



The Prime Minister's Office of Public Services Reform

Leading from the front line

Celebrating excellence and sharing best practice – a guide for headteachers, NHS managers, senior police officers and senior local government officers. PM's foreword, p3.

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Foreword by the Prime Minister

We have reached a crucial stage in the reform of Britain's public services. Together we are working to ensure that we can provide services which are not only universal, but also genuinely treat people as individuals. Services which offer the choice and quality that everyone has the right to expect.

I want to thank you for your efforts in making reform happen. I am grateful for your commitment and I admire your professionalism. But of course the journey is far from complete, and we need determination to see it through.

The starting point for all our public services should be that customers' needs and aspirations should genuinely and demonstrably be the basis for designing and then delivering the services they receive.

To do this work effectively we are applying four principles of public service reform:

- **national standards** of service, so that everyone has the right to the same outcomes wherever they live and whoever they are
- **devolving to the front line** the responsibility for delivering these standards in the ways that best fit local circumstances and the needs of local people
- **flexibility** so that services are more responsive and accessible to their customers, and that service providers can get on with the job they need to do without the imposition of unnecessary red tape
- improving **choice**, particularly where service quality falls below the standards that the public has the right to expect.

There are a great many examples of innovation in our public services and it is an important role of the Government to help professionals share this best practice with one another. This booklet can only capture a few of these case studies, but, I hope you find **Leading from the front line** a helpful tool as you strive to improve services for the public. I want to encourage our public service leaders to share their ideas.

We have made real progress on our journey of reform. National standards are largely in place; services are being provided with increasing flexibility, and choice is gradually expanding. We have put key building blocks in place to devolve more responsibility to local public services, though I recognise that the results of this are yet to be felt on the front line.

We need to do more, both in Whitehall, where the Government is encouraging departments to modernise – including devolving power – and also across the public services. There are many challenges, for example I have heard a clear message from the front line that bureaucracy needs to be cut and the Government is acting.

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I am confident that together we can build on the good job that has been done already and deliver the consistent high quality services that the public rightly demand.



Letting teachers get on and teach

“By creating capacity, raising standards and reducing teacher workload, we have made our school a better place to work”

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students. These are qualified teachers who oversee mentoring, liaise with parents, monitor classroom activity and take assemblies.

A group of teaching assistants now takes responsibility for dealing with badly-behaved students in each year group, as well as other pastoral issues. They tackle everything from truancy, lateness and misbehaviour to ensuring students obey the school's uniform policy. Each 'year manager' is supervised by a member of the school's leadership team.

Canterbury High has also changed its working practices in other ways. An administrator now finds work experience placements for students and extra admin staff do tasks like photocopying. Students have mentors rather than tutors, who may be teachers or support staff, with each mentor having a smaller group of pupils to support than before. The result of these changes is that students have more individual attention and benefit from better teaching, while teachers have more time to teach and prepare lessons.

Schools across the country are changing their staffing structures. As well as traditional headteachers, deputies and teachers, support is being provided by a growing group of teaching and administrative assistants.

For two very different schools, their benefits have been clear. Fordham Church of England Primary School, in Cambridgeshire, has recognised the value of teaching assistants by developing a new career structure. And Kemnal Technology College, in Bromley, Kent, involves its assistants in planning, marking and tuition.

The number of assistants nationwide has increased by two thirds in the last five years, and their importance and number are expected to

increase further as the result of the 2003 agreement on remodelling school workforces. This set out tasks which administrative staff should undertake instead of teachers.

At Kemnal, an 1,100-pupil boys' specialist school for 11- to 18-year-olds, teaching assistants can work with children in whole classes, groups and on a one-to-one basis. Assistants also help plan lessons and manage exercises. A team of cover supervisors ensures that classes are not disrupted by unexpected teacher absence. A total of 16 staff posts (some shared by part-timers) is filled by assistants and cover supervisors. Together with administrative staff, there is around one support staff member to every three teachers.

Fordham has an equal number of teachers and support staff in its 18-strong team. The school, which caters for 220 four- to 11-year-olds, has recognised how teaching and other support staff can not only reduce teachers' workload, but can directly help improve standards.

In recognition of their performance, Fordham has developed a three-tier structure for those providing learning support. A first tier covers basic skills, a second individual tuition, while the third group helps with lesson planning, teaches small groups and supervises larger groups of pupils. The model allows assistants to progress as they gain experience, and to be rewarded according to their skills and responsibilities.

Both schools believe the work of support staff helps improve standards for pupils. Kemnal is one of the fastest-improving schools in the country, and has scored highly in a value-added performance table of specialist schools. Fordham has above average test results and has been praised as a very good school by Ofsted.

Two heads are better than one

With so much change in schools, heads welcome the chance to refresh their skills. And Chris Mitten, headteacher of the 230 pupil Roche Community Primary School, St Austell, Cornwall found that a new leadership course not only introduced him to new ideas, it also helped him to delegate more effectively.

Chris has been a head for eight years. His leadership and management were described as very good in Roche's most recent Ofsted report, but he believed his school could do more to improve. Like many heads, he felt isolated from colleagues in other schools and wanted to share ideas with them. He also wanted to empower staff to take more ownership of school improvement.

