

Keep it REAL

Responsive, Efficient, Accountable,
Local services





Contents

Foreword	4
Executive summary	5
Introduction	7
Vision for REAL public services – Responsive, Efficient, Accountable, Local	8
Rebalancing power between the centre and localities	11
Councils rethinking service delivery	17
Empowering citizens and neighbourhoods	29
Improving transparency and access to information	33
Useful resources	35

Foreword

Public services are changing because taxpayers demand it; they want the public sector to be more affordable, give better value for money and put individuals and families in control of the services they use. We in local government know this – councils are not only the most efficient part of the public sector but the most accountable, reforming and innovative too. In the face of unprecedented economic challenges, vastly reduced public spending and rising demand for services, we need to build on this record.

This document sets out some ways in which local government is leading the reform of public services – to celebrate what many councils are doing, to encourage councils to learn from each other, and to throw a challenge back to central government departments to recognise and imitate the lead they are being shown by councils.

The country's response to the economic crisis and tackling the national deficit means that councils must deliver very significant cuts to spending on public services. The scale of the cuts and the ever increasing demand for efficient service provision requires a radical and ambitious rethink of traditional service delivery models and many councils now see themselves as strategic commissioners of local services. Because they are democratically accountable bodies, councils are uniquely placed to understand the needs of their communities and to take a joined up approach to meeting them. Many councils will continue to be excellent service providers,

precisely because of their close relationship with communities. However, our USP is not in providing services directly, but in having an accountability culture that ensures council-tax payers get the services they rightly expect provided by the organisations who can offer best value, whoever they are.

As commissioners, councils have a role in creating markets, diversifying supply and bringing local commissioners together to cut through the bureaucracy and organisational incoherence around complex needs and problems to get a real focus on outcomes, paying for results not process.

Councils are already working to fundamentally reshape the architecture of the welfare state for families with complex needs through Community Budgets, and are ready to do the same for other services.

Public services are more accountable, more efficient and more in tune with the needs and aspirations of local people when they are delivered locally. It is our ambition to make that happen better, for more services. But it will require trust in those at the front line of providing services, and greater freedom from stifling regulation and inspection.

We urge Government not to hold back. No department should consider itself above the need to break up the inefficient centralisation of standardised national delivery.

Sir Merrick Cockell
Chairman of the LGA

Executive summary

The current economic crisis and the reduction in public spending have given new urgency to the drive to get better value from public services. At the same time, longer-term trends point to increased demand on services and public finances. Challenges on this scale require a fundamental rethink of the way we deliver public services.

Meeting these challenges will require a strong and effective link between people, as the users of public services, and decision making about and delivery of those services. Local representative democracy can forge that link through strong local government with the democratic legitimacy to lead.

It is that democratic legitimacy and their relationship with the communities they represent that make councils effective commissioners. Councils are now building on their experience to develop their role as strategic commissioners; understanding customer and community needs; commissioning services to meet these needs; and performance managing services to satisfy community needs.

“Local government has been better, frankly, than central government at being efficient and providing good value for money.”

David Cameron, Speech to LGA annual conference, 2011

Redefining public services goes hand in hand with decentralisation and will require a rebalancing of power between the centre and localities: away from Whitehall and towards the will of the voters expressed through the ballot box. Central Government has accepted in its recent white paper that responsibility and accountability lie locally and must deliver on its commitment to transfer control to the lowest appropriate level.

Recommendations for REAL public services

Government should:

1. Create a mechanism that enables all areas that want to, to make and implement proposals for joining up services and budgets at a level that makes sense locally and ensures cross-government support for pooling budgets.
2. Make decentralisation the default option for all government departments.
3. Extend the Community Right to Challenge to all public bodies including central government services and identify opportunities for decentralisation.
4. Give councils more financial flexibility by pressing ahead with localisation of business rates and removing constraints on their ability to be active in financial markets.

5. Minimise central direction or prescriptions by the Secretary of State over which public health services councils will be required to commission, and the manner in which they are commissioned.
6. Wherever possible, charging regimes for local services should be localised to allow charges to reflect local circumstances and drive better services. This should in particular include decentralising planning fees.
7. Clarify the level of resource to be allocated to local authorities to meet the proposed public health duties and to remove the ring-fence to enable councils to use the resources to greatest effect locally.
8. Support councils to diversify the supply of providers by tackling institutional and financial disincentives. For example, no longer charging voluntary and community organisations VAT when they share back office services, helping them to join together to bid for contracts.
9. Allow councils and communities to decide which services are suitable for commissioning locally and how.



Introduction

Local government is at the heart of reforming services and has a key role to play in diversifying supply and ensuring services are more affordable, more accountable, give better value for money and put people in control of the services they use.

This publication sets out local government's ambition for the reform of public services. It also highlights examples from across the country of how councils are improving services, saving money and discovering new ways of working with partners and communities.

We include a list of recommendations to central government which would enable local government to go further with reforms and have the freedom to decide with partners and citizens at a local level, what is best for their local communities.

The Local Government Association (LGA) will continue to support councils to seek out opportunities for devolution of powers and funding to the lowest appropriate level. And we will continue to explore and promote the successes and innovative work that is already going on in local government.

“Open commissioning is much better established in local authorities than it is in central government. Local authorities have achieved a great deal in terms of more open public services. The wider public sector has much to learn from local authority successes in commissioning, for example in adult social care and highways services.”

Open Public Services White Paper, 2011

Vision for REAL public services – Responsive, Efficient, Accountable, Local

The current economic crisis and the reduction in public spending have given new urgency to the drive to reduce the costs of public services. As people's incomes are squeezed and the cost of living goes up, tax payers' money will need to go further. At the same time, longer-term trends point to increased demand on services and public finances. Challenges on this scale require fundamental changes to the way we think about the services we expect and need, how they are provided and by whom.

In rethinking and redesigning services, the goal must be to improve the outcomes for service users and the tax payer and ensure that money is spent on the people who need it most. Citizen focused services do not start with an assumption that the best services will be delivered by one particular sector or type of provider. They start with an ambition to provide quality that meets people's needs, to solve or prevent problems and to do that in the most effective and cost efficient way possible. To be responsive and outcome-focused, services need wide and deep involvement of communities in shaping priorities, in designing services and, where appropriate, commissioning or running services at neighbourhood level. Councils have the in-depth understanding and close relationship with citizens and communities that is needed to tailor services to local needs.

