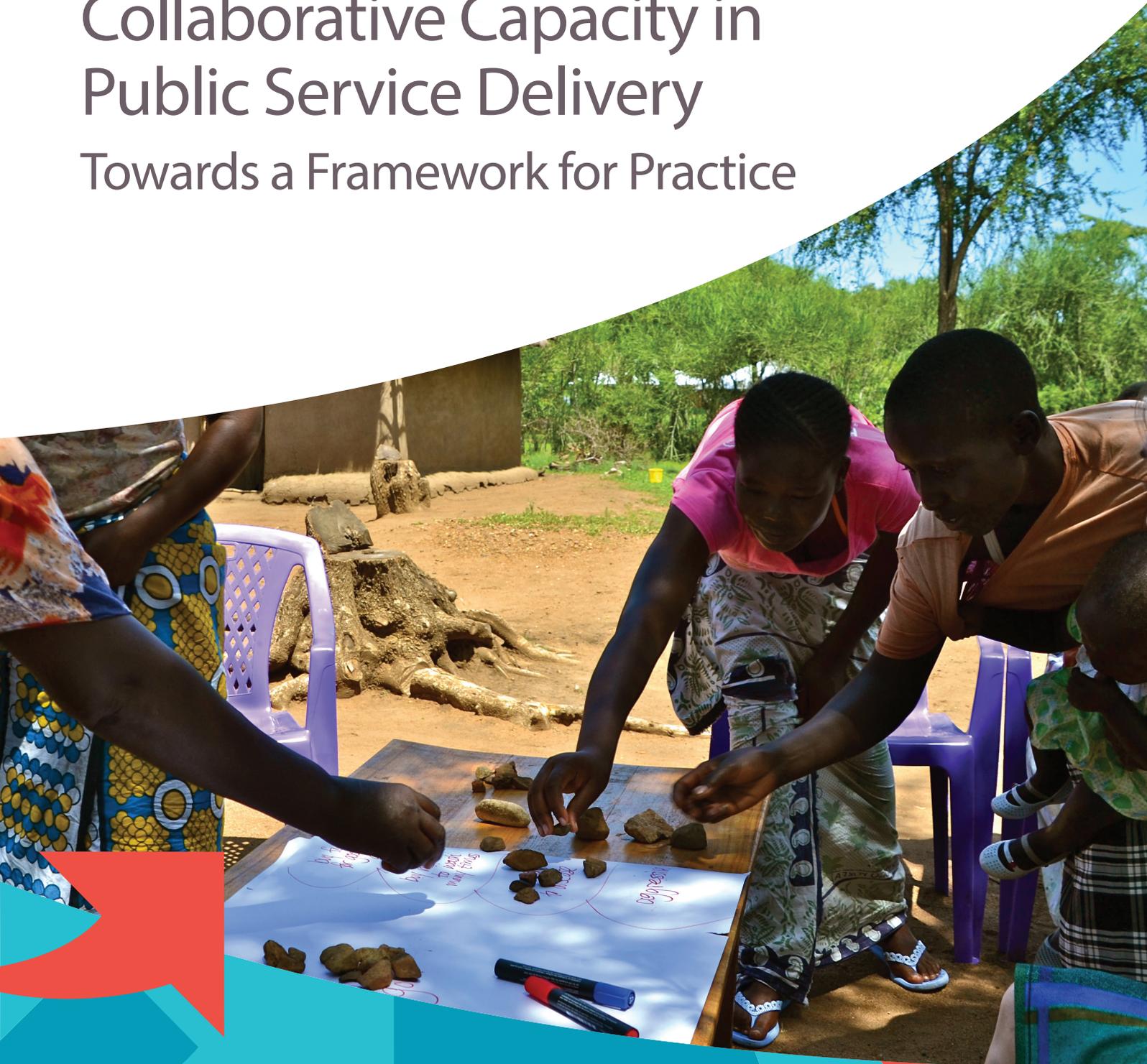


# Collaborative Capacity in Public Service Delivery Towards a Framework for Practice



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## 1. Introduction

*"We should move from being people who know the answers to people who know what questions to ask." (Ramalingam, 2014)*

The global public services landscape remains in flux. In the aftermath of the biggest economic upheaval for generations, leaders around the world are raising profound questions about the role and purpose of government, and the scope and breadth of the public services provided to citizens.

For some, these questions are driven by rising demand and harsh financial realities—the consequences for mature welfare states of a global crisis that was unprecedented in its impact and scope. The UK, parts of Western Europe and the USA have, accordingly, experienced a shift in mainstream perspectives on the role and scope of the state. For others, the challenge is one of sustainability—sharing and underpinning the emerging gains of growth by building first-generation services for a changing population. As a consequence, countries such as India, Brazil and parts of sub-Saharan Africa are pioneering new investment and delivery models in an attempt to leapfrog stages of development to meet burgeoning need and demand.

**Mainstream perspectives on the role and scope of the state are changing**

This discussion paper reflects primarily on the public service reform agenda in the UK, drawing lessons from a range of British examples to form the basis of a delivery framework that can be discussed, adapted and applied internationally. It starts with a conviction that public services at their best are the cornerstone of society. Yet in order to build the case for investment in what is an ideal at a time of extreme pressure, we need to make the case for a new model of delivery that unlocks the collaborative capacity of citizens, state, business and society.

We need to do this because the problems faced by the UK—as in much of the world—cannot be fully addressed through traditional means. Many are not straightforward issues against which existing services can be aligned; nor are they issues that the public sector has within its gift to solve alone. In a context of economic flux, rising inequality, social exclusion, high-levels of unemployment and declining trust in institutions and professions, this paper argues for a different approach that has collaboration, innovation and capability-building at its heart. On this, the developed and developing worlds have much to teach each other, and much to discuss (Kippin and Snaith, 2011).

## 2. The new drivers of collaboration in public services

The starting point for our work at Collaborate is a conviction that public services should meet what Professor Vernon Bogdanor has called a “moment of historical discontinuity” with a radical and different approach. That is, we should explore how we could effect a shift from a relatively narrow and historically path-dependent notion of public services, to a new social compact that recognizes a different set of roles and responsibilities for each sector of the economy within public life.