He signed up for two programmes organised by the National College for School Leadership – its leadership programme for serving heads and its programme for consultant leaders, who will work to help other schools improve. The college hopes to recruit 400 consultant leaders in 2003.

Roche has a strong record of staff professional development, and has been praised for its training programmes for teaching assistants. Since Chris completed his courses, other staff have been encouraged to improve their training. Staff are now more involved in collective decision-making and in taking delegated responsibilities. There is greater openness to new ideas. The whole school has been refreshed as a result of their headteacher refreshing his leadership skills.

And Chris's work with primaries as a consultant leader means that he helps to solve

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the literacy and numeracy problems they face.

Hasan Chawdhry, head of the 170-pupil Edinburgh Primary School, in Walthamstow, North London, was keen to work with colleagues in a new professional network.

Edinburgh Primary School became one of seven schools in Waltham Forest to form its own learning network, known as WF7 – and Hasan became WF7's co-leader. The seven heads visited each other's schools to see how each approached leadership, teaching and staff professional development and pupils' work.

They are developing a curriculum which seeks to help pupils to become better at learning and thinking for themselves. They are working with the Institute of Education to establish a shared research library. And they are improving leadership in all the schools by sharing consultancy and mentoring.

WF7 is one of over 80 such networks bringing schools together across England. They are supported by the NCSL, which supports the training of heads, deputies and other senior school staff.

With schools thinking of new ways to deploy support staff, many have been looking afresh at how their structures can best support the needs of students.

Canterbury High School in Kent, a 1,000-student specialist sports college, has changed how it organises responsibilities for year groups, as well as improving tutoring for students and providing better administrative support.

Canterbury High felt that the traditional model of a head of year didn't do enough to manage students' progression at key times in their school lives, nor did it address the particular problems of poorly-behaved pupils.

So it has appointed 'key stage managers' – one for new pupils in Year 7, to help them in the difficult transition from primary school, and one each for Key Stage 3, GCSE and sixth form

Tailored learning – the way ahead

Schools are exploring new ways to meet pupils' individual needs, building a wide range of academic and vocational pathways

Every pupil has different strengths and weaknesses but catering for them can require extra effort.

At Kirkley High School, a 1,200-student specialist sports college for 13- to 18-year-olds in Lowestoft, Suffolk, individual needs have been central to their pastoral programme. Mentors work on a one-to-one basis with pupils to ensure that their lessons are matched as far as possible to pupils' aptitudes.

And GCSE students are able to study subjects and undertake courses that will best help to meet their potential. Using software, known as Mindscreen, pupils' aptitudes and capabilities are individually profiled.

They then have a personalised curriculum designed for them. As well as traditional and applied GCSE subjects, pupils can gain work experience and business coaching.

There is lots of evidence that pupils learn in different ways and research at Strathclyde University has shown that many pupils with strong entrepreneurial skills are often turned off by traditional lessons. So, the bespoke curriculum allows those interested to set up mini-enterprises and to gain a recognised enterprise skills certificate.

The early years of secondary school can be particularly difficult for pupils. From having one primary teacher, pupils can end up with up to

20 teachers in their new school.

The personal touch can help make the transition easier. Seaford Head Community College, an East Sussex secondary school, has found a new way of using an established approach. It split its 255 12- and 13-year-old pupils into three 'learning communities' of 85 pupils, similar to the 'house' system operated in some independent schools.

But the main difference is that in each group – called the Olympic, Carnegie and Nobel groups – the youngsters are taught by a total of just five teachers who cover a particular area of the curriculum. As a result, teachers are much more focused on individual pupils, and can stretch the most able or help those falling behind more readily. Where subjects can support each other, it is also easier to do so.

The Government sees 'active learning' as key to its drive to raise school standards. By that it means that pupils are taught how to do research for themselves, use information technology effectively and to become questioning and analytical learners.

Thus, they develop the wider skills required by universities and employers. A personalised approach to the curriculum is often the best way to develop such skills.

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As a 'leading edge' school, Cramlington will work in partnership with other schools. It has already organised annual conferences for other teachers on learning techniques and ICT. Cramlington has been praised by Ofsted as 'strikingly successful' and for its 'bold and innovative focus on teaching and learning'. Over 70% of students achieve at least five good GCSE passes.

Ercall Wood Technology College in Telford, Shropshire, not only ensures that its students get good exam results and a rich curriculum, it has developed a strong reputation for its work on special educational needs. "I think that's one reason why we've been designated as a 'leading edge' school," says Mr Graeme Harkness, Ercall Wood's headteacher. "We have won particular praise for our work with dyslexic students. We are funded to work with 20 statemented students per year and employ 22 teaching assistants to work in partnership with them".

But it is the school's work with new technology and local business that has come in for most praise. The school believes in fully preparing young people for adulthood, so much GCSE coursework is related to real life tasks, and local business mentors work with students.

GCSE results are above the national average and continue to improve. When the school's results at 14 and 16 are compared with the student intake, Ercall Wood features among the top schools for adding value in the country.

As 'leading edge' schools both Ercall Wood and Cramlington will lead partnerships with others who can improve their own standards by learning from their success. Each partnership receives £60,000 a year to help disseminate good practice.

