—is still in its early days. It is as yet unclear whether user-driven public services offer better value for money or improved outcomes for all or most service users. What is clear is that stronger variants of user participation and control would have far-reaching effects on the shape of some of our public services. In particular, there would be fundamental implications for the role of public service professionals, their relationship with service users, and the way that public services are organised and assessed. (Paragraph 77)

10. In the absence of firm empirical evidence about the effectiveness of user-driven public services, we have not attempted to be prescriptive about the ideal level and form of user involvement in public services. In any event, this will depend on the

circumstances of each individual case: people should be involved in service design and delivery only to the extent that they want to be. Where deeper user involvement is both feasible and desirable, however, we believe that the Government should provide the necessary support to enable people to participate effectively in public services. This will help ensure the right conditions for user-driven public services—and the people using them—to flourish. (Paragraph 78)

Formal minutes

Members present:

Dr Tony Wright in the Chair

Kelvin Hopkins	Mr Charles Walker
Julie Morgan	Jenny Willott
Mr Gordon Prentice	

Draft Report (*User Involvement in Public Services*), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 78 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 29 April 3.00 pm

Oral and written evidence are published in a separate volume as *Public Services: Putting People First,* Session 2007–08, HC 408.

Witnesses

List of written evidence

List of written evidence (cont'd)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2007–08

First Report	Machinery of Government Changes: A follow-up Report	HC 160
Second Report	Propriety and Peerages	HC 153
Third Report	Parliament and public appointments: Pre-appointment hearings by select committees	HC 152 (*HC 515*)
Fourth Report	Work of the Committee in 2007	HC 236 (*HC 458*)
Fifth Report	When Citizens Complain	HC 408

Session 2006–07

First Report	The Work of the Committee in 2005–06	HC 258
Second Report	Governing the Future	HC 123 (*Cm 7154*)
Third Report	Politics and Administration: Ministers and Civil Servants	HC 122
Fourth Report	Ethics and Standards: The Regulation of Conduct in Public Life	HC 121 (*HC 88*)
Fifth Report	Pensions Bill: Government Undertakings relating to the Financial Assistance Scheme	HC 523 (*HC 922*)
Sixth Report	The Business Appointment Rules	HC 651 (*HC 1087*)
Seventh Report	Machinery of Government Changes	HC 672 (*HC 90*)
Eighth Report	The Pensions Bill and the FAS: An Update, Including the Government Response to the Fifth Report of Session 2006-07	HC 922 (*HC 1048*)
Ninth Report	Skills for Government	HC 93 (*HC 89*)
First Special Report	The Governance of Britain	HC 901

Session 2005–06

First Report	A Debt of Honour	HC 735 (*cm 1020*)
Second Report	Tax Credits: putting things right	HC 577 (*HC 1076*)
Third Report	Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill	HC 1033 (*HC 1205*)
Fourth Report	Propriety and Honours: Interim Findings	HC 1119
Fifth Report	Whitehall Confidential? The Publication of Political Memoirs	HC 689 (*HC 91, Session 2007–08*)
Sixth Report	The Ombudsman in Question: the Ombudsman's report on pensions and its constitutional implications	HC 1081 (*Cm 6961*)
Seventh Report	The Ministerial Code: the case for Independent Investigation	HC 1457 (*HC 1088, Session 2006–07*)
First Special Report	The Attendance of the Prime Minister's Strategy Adviser before the Public Administration Select Committee	HC 690