The needs of individuals must be considered alongside the needs of wider communities and the public purse. Delivering community-based outcomes therefore requires leadership, to take an overall view of the outcomes sought within the budgets available, and how to target services on real community priorities. Because they are accountable to local people, councils are uniquely mandated to make these decisions on behalf of their communities.

Councils have already demonstrated how taking a joined-up approach to services saves money and delivers better value for money. This depends on local partners coming together to join up services to avoid waste, duplication and inefficiency. Councils can provide the strategic leadership required to bring together different public bodies with an interest in the outcome, and to engage with the supply-side to identify who is best placed to deliver outcomes most efficiently.

A diverse supply of service providers can drive up service standards through increased competition. There must be systems in place to ensure value for money and accountability to local people, but we cannot afford a return to burdensome performance management that diverts resources away from service delivery, stifles innovation and undermines diversity. Councils provide a clear and unbureaucratic route for holding service providers to account and protecting the rights of users and tax payers via democratically elected representatives.

“With its long record of waste, central government is in no position to lecture either local government or the voluntary sector on efficiency and competence. The case for fresh thinking from a new direction is overwhelming.”

Decentralisation and the Localism Bill: an essential guide, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010



Doing things differently

As communities and their councils face complex social and economic challenges, they are creating innovative approaches to delivering a range of public services.

Merging services between the district councils of **East Lindsey and South Holland** has resulted in the development of a limited company called Compass Point Business Services (East Coast) Ltd (www.tinyurl.com/c345esu) which is wholly owned by the two district councils with Hitachi, Microsoft and Capita as strategic partners. The company establishes a shared service for both councils which delivers five back office services: revenue and benefits, human resources, information and communications technology, finance and customer services. This service operates through a management agreement and service level agreements which allow for different performance targets. The arrangements became fully operational in April 2011. The councils have forecast a saving of £31 million over ten years of operating.

Further information including a video on this case study is available at: www.tinyurl.com/bs9alyg

Midlands Highway Alliance (MHA) was launched in July 2007. There are 16 local authority members involved with Leicestershire County Council acting as the lead authority. MHA aims to establish and develop collaborative procurement frameworks to secure the delivery of highway capital schemes and services and develop a continuous improvement model for highways maintenance. By July 2009, savings of £2.42 million had been achieved, with a further £15.8 million savings projected by 2011 and £16.75 million by 2013.

As part of the process, the MHA has produced an innovative way of quantifying the savings and sharing knowledge via an online system for tracking overall performance. The system shows the financial impact in terms of cost and payback and non-cashable impacts on staff and the community. www.tinyurl.com/cupxtyv

The **London Borough of Croydon's** 'RELEASE and DELIVER Programme' aims to increase efficiency by improving procurement practices, financial management and customer engagement, as well as integrating local services.

Examples of innovation include a scheme aimed at improving local parks which gives residents the chance to vote on which parks receive a share of £1.5 million budget and allows them to have a say on how the money is spent.

The programme achieved savings of £10.7 million in 2009/10, which included £3 million in adult services and housing, £2 million in community services, and £5 million in central departments.

Rebalancing power between the centre and localities

Revitalised local democracy, providing real local choice and reflecting real local priorities, demands a rebalancing of power between the centre and localities: away from Whitehall towards the will of the voters expressed through the ballot box. For their part, councils will demonstrate leadership, recognising that their electorate may be divided in its appetite for change. They must also manage risks and take responsibility when things do not go as planned. Central government will have to accept that responsibility and accountability lie locally and there will be local variation. They must resist the temptation to intervene unless there are legal violations or systemic failure.

An example of where government needs to resist centralised control is in implementing its public health reforms. It is estimated that health inequality costs the economy between £56 billion and £60.5 billion per year.¹ ‘Healthy people, healthy lives’, the Government’s white paper on the future of public health, recognises that public health has become narrowly targeted and fragmented and that the wider determinants of health cannot be addressed by the NHS. Its proposals to transfer the responsibility for public health to local authorities are right.

Taxpayers could make significant savings if public health was delivered through influencing mainstream service provision for example: in housing, transport, environment, social care and regeneration, to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and stem the growing economic and social burden of ill-health. The Health and Social Care Bill transfers responsibility for many public health services to councils to allow them to commission better outcomes locally. However, as drafted, the Bill also includes powers for the Secretary of State to regulate and prescribe which services they commission and how. Use of such powers could impose unnecessary restraint and centralise control on the freedom of councils to develop local approaches to address health priorities.

The planning fees system is a further example of how central regulation and control over a local service is holding back improvement. A transparent local model based on robust evidence of the true costs of running the service would drive service reform and ensure the system was more focused on meeting customers’ needs efficiently. Importantly it will end the current approach where council tax payers are required to subsidise certain types of applications.

The Government consulted on its intention to decentralise planning fees earlier this year – it now needs to put its commitment to localism into practice.

¹ Marmot, M., Allen, J., Goldblatt, P., Boyce, T., McNeish, D., Grady, M., Geddes, I. (2010) Fair Society, Healthy Lives: A strategic review of health inequalities in England, post-2010. London: The Marmot Review

We have seen some significant progress towards decentralisation. The top-down bureaucratic performance management system, imposed national targets, and some unaccountable and remote quangos and government agencies have been swept away. The Localism Bill was conceived to give more power to localities to act on local priorities, and the LGA has secured significant amendments to the legislation to make sure the final Act comes closer to realising this aim.

At the heart of the rebalance of power is a fundamental change in how public money is spent. Central government finds it so difficult to decentralise because it controls – and has to account to Parliament for – most of the money. Flows of money through departmental grants and separate funding streams mean service delivery has to mirror Whitehall structures. It encourages departments to view councils as part of the delivery chain in the pursuit of Ministerial objectives rather than as decision-makers and commissioners of the best outcomes for their communities. Radical service reform will require more financial autonomy and freedom at local level.

The Localism Act: devolving power to places

The Act takes a significant step forward to empower councils to act with confidence on behalf of their communities, through doing things differently and doing new things.

The new **General Power of Competence** (GPC) gives councils the same broad powers as an individual to be creative and entrepreneurial in terms of what they do and how they do it. Unlike the old wellbeing power, the Act does not seek to constrain councils to use these powers only to promote social, economic and environmental wellbeing within their community. Parliament's intention is clearly to avoid a narrow legal interpretation once again being applied to undermine the power. Instead councils will now have the freedom to act directly in the interest of their communities but also to act in their own financial interest, with Parliament recognising that indirect benefits, such as securing greater efficiencies, are just as valuable to support local communities. All councils will now also be able to undertake commercial activities, with the GPC introducing new trading and charging opportunities for parish councils and thus the potential for joint commercial ventures across all tiers of local government.