The following sections give a snapshot of the economic, social and political trends reshaping service delivery in the UK. In other countries this will look and feel different; in parts of the global south for example, demographic pressure is as much about the demands of a young population as the needs of the elderly. For some countries, financial constraints and indebtedness are less components of a crisis and more a semi-permanent reality. And we must remember that public services are of course subject to a range of different political forces across global contexts. For this reason we do not try to give ourselves a global remit, and instead suggest some avenues for further inquiry in the conclusion of this paper.



**CC BY-NC-ND UNPhoto** “Stitching together a future in South Sudan”

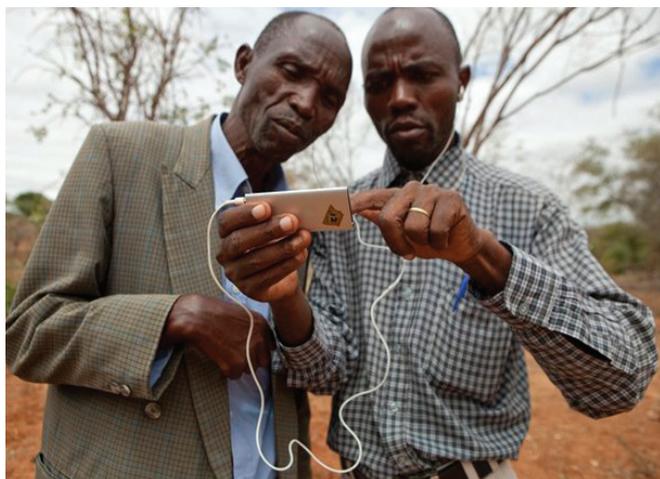
The UK, like much of Europe, remains in a state characterized by relative economic fragility, public sector austerity and the likelihood of an extended period of relatively low GDP growth. This has already created substantial challenges for policymakers and practitioners. The 2010-15 Conservative and Liberal Coalition government has rightly been quick to warn against the dangers of diminished international economic competitiveness and economic (labour) productivity. The challenge is to address these realities through a truly inclusive and sustainable growth model. Recent studies bear out the argument that the UK’s political economy is changing, fracturing traditional expectations of who gains from growth and who should benefit from public spending.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See for example recent debates in the pages of the Financial Times following the publication of Thomas Piketty’s *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Piketty, 2014).

*“Around three in ten people (31 per cent) think that government is solely or mostly responsible for keeping their living expenses manageable. Only 22 per cent think government has no responsibility to act.” (Adebowale and Kippin, 2014)*

According to the Resolution Foundation think tank, families on low-to-mid incomes can expect to be worse off in 2020 Britain than they are today. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (a charitable trust) has shown that the majority of families living in poverty in some parts of the UK actually have a family member in work and compensating for low pay by claiming benefits. These vignettes point to an unpacking of traditional assumptions about the relationship between economic growth, social progress and public spending. As the London School of Economics’s recent Growth Commission argued, sustainable future growth requires improving the ability of the whole population to be economically productive. We need a more collaborative and balanced model of growth in which all sectors of the economy are playing a productive part.

*“Once the legacy of the global financial crisis has been overcome, global GDP could grow by around 3 per cent per year for the next 50 years...Notwithstanding fast growth in low-income and emerging countries, large cross-country differences in living standards will persist in 2060...” (OECD, 2012)*



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Future social challenges are daunting. Recent research from Collaborate, the Royal Society of Arts and the Local Government Association suggests that demand driven spending will create a supply-demand gap of £14.4 billion by 2020 for local government in the UK (Randall and Kippin, 2014). Much of this is driven by demographic change, what The Economist magazine calls a global “slow burning fuse”. A recent UK House of Lords Select Committee report set out in stark terms the implications of an ageing society, not only the direct costs of care and pensions, but also the spin-off implications for a changing labour market, for the UK’s social model, and for intergenerational inequality. It concluded that the country is almost certainly not ready for what is to come.

Complex and chronic conditions are meanwhile changing patterns of social need and services demand. The UK Department of Health estimates, for example, that diagnosis of dementia will double by 2030, and, according to UN data, it will reach 135 million worldwide by 2050. The way we address these issues tomorrow will not be the same as today. As citizens we are more tech-savvy, consumer-minded and demanding than ever. New technology can itself stimulate new forms of social demand, as well as offer solutions at low cost and on a large scale. But as a number of recent global and national studies have indicated, we are also increasingly and profoundly unequal across a range of social and economic indicators. Future social cohesion, community resilience and the sustainability of social support will therefore depend on us getting beyond traditional services and addressing complex social needs in increasingly innovative ways.

*“England will see a 51 per cent rise in those aged 65+ and a 101 per cent increase in those aged 85+ from 2010 to 2030. This increase in the number of older people will have a profound impact on a wide range of public services.” (Filkin Commission on Ageing, 2013)*

As British academic Christopher Hood has argued, change is a constant in the public services, though the contours of the contemporary welfare state in the UK would arguably still be recognized by its founders (Hood, 1998). Thus, in the UK, public services are a hybrid mix of traditional patterns of top-down organization and delivery, post-1979 market-based reforms to free up provision and drive competitive pressure, and more recent innovations involving personalization, service integration and early intervention, which are of growing importance but remain relatively marginal. Successive governments have pushed hard to increase the autonomy of local actors such as schools, hospitals, and colleges and universities; and since 2010 have sought to drive down the cost of service provision from the centre and substantially shrink the cost of public goods. Around 95 per cent of the UK’s deficit reduction since 2010 has come through spending cuts, and this is likely to stick in the next five-year parliament and beyond.

We are seeing a mix of initiatives that seek to mobilize the public, private and social sectors to consider results-based commissioning; to seek to generate substantial investment from social or private actors; and to seek to leverage a new generation of hybrid delivery models that can deliver outcomes at reduced cost. Public services are changing rapidly in some areas, in some cases radically. It is now up to those who care about public service outcomes to make sure that these changes are not a race to the (financial) bottom, but instead promote an ethos of social value and citizen-centric service design.

*“More than ever, it is the relationships and the balance of risk and trust between service users, (public service) providers and their communities which count.” (Julia Unwin, 2014)*

We hope to give the sense that macroeconomic, social and political changes are already forcing a revision of relationships across sectors of the economy and providers of services.

They pose a fundamental challenge to the operating model of government, and put in question the purpose and validity of our models of public entitlement and public services. Our belief is that collaboration is both much needed and often absent in this context. So we need to understand not only what it means, but how it might happen in practice, and what capacities are needed to stimulate and sustain it.

