

Changing public services – changing professional practices

Policy seminar one – 18 May 2010



Purpose

The seminar series aims to learn from leading thinking and practice across public services to ensure that the learning and skills sector is as well-informed as possible to develop its leadership and professional practices to face the very significant challenges now and in the future.

Background

All public services are facing a period of exceptional change as a result of financial restraint and the increasing demands and expectations of citizens. It is clear that whatever the character of the next government, the performance and perception of public services with the electorate will be a major factor in decisions regarding their funding, and a significant dimension of a new government's economic strategy. Establishing legitimacy with the voting and tax-paying public will be critical to the future of services. This cannot be achieved by continuing the status quo – it is argued from all areas of the policy community that the fiscal climate must provide a stimulus for radical rethinking of how public value outcomes can be maximised from the investment in public services.

There appears to be consensus that the following shifts will be needed to reframe public service:

- **Greater public empowerment** in particular by using new technologies and opening up the data government holds to transform accountability of services to the public; empowering citizens to shape services through technology and greater access to information;
- **Increased localism** to involve citizens more directly in decision-making about local services and to build stronger relationships between citizens and the state; rebalancing local and national accountabilities through a move away from excessive centralism; enabling decisions to be made as close to the citizen as possible and giving service providers discretion to respond innovatively to local needs;
- **Rebalancing of responsibilities between the individual citizen and the state** so that individual responsibility is increased, lightening the need for regulation to control behaviour. This is associated with an increasing interest in how behaviour economics and behaviour change could be applied to achieve positive social outcomes while reducing demands on the public purse;

- **Closer working between public services to improve outcomes for citizens** - the Total Place pilots indicate that significant gains in quality and efficiency can be achieved through co-ordinated strategic action across public services in the locality. Increased collaboration is seen as a means of both addressing public service priorities more effectively – ie ensuring all services line up to support particular outcomes – and of increasing efficiency by streamlining strategies and avoiding duplication and conflicting or competing approaches.

The pilots have indicated the need for changes to systems and to professional practices. For example, there is a need for changes to accountability arrangements to offer greater freedom from central performance and financial controls; leaders in the locality need greater discretion to take a cross-public sector approach to investment in prevention; new skills need to be developed in working laterally across organisations rather than vertically; and we need to change the silo approach to using public assets. Next stages of Total Place are exploring further these human and system changes and their implications.

The learning and skills system will be affected by these shifts as significantly as other parts of the public sector. Many providers are already considering how to deliver more for less given reductions in the unit of resource. Customers, whether individuals, communities or employers, are more demanding, both as a result of increasing needs generated by the recession, and as a result of the introduction of stronger entitlements and guarantees. These trends look set to continue and increase.

Through the seminar discussions we aim to learn about the longer-term direction of change and approaches in other areas of public service in order to enrich our understanding of strategic options and to arm the sector to shape the debate about its future.

Seminar one: Understanding the direction of change

Programme

- To extend our understanding of possible scenarios and directions of change for public services and their implications for the learning and skills system;
- To consider the changes required to systems and to behaviours, including accountability, citizen engagement, leadership and professional practice;
- To discuss how sector leaders can take an active role alongside other public services in shaping future ambition for public services in their locality.

Seminar one: Understanding the direction of change

Programme

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| Venue | Institute of Directors, 116 Pall Mall, London , SW1Y 5ED |
| 10.00 | Arrivals, tea and coffee |
| 10.30 | Chair's welcome and introductions from participants Polly Toynbee , independent chair and journalist Welcome from LSIS Dr David Collins CBE , Chief Executive, LSIS |
| 10.40 | Keynote Speaker: Lord Michael Bichard , Executive Director of the Institute for Government Total Place – the journey so far and next stages |
| 11.10 | Keynote Speaker: Sir Andrew Foster , Chair, Commission on 2020 public services The shape of future public services – emerging thinking from the Commission |
| 11.40 | Coffee break |
| 12.00 | Responses from the sector and discussion |
| 13.20 | Closing comments from speakers and from LSIS, including next steps |
| 13.30 | Lunch |

Chair and speakers



Polly Toynbee is a columnist for the Guardian and former president of the Social Policy Association. She was formerly BBC social affairs editor, columnist and associate editor of the Independent, co-editor of the Washington Monthly and a reporter and feature writer for the Observer.

Polly Toynbee won a scholarship to read history at St. Anne's College, Oxford. She worked for many years at The Guardian before joining the BBC where she was social affairs editor (1988–1995). She was appointed President of the British Humanist Association in 2007. In 2008 she topped a poll of 100 “opinion makers”, carried out by Editorial Intelligence.



David Collins CBE, DBA, MA, PhD, FRSA took up his current role as chief executive of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service in August 2009. After graduating from the University of Edinburgh with an MA in Economics and Economic History and a PhD in Educational Studies, he worked in a variety of educational establishments, including a prison and a young offenders' institution as well as a number of colleges.

Before becoming chief executive of LSIS, David was principal and chief executive of South Cheshire College where he developed an exceptional institution, consistently topping the unofficial Ofsted league tables and twice taking the college into the Sunday Times list of the 100 best companies to work for.



Lord Michael Bichard joined the Institute in September 2008. He was previously Chief Executive of Brent and Gloucestershire Local Authorities and in 1990 became Chief Executive of the Government's Benefits Agency. In 1995, he was appointed Permanent Secretary of the Employment Department and, subsequently, the Department for Education and Employment. Michael received a Knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours 1999. In May 2001, he left the Civil Service. He was appointed Rector of The London Institute, the largest Art and Design Institute in Europe in September 2001, which became University of the Arts, London in May 2004. From 2005-2008, he was Chair of the Legal Services Commission. He was appointed Chairman of the Design Council in 2008.



Sir Andrew Foster has had a long career in public service. He served as Chief Executive of the Audit Commission for England and Wales between 1992 and 2003, and he was previously Deputy Chief Executive of the NHS and Director of Social Services for North Yorkshire County Council. He is the Chair of the Commission on 2020 Public Services, the Chair of Commonwealth Games England, Deputy Chairman of the Royal Bank of Canada, and serves on the boards of a number of listed companies.

Sir Andrew is currently the Chair of the Government's Intercity Express Programme (IEP) Review. He has also Chaired reviews on the Capital Programme in Further Education, which was published at the end of March 2009, and before that on Further Education.