

## Commission unveils radical vision for 21st Century public services

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A major new report by the University of Birmingham published on July 11<sup>th</sup> will call for a new system of Local Public Support fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

'When Tomorrow Comes - The future of local public services outlines a blueprint for a new system of Local Public Support based on local democracy and citizen involvement in delivering services to meet the aspirations of individuals and communities.

The report summarises the outcomes of the University of Birmingham Policy Commission, which brought together senior academics, politicians and leaders from the public, private and charitable sectors to examine the future of local public services. The Commission collected evidence from a wide range of experts involved in local public service delivery as well as gathering the opinions of more than 800 young people to understand their views of local services.

Their findings call for a radical rethink of public services to make them fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Professor Helen Sullivan who is lead author on the report comments: "*Our evidence showed a disconnect between users wanting more say in their services and a system, which was not designed to do this. The young people we interviewed wanted more access to services and were happy to give their own time to develop local services.*

*We believe that the demands of the future require a transformation of the kind of support and services citizens will expect from local authorities and local providers.*

*The only way to achieve better public services, particularly in straitened financial times is to involve local people in their design and delivery."*

The Commission report 'When Tomorrow Comes' proposes a new system of Local Public Support, based on 10 core elements, which is can be adapted to fit the diverse range of English localities..

### **Democratically determined rights and entitlements to Local Public Support**

People's rights and entitlements to support should be decided and determined through democratic deliberation involving the whole community. Local government has a responsibility to ensure that weaker/unpopular 'voices' are not marginalised in these deliberations.

### **Local priority setting in a democratic framework**

The system of Local Public Support is driven by the local community priorities negotiated and agreed with a democratic local government.

### **Outcome based commissioning**

Outcome based commissioning provides the mechanism for deciding what support will be offered and by whom based on democratically agreed local community priorities. It should promote testing of a range of approaches to establish which works best for which users and communities in which circumstances.

It demands new behaviours and approaches from commissioners and providers, from whatever sector, particularly where commissioning is joint or shared.

### **Co-production in the design and delivery of support**

The experiences of some of the young people who gave evidence to the Policy Commission suggested that engaging in jointly developing services not only helped to create a better system of support but also enhanced their sense of being independent and responsible individuals, attributes they prized.

### **Dedicated resources for citizen/community action**

A system of Local Public Support is one which makes resources (human, physical and financial) available for citizens and communities to take action on their own behalf. This could include resource support to individuals through personalised budgets and to communities through the transfer of physical assets..These resources will be transferred from local public authorities or public service providers and made available from private and third sectors

### **Combining preventative and responsive activity**

**A system of Local Public Support focuses on preventative activity as this can provide a more a direct route to achieving positive outcomes for individuals and communities and can reduce the need for expensive responsive interventions so saving scarce resources.**

### **Plural provision where this supports outcomes**

Who supplies support, of what type, in what way and how funded are all questions that are answered in relation to what offers the best outcome for individuals and the wider community.

### **Local Public Support budget**

A Local Public Support budget operates flexibly. It makes use of the whole range of financial resources available from private, charitable and philanthropic sources.

### **Powerful local politicians**

Local politicians need to shape and guide the system in ways that reflect local community priorities. They need to represent the views of those with limited power in decision making; and provide a robust framework for local accountability. They will need to work closely with other recognised community leaders and influencers.

### **Systematic and shared learning**

There should be multiple opportunities for people to learn about and understand local services in order that different aspects of support can be regularly reviewed and revised or replaced if they are not contributing to individual and community well-being.

The report also looks at specific areas that require urgent reform if this vision for public services is to be realised.

The proposals recommend training a new generation of public servants, able to fulfil a variety of roles and equipped with a range of skills regardless of their professional identity or sector. The report argues that this will move services away from silo institutions that have long since ceased to be useful in achieving local results.

Twenty-first century public servants fulfil a combination of roles, some of which are new, some evolving and some longstanding. Key new roles include: storyteller, communicating new possibilities for local public support in the absence of existing blueprints; weaver, making creative use of existing materials to generate something new and useful for service users; architect, constructing coherent local support systems from the myriad of available resources; and navigator, guiding citizens and service users around the range of available options.

The other key conditions for success outlined in the report are

- Citizens need to be genuine co-authors of their well-being
- A connected and connective local government
- A new relationship between central government and local communities

Deborah Cadman OBE who chaired the Commission comments: "

*"These proposals require the development of a new kind of public servant, able to fulfil a variety of roles and equipped with a range of skills regardless of their professional identity. We recognise that particular public support functions demand a level of specialist knowledge this emphasis on professional specialism needs to be matched by possession of other attributes and competence in other skills relevant to all public servants.*

*We believe that this package of reform would actually enhance the role of local democracy and create a system that people feel represents their needs."*

**ENDS**

Professor Helen Sullivan and Deborah Cadman OBE (Chair of the Commission) are available for interview. For further information contact Ben Hill, PR Manager, University of Birmingham on 0121 4145134, Mob 07789 921163.

#### **Notes to Editors**

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- The University is the eighth largest employer in the Birmingham/Solihull sub-region and plays an integral role in the economic, social and cultural growth of local and regional communities; working closely with businesses and organisations, employing approximately 6,000 staff and providing 10,000 graduates annually.
- The University contributes £662 million to the City of Birmingham and £779 million to the West Midlands region, with an annual income of more than £462 million.

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