The Act also opens up a significant window of opportunity for councils to bid to take on other local public functions that are a high priority for their communities, to ensure decision-making is devolved to the lowest appropriate level, and results in more locally responsive public services. There is now a duty on the Secretary of State to consider proposals from councils which offers the potential to transfer power to locally democratically-elected representatives thereby increasing accountability to local people.

Again, there have been some positive steps towards greater financial flexibility at local level. The Local Government Resource Review seeks to give councils more control over the local tax base. The Localism Act will give councils new powers to charge and trade. The number of separate funding streams flowing from Whitehall has been reduced and Government is working with councils and their partners to support areas in piloting place-based approaches such as Community Budgets. Building on the experience of the Community Budgets approach to families with complex needs, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is currently running a competition to identify two areas to pursue a whole-area community budget approach.

These are helpful steps and demonstrate how the joining up of budgets can improve services and deliver value for money, but are not yet reflective of the much greater ambition councils have for joining up services. Government now needs to make faster progress and allow all areas that want to, to come forward with proposals for joining up services and budgets at a level that makes sense locally and make it possible to implement them.

The Localism Act will allow councils to apply for functions to be transferred to them where they promote economic development or wealth creation, or increase local accountability. The elected mayoral model has the potential to give local communities significantly more power over their areas and allow extension of the Community Budgeting model. However these powers should be available to areas whether they have chosen to have an elected mayor or not.

Community Budgets approach to families with complex needs

Westminster City Council's Family Recovery Programme, an example of a Community Budget approach, has saved the public purse an average of £41,000 per problem family it has helped.

The programme brought together previously disconnected work by the police, health, social services and benefits professionals to take a whole-family approach to the problems of the city's most troubled families, with the promise of sanctions if improvement plans are not adhered to.

By intervening to build parenting skills, preventing family breakdown and tackling issues like addiction, the programme has reduced the number of criminal offences participating families were accused of by 69 per cent and improved the school attendance of 80 per cent of children for whom truancy was a problem.

In the case of one family the programme resulted in a saving of £136,000 over a 12 month period.

Forecasts show a potential avoided cost of £2 million over the first year.

www.tinyurl.com/cpvy98a

Redefining public services goes hand in hand with decentralisation. Government has clearly stated its view that services should be devolved to “the lowest appropriate level” which means that decentralisation should be the default option for all services unless there is a compelling reason for central government to retain control. Councils would like to see this test applied across the full range of services commissioned at national level. No government department should consider themselves as exempt from decentralisation, and should look for opportunities to devolve commissioning of services as far as possible. Many local authorities have individually or collectively established delivery bodies which would be able to manage the procurement of central government contracts for specific geographical areas.

In the recent Open Public Services White Paper, the government has identified a number of areas where they would like to see early progress including skills, public transport support, the natural environment and families with complex needs.

The case for decentralising skills

There are a several major challenges in relation to adult skills that are of concern to local councils and local enterprise partnerships: local and regional imbalances in skill levels; spatial concentrations of low skills; the skills gaps employers continue to report; and local concentrations of high unemployment, in particular for young adults. Government invests £3.5 billion a year in adult skills.

A more decentralised skills system could secure better value for this investment, and ensure that individuals and employers secure the best possible return to their private investment in skills. Reform should be based on the following key principles:

- Decentralisation should support the Government’s skills policy – a choice-based approach, greater freedoms and flexibilities for providers, greater transparency and diversified provision. This means moving further away from centralised, target-driven systems at either national or local levels.
- Improving the local accountability and performance of further education providers to local people through information about learners’ destinations, with councils taking greater leadership, scrutiny, champion and co-ordination roles.
- Greater joining up across the learning and skills continuum – covering all ages, levels and types of provision to avoid fragmentation.
- A role for local councils or local enterprise partnerships in providing local co-ordination so that local people receive the training that takes into account local economic opportunities, spatial variations in the skills profile and is based on accurate local labour market information.

The case for decentralising transport

Many of our major cities and towns underperform compared to European equivalents on key economic indicators, and at least part of the reason is the quality of the local transport systems which make these cities attractive places to invest and enables people to get to the jobs.

UK transport infrastructure problems are estimated to cost each and every business nearly £20,000 on average per year. The top two improvements businesses would like to see for their areas are improved transport links with other cities and improved public transport. Nearly 40 per cent of jobseekers say transport is a key barrier to getting a job.

The LGA has long argued that greater local control over decisions about transport investment would improve integrated decision making to achieve the full economic benefits of public transport investment. London, Merseyside and Scotland are demonstrating that local decision-making can lead to improved usage and higher satisfaction levels with knock on effects for economies. In Europe there are numerous examples where greater control over transport rests with local politicians. In the Netherlands this has led to significant efficiencies, increased satisfaction levels and also to innovation such as the franchising of whole networks (including bus and rail). Proposal for reforms to bus subsidies, rail devolution and local major transport scheme funding all provide the opportunity to make early progress in devolving transport funding to support growth.

A localist approach to decentralisation

The commitment to explore the potential for decentralising commissioning power in these services is welcome, but a truly localist approach to decentralisation would allow proposals for devolution to come from the bottom up rather than waiting for the state to work through the list service by service.

That is why we need to expand the concept behind the Community Right to Bid provisions enshrined in the Localism Act to give councils the right to bid to run central Government services and identify opportunities for decentralisation. This could potentially develop from the government's proposals, trailed in the Open Public Services White Paper, that where "local areas come forward with credible proposals to do things differently, the Government will seriously consider these."².

The Sustainable Communities Act could provide another means by which councils could make proposals for devolution of services – for example by removing any barriers to the use of the General Powers of Competence.

Recommendations

Central government should:

- Create a mechanism that enables all areas that want to make and implement proposals for joining up services and budgets at a level that makes sense locally and ensures cross-government support for pooling budgets.
- Make decentralisation the default option for all government departments.
- Extend the Community Right to Challenge to all public bodies including central government services and identify opportunities for decentralisation.
- Give councils more financial flexibility by pressing ahead with localisation of business rates and removing constraints on their ability to be active in financial markets.