### 3. Collaboration in public services

Government, civil society and the private sector often do not work together collaboratively for reasons that are both intrinsic and extrinsic to them. Obvious differences in ethos and purpose (even within these sectors) often translate into uneasy alliances to deliver public goods. But when the balance between collaboration and competition is right, the results for citizens can be remarkable: blending relationships, democracy and productivity to drive social purpose.

When we get it wrong, the result is that public services are delivered in silos, agendas for economic growth and public spending are prosecuted separately, and discrete professional boundaries remain the dominant force in commissioning and partnership processes. Undoubted and important differences in the governance and ultimate goals of the different sectors can feel stark and impossible to align. The injection of competitive pressure into a statist system has driven some of these tendencies, but the parameters were arguably well set by then, and the barriers to collaboration remain as much cultural as structural.

Nature might have it differently. As people, families, communities and society, we collaborate all the time. Notable recent research informs us that we are hard-wired to be collaborative, social animals.<sup>2</sup> We constantly exercise what Richard Sennett calls “the capacity (of people) to cooperate in complex ways” (Sennett, 2012, p.9). And, as declining levels of trust in government and the professions indicate (Edelman’s 2014 Trust Barometer, for example, puts global trust in government at around 45 per cent (Edelman, 2014), we implicitly recognize that neither government nor any sector alone can solve the complex array of social and economic issues facing society.

*“In the 21st century, no institution can solve global challenges on its own. There is no monopoly on good ideas. That is why I believe so deeply in partnerships-strategic partnerships.” (UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, 2013)*

The organizations that make up the public, private and social sectors very often display collaborative instincts: making alliances, building partnerships and working across boundaries to get better results for individuals, for the public,

or for their company directors and shareholders. Research carried out by Collaborate and the Institute for Government research in the UK has indicated, for example, that around 60 per cent of public service providers are now working in outcomes-based arrangements, many in consortia or partnership arrangements with other providers. Around 90 per cent of local commissioners say they are encouraging more such collaboration in the public services market (Crowe, Gash and Kippin, 2013).



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The incentives to work in silos are, however, inevitably strong. And even those who want to work across lines are often constrained by regulatory, policy and legal frameworks, not to mention cultural and political barriers to change (Taylor, 2013). Often these are valid or necessary. But all too frequently they are used to shut down the conversation about working differently before it can begin. As Emily Miles writes in a recent report for the Institute for Government think tank:

*“Collaboration can require trade-offs between equally legitimate and competing demands of ‘public value’ and ‘public good’. Staff try their best to prioritize one ‘public value’ purpose over another, and institutions often mirror these divisions. The prison service ‘punishes’. The probation service primarily ‘rehabilitates’. The police ‘enforce’. The health service ‘heals’. But all of these ‘public goods’ are needed in relation to one person...” (Miles and Trott, 2011)*

Despite years of trying and a raft of pilot initiatives and islands of success, effective cross-agency and cross-sector collaboration in the public services is the exception not the rule.

If we are to get better at collaborating for the public good in future, then we perhaps need different tools and kinds of support. Our experience suggests that front-line staff are frequently among the biggest advocates for collaboration, co-production and sharing of resources and expertise. They can see for themselves, for example, that effective primary care services are fighting a losing battle without the right public health partnerships and strategies; or that even the most personalized and resource-intensive employment services will fail to change lives without local employers sharing the problem of unemployment and becoming part of a collaborative solution.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Brooks, 2011.

## 4. Collaborative services and collaborative citizens

The root of this reorientation is a more meaningful relationship with what we have called the “collaborative citizen”. As one expert response to our Collaborative Citizen research noted: “Today, citizens are treated as objects of policymaking and service delivery decisions, rather than as active participants in the changes that will directly affect their lives.” (Parston, 2014) This citizen dimension can often feel like the elephant in the room. Yet if public service reform is to be more than conversations between professionals, we need to get better at understanding what “active participation” could mean, and at preparing public leaders and front-line staff to enable it to happen.

*“Future providers of services to the public must work to develop the contribution of citizens with whom they can collaborate-by educating, supporting and including them in a more informed discourse and in co-production of outcome improvement.” (Parston, 2014)*

### A note on the framework

This framework explores four stages of collaboration in public services delivery. The first is “outcomes”, covering the ways in which insight is generated, relationships are brokered and service interventions are designed to address these outcomes. The second is “alignment”, exploring the role that risk, incentives and resources play in building effective delivery partnerships. The third is “delivery”, arguing that innovation, agility and great leadership characterize the best and most sustainable delivery partnerships. Fourth is “accountability”, showing how evidence, engagement and transparency underpin collaboration in delivery and create a case for reproducing and deepening it.

These themes are presented as a cyclical journey, beginning with outcomes, ending with accountability, and back to outcomes. This best reflects the “journey” I have seen policymakers and practitioners make, and is a way of structuring what is undoubtedly an interdependent set of themes and sub-themes. Some, such as design and innovation, have a hinterland of their own. My intention is not to dilute or ignore this, but to show how they fit within the broad spectrum of issues that public leaders have to address. Other reports from Collaborate address the cultural and behavioural aspect of collaboration more substantially than is the case here.

As the quotation above implies, we are some way from this goal. And the big question is how we use our analysis and resources today to support innovative leaders trying to make change happen on the ground—a task for which Collaborate has been established. There is no blueprint for perfect collaborative practice, and the old truism about “no progress without difficulty” holds firm. Yet we would argue that we

can do more to prepare the ground for working together, by diagnosing opportunities and threats, understanding the ecosystem within which we work, and building organizational and individual “readiness” to do things differently.

The framework below offers an entry point into these themes: it offers a set of interdependent enablers, conditions and behaviours that could unlock “collaborative capacity” in public services, and ultimately generate better outcomes for citizens. It is one of many attempts to distill the essence of good collaboration in business, government and the social sector in the literature and in practice. We welcome your feedback and will actively seek to develop our approach in partnership with others.

## 5. Strand one: outcomes

Improving social and economic outcomes, for citizens, communities and the public at large, is what matters most. How can collaborative models of public service delivery support this goal? This section looks at how outcomes can be supported through insight, brokerage and design.