We achieve more together

Schools involved in the Leading Edge programme are helping others to address educational challenges.

Cramlington Community High School, in Northumberland, a 1,600-student specialist science college for 13- to 18-year-olds has been designated a 'leading edge' school for its imaginative approach to spreading effective practice.

The school has its own research team which looks at what works well here and abroad. Its resources are made available across the town through an Intranet service. Lessons are structured to help pupils remember what they learn and to develop independent learning.

"We base our lessons on current best

practice," explains Derek Wise, the school's head teacher. "We use multi-media presentations and take account that students learn in different ways. Independent learning and group work help our students see education as a process of thinking through problems. These skills will be crucial at university and in the workplace."

Cramlington is particularly strong in its use of computers. A programme is being developed in partnership with the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, a grant-making charitable trust which supports many education projects, to produce lesson plans which use information and communications technology and are equally effective for all students.

Extra, extra – read all about it!

A growing number of schools are expanding to provide everything from crèches to adult IT classes. Such 'extended schools' provide a host of extras for pupils and the wider community.

The City Academy Bristol, one of Britain's most innovative new secondary schools, provides extra support for its Somali students and their families, particularly those recently arrived in Britain.

With a Somali charity, the academy runs a Supplementary School on Saturdays and after school. Classes are provided for children aged from five to 16. Parents help out, particularly on Saturdays, when they have the chance to socialise with other families. English classes are also organised for Somali women.

Forty boys and 80 girls attend the classes. "It helps improve their education and it strengthens our ties with the local Somali community," says Principal, Ray Priest.

Extra facilities can be particularly valuable in areas of deprivation. Weston Coyney Infant School, in Stoke-on-Trent, serves a former mining community. The school realised that to improve its own standards, it needed to do more to engage parents and the wider community.

So not only were parents involved more in the running of the school and helped to support their children's education, they were helped to return to work themselves by learning new skills with the help of a local college. Parents can drop in to 'surgeries' to discuss any concerns about their children's education visit a clinic run by the school nurse.

Ofsted said the school created an 'outstanding relationship' between everyone involved with the child. Test results for seven-year-olds are above national expectations.

Flexibility, creativity, choice

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Schools often find it hard to cover subjects in sufficient depth. So Fridays offer a very different learning experience in a new Bexley school. The 800 students of the Business Academy, in Erith, Kent spend Monday to Thursday studying the national curriculum, but on a themed day on Fridays they study business and citizenship.

With a mini stock exchange and trading floor in school and regular visits from city traders, the subjects are certainly brought to life.

The Business Academy is one of three academies to open in 2002. Nine more opened in 2003. Academies are a new type of all-ability school, giving principals and staff new opportunities to develop educational strategies to raise standards in disadvantaged areas. Their school leadership benefits from the skills of sponsors and other supporters. Capital costs are shared between the DfES and major sponsors, such as charitable trusts and foundations. Running costs are met by the Government.

The Business Academy replaced Thamesmead Community College, and currently caters for 11- to 18-year-olds, though it has plans to offer primary and nursery education,

and a crèche on the same site. It is funded with government money and up to £2.4 million in sponsorship from David Garrard, chairman of Minerva plc, who was educated at a state school in South London and wished to put something back into the community.

As an Academy it has the flexibility to be creative in its curriculum, timetabling, organisation and governance. So, in Bexley, the school doors are open from 7am until 10pm each day. Students take the International Baccalaureate instead of A-levels.

Innovation is also flourishing in Middlesbrough on Teesside where the Unity City Academy specialises in ICT, having gained up to £2 million in sponsorship from Amey plc. Unity has radically changed the way it teaches. Learning is organised thematically, rather than by subject. And students are expected to adopt a greater personal responsibility for research and learning.

"We place a strong emphasis on links with business," explains Principal Eddie Brady. "And we also provide extra opportunities for local residents to study. However, it is our focus on the individual student that we hope can be a model for learning for all."

"We expect success and challenge low aspirations"

Children's centres are providing one-stop shops for parents and children

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Busy parents find it hard to do everything. So those taking their children to the newly-designated Sure Start children's centre in Bromley by Bow welcome having access to a first-class day nursery and a GP under one roof, as well as the chance to learn how to start their own business or improve their own skills.

The Tower Hamlets children's centre, which is run by the local community, is one of 32 pioneering centres where nursery education, childcare, health, family support and help into work are being offered under a single roof.

As a children's centre, it is building on its achievement over nearly two decades. There are currently 25 full-time places in the nursery, expanding to 73 in April 2004. A toy library gives mums the chance to play with their

children. And homework, arts and computer clubs are used after school by children aged eight upwards.

Four thousand patients are registered with the health centre, where local GPs and other health professionals work with wider community projects. Over 150 people at any one time use the centre's resources to help them find jobs or set up their own small businesses.

Others are involved in a range of educational and training programmes, including English classes for the local Bengali community and job-related courses.

The centre also provides activities for local young people, elderly people and those with disabilities, as well as a popular café and a local church. Its facilities are now being extended in partnership with a local school.

