

Summary on a Page: August 2011

Open Public Services White Paper

📌 What is it?

It proposes that market competition between providers improves the quality of public services making them more effective, improving social outcomes, and reducing costs.

📌 What does it say?

The paper details plans to follow five key principles and the three categories of service.

- Increasing choice wherever possible. More direct control will be given to people over the services that they use. Where not possible, elected representatives will have more choice.
- Public services should be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level. Whether community groups and neighbourhood councils or LAs and Police and Crime Commissioners.
- Public services should be open to a range of providers. High quality services can be provided by the public sector, the voluntary and community sector, or the private sector.
- Fair access to public services. Extra help will be provided to those previously been left behind. Fair access will ensure to advantage the disadvantaged and improve outcomes.
- Public services should be accountable to users and to taxpayers. There will be new democratic structures such as Health and Wellbeing Boards. Open government and open data will help people to hold service providers and Government to account and will stimulate competition amongst providers.

Commissioned services are those where it is not possible or appropriate to pass responsibility to individual service users or community organisations. Public service commissioners may be expected to have at least 3 providers delivering any service, open to 'any qualified provider', linking their contracts to payment by results, and open to challenge by providers on decisions (Open Commissioning). 10 local authorities will trial payment by results paid for by Supporting People budgets. Payment by results will be explored in other areas, eg immigration and visa administration.

Individual services are personal services provided to individuals such as education and individual healthcare. Councils must extend personal budgets to all areas of adult social care by 2013. Integrated personal budgets will be piloted across several services, eg, health, education and social care budgets for families of children with special needs. NHS providers will be paid for carrying out each treatment and a similar approach will be introduced for schools and further education.

Neighbourhood services are locally provided and used collectively eg sports facilities. Decision-making, organisation and purchasing services will be at this level where possible. Devolved budgets will be trialled via two Neighbourhood Community Budget pilots, and more voluntary and community groups will own, run and manage services and assets as social enterprises, trusts or co-operatives.

Specific measures will ensure equality and quality assurance and address the limitations of a 'pure market approach'. Service providers must register with the regulator for their sector to ensure quality of services, eg health providers must register with the QCC. Ombudsman services will be expanded, offering redress if people are not provided with choice and to deal with poor standards.

📌 Key links:

📄 Read the full report: [Open Public Services White Paper](#) and give your comments [here](#)