### Insight

*“We don’t understand the community, and we cannot design effective public services without getting better at it...” (Interview with respondent in Collaborate research.)*

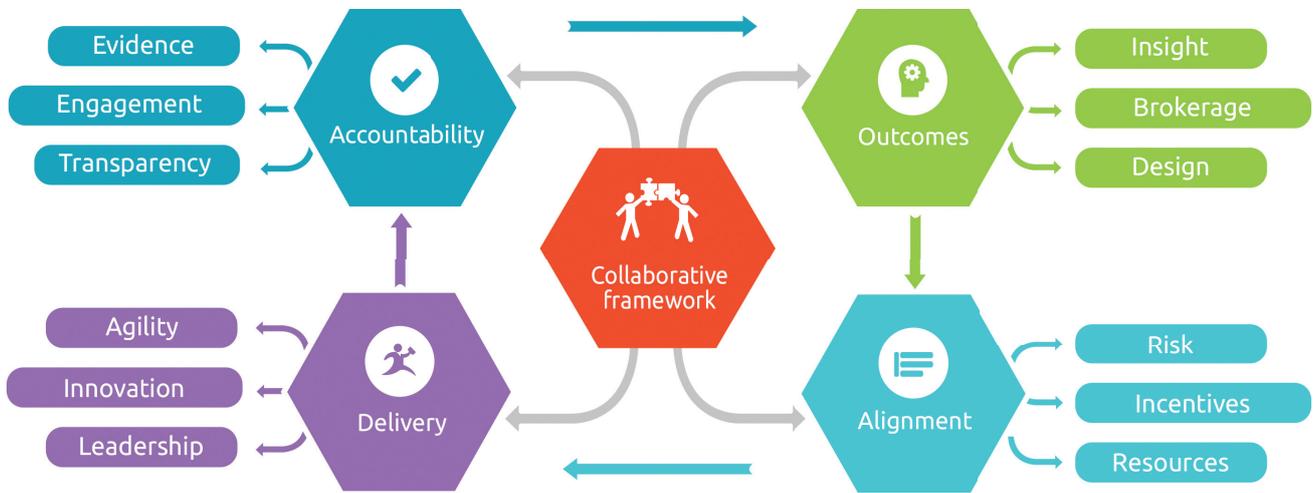
Generating deep insight into the needs, wants and aspirations of the community is the first and most critical, and often least developed, platform for collaboration. This should seek to go beyond what we already know, and look outside the “service lens”. Many parts of the public sector have generated a rich evidence base about the effectiveness and impact of the services they deliver (such as responses to school choice, or anti-smoking interventions). But public agencies typically know less about the needs, wants and aspirations of citizens beyond those needs or responses relevant to the services they provide, which militates against an approach that could build on local assets and strengthen civic capacity. Mapping not only social need but assets, resources and networks, including through forms of ethnographic research,<sup>3</sup> brings the possibility of getting beyond the service lens and designing investment strategies that incorporate outcomes that are meaningful to people on the ground.<sup>4</sup>

The framework below offers an entry point into these themes: it offers a set of interdependent enablers, conditions and behaviours that could unlock “collaborative capacity” in public services, and ultimately generate better outcomes

3 See, for example, the research carried out by the Young Foundation for Camden Council’s Equality Taskforce 2012 and 2013 (see Aylott and others, 2012; and Boelman and Russell, 2013)

4 Policymakers might learn from a number of “nudge”-influenced policy experiments being conducted in the UK and elsewhere, and indeed by the US political organizing community, which has, notably in President Barack Obama’s 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns, adapted and utilized a range of ethnographic, network and behavioural insights based techniques to develop a new way of understanding (and influencing) voting behaviour. See, for example, Issenbergh, 2012.

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## Brokerage

*“Inter-sectoral collaboration is a rich source of innovation. Like foreign countries, the community, private and public sectors have language and cultural differences that need to be considered for collaboration to be effective.” (Huddart, 2010)*

**Peer-to-peer generated community insight:** - The Connected Care model of the social enterprise, Turning Point, is predicated on a peer-generated understanding of assets, resources and needs within a neighbourhood. It involves training and deploying community-led researchers to develop bespoke models of integrated local health, social care and housing services. The innovation agency, Participle, has pioneered a range of services in adult social care and welfare using in-depth, ethnographic research with service users. Experience suggests that the sustainability of both of these approaches requires a forward thinking and creative approach to service commissioning.

**Understanding the grain of communities:** - The emergence of social network analysis (SNA) methodologies gives policymakers a powerful tool to understand the grain of communities better. Through building a picture of the hubs, spokes and ‘connectors’ within a community, SNA, as used, for example, in the Connected Communities approach of the Royal Society of Arts, can show how the postman, the supermarket and the local bar, for instance, can be vital sources of social capital that keep communities alive. Social network-based services such as Shared Lives (UK) and Tyze (Canada) are building on this ethos to support older people.

Collaboration can require the creation of “shared space” within which agreement on outcomes and objectives can be negotiated. This is often a difficult process, requiring a trusted brokerage function that can knit together sometimes disparate partners with vested interests around a shared ethos and value set. Accounts of collaborative leadership often emphasize mediation and empathy as key characteristics (see, for example, Archer and Cameron, 2013), and these are indeed key elements of a brokerage or intermediary function. A clear and objective evidence base plays a role, and a democratically accountable body such as government department, political office or local area board can serve as a means to incubate a relationship or provide seedcorn funding and sponsorship for nascent public collaboration. Our research on “leading across the sectors” found that it can be vital to have a means of brokering and working through what can be impenetrable practice and threatening language. As one interviewee put it: “Big institutions have lots of internal language. You have to transcend this to communicate with people outside of it. People who have always been in that environment find that hard to do.” (Hukins and Kippin, 2013)

**Brokering innovation in the housing market:** - Leeds Empties is a new social enterprise set up by the social enterprise Social Business Brokers CIC, which creates partnerships that bring derelict or vacant properties back into use. Working with Leeds City Council, private landlords and local businesses, the initiative seeks

to offer apprenticeship and training opportunities for young people working on these homes, thereby offering a benefit to these individuals, landlords, homeseekers and the general public.

In London, the social business Dot Dot Dot houses people in otherwise empty houses as “property guardians”, with short-term tenancies at low cost in exchange for a commitment to volunteering in the community.