"We have a philosophy of encouraging connections between people to drive innovation," explains Rob Trimble, the centre's director. "That means we expect success, and we challenge low aspirations and poor self-esteem. This is a principle we apply to everything we do."

Through the new children's centre, a range of professionals will be on hand to support young children and their families. The idea is that by offering such services together, youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds have a real chance of a more equal start.

Research into such services has shown that such good quality early years services reduces the risk of children requiring extra support for special educational needs at school from 33% to 20%.

Taking things further

FE colleges and universities are searching for new ways to increase access and offer different styles of learning

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Small business – big ideas

Further education colleges are responsible for improving the skills of millions of adults and young people every year. Traditional colleges don't always meet their needs. Colleges increasingly recognise that one of the best ways to boost skills is to develop courses tailored to the specific needs of local firms. The Government's new skills strategy will make this easier with changes in funding and qualifications.

One of the most innovative services is provided by West Nottinghamshire College which has a dedicated business training service for local, small and medium sized firms. Training is offered in ten key employment sectors, including IT, Care, Catering and Call Centres.

Using the Learn@Work brand, the service operates from a discrete unit on a local business park, offering distance learning with support from individual tutors available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The college has recruited 70 tutors, mainly specialist trainers, to work with local businesses and support learners. Learning can take place in the workplace, at local learning centres or in the college.

In just over a year, Learn@Work has delivered to 1,000 local businesses and 3,500 employees. So far, 120 people have achieved NVQs, learning terminals have been located permanently in 15 companies and Modern Apprenticeships have been supported in 210 firms. Retention and achievement on distance learning courses have exceeded 90%.

Partnership to meet a specific skills need is central to the approach of

Logistics College North West which brings together six colleges to meet a growing demand for drivers of large goods vehicles. 20,000 drivers are currently needed nationally with 100,000 likely to be needed by 2010.

Logistics College is the UK's largest Centre of Vocational Excellence and works with major employers in the region and the Transport and General Workers' Union. One of its first drives is to work with employers to offer 500 specialist apprenticeships.

Deeside College, in Connah's Quay, NE Wales, has developed an NVQ-based programme which has so far benefited 40,000 employees in the retail trade across the UK. The courses began as an attempt to help Iceland stores to develop modern apprenticeships and customer service training.

In order to ensure the courses were tailored to Iceland's needs, four senior Iceland staff were seconded to Deeside to help develop the right accredited programme for the store's staff. Those Iceland managers came to be regional managers of a training package that is now delivered by 50 other colleges.

The programme offered an induction course for new and existing staff, many of whom had experienced no formal training or education since leaving school. Those who wanted to could progress to achieve GCSE-standard qualifications.

"The training has not only helped many thousands of Iceland staff, it has now also been developed further for colleges to work with other firms, including Spar, the Co-op, Sony and members of the Association of Convenience Stores," says Neil Crawford, who led the Deeside team which developed the training programme.

Centres of vocational excellence

Specialisation is not only helping improve school standards, it is enabling colleges and other training providers to play to their strengths too. The status is awarded to particular departments within a college, rather than the college as a whole.

A network of 'centres of vocational excellence' (CoVEs) has been developed since 2001 covering everything from marine engineering to social care, where top quality lecturers use the best industry-standard facilities. Four hundred CoVEs are planned by 2006.

Convenience learning

learndirect is at the forefront



of the e-learning revolution. *learndirect* has trained some 895,000 people since October 2000, offering courses where individuals want them. There are over 2,040 *learndirect* centres in high streets, leisure and community centres, colleges, sports clubs, churches and libraries.

In Humberside, Hull College is the hub for 31 centres based in the county's main population centres. One is located in the Kingston Communications Stadium, a major local sports and concert venue. Another can be found in the Goodwin community centre, in a deprived area. Some 3,000 Humberside learners benefited from courses in the first half of 2003.

learndirect in Wigan has been particularly effective in reaching people who have not been on college courses recently. Their partnership with Wigan and Leigh College has provided 16 local *learndirect* centres, several of which are located in local secondary schools. Others are provided in local libraries, at a YMCA centre and at community centres. Special computer facilities targeted at pensioners are being developed in Wigan and Leigh town centres. A total of 5,600 people joined courses in 2002.

By reaching beyond traditional provisions, *learndirect* is helping thousands of adults with no or few qualifications to get to grips with information and communications technology, business and management, and the 'skills for life' of numeracy and literacy.

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The university challenge

Going to university can seem like a rite of passage for some young people, but in large areas of Merseyside, fewer than one in six young people progress to higher education. Aspirations are low and there is simply no culture of going into higher education.

That's why the University of Liverpool decided it needed to lift young people's horizons. And it recognised that it had to reach into primary as well as secondary schools if it was really to make a difference. What the University has called a 'supply chain of support' has involved providing practical help and advice to teachers, college lecturers, parents and community organisations, as well as young people and potential mature students.

Primary schoolchildren have their own 'university', in practice a day-long introduction to the idea of universities, with a campus visit, a special science lecture and the chance to meet

some students. Similar programmes have brought children and their parents from Toxteth into university-based summer schools exploring black history and culture. When young people or mature students are considering university, those with no family history of participation can access a programme of extra help and support, so that they are not placed at a disadvantage compared with more confident students with graduates in the family.