² Open Public Service White Paper, 2011, Paragraph 5.18

- Minimise central direction or prescriptions by the Secretary of State over which public health services councils will be required to commission, and the manner in which they are commissioned.
- Wherever possible, charging regimes for local services should be localised to allow charges to reflect local circumstances and drive better services. This should in particular include decentralising planning fees.

LGA supporting councils – Community Budgets

Building on the learning on the Total Place programme, the LGA has campaigned for place-based budgeting, making the case that better, more targeted local public services, with a greater emphasis on investment in prevention and much lower administrative and transactional cost, could be achieved by commissioning through local pooled budgets subject to local democratic accountability.

We have supported the first 16 areas developing Community Budgets for families with complex needs, representing them at national governance bodies and influencing policy; bringing together places participating in the initiative and organising events and conversations that have helped councils share knowledge and experience; and by providing and facilitating support through a number of routes, including directly part-funding support to places, and through hosting resources on our website.

With “whole place” and “neighbourhood” Community Budgets pilots, local government will move closer to its ambition for place-based budgeting, applying the principles tested in the families with complex needs pilots to all public spending in an area to achieve the wholesale transformation of public services necessary for improved accountability and better outcomes at less cost.

These pilots are welcome steps forward in enabling places to make the case for integrating services to deliver better outcomes at less cost. But it is clear from the number of applications that there is considerably more demand than the number of pilots allows for.

We will offer support to any council seeking to develop a Community Budget approach, regardless of whether or not they are an approved government pilot.

www.local.gov.uk/community-budgets

Councils rethinking service delivery

Councils as strategic commissioners

Councils have extensive experience in commissioning services from a range of providers, ensuring they provide value for money and are accountable to local people. Local government is the most efficient part of the public sector and already takes a commissioning approach to more than half of all the highways, housing, environmental and social services which it funds. Across the country councils are building on this experience to develop their role as strategic commissioners. A commissioning approach is agnostic about which sector provides services and involves three main functions for local authorities: understanding customer and community needs; commissioning services to meet these needs and performance managing services to satisfy community needs.

What does commissioning mean?

Approaches differ according to local circumstances, but strategic commissioning is based on the following principles:

- centred on people: putting local people and communities at the heart of the process, and ensuring that they are engaged in the design and delivery of services so that the outcomes delivered are the ones that really matter to them

- smoother collaboration: developing a three-way relationship between the commissioner, supplier and service user, based on trust, will create a shared sense of what people want to achieve and the things that will allow them to achieve it
- better evidence and deeper analysis: a whole-place analysis of places' needs to identify service priorities and a better understanding of outcomes
- better dialogue: early dialogue within commissioning teams, for example, between technical staff (heads of procurement) and strategic staff (chief executives), and with suppliers, will mean operational programmes are joined-up with strategic policy goals
- improved sustainability: the sustainable management of services and assets demands a focus on quality and value for money – not lowest cost – so that more is achieved with less in an environmentally friendly way
- contractual challenge: transparent information about the cost and performance of local services will allow authorities to make accurate assessments about whether existing services represent value for money.

Under this model, local services will be provided by a wide variety of suppliers from across the public, private and third sectors, stimulating a market for local enterprises and voluntary and community sector organisations according to their ability to respond to what the council as commissioner requires.

In delivering this strategic commissioning function, it is important that councils have the freedom to make decisions about which local services are suitable for commissioning and how.

Any attempt by government to over-regulate local approaches to commissioning or define at national level which services are suitable for commissioning, will risk introducing unnecessary bureaucracy that will only serve to stifle innovation and diversity of supply.

“Public services are more accountable, more efficient and more in tune with the needs and aspirations of local people when they are delivered locally. Now Ministers need to deliver on their commitment to let go and devolve services down to the local level.”

Sir Merrick Cockell

Innovative approaches to commissioning

Lincolnshire County Council recently voted to encourage all its schools to become Academies, and if they want to join a multi-Academy Trust, then the Council would recommend the CfBT Schools Trust. The council has already been engaged with CfBT in the provision of education services since 2002.

Since then, the local authority has been extremely effective at leading the work; commissioning school places and brokering partnerships to support improvement including linking some of its strong schools to weaker schools through federations and National Challenge trusts. In turn, CfBT's work has sought to preserve local schools, provide an infrastructure of support services to all schools and maintain a commitment to the wider school community.

The partnership has delivered improved outcomes across Lincolnshire and GCSE results, including English and mathematics, which have risen faster than the national rate of improvement each year for the last eight years. Lincolnshire now sits in the top quartile on all performance indicators at Secondary. In addition, CfBT runs the outstanding Music Service and Birth to Five Service in Lincolnshire.

Brighton and Hove City Council has developed an 'intelligent commissioning' model, that will involve reorganising its current structure so that senior officers are principally accountable, not for managing delivery but for securing strategic outcomes, like making people feel safe and secure, and will call on 11 'delivery units' to help meet this objective. The restructuring process will reduce the number of posts from six to four and also establish a 'commissioning group' to ensure that the best services and facilities are available for their residents.

One of the three 'intelligent commissioning pilots' held in the locality aims to tackle the problem of domestic violence. As well as the social cost, the direct and indirect costs to the city are estimated at £123 million per year. www.tinyurl.com/cnjszvtv

The West of England partnership comprising **Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire** councils have been working together jointly on managing waste strategically across their areas. In addition to adopting a joint waste strategy setting out how residual household waste should be managed over the next 20-30 years, the partnership have taken this one step further and jointly commissioned New Earth Solutions to deliver a sustainable waste management solution for the region. It is predicted that the councils will save £44 million over five years and reduce the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill by 75 per cent. Without this new contract diverting waste away from landfill, the West of England councils would have had to budget for £12.7 million in landfill taxes in the year 2119/20.

Further information can be found at www.tinyurl.com/c5ee289

South West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership is working with authorities across the South West to improve the way that children's placements are commissioned. The Peninsula Group comprising of councils from **Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth, Torbay and Somerset** has established a central purchasing body to commission fostering and residential placements in the independent sector. The project ensures that all pre-qualified providers meet a minimum quality standard and that fees offer value for money. Savings of over £3 million have been realised to date.

Expanding choice and personalisation

Taxpayers want to exercise choice in public services, just as they do in other areas of their lives. Choice can mean giving people direct choices through personalised budgets or direct payments.

A third of all people eligible for social care support are now receiving a personal budget, which represents almost £1 in every £7 spent by councils directly on care and support services.