**Developing the skill-set for brokerage:** - A recent article by two Canadian authors explores the potential for “resilience through multi-scalar collaboration”, citing the role of partnership brokers (or “entrepreneurs”), and recognizing the complex skill set required to do the job effectively. They write that this “complex skill set enables them to recognize which types of relationship within [a] network are crucial at different times and to mobilize those relationships in order for innovations to cross scales” (Lee-Moore and Westley, 2011). Collaborate’s research with the Clore Social Leadership Programme highlights a powerful example of this in the UK homelessness and housing sector (McAllister-Jones, 2014).

**New approaches to social care by design:** - Creative agency ThinkPublic’s Good Gym initiative (trialled in the south London Borough of Southwark) is an example of how a service design approach can lead to innovative ways of achieving outcomes. The initiative pairs running enthusiasts with older local residents to create a novel social connection that can help meet low-level needs (such as bringing round a pint of milk), reduce social isolation, and keep younger members fit. This is one example of a raft of new initiatives “designing in” social solutions to hitherto professional problems which can be a powerful way of reducing demand for acute health and care services downstream.

**Designing services with communities:** - In Lambeth, another south London borough, officers and planners have committed to putting citizens in decision-making roles as part of a new “co-operative” approach to service design and delivery. The council has created its Co-Operative Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in partnership with young people and their communities. It has been able to de-commission traditional services, and in their place build a platform for investment in new services that can be held to account on principles designed by service users themselves. This is a good example of a guiding set of values opening up the possibility of a more open and collaborative process.

## Design

*“Design is not a panacea for public service reform...[but]... it offers a fresh approach to rethinking policy, redrawing professional practice, and reshaping service delivery.” (Barry Quirk (CEO Lewisham Council), 2013)*

Awareness of design methodologies is fast becoming part of the mainstream in European public service policymaking. It is, as the UK’s Design Council notes, “used as a fresh approach to tackling some of [the] most urgent and complex challenges in the public sector, such as developing frontline health services or designing high risk pilot projects” (Design Council, 2014). At root, much design-related thinking (even if not badged as such) is based on an understanding that value in public services is created in the interaction between service provider and service user, thus borrowing from the service logic models of Vargo and Lusch (2004), and others. It therefore puts the citizen at the heart of service design, and values testing, prototyping and experimentation, the antithesis of a traditional approach in which public service interventions are designed, delivered and accounted for at the political centre. There is a strong relationship between design thinking, social innovation, “social productivity” (Kippin and Lucas, 2011) and collaborative models of public service provision. What has emerged from such processes is a spectrum of novel ideas that can help significantly improve day-to-day practice in social service delivery but can also radically shift established business models in areas such as mass education (e.g. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)).

## 6. Strand two: alignment

Collaborating for better outcomes demands a different way of working together. How can actors across different sectors, cultures and silos achieve this? This section explores how alignment can be supported by new approaches to risk, incentives and resources.

### Incentives and shared goals

*“Collaboration is an unnatural act performed by unwilling participants...” (US Non-Profit specialist, Mary McDonald, 2009).*

Getting the right mix of partner organizations with the right incentives is a critical component of successful collaboration – and is of course highly context specific: a neighbourhood-level social problem may, for example, require collaboration between social services and a local voluntary organization, while a large-scale carbon reduction programme such as Amsterdam’s Smart City requires significant public and private sector engagement. Alignment around shared goals and recognition of organizational interdependence is key, but the extent of organizational “fit” will depend on how formal the collaboration is, how compatible core values actually are, and the extent to which the collaboration in question is creating a win-win situation for those involved. Self-interest plays a key role. The challenge for brokers is to ensure that this self-interest, which could, for example, be based on resources,

knowledge, data or ethos, is negotiated fairly, with all partners feeling that they have some leverage over the relationship. As one senior social sector representative in the UK argued at a Collaborate workshop put it: "All of this can be negotiated, but having a shared goal is vital."

**Shared goals to incentivize frontline collaboration:**

- The UK government's Troubled Families initiative seeks to "turn around" the lives of 120,000 families through addressing the root causes of antisocial behaviour, youth crime, school truancy and educational underachievement. These families are estimated to cost the public purse an average £75,000 per year in interventions by different public agencies. The programme is showing some provisional successes within a mixed bag of results, and, perhaps most importantly, is shining a light on "chaotic public services" (rather than families) that do not align with the real needs of families in difficult and complex circumstances (DCLG, 2013).

**Payment by results-creating mixed incentives?:** - The UK's public services and its development industry have been piloting payment by results approaches to service delivery with mixed results: early evidence reveals both innovation and creativity, but also perverse incentives and elements of market failure. Examples include a public-private-social partnership to reduce reoffending in the southern city of Peterborough, a major national welfare-to-work programme providing intensive services for long-term unemployed people, and Department for International Development (DfID) education pilot projects in Ethiopia, Uganda and Rwanda (DfID, 2014).

the University of Birmingham's Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV) argues, we should be working towards a culture of risk enablement which is outward looking, that is, focusing on citizens and social outcomes, not only on organizations. We must, it argues, "encourage a culture of taking collective responsibility for improving publicly desired outcomes [and]...embed a wide-ranging set of measures to increase user, community, organizational and service system resilience"(Staite, 2013). In practice, this means meaningful risk sharing, openness to innovation and failure, and "humility" in the face of complex problems and unknown social and economic variables. Practitioners will often need supporting through these ways of working, as they face what Alexander Stevenson has argued can feel like "managing the unmanageable"(Stevenson, 2013).

**Building collaborative platforms to support young people:**

- The social and economic risks faced by young people are at the heart of Build It, a multi-agency programme led by youth advocacy body London Youth in which young people learn construction skills from older mentors, while renovating local authority housing and other buildings. The programme creates new relationships between business, state and civil society aligned with the needs of young people in south London (Kippin and Ferguson, 2014).

**Balancing risk, innovation and reward:**

- The controversial relationship between innovation and risk lies at the heart of two of the UK government's programmes, the Work Programme and Transforming Rehabilitation. These agendas are reshaping employment and the probation services by shifting risk (and responsibility) to large "prime" service providers, who in turn create relationships with social sector organizations, all of which is paid for via 'payment by results' contracts. Collaborate and Institute for Government research indicates that many service providers are worried that these programmes shift unacceptable risk to the social sector and, ultimately, to communities.