"These practical programmes involve partnership at every level," says Tricia Jenkins, the University's Head of Widening Participation. "But they have also meant staff and students have thought imaginatively about how to improve young people's choices and opportunities. This has meant engaging all those involved in their decision-making – and reaching youngsters at a much younger age than we would have done in the past."

For further information see p28

“Now we can save vital minutes”

NHS organisations are tackling the obstacles that slow access to the health service

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Reaching remote patients quickly in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire is a real challenge for ambulances, which receive over 100,000 emergency calls a year.

It often used to take far longer than eight minutes to arrive in potentially life-threatening cases. And if an ambulance responded to a case, which turned out not to require a hospital visit, it was harder to reach a patient whose life really was in danger.

The East Anglian Ambulance NHS Trust realised that paraprofessionals could make a big difference to response times. Now ambulances reach over 75% of such patients within eight minutes – and locally-based paramedics can get there even sooner.

Now 36 paramedics are based in rural surgeries. When a 999 call is made for an ambulance, the paramedic is also sent.

The chances of surviving a cardiac arrest decrease with each minute that passes. So, early

intervention with a defibrillator is vital to shock the heart back into a normal rhythm. Where paramedics are based in the community, they can save crucial minutes.

Paramedics perform emergency resuscitation for cardiac arrests where speed is vital. And they can often determine in other cases (with the help of a phone call to the local GP) whether the patient can be treated successfully without going to hospital. Where the paramedic and the GP agree, the ambulance can turn back to deal with the next case. There's been an added bonus for local surgeries, too. Paramedics can assist with blood tests and ECG monitoring. They can also pay home visits in non-emergency cases and talk the case through with the GP, allowing doctors to reach more patients each day.

The percentage of life-threatening cases reached within eight minutes has improved from 59.9% in April 2001 to 76.7% in April 2003.

Thumbs up for patient records

The Wells Park Practice in Lewisham has a history of offering patients access to their paper records, but as it computerised, it needed a new way to provide such access. It managed to produce a self-contained system which patients could easily access and navigate for themselves. The practice's solution was to develop a system which records thumb prints with their medical records.

Patients can see a summary record – including allergies or a full record with all their medical history at the practice.

The computer also provides patients with information about their medication and when they received vaccinations. And it has the results of key tests, including their blood count.

To avoid patients unwittingly leaving their records open to others, the computer automatically logs them out if they do not touch the screen or click the mouse regularly.

Patients can print out information to take away – and go into appointments better informed – improving efficiency.

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Scan waits cut

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Sonographers, who perform ultrasound scans, are in short supply. So when Plymouth's Derriford hospital wanted to cut waiting times, speedy recruitment was not realistic.

Instead, staff used a mix of better training, greater responsiveness to patients and sensible use of resources. As a result, waiting times have been cut from up to a year to just two weeks.

Around 35,000 people a year have scans at Derriford. Their number has risen with advanced technology. The major redesign of the Hospital's radiology department saw the sonographers working with GPs, nurses and administrative staff to turn things around.

Two new scanning machines were also bought. Patients were booked every 20 minutes rather than every 30 minutes, increasing throughput. Three extra ultrasound sessions were scheduled at times convenient to patients – like evenings.

Hospital staff now contact every patient a few days before their appointment to check they are still able to come: a project funded by the National Booking Programme, which is designed to reduce missed appointments.

Reminders reduced the no-show rate from eight to one per cent. A backlog of 2,200 patients has been cleared.

Back on form in Winchester

Patients with a bad back in the Winchester area can be seen much more quickly thanks to a new clinic established by the Winchester and Eastleigh Healthcare NHS Trust.

While patients used to have to wait 20 weeks for a routine orthopaedic consultant appointment, they can now be seen within three weeks – and those with urgent cases wait just 48 hours.

The back triage clinic is run by two physiotherapists and an orthopaedic physician. They assess some 500 patients a year and provide follow-up treatment

including spinal injections, mobilisations and manipulations, rehabilitation programmes and spinal stabilisation exercises.

But where patients need to see a consultant or to go to hospital, the team can fast-track their appointments to the right source of care, whether it be in rheumatology, the pain clinic, physiotherapy, the surgical spine clinic or the chronic pain management group.

“Thanks to the changes we've made, we are able to see patients more quickly and treat them sooner – prioritising services for those who need them,” says Peggy Ogilvie, Therapy Services Manager.

Matron ensures patients seen more quickly

Many patients going to A&E at Whipps Cross University Hospital, Leytonstone, could have been treated more quickly in surgeries or walk-in centres. And management of patients' cases needed greatly to be improved.

Improvement started when a matron was appointed to head the hospital's minor injury and illness service last year. She introduced important

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nursing changes. As a result, people with minor injuries are being treated and discharged within four hours at the East London hospital, where cases typically took 15 hours.

Some nurses were made 'emergency nurse practitioners', giving them responsibility for a patient from their first assessment when they were treated by a doctor. A Consultant Nurse was appointed to improve the emergency service and its links with local surgeries. She also improved training for community nurses and encouraged better sharing of information between surgeries and the hospital.