The total number of personal budgets delivered by councils across England has doubled in the last year. But choice can also be exercised collectively, for example giving parishes or neighbourhoods the ability to decide what services are provided and how, in their area.

For choice to work, communities and individuals must have the information, skills and knowledge to understand the implications of their choices. Councils' experience of implementing personal budgets shows that a high level of initial awareness raising and support is required to achieve successful outcomes.

Getting personal

Following extensive engagement with users through a cross-party commission, **Hampshire County Council** has developed a person-centred approach to social care services in which the council works with individuals to determine their support needs and takes into account the connections between care, health, benefits, housing, finance and other aspects of people's lives. The Hampshire model includes and has achieved:

- A universal offer of access to free, good quality information, web assessment, advice and advocacy. The offer is irrespective of whether their needs fell outside current eligibility criteria.
- Six week free 'urgent care' integrated with health for a period following hospital discharge, to help people improve their independence before making long-term care decisions.
- Integrated Community Innovations teams across the county, which provide time limited interventions for people at risk of losing their independence.
- Self-directed support, including those with mental health needs, which allows people to make their own choices and take charge of their own care packages.
- The development of extra-care housing for older people and people with learning disabilities, to ensure cost-effective 24-hour care options in the community.

Hartlepool Borough Council worked with Hartlepool PCT and Turning Point to determine the needs and aspirations of residents of Owton ward and their views on health and social care provision. The resulting Connected Care service is delivered through a social enterprise managed by residents and local community organisations. The development of a social enterprise is seen as central to the service, helping to ensure it remains focused on the needs of local people.

An evaluation of the scheme concluded that services were more accessible to local people, take-up had improved and people were less likely to disengage from the system. Connected Care has improved access to services and delivered a range of outcomes for residents in the Owton Ward.

Supporting a more diverse supply of providers

Local government has a strong record of encouraging diversity among providers and driving up standards through competition.

Many local authorities are working to encourage small local organisations such as social enterprises to compete for contracts which would otherwise be dominated by incumbent providers. This includes revising procurement and commissioning criteria to reflect the social value that these organisations can contribute; providing advice and support for bidding for contracts and building sustainable business models; and providing information to the public on the benefits of new enterprises and options available to them.

A future model for adult social care

The LGA has developed proposals for local wellbeing networks that would place personal choice at the centre of adult social care and allow areas to better meet the challenge of demand for adult services set to increase annually by £6 billion by 2014/15. The model would be able to react quickly where necessary to the full spectrum of need, yet also provide a constant, proactive level of support keeping people independent, socially active, informed and well. Both functions would be based on offering personalised solutions, giving the individual control of their funds and choice as to how those funds are spent and allow councils to focus more on those with the greatest needs.¹

¹ Local Government Association discussion paper The future of adult social care, 2011 www.tinyurl.com/crprluz

Government can support councils in opening up services to more diverse supply of providers by tackling the barriers that some organisations face in bidding for contracts.

Capacity building with the voluntary and community sector

Gateshead Council is working with the Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council (GVOC) to provide advice and support to voluntary and community sector organisations (VCOs) and social enterprises interested in bidding for future public sector contracts.

These collective services give those organisations the knowledge of and skills to negotiate legal structures and governance, funding, commissioning and procurement processes to ensure they are 'contract ready'. Larger public sector contracts will be approached via the Commissioning Exchange, recently developed by the voluntary and community sector and supported by the council, which will broker consortia on behalf of the groups involved in the capacity building support.

Gateshead Council has also created the £1 million Gateshead Fund, which VCOs can access through ward councillors with the aim of actively promoting community engagement and development. In addition, the Gateshead Capacity Building Fund is supporting 90 local organisations to build their capacity and diversify their income with the aim of making them more competitive in bidding for contracts.

LGA supporting councils

The LGA is committed to supporting councils and councillors to make the best commissioning and procurement decisions for their place.

Between December 2011 and April 2012 we will deliver a programme of support for councillors with a focus on both efficiency and social impact. The programme will address the challenges and opportunities for 'bottom-up' delivery and new ways of working and will comprise a range of options, including workshops and events, joint working opportunities with voluntary and community sector organisations and support from senior local government peers. Projects will be tailored to individual councils and delivered locally.

For more information on taking up this offer or to discuss what would best suit your place, please contact the localism team at localism@local.gov.uk

Events will be listed at:
www.local.gov.uk/events

Targeting money effectively

Through its work on Total Place and Community Budgets, local government has demonstrated a clear case for how joining up of budgets and effort at local level can improve services and deliver value for money. This approach also encourages targeting of funding towards early intervention and investment in prevention, therefore reducing the long-term demand for services to deal with problems further down the line.

The importance of local rather than central institutions in shifting money towards early intervention has been recognised by the recent review of early intervention carried out for the Government by Graham Allen MP.³ Payment by Results offers a means of incentivising public service providers to focus on results. Councils are involved in schemes trialling payment by results in a range of services including supporting young people who are either not in education, employment or training, Sure Start Children's Centres, helping families with complex needs, and drugs and alcohol recovery services.

“‘Big Society’ is simply what we do in Essex.”

A Big Society Prospectus - Essex County Council, March 2011

For example, VCOs are currently charged VAT when they share back office services which acts as a disincentive to cost-sharing and is a barrier to VCOs joining together to bid for contracts. Government could remove this barrier through implementing an EU directive.

³ Early Intervention: The Next Steps www.tinyurl.com/6g8dtg2

Early intervention

Using a 'Cost-effective Children's Services' approach developed by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO), **Hertfordshire County Council** has worked with a number of local partners and agencies to create a better understanding of the cost of services. The process involved utilising products developed by DfE, ADCS and C4EO, to help understand how different agencies contribute to better outcomes for children, young people and families. As a result, they are projecting savings of £23 million over four years, through a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention, with a multi-agency approach to working with families with multiple problems.

Melton Borough Council has moved away from traditional structures, and cut across administrative and departmental boundaries, resulting in better working among agencies and better tackling of the root causes of issues and problems. In particular, it has sought to prevent failure by investing resources in early intervention.

- The cost of re-offending in Melton was calculated at £4.5 million a year.
- Young people were committing crime and acting antisocially when they should have been in school. This was financially costly to the local community.
- Many families living in chaotic conditions, often in council properties, had children who were displaying worrying behaviours from a very young age.
- National research highlighted that a single problem family could cost £250,000–£350,000 a year.
- Detailed research into one of Melton's own problem families verified that different agencies were spending huge resources on families such as these without making things any better.
- Offenders usually had similarity in their profiles, including low literacy and numerical skills, truanting or exclusion from school and mental and physical health problems, and were more likely to be unemployed.