**Risk**

*"Delivering public services is a risky business, full of what Donald Rumsfeld famously-and rather presciently-called 'unknown unknowns'. As the nature of social risk has changed, so have our means of addressing them. Yet they have not changed fast enough." (Kippin and Ferguson, 2014)*

Being open and honest about the risks involved in collaboration is essential at the outset. Public, private and social organizations obviously have different incentives, accountability structures, and

therefore risk ratings and escalation protocols. These must be understood and form a key part of delivery agreements. Yet it is vital that risk management does not translate into risk elimination or avoidance. As a recently-published book from

**In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, no institution can solve global challenges on its own**

**Resources**

*"In line with the capabilities approach of Amartya Sen, we will need to care less about providing the same service to everyone, and more about asking what the state and public services can do to support and be relevant to people's lives at different stages." (Kippin, 2013)*

Part of what drives collaboration in public services is a need to broaden the resource base or "recapitalize" areas of service delivery that are underfunded or need to find a different way of meeting outcomes. There are several layers to this. First, collaboration with citizens aims to unlock what academic and policymaker David Halpern calls the "hidden wealth of communities", social capital ignored by models

of top-down service delivery. Second is a desire to leverage the resource of business for social goals and encourage a “shared value” ethos that “makes money while doing good”. Third is a conviction that civil society must do more to help build the social and economic resilience of citizens. Local leaders must align this broad range of resources with the complex and multi-faceted nature of contemporary social problems they face in localities. This requires a different form of leadership which we describe below.

**Leveraging the resources of society in service innovation:**

- User Voice is a charitable UK-based organization run by ex-offenders, with a mission to reduce re-offending through fostering better understanding and dialogue between criminal justice service providers and service users. Through hosting “user voice councils” (that give a platform to offenders in prison and the community), mentoring and advocacy work, they help strengthen justice service provision through bringing the insight and resources of ex-offenders into service design and delivery.

**Using private capital to drive social purpose:**

- Beyond the headlines of the “shared value” agenda, we are seeing a range of emerging partnerships between business and society. Those examples that do go beyond Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are exploring ways in which private business can combine a profit margin with social purpose. This has been relatively isolated practice centred on particular value-driven businesses, but government is waking up to its potential. For example, recent policy reviews in places like Manchester, Leeds and London have explicitly invoked the idea of “civic enterprise” (a term explicitly used in Leeds) as a means to align a different set of resources to deal with of the most complex problems faced in these cities (Camden Council, 2014; Civic Enterprise UK Website, 2014).

## 7. Strand three: delivery

How can those delivering collaborative, outcomes-focused public services make sure that the process matches their intention? This section explores the role of leadership, innovation and agility in supporting these delivery goals.

### Leadership

*“As the tri-sector leaders needed to address (societal) challenges are becoming more valuable, they are also becoming harder to develop...” (Lovegrove and Thomas, 2013)*

*“...[C]an you (think) the other way around, and spread leadership throughout organizations?” (Collaborate interview with leadership & innovation consultant, 2014)*

Sustaining effective collaboration requires great and consistent leadership, creating a shared vision at the top

of the organization or partnership, but also the means to catalyse behavioural and operational change at the delivery level. There are many manuals on “good leadership”; but what does it take to lead effective collaborations? First, a different ethos, involving “adaptive”(Vimeo, 2010) or “clumsy”(Grint, 2012) leadership to address problems that are complex, multi-layered, centred around citizens and do not fit within neat boundaries of sector or service. Second, a combination of what Archer and Cameron (2013) call the “critical skills”-mediation, and influencing and engaging others-and the “essential attitudes”-agility patience and empathy. In a recent article for the Harvard Business Review, Lovegrove and Thomas talk about “triple strength leadership”, drawing on Joseph Nye’s conceptualization of the “tri-sector athlete” who has the skills, networks and mindset to straddle the public, private and social worlds (Nye, 2011). Collaborative leadership is about getting shared results by giving up control; about jointly creating common approaches to complex issues through team-based approaches; and about being pragmatic and “doing what works” with a broad and fluid resource base. Trust is, as ever, a core requirement, particularly when managing across different cultures and difficult power relationships.

**Supporting the future public leader:**

- Birmingham University’s 21st Century Public Servant research project is exploring the implications of a shifting reform landscape for public servants. It argues that tomorrow’s public servant must be “storyteller, resource weaver, systems architect and navigator” in a fluid, fragmented and complex landscape. This corresponds closely with the findings of a recent Collaborate report on the characteristics of future tri-sector leadership, which called for more opportunities for cross-sector working throughout career pathways (Hukins and Kippin, 2013).

**Understanding the next generation of civic activists:**

- The Young Foundation’s Uprising initiative has attempted to address declining trust in the political class through a research and training programme encouraging bottom-up models of leadership among young people. Research findings indicated that the public values of emotional intelligence, honesty, integrity and humility were the most admired leadership attributes. Young people in particular wanted to see leaders “put the community first”, an attribute they felt was lacking in more traditional forms of public leadership (Malik, Rao and Inkster, 2012).

### Innovation

*“[A]s any bricoleur knows, the more (and more different) the parts, the greater the possibility of new and radical combinations... Such cultures support social innovation, and social innovation in turn builds resilience.” (Westley, 2013)*

Innovation is simultaneously the most essential, underemployed, misused and misunderstood concept in

public services. Innovation is about finding new and creative means to achieve results. It involves challenging received wisdom about the way organizations and services are run, and putting the citizen, family and community at the centre of policy thinking. Whole organizations are dedicated to the promotion of innovation across the sectors, in the knowledge that both incremental and path-breaking innovation can realize material benefits to people, places and the economic bottom line. Innovation, by definition, cannot be prescribed, but we do know something about the conditions that encourage it: an openness to new ideas; porous and fluid organizational structures; an embracing of risk and “constructive failure”; and a focus on outcomes combined with creativity over the means to get there. Collaboration and innovation are thus interdependent. MindLab’s Christian Bason talks about the need for innovation to emerge from “co-creation” between the users, deliverers and designers of public services (Bason, 2010). Academic Mariana Mazzucato reminds us about the collaborative genesis of many of the world’s biggest technological breakthroughs (Mazzucato, 2013). Social innovation—the mobilizing of new ideas to “tackle social problems or meet social needs” (Nesta and the Young Foundation, 2008)—has been at the heart of efforts by organizations such as the Young Foundation to improve public service outcomes at lower cost.