One outcome of this co-operation is that community and NHS Direct nurses will spend time working in the hospital's accident and emergency department, helping them make the most appropriate referrals in future.

Choice empowers not just the few but the many

Choice, Oxford English Dictionary definition: *choosing, right of choosing; variety from which to choose; person or thing chosen*

Patients with severe breathing problems, often caused through lung disease or asthma, used to find it tough seeing their doctors at a Middlesex hospital.

Getting to an appointment and back often involved a day's travel for a consultation with a junior doctor that often lasted less than three minutes. And any tests they needed weren't always organised so that they coincided with doctor appointments.

Staff at the Central Middlesex hospital in Harrow decided there was a better way. They appointed a Chronic Disease Practitioner to work with consultants to provide the regular check-ups that patients needed.

The practitioner manages the cases of around fifty patients with end stage chronic respiratory failure, referred by their respiratory doctor.

Each patient agrees a programme of care with the practitioner, and is given a direct mobile number which they can call if a problem arises.

Where previously patients had follow-up appointments every two or three months, a patient can have a next-day appointment if their condition deteriorates. This can be with the consultant, the practitioner (who will

sometimes make home visits) or at a community outreach centre.

Where patients need to be admitted to hospital, the practitioner will make these arrangements speedily on their behalf. Tests and x-rays can be organised to fit in with any other hospital appointments. And there is the reassurance of a familiar person.

The result is a better service all round. Early signs that a patient's condition is worsening can be detected. But patients no longer struggle for follow-up appointments when they may be least appropriate for them.

Prevention is better than cure in Enfield, North London, where a local scheme is helping reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. "Fit for Life" tries to give people the power to take control of their own health, take more exercise and improve their diet. By working with local voluntary organisations, targeted pilots have been run to help young people, the homeless and ethnic minorities to improve their own health so that they are less likely to suffer from heart disease. The project is funded by the New Opportunities Fund and co-ordinated by the Enfield Healthy Living Centre and Enfield Primary Care Trust.

Healthier tuck

Apples replaced crisps in Brent's Preston Park Primary School's tuck shop as a result of an innovative health-education partnership.

Persuading children to eat healthier meals is not easy. So eight- to 11-year-olds in the North London school were asked to give their own ideas of what a healthy tuck shop should sell.

And while naming carrots and sweetcorn as their favourite vegetables, the youngsters suggested the shop should stock fresh and dried fruit, nuts, cereal bars, yoghurt and smoothies. Pupils had a special assembly to talk about their choices – and some pupils modelled their favourite foods on a catwalk.

Their health conscious views were collected as part of a drive to improve children's nutritional standards in the borough. The local Primary Care Trust is working with Brent local education authority and other agencies to improve school

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dinners and ensure children learn more about healthy eating on the curriculum.

Research has shown that children who have a more nutritious diet are not only healthier, but they are also likely to perform better and concentrate more in the classroom.

So, the partnership decided to employ a qualified dietician, Katherine Cullerton, to work with teachers, parents and pupils. Her post is funded by the Children's Fund.

Catering staff join students, teachers, school nurses and Katherine in regular meetings to

develop improved menus in each primary school in the borough. Schools develop food and nutrition policies to ensure that healthy eating becomes part of their ethos.

Across the LEA, Katherine works with the catering companies which provide school meals to promote better ingredients and healthier meals.

"All in all, the project is a good example of how different agencies working together as partners can achieve shared objectives," says Katherine.

For further information see p28

New moves to put patients in charge

Pilot projects and an increased focus on self-management are improving patients' quality of life and easing pressures on the NHS

More people aged over 75 die after falling than from any other injury. And 400,000 older people attend A&E departments after an accident in England each year.

These stark statistics helped persuade Enfield Primary Care Trust, the local borough council, community pharmacists and local voluntary organisations to introduce a practical programme to reduce the problem among its senior citizens.

The award-winning approach involved several linked initiatives. Through 'Foothealth', people with a history of falls and foot problems can be treated by a senior podiatrist. They can

be given specialist footwear if necessary.

As some 1,500 deaths occur nationally as a result of a fall in the home, the Enfield Handyperson provides safety checks and follow-up work where older people live, in an effort to reduce accidents caused by trip hazards and other dangers.

Weekly physical activity classes are provided in a local hospital for those with a history of falls or who have problems with their balance. Over 200 people have joined the classes, and the vast majority improved their balance and confidence. 90 per cent could lift themselves off the floor independently after the programme.

Some falls are caused because of drowsiness and other side-effects from medicines. So pharmacists ran a month-long campaign to review what medicines older people were taking. Celebrity support from Maureen Lipman and Norman Wisdom increased public awareness.

"Our falls programme has helped reduce the risk of falls by older people," says Kostakis Christodoulou, the Trust's Health Development Manager. "The benefits of promoting physical activity, reviewing medicines and undertaking home safety checks are important as strategies to combat accidents."

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Patient focus

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Living with chronic illness is not easy. But a new course piloted by two London Primary Care Trusts is helping hundreds of such patients to manage their lives better.

The 'Living Well' course is offered to people with chronic illness, including back pain and heart disease, in Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea. On the courses, they learn about how to manage their disease and its symptoms. They hear about the importance of diet, nutrition and regular exercise. They learn how to talk about their illness with family and friends, and deal with any depression, pain or tiredness.