Melton wanted to focus on tackling the root causes, which meant ensuring that it was intervening at the earliest possible stage to prevent children from growing up in a way that was shown to lead almost inevitably to a life of crime and state dependency. Melton is already undertaking joined-up preventive work at the 22-weeks pregnancy stage, targeted at individuals and families deemed to be at high risk of experiencing poor outcomes.

www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/early-intervention-next-steps.pdf
(2011 'Early Intervention The Next Steps' report).

Innovation and a new approach to risk

Change will only happen if public sector managers are free and confident enough to innovate. Risk is an essential component of innovation. A recent NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) report examining innovation across the public sector found that a 'negative attitude to risk' was one of the main determinants of differences in the 'capability' to innovate between Foundation Trusts and non-Foundation Trusts.⁴ However, most public service control frameworks discourage risk with emphasis on departmental control of funding streams or threats of central intervention should things go wrong. Successful innovation will require a new approach that moves away from viewing risk as something to be minimised or avoided towards proper governance and management of risk.

Councils must be given freedom to take risks and innovate – the LAML judgement

The power of wellbeing (Local Government Act 2000) gave councils powers to do anything for their community's social, economic or environmental wellbeing. A number of London Boroughs attempted to use the power to create the London Authorities Mutual Limited (LAML) controlled by, and run for the benefit of, participating London authorities with intended benefits through costs savings and improved risk management.

In 2009 the Court of Appeal ruled LAML was unlawful on the grounds that the financial wellbeing of a local authority was not the same as the economic, social or environmental well being of its area. Nor could an action to reduce an authority's costs be regarded of itself as doing something that would promote or improve the wellbeing of the area. Therefore the court ruled that the councils did not have the power to enter into the mutual to make more efficient use of public money.

The judgement rejected the views about the meaning of the wellbeing power expressed by the members of Parliament who legislated it, effectively undermined that power and dissuaded other councils from attempting similar innovations.

The Localism Act will grant councils a new General Power of Competence with the clear intention of giving them the freedom to act directly in the interest of their communities and in their own financial interest. There is a need to ensure the new power is not undermined by a narrow judicial construction once again.

⁴ Hughes, Moore and Kataria, 2011, Innovation in Public Sector Organisations - A pilot survey for measuring innovation across the public sector

LGA supporting councils

Creative Councils is a new programme from NESTA, working with the LGA, to support local authorities to develop and implement radical innovations that meet the challenges of tomorrow. Our ambition over the next two years is to work with a small group of pioneering local authorities across England and Wales and their partners to develop, implement and spread transformational new approaches to meeting some of the biggest medium and long-term challenges facing communities and local services.

Over the next few months, seventeen shortlisted councils will receive practical support to challenge and develop their idea, with the opportunity to access financial and non-financial support over the next six months.

London Borough of Islington is in the process of developing an outcomes-based commissioning vehicle 'Islington Youth' for young people's services that is designed and run by young people themselves. They believe that young people's ownership and insights will result in more relevant support and services for young people that they will use and value. This should play a key role in Islington's broader strategy for tackling intergenerational cycles of disadvantage.

The vehicle, sponsored by Deputy Leader Richard Greening and Chief Executive Lesley Seary, already has ideas for future ways of working including becoming independent of the Council with the ability to trade and attract investment. Assets will be transferred into the vehicle and any profits generated will be invested back into the organisation.

The aim of this initiative is to create a business-led model in which young people have greater influence in, can drive quality and enables new providers such as social entrepreneurs to develop responsive and transformative services.

West Lindsey District Council

is working with social enterprise, businesses, parish councils, neighbourhoods and individuals to introduce energy saving measures into housing in a deprived neighbourhood. By taking empty and run down privately owned terraced houses and renovating them using long term unemployed people from the community, the houses will be then brought up to a standard where they can be returned to the housing market. The scheme aims to upskill unemployed people, improve and reduce energy needs of the housing stock and generate income through properties as they are sold on the open market.

www.local.gov.uk/creative-councils

Working together

Local government has a long track record of setting up and sustaining effective partnerships with other organisations. New ways of delivering services put partnerships – across the public sector and with private and voluntary sectors – ever more at the front line.

One example of this new era of joint working are Health and Wellbeing Boards which will bring together local councils, clinical commissioning groups and other local government and health professionals and local organisations representing the views of patients, communities and people who use services.

They will be the driving force for system reform, by identifying the health and wellbeing needs of the local community, agreeing key local health priorities on which to base commissioning plans. They will bring greater democratic accountability and legitimacy to the NHS, promoting better integration across health and local government in the interests of patients and the public and ensuring that the needs of local populations and vulnerable groups are met. Most importantly, they will be responsible for achieving real and lasting improvements in the health of the local population.

To realise their potential, boards need to be built on new relationships between elected members and health professionals; a focus on outcomes, together with a shared vision and understanding about the priorities to be achieved and agreement about what success will look like. Health and Wellbeing Boards will be responsible for the new public health service that will transfer from Primary Care Trusts to local government.

Many Boards are already working to identify how they will meet their new responsibilities but they are hampered by the continuing lack of clarity on a number of issues: the relationship between boards and Public Health England – the new national body responsible for health protection; the overall resource available to fund public health and the basis on which funds will be allocated. Councils need this now in order to plan how they will improve the health of their populations.

Councils across the country have been working together to deliver efficiencies and provide better services by sharing services and combining commissioning contracts. Shared services can mean many things. Whilst traditionally thought of as back office arrangements (transactional, operational or professional) councils and other public services are increasingly looking to share senior management arrangements and consider joint-venture relationships with other public sector bodies and the private sector.

LGA supporting councils

The LGA's productivity programme supports councils and shares experience in generating further improvements in productivity to get the very best value for money and outcomes for local communities.

www.local.gov.uk/local-productivity

Recommendations

Central government should:

- Clarify the level of resource to be allocated to local authorities to meet the proposed public health duties and to remove the ring-fence to enable councils to use the resources to greatest effect locally.
- Support councils to diversify the supply of providers by tackling institutional and financial disincentives. For example, no longer charging voluntary and community organisations VAT when they share back office services, helping them to join together to bid for contracts.