**Embedding innovation with public service**

**structures:** - Innovation is the sine qua non of today’s public service reformers, but there have been relatively few attempts to institutionalize it within public service governance structures, or in quasi-public bodies. The exceptions, such as Denmark’s MindLab, and the UK’s Design Council and Nesta (both now independent), continue to make the case for different ways of understanding and addressing public problems and social outcomes. But a healthy debate is taking place about the sustainability of these methods, with some arguing that compartmentalizing innovation can lead to marginalizing core business. Accordingly, many contemporary definitions (such as the OECD’s) emphasize that innovation is about implementation as well as ideation and design.

**Exploring collaborative innovation:** - Collaborate, the Social Innovation Exchange (SIX) and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation co-hosted a global festival in September 2014 to explore the relationship between collaboration and social innovation. A number of deliberative events and workshops explored how the concepts can combine to help address and solve the most complex social issues such as worklessness, social isolation, city governance and the impact of an ageing society. The partners will be publishing a report from the festival in the coming months.

**Agility**

*“Sustainability (will require) something akin to creative adaptability. We need to be able to solve problems that are new, some that we can see from our current vantage point, and others that are... presently over the horizon.” (Spence, 2011, p.271)*

One recent study on whole-systems thinking notes that “successful systems innovators create constellations of other actors aligned around them”, meaning that that “agile and strategic management is vital” (Mulgan and Leadbetter, 2013). What does this mean? Agility in this context is about being adaptive to change, capable of communicating across a range of organizational cultures, and sustaining a strategic focus on long-term outcomes over short term returns or targets. It is, as Richard Norman has suggested, a “cycle of continuous improvement”, reflecting the cycle of “direction setting, planning, implementation and delivery and review” (Norman, 2011). Agile management facilitates effective collaboration through convening the right resources to achieve strategic goals, and, where a public service market is concerned, effective market stewardship. As former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair has argued, effective and agile delivery depends on implementing “clear priorities, great people and the right systems” (Blair, 2014). A recent high-profile Institute for Government report noted serious flaws in some UK public service markets (which some consider the “experimental” ground for other countries), to the extent that they uncovered “repeated uncertainty about whose job it was to perform important market stewardship functions” (Gash and others, 2013).

**Navigating increasingly complex social needs:** -

Collaborate, the Institute for Government and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation recently published a study into the readiness of public service commissioners and providers to operate in an increasingly complex environment. It found that smaller, social sector providers of services were most worried about their ability to transition to a more outcomes-based way of working, with nearly 80 per cent of those surveyed concerned about cost recovery and financial risk. A majority of those commissioning services felt that building solid relationships with citizens was the strong point of these organizations, implying that more support is needed to help smaller organizations play this relational role (Crowe, Gash and Kippin, 2014).

**Managing for solutions, not services:** - The international policymaking community is increasingly exploring what William Eggers and Paul Macmillan call “the solution economy”. Using a range of international case studies, they argue that “government’s role (is) changing dramatically”, - shifting from that of a provider of services, to a strategic and agile actor within new multi-sector markets for social goods. Policy development processes, too, are being unpacked, with Zaid Hassan’s “Social Labs” methodologies bringing a more deliberative approach to solving complex problems (Eggers and Macmillan, 2013; Hassan, 2014).

## 8. Strand four: accountability

Evidence, accountability and democratic engagement are vital to sustaining social partnerships. How can policymakers and practitioners keep them at the heart of their agendas? This section explores how transparency, democracy and engagement and evidence can support collaborative goals.

### Transparency

*“Open government isn’t an optional add-on or a ‘nice to have,’ it is absolutely fundamental to a nation’s success in the 21st century. In the global race, it is a vital part of any country’s plan for prosperity.” (Francis Maude (UK Cabinet Office Minister), 2013)*

If trust is the glue that holds collaboration together (as one interview respondent told me), then transparency is a key means of building it. Several high-profile scandals arising from loss of data, outsourcing and corruption in recent years suggest that public leaders in the UK have some way to go. On the face of it, transparency is already an important part of the way government presents itself. The new Cabinet Office guidelines require the publication of all contracts and tender documents over a certain financial threshold (£10,000), for example. The open data agenda has done much to push the need for government transparency into the public arena, and indeed the UK is seen as a global leader in this area. At the operational level, however, ensuring transparency has proven more difficult. Public, private and social organizations seek to protect their IP in different ways, and the mechanisms of competition in public services militate against an open approach to commissioning and contracting. The Institute for Government argues that this hampers the ability of social sector organizations to participate in collaborative contracts such as the Work Programme, and indeed undermines the notion of a “diverse and responsive supply chain” on which the whole programme is predicated (Rimmer, 2013). For collaboration to work, all partners must value and exhibit transparency. As Cass Sunstein, the co-author of *Nudge* and former Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the Obama White House, has argued, “nothing should be hidden” (Sunstein, 2013).

**Using open data to foster innovation:** - The UK’s Open Data Institute was established to help understand and nurture the emerging fields of open data, big data, and open government, one of a swathe of initiatives designed to free up public data in ways that can boost the accountability of public services (such as ratings websites for health services), and unlock new opportunities for economic growth. More transparent government has been an important theme for successive political parties, with the most recent example being the establishment of 21 “transparency commitments” as part of the UK’s Open Government Action Plan.

**Transparency in public service governance and management:** - The recent focus on transparency and

open government in the UK mirrors the enthusiasm with which the concept has pursued by government and multilateral institutions in the aid industry. Organizations such as Transparency International occupy this space, and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is a high profile example of a global initiative seeking to persuade business, government and civil society to promote more open and transparent business arrangements. Encouraging transparent public procurement has been a recent focus, particularly as the World Bank estimates it accounts for around 5 per cent of GDP in developing countries - and for considerably more in some (European) contexts (World Bank Institute, 2012).

### Engagement and democracy

*“You can’t call it public service commissioning if it isn’t co-produced...” (Senior Public Service Practitioner, cited in Crowe, Gash and Kippin, 2014)*

Public services are built on (or at least should be built on) engagement between citizens, communities and the services they consume. Forms of engagement exist along a spectrum from very light (as in national security, for example), through to very intensive (in areas like social care). Where services are human-facing, the relationship is rarely purely transactional. I have argued in the past (Kippin and Lucas, 2011) that the value of public services is realized in the quality of this interaction between citizen and service, often termed co-production, or “social productivity” (2020 Public Services Trust, 2010). As public policy has shifted from a New Public Management mode obsessed with choice and consumerism, policymakers are increasingly valuing this relationship. Yet as thinkers such as David Boyle and others have argued, our current model of service lags behind these insights, and practitioners do not necessarily have the skills or the tools to engage outside the lens of service provision. Engagement is also key at the organizational level, fostering the means to create innovative public-private-social partnerships that can leverage investment and deliver services at scale. We are seeing a number of these “next generation” joint-ventures emerge at a local level (Parker, 2013).