The courses are delivered by volunteer tutors who learned how to manage a chronic illness. The strategic health authority arranges training for the volunteers. Weekly sessions last two-and-a-half hours held over six weeks. But the benefits are greater for both patients and doctors. Patients feel better aware of services and are more confident in managing their own condition. They also tend to use their GP less.

Helping doctors to manage

Hospital doctors have traditionally progressed to becoming consultants. But, more recently, the job has required a greater degree of management skill. With responsibilities increasingly devolved to the front line, they are keen to have the right training to help.

In Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire, a particularly active NHS-funded postgraduate training unit is equipping registrars, consultants, GPs and dentists with the skills to become leaders and managers.

The unit run by the Oxford Deanery involves working clinicians in its courses so that often abstract management concepts are brought down to earth.

One of the Deanery's most popular courses, aimed at final year registrars, deals with management in the NHS and offers an introduction to the skills needed to undertake a management or leadership role.

The Nuts and Bolts of Health Service Management is a two-day course which covers the NHS management structure nationally and locally. It explains about becoming a consultant, clinical risk management, avoiding litigation, writing a business plan, and includes practical sessions on managing units and difficult colleagues.

A more formal course, run three times a year for up to 18 people at a time, helps registrars manage the transition to becoming a consultant, by equipping them with the required leadership and management skills.

On this three-day residential course, participants start by learning about issues including managing themselves, teamwork and general leadership skills. They then look at leading and managing others, building a team, negotiation skills and how to manage within a larger organisation. The final day of the course deals with managing change, time management, as well as other issues related to managing themselves and others.

Those teaching the course are senior clinicians from local hospitals and practices. Participants feel they are better equipped and more confident in approaching the challenges of managing hospital departments after they have completed it. They also have a clearer idea where they may need further professional development.

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“Significant reductions in burglary” by supporting victims

Small changes to the way officers interact with the public can produce significant results

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evaluation and telephone surveys conducted with victims before and after the new system was introduced. 75% of victims said they were ‘completely satisfied’ that a crime would be properly investigated after the changes, compared with 60% before. The proportion of victims reporting being kept properly informed rose sharply: 80% said the police had told them what they would do next after the changes compared with 64% before.

Far more people reported receiving a written statement, contact details and a police reference number. And those aware that an arrest had been made in their case rose from 21 to 29%.

“As a result of the changes, victims felt they were being treated better by the police and that their case was being properly investigated,” says Chief Supt David Mallaby, who led the changes. “We improved our dealings with the public, and this will make it easier to ask for their co-operation in future cases. The initiative has also contributed – along with better targeting of offenders – to significant reductions in burglary.”

And providing a good service to victims of crime can play a vital part in cutting crime itself. That’s what police in Merseyside found when they changed the way they treated victims.

Merseyside changed its policing style in 2001. It set about both to reduce crime and to increase public satisfaction and confidence in the police. And it introduced regular surveys to evaluate how well it was doing.

600 crime victims are interviewed every month by telephone. Victims of hate crimes are specifically interviewed. Additionally, street interviews are conducted with a random group of 400 members of the public each month. A representative sample of 12,000 people,

members of a local citizen panel, is also interviewed each year.

The survey allows the police to test public expectations and perceptions of how well they are delivering. Where there are weaknesses or areas which victims and the public feel are being ignored, adjustments can often be made.

These surveys also allowed the police to change their practice. Callers to local police switchboards are now treated more sensitively and with greater efficiency, thanks to improved call handling scripts and training of call handlers to deal with different personal circumstances.

Police have a robbery investigation pack, which ensures that they are seen to treat all robberies seriously and a burglary pack, which includes a security assessment to help burglary victims avoid being burgled again. New processes are also being introduced for other crimes, too.

So far, overall satisfaction levels have risen from 72 to 76% among victims, but Merseyside police expect further improvements once their procedures are fully in place.

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A direct line to cutting crime

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forthcoming. They will offer advice on crime prevention and provide information. They will deal with callers as individuals and when they promise to call back in an hour, they will!

Managing call demand for the four areas from one centre means that more call handlers are available to respond and waiting time is minimised. The result should be a service which puts customers first and makes more efficient use of police time.

With similar ambitions, Hampshire police has established a central Force Inquiry Centre to handle incidents that can be resolved by the call handler without needing to involve a police officer. Established in September 2001, the Inquiry Centre is focused on improving customer satisfaction with the service they receive.

“The Centre reduced pressure on the whole Constabulary,” says Superintendent Ron Godden of Hampshire Police. “In its first year total calls to our single non-emergency number fell by 242,000 and ‘999’ calls by 58,000. The main reason for the fall was fewer repeat calls from dissatisfied customers. The Centre now handles 48,000 a month.”

As an additional benefit, by not using police officers to handle routine enquiries, the force is better able to deploy officers.

In addition to this, a single national non-emergency number that fulfils the callers’ requirements first time is being piloted. It will be accompanied by national call handling standards to ensure consistency of service across all forces in the country.