Working together

The **London boroughs of Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea** together have a total spending budget of £1.5 billion, much of which is tied up in fixed commitments – for vulnerable people in care, schools and contracts for essentials like waste collection and disposal. Due to the current financial climate and the sector's funding allocations, the three councils have identified a savings target of £100 million between 2011/12 and 2013/14. In order to reduce the cost of bureaucratic overheads and save management costs, it is proposed that some current council services can be more efficiently managed at greater scale.

Under the plans, each authority would keep its council leaders and local ward councillors but will identify services that could be shared. There are many examples that are currently being looked at; including combined children's and education services, human resources; building control, facilities management, insurance, office accommodation and parking services. London Councils Capital Ambition has contributed funding towards this initiative. Further information can be found at: www.tinyurl.com/d3dzjwu

The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) is a group of three local authorities working together to manage delivery of revenue services for **Breckland Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and Forest Heath District Council**. The partnership, created in 2003, has provided both significant improvements in service delivery and annual financial savings in excess of £1 million per annum through improved benefits management, information, communications and technology, better use of buildings and joint procurement strategies. There has been a recognised 15 per cent increase in caseload management, and staff productivity has increased by 50 per cent with the introduction of home working. Initial set-up costs were kept low with the biggest expense coming from external legal support to draw up the partnership agreement.

In **Herefordshire, the unitary council and the PCT, NHS Herefordshire**, have had a joint chief executive and a single management team, together with a single corporate plan, since 2008 across the two organisations. Budgets have been pooled for service delivery for learning disabilities, adaptations, mental health and continuing care. A public sector joint venture (called Hoople) has been set up to carry out back office services together with a multi-sourcing approach for smaller services. It is estimated that this transformation of services will produce savings of £4.3 million per annum after full implementation further amounting to estimates of £33 million over 10 years.

Empowering citizens and neighbourhoods

Councils have been working for years with their communities to identify devolved services beyond the town hall. For example, a third of councils have ward budgets for individual councillors, and a fifth of councils use participatory budgets. Councils work closely with parish and town councils and community groups to engage their communities in discussions about public services. Many councils are already involved in conversations with neighbourhoods about opportunities to devolve functions and new ways of managing neighbourhood services and assets. The current decentralisation agenda offers even greater opportunities to foster the fundamental change in the relationship between citizen and state.

The new relationship will require leadership from all parts of the community and councillors have a unique role to play in focusing that leadership on community wide and strategic outcomes, convening disparate groups, balancing different interests and needs and ensuring fair representation of all parts of the community.

Their democratic mandate, accountability and knowledge of their place and residents allows them to best represent local needs. Councillors are of and for their communities. Most councillors started out as residents who wanted to make changes and in the recent census of local councillors, 88 per cent said they took up their role 'to serve the community'.

As elected representatives, their success as community leaders depends on the way they lead and convene self-organised and dynamic community activists in their wards, divisions or parishes, and on how they hold to account the executive arm of the council on behalf of voters. In the census, councillors identified the most important things that they do as listening to the views of local people (94 per cent) and supporting the local community (91 per cent).⁵

LGA supporting councils

The LGA is supporting councillors to lead and encourage more people to represent their community as councillors through initiatives such as Be a Councillor, 21st Century Councillor, the Leadership Academy and Next Generation.
www.local.gov.uk

The Localism Act provides further tools for councils and neighbourhoods to work together to shape services. Neighbourhood plans will provide a further way of getting people involved in planning in addition to community-led planning mechanisms that councils already use. Under the Community Right to Challenge, a broad range of alternative service providers will be able to submit an expression of interest to run a service.

⁵ Evans, K. and Aston, H. (2011). National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2010. Slough: NFER
www.tinyurl.com/ccel59n

Meanwhile the Assets of Community Value provisions will provide extra time for parish councils and local voluntary and community groups to prepare their bid to purchase a listed community asset should the current owner choose to dispose of it.

These powers provide a valuable backstop for communities; councils recognise that local people have different appetites and capacities therefore the new community rights must sit alongside, not replace, existing community empowerment initiatives. Many councils already involve local voluntary and community sector partners at the very earliest stage of their commissioning process.

Similarly, many authorities are exploring routes to transfer council assets to community groups at a low-cost or peppercorn rent. Community asset transfer allows councils to save on refurbishing and maintaining under-utilised town halls or libraries whilst ensuring that groups without the funds to purchase an asset on the open market are not excluded from opportunities to use local assets to deliver community-led services.

Participatory budgeting

Leicestershire County Council and **Blaby District Council** piloted Participatory Budgeting in 2009, before rolling out this approach to the whole county. The scheme received support from their partners in district councils, the voluntary sector, the police and NHS, who all helped to implement the participatory budgeting process. This ensured that the maximum amount of funding was spent on projects chosen by the community rather than on overheads to run the scheme.

There was real added value in the way the process allows for deliberation; giving participants not only the opportunity to share their own ideas, but also to hear and comment on proposals from other people and groups in the local area. Both partners and participants thought the process was genuinely involving, and gave real influence over spending decisions to local communities, with 92 per cent saying they would encourage other people to take part in this process if it were to happen again. This overwhelming support for the scheme's 'added value', alongside the fact that the £473,000, allocated via the scheme leveraged more than £600,000 of other contributions, helped to secure a further round of participatory budgeting in Leicestershire. 'Cash for Your Communities' will now complement the county's Big Society Fund by awarding £320,000 to local projects chosen by local people to be delivered by parish or town councils, social enterprises, voluntary and community sector organisations and charities.

Working with parish councils

Devon County Council, in partnership with the **West Devon Borough Council**, and the large number of parish councils spread across the county have developed a model to enable the three tiers of local government to work together. As part of their place-based approach to public services, the county and district council have encouraged parishes covering a sparse rural population to join together to find local solutions to issues that matter to them. Clusters of parish councils, meeting as Link Committees, a parish clerk sponsored by the county council to act as the secretariat and a single link officer so that parish councils have a clear route into both the county and district councils.

Moreover, each parish council has access to a fund to help stimulate community services. The amount each parish receives is linked to the size of their local electorate, with the county council providing £1 of funding per voter and the district authority inputting a further 10p. Through pooling this funding, Link Committees have the opportunity to respond to local needs, for example on highway maintenance, whilst achieving relative economies of scale.