**Putting community engagement at the heart of public services:** - A number of UK local authorities within the recently formed Co-operative Councils Innovation Network have committed to putting engagement and democracy at the heart of their public service reform strategy, leading change through a different and more challenging role for local politicians in their communities. Councils like Sunderland, Oldham, Liverpool and Lambeth are attempting to reshape commissioning and service provision through engaging more meaningfully with the community to co-design the services they receive. The success or failure of these initiatives will define the extent to which they can meet

financial and demand challenges while continuing to play a positive social role.

**Community leadership and service transformation:**

- Sunderland City Council (in the north-east of England has committed itself to a model of community leadership that signals a distinct shift in role and purpose, away from more traditional top-down service delivery, and towards mobilizing a range of different models that are more responsive to local needs and demands. Underpinning this is a different role for elected politicians, who are being asked to play a bigger part in service design, commissioning and demand management within communities. The upshot is a model that “brings the politics back in”, valuing local democracy not only as scrutinizer but also as driver of public service reform strategies.

**Evidence**

*“Evidence based policy is sought by government, but mostly the result is policy-based evidence...” (John Kay, 2013)*

The use of evidence is vital. Yet the way we understand it, collect it, and deploy it in policy and practice is ripe for change in some areas. Initiatives such as The Economic and Social Research Council’s What Works Centres and the Social Innovation Partnership’s Project Oracle point the way to a more integrated approach, linking academia to policy and practice in a way that front-line workers can use and co-produce. Digital technology offers a platform and big data affords a big opportunity, but neither is a panacea. Services to the public require deep and meaningful insight and multi-methodological evidence into what matters for communities. This is increasingly part of the dialogue. For instance, experiments in the use of randomized control trials (popularized by MIT’s J-PAL lab and a recent influential book by Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo (Bannerjee and Duflo, 2011)) are on the increase, borrowing from initiatives piloted in a developing world context. At the core of our approach must be an approach to evidence that is adaptive and “in real time”, ensuring that evaluation and accountability are not only useful in retrospect, but can inform collaborative social programmes as they are evolving.

**Building a collaborative evidence base:** - Project Oracle is an “evidence hub” for children and young people, jointly hosted by The Social Innovation Hub and London Metropolitan University, with support from the Economic and Social Research Council, the Greater London Authority and the London Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). The project accredits project evaluations with standards of evidence validated by academics, providing a unique means of improving future service provision through a shared evidence base developed via cross-sector collaboration in real time.

**Evidence from the bottom up:** - Can evidence and information be effectively used by citizens to drive new models of service delivery from the bottom up?

This has long been the basis for public services arranged along New Public Management lines, with the built-in assumption that citizens can be active choosers of public goods based on rational assessments of good information. It is not difficult to see how this notion could have its limitations. Citing US and UK evidence on hospital choice, Professor Carol Propper and Dr. Anna Dixon (Propper, 2013; Dixon and others, 2010) have (in separate studies) shown that choice and competition may drive up quality and help control cost, but inequalities affect the public’s ability to choose, and without addressing these inequalities, this will further entrench disadvantage.

**9. Conclusion: serving the collaborative citizen**

This framework has set out a challenge and the beginnings of a response. It is a starting point, designed to stimulate discussion on the potential collaborative capacity of public services, and on the dynamics that might unlock this to the benefit of service users and communities. There is neither a tried-and-tested blueprint nor a perfect recipe for public agencies, citizens and communities to address the range of challenges they face. Yet all must find imperfect ways of navigating changing patterns of supply and demand, and of addressing what are increasingly complex and in many cases intractable socio-economic problems.

Our work on the Collaborative Citizen argued that we should start this navigation process from the bottom up, disrupting and reshaping services from a position of a deeper form of insight, evidence and co-productive practice. Yet this will not happen by accident, especially not in a context where every incentive is given to the public manager to find short-term cuts and savings, despite a wealth of data about the long-term value of prevention and early intervention.<sup>5</sup>

The public has been conspicuous by its absence from post-austerity debates about the scope and distribution of public entitlements. “Public services”, notes Greg Parston in *The Collaborative Citizen*, “form a main component of a ‘social contract’ between people and their governments... But that requires collective action from players on both sides on the contract, built on social capital, trust and shared values that allow and enable citizens to be co-productive agents in the relationship” (Parston, 2014). Building the capacity of government and public agencies to play this role requires us to develop new tools of public administration, and look beyond the policy toolkit of New Public Management. It can feel tangential when the short term challenge is to cut the cost of serving an increasingly demanding population.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the range of data from the Early Intervention Foundation (2014).

Yet it is arguably the only way to sustain productive systems that both support and draw from society, and that create wealth as well as spend it.

As the Canadian expert Jocelyn Bourgon has noted, much of the developed world lives with systems of public administration that are “not entirely of the past and not yet of the future” (Bourgon, 2011, p.7). So as we look both to ways in which we can improve established welfare states, and to ways we can support countries that are building new ones, we hope to be able to draw from this emerging framework as a starting point for new and innovative practice. We will continue to develop these themes as part of a longer-term relationship between Collaborate and the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, and invite your substantive input as we do so. We look forward to hearing from you.

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The author would like to thank Max Everest-Philips, Nigel Goh, Arndt Husar, Greg Parston, Victor Adebowale, Jon Huggett, Adelaide Adade, Rebecca Oldham and the reviewers for input and comments on a previous draft. All errors remain those of the author.

This report is based on a paper originally presented to the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence in Singapore in March 2014. It formed an input into a high-level workshop entitled *Unlocking Collaborative Capacity in the Public Services of Tomorrow*, and has since benefited from input from a range of colleagues within the UNDP and beyond. The paper is designed to reflect on the UK's experience for an international audience. It is the first stage of a longer-term collaboration between the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence and Collaborate which will explore the potential for comparative learning in public services across the global north and south.



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