

*[Check against delivery]*

With permission Mr Speaker, I would like to make a Statement about the Open Public Services White Paper.

There couldn't be a more important issue.

Public services save lives. They rescue people from disease and ignorance. They protect people from crime and poverty.

Much of what is done by our public services is fantastic – amongst the best in the world.

But we can do even better.

This Government has a vision – set out in this White Paper – about how we can do better.

The central point is this.

When public services aren't up to scratch, those who are well off can pay for substitutes.

But for those who are not well off, there is no opportunity to pay for substitutes.

So we need to give everybody the same choice in, and the same power over, the services they receive that well off people already have.

This White Paper sets out how we are going about the business of putting that vision of choice and power for all into practice.

Our principles are clear. They are:

1. Choice – wherever possible we will increase choice;
2. Decentralisation – power will be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level;
3. Diversity – public services will be open to a range of providers;
4. Fair access – we will ensure that there is fair access and fair funding for all; and
5. Accountability – services will be accountable to users and taxpayers.

Mr Speaker, let me give you some examples of how these principles will apply in specific public services that cater for specific individuals.

First, we are going to ensure that every adult receiving social care has an individual, personal budget by 2013, and we are moving towards personal budgets in chronic health care, for children with special needs, and in housing for vulnerable people.

This means more choice and power for people who need those services: they will be able to choose what the money is spent on.

Second, we are making funding follow the pupil in schools, the student in further education, the child in childcare and the patient in the NHS.

This means more choice and power for people who need those services: they will be able to choose where the money is spent.

Third, we are providing fair access so that, for example, a pupil premium payment follows pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, and a health premium is paid to local authorities who achieve the greatest improvements in public health for people in the least healthy parts of the country. We attach huge importance to this agenda. We want genuine equality of opportunity and genuine social mobility.

Fourth, we are providing open access to data so that people can make informed choices about the services they use:

- crime maps, so people can see whether the local police are preventing crime in their street;
- health outcomes, so people can see which hospitals and which GPs achieve the best results;
- standardised satisfaction data for all public services – so people can see exactly which service providers are providing the quality of service people want; and

- open, real-time data on road conditions, speeds and accidents along our motorways, so people can make informed choices.

Fifth, we will be providing a new system of redress, through beefed up powers of Ombudsmen to step in where the choice to which people have a right is denied.

But we are going further than this.

We are not only concerned about increased choice and increased power for individuals.

We are also determined to increase choice and power for communities, so that they can determine how money is spent on their communal public services.

We will do this:

- by making it far easier for communities to take over and run public assets and assets of community value;
- by giving communities the right to build houses for their own young people;
- by giving parish councils and community groups the right to challenge, enabling them to take over local services, and making it easier for people to form neighbourhood councils where there are none at present;
- by giving neighbourhoods vastly more power to determine their own neighbourhood planning; and
- by giving neighbourhoods the ability to challenge the local police at beat meetings informed by crime maps – and remember, the people at these meetings will each be electors of the local police Commissioner.

We recognise of course, that some services will inevitably continue to be commissioned centrally, or by various levels of local government.

Here too, we are aiming at decentralisation, diversity and accountability.

The White Paper sets out the way we will use payment by results to transform:

- welfare to work;
- the rehabilitation of offenders;
- drug and alcohol recovery;
- help for children in the foundation years; and
- support for vulnerable adults.

In all of these areas, a diverse range of providers will be given a huge incentive to provide the social gains our society so desperately needs – by being rewarded for getting people into work, out of crime, off drugs and alcohol, and into the opportunities most of us take for granted.

To strengthen accountability, the White Paper also sets out the most radical programme of transparency for government and the public sector anywhere in the world.

To unlock innovation, the White Paper commits us to diversity of provision, removing barriers to entry, stimulating entry by new types of provider, and unlocking new sources of capital.

To ensure that public sector providers can hold their own on a level playing field, the White Paper sets out measures to liberate public sector bodies from red tape.

To encourage employee ownership within the public services, the White Paper sets out the measures we are taking to promote mutualisation and employee cooperatives.

To ensure that service continues if particular service-providers fail, the White Paper sets out the principles for continuity regimes we are establishing, service by service.

Mr Speaker, in the last 13 months, this Government has done more to increase choice and power for those served by our public services than the Party opposite achieved in 13 years.

This White Paper describes the comprehensive, consistent, coherent approach we are taking to keep our public services moving in the direction of increased choice and power for service-users – so that we can provide access to excellence for all.

That is the aim of this White Paper.

I commend it to the House.