

## Terms of Reference for independent review to understand the barriers to choice in publicly-funded services.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Minister for Government Policy have commissioned an independent review to understand the barriers to choice in publicly-funded services as part of the Open Public Services programme.

The review was announced in the *Open Public Services 2012* publication on 29 March 2012, which stated:

*Where choice is available, everyone should be able to exercise it. To address the barriers to choice, we will instigate an independent review to identify the factors that prevent people from understanding and exercising the choices available to them in using specified individual services.*

David Boyle has been appointed as the independent reviewer and the review will commence in June 2012. The independent reviewer will be supported by a small team of officials. The review will engage in wide consultation with users, providers and commissioners of public services, as well as key thinkers on choice in public services and will draw on a broad range of relevant literature.

The following guiding principles have been identified which are intended to provide a framework within which the review's work should be undertaken:

- The review will focus on identifying the practical barriers to people exercising choice in specific areas where choice is already available to users, including for example: GPs; hospitals; community services; adult social care; schools; Further Education; Higher Education, and early years.
- Where choice is enshrined in policy or legislation, there should be genuine options for users to choose from, including for users of services in rural areas, subject to reasonable cost concerns.
- Where needed and helpful, individuals should be actively prompted to consider the choices available to them.
- High quality information, including on service outcomes and user satisfaction, should be available to individuals in an accessible form

that enables them to make good choices about publicly-funded services.

- Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups should have the same choices available to them as the wider population.
- The review will predominantly focus on services in England.

The review will assess how the current system operates against these principles and make practical recommendations which take account of value for money and the limitations of capacity and public resources.

In identifying the barriers that exist which prevent people from exercising choice in publicly-funded services, the review will explore the following issues:

- The factors necessary to ensure that all individuals, with an emphasis on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, are able to choose publicly-funded services where choice is available;
- The current evidence base on choice in publicly-funded services;
- In which service areas and circumstances choice policy has been particularly effective in ensuring that people receive the right services to meet their needs, including where choice policy has demonstrated value for money;
- The extent to which lessons learnt from the implementation of current choice policy could be applied to other areas of public services;
- The extent to which different users of publicly-funded services have access to information, advice and support that meets their needs in order to determine the service that best suits their circumstances and requirements; and
- Examination of the practical options for breaking down the barriers which prevent users of publicly-funded services exercising choice in public services.

A final report setting out the Review's findings is expected to be submitted to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Minister for Government Policy in early 2013 and will be published thereafter.