Community engagement

Newcastle City Council has recently reviewed the way it communicates with the people who live and work in the city. This has led the council to move away from traditional consultation exercises and enter into a more engaging, accessible and ongoing conversation with local people through ‘Let’s Talk About Newcastle’. The council has created a range of events that get local people closer to the big policy decisions that need to be made, such as setting the budget. The Council Pound exercise, for example, used events to help local people see how every penny of a council pound is currently spent and inform them about what different services actually do, before asking for their views to help prioritise services. The result has enabled the council to get a much clearer picture of the services that the people of Newcastle value beyond doorstep issues like waste collections.

Overall Newcastle City Council has spoken to over 4,000 people about how they will spend public money over the forthcoming year, compared to the average 1,000 responses they usually receive. Alongside using social media like Twitter, tailored, interactive events on topics like “What makes Newcastle a great city to grow up in?” have already attracted a wide range of participants, including looked after children and young people from vulnerable backgrounds. Meanwhile the “Thinkabout” initiative invites public, private and voluntary and community sector organisations to contribute to a series of policy Cabinet meetings, which will consider the big issues facing the city. These range from how to tackle domestic violence through to ideas for attracting investment to Newcastle.

Councils have a key role in supporting local groups and communities, particularly in helping them understand the scope, parameters and implications of what they can do and in helping them with technical issues. Advice and guidance from local authorities will be the most effective way of ensuring that neighbourhood councils and other local groups are equipped to run services devolved to them.

If we are to see local people empowered to have a stronger say in service delivery, we need to accept that the approach will vary from place to place. A centrally prescriptive approach to what services are devolved to neighbourhoods and how they engage makes no sense at all – a truly localist and decentralised approach would give councils and communities the responsibility to decide which services are suitable for commissioning locally and how they go about doing it.

As we have seen from the Localism Bill's provisions for neighbourhood planning, attempts to define procedures and rules for local areas only serve to increase the complexity and cost of devolving to neighbourhoods and undermine councils' ability to work with communities locally.

Government must see its role not to define local approaches but to help remove barriers, such as prescriptive procurement rules, legal issues or failure in other markets, such as the insurance industry, where it can.

Recommendation

Central government should:

- Allow councils and communities to decide which services are suitable for commissioning locally and how.



Improving transparency and access to information

Transparency and availability of information in a meaningful form are crucial to allowing people to exercise choice and for councils to hold providers to account for performance.

But that does not require a lot of national bodies or bureaucratic processes – effective and proportionate local arrangements can achieve both and in a way that is better tailored to people’s information needs. We cannot afford a return to the top-heavy, centrally imposed system of performance management that places additional burdens on councils around monitoring and reporting and diverts resources away from service delivery.

Local government is already improving transparency and availability of information to the public. Councils are exploring new and innovative ways of making information available to citizens, making maximum use of technology. Birmingham City Council has developed a web-based service that people can see information on all requests to the council and how they are being processed. Kirklees council’s “who owns my neighbourhood?” website allows people to find out who owns land and property in the local authority area to help people take responsibility for land, buildings and activities in their neighbourhood.

Access to data and information

Who Owns My Neighbourhood? is an open data project from **Kirklees Council and Thumbprint Co-operative**, funded by NESTA’s Make It Local programme. This new online service has improved the accessibility and transparency of land ownership information in Kirklees. The aim was to provide local people with a starting point for getting things done in their own neighbourhoods. It’s hoped that the service will make it easier for people to have conversations with each other about their local area, help people to access the services provided by the council, and encourage people to share what they know.

Who Owns My Neighbourhood? is helping people to think about what personal responsibility they want to take for their local place and how everyone can work together to look after it. The service has been well-received by residents and community organisations, who are already developing practical uses for it. To build on this success, the project team plan to add other types of information to Who Owns My Neighbourhood? in the future. www.tinyurl.com/bt6lnlh

London Borough of Redbridge’s DataShare service is designed to increase accessibility and improve availability of data for partners and the public. The council is committed to make non-personal and non-sensitive data open so that it can be used in applications, support transparency and accountability and make sharing data between public sector partners more efficient. Redbridge using data: www.tinyurl.com/c8eo4mc



The primary route for ensuring accountability and protecting the rights of users and tax payers is via democratically elected representatives who are responsible for spending of public money. Councillors as democratic representatives of their communities are uniquely mandated to champion rights of citizens. Mechanisms already exist to ensure that the public have recourse to the local government ombudsman if they are not satisfied with local authorities' complaints processes. These principles should continue with councils providing overview and scrutiny and the role of ombudsmen should be limited to cases where there is evidence of fraud or wrongdoing in which cases councillors could not conduct an objective inquiry.

LGA supporting councils

The Local Government Inform (LG Inform) prototype is a practical response to the sector's call for greater freedom to take responsibility for its own regulation and improvement.

It is a free online service which allows anyone in the sector to access, compare and analyse data and present their findings. Such intelligence will help councils and fire and rescue authorities make the right decisions about their local areas and the services they provide to their residents. www.local.gov.uk/inform

Useful resources

You can sign up to the LGA's monthly Localism bulletin to get the latest news on localism delivered directly to your inbox:
www.local.gov.uk/ebulletins

LGA Localism resource
www.local.gov.uk/topic-localism

Public Service Reform
www.local.gov.uk/public-service-reform

Doing Something Big – a report from the LGA Big Society Task Force on how councillors are at the forefront of developing stronger, more empowered and more resilient communities.
www.tinyurl.com/cd48xtu

The LGA guide to Social Enterprises and Staff Mutuals. This guide concentrates on the main employment issues for councils and offers practical guidance in responding to employee requests to deliver local services.
www.tinyurl.com/ctg8jmm (members only)

Self-regulation and improvement in local government
www.local.gov.uk/taking-the-lead

The Knowledge Hub – online knowledge network for local authority professionals to work together and share experiences.
www.local.gov.uk/knowledgehub

How we support councillors
www.local.gov.uk/how-we-support-councillors

Localism in Action – case studies, tools and tips from the South West of England.
www.tinyurl.com/737agz3

Our Peer Challenge support offer
www.local.gov.uk/peer-challenges

Cabinet Office resource on Open Public Services
www.tinyurl.com/6kx447x

“Greater freedom and flexibilities for local government are vital for achieving the shift in power the Government wants to see.”

A plain English guide to the Localism Act - Update, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011



Local Government Association

Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000

Fax 020 7664 3030

Email info@local.gov.uk

www.local.gov.uk

© Local Government Association, November 2011

For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio, please contact us on 020 7664 3000. We consider requests on an individual basis.