The experience people have when dealing with the police can affect their confidence in them. Around 90% of initial contact with the police is via the telephone and people base their judgement of whether the police are doing a good or bad job, on this initial contact.

On a busy working day, callers to police stations can find themselves left hanging on the line – or being transferred before having their query satisfactorily dealt with.

From October 2003, residents of Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster should be able to put such frustrations behind them, thanks to a new call centre developed by South Yorkshire Police.

Those handling calls from the public will be trained to do more than simply handle queries. They will offer a sympathetic ear, reassurance and gain valuable intelligence about crimes, which may not otherwise be

Having your home burgled is traumatic and victims want the police to respond sympathetically and to keep them informed of progress in the case.

Most officers try hard to do just that, so police in Blackburn, Lancashire were surprised at the difference between how burglary victims felt they were served by police and how officers themselves thought they had acted.

For example, a police operator might offer reassurance to a victim by suggesting that the police would be with them in a few minutes, when a wait of several hours was more likely. But research showed victims would rather know the truth than receive false reassurance.

After listening to separate focus groups of victims and police officers, Blackburn police started to develop a new way of doing things. Police were trained in ways of working better

with victims: 200 staff took part in workshops, including police, forensics, operators and support staff. A video of a burglary victim recounting her own experiences with the police proved a valuable learning tool.

The police were given new guidance on how to respond to victims. Simple but important changes including avoiding calling police officers to another job when they were with a burglary victim. Victims were fully informed of all aspects of the case, and investigations of burglaries were tightened up, too.

Police also ensured that victims knew how to get help from Victim Support. They routinely called back on victims to check they were alright. Effectively, the police agreed and kept a contract with the victims.

The effect of these changes was quite dramatic, according to an independent

Community Support Officers – can they help you?

CSOs are starting to make a difference – taking labour-intensive tasks from police

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Londoners have been among the first in the country to receive extra protection from terrorism, crime and disorderly behaviour, thanks to the deployment of hundreds of community support officers.

And across the capital, the officers are trained to work with the police in providing greater security or in tackling low level crime, including property damage, vandalism, teenage drinking and anti-social behaviour.

The CSOs have limited powers of detention pending the arrival of a police constable. And they can issue fixed penalty notices for litter and dog fouling.

Their role is a vital one in improving people's everyday quality of life, which is so often threatened by rowdy and yobbish behaviour.

Like health and education, such paraprofessionals are set to play an increasing role in police forces nationally – they already work in 36 forces. 4,000 community officers are set to be recruited by 2005.

In London, 500 community support officers are already working, with a further 250 more set to be recruited as a result of funding for 2003–4. They work alongside the Met's 28,000 police officers.

A significant number of London support officers work with the Police on anti-terrorism security and on patrolling bus routes for illegally-parked cars, to improve the free flow of public transport.

Others patrol suburban streets as part of the Safer Streets Initiative, where the presence of uniformed officers is a visible deterrent to criminals.

By recruiting community support officers, the Met is providing a better service to the public, offering people greater reassurance and more security. They are helping to deter low level crime, which can cause considerable distress and nuisance. And they are a practical way of engaging members of the wider public in the fight against crime.

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Juggling resources for top performance

Even an expanding police force can find it hard to meet all its pressures. Many forces are looking at how they manage and respond to demand in order to improve both the service they offer and public assurance, as well as creating a better working environment for staff.

Effective shift patterns can avoid delays in responding to emergency calls and dealing with the public when they visit police stations.

The Met undertook a review to examine how to make most effective use of officers and civilian staff to provide a better service. The Managing Demand Best Value Review, conducted by its own Internal Consultancy Group, examined the Met's response to demand from the customer's perspective.

"The review made a number of recommendations which should improve our performance," says Chief Superintendent David

Morgan. "These included developing a help desk type facility for non-emergency calls and improved front counter services in police stations. The review suggested increasing the number of mobile police stations and introducing one-stop shops to provide policing services in conjunction with those of partners."

It also found that a key element of providing a better service for local residents would be the more efficient use of staff time. An earlier review by Accenture management consultants provided useful management information. It found that various shift patterns existed across London, but they bore little relation to when the police were busiest.

Other forces, including Merseyside, have clear shift patterns related to demand. Merseyside develops shift patterns variably over 15-week periods, which have both helped police respond to demand and offered them a good balance between their working life and their home life. This move was one of a number of measures taken to improve the service to the customer including joint agency work, introducing a citizens' panel and public confidence tracking.

Now, two Met borough police units, Greenwich and Bromley, are trying out the Merseyside shift approach to see whether it could work in other areas.

There are no plans to impose a single shift pattern. Instead of each unit having to reinvent the wheel, an established shift pattern could be used to match local needs. Indeed, some London command units are developing alternatives that suit them, including a 12-hour shift in Kensington and Chelsea and a permanent night shift in Charing Cross.

Holiday activities are helping too

Lively holiday activities are reducing teenage crime in Oldham, thanks to a partnership between the local police and Oldham council.

Two hundred young people took part in activities during August, including sports, museum visits, African drumming, drama and a fashion show. The Oldham scheme was run by the local Youth Inclusion Programme, and was one of just over 100 'Splash' projects funded across the country to provide purposeful activities for young people during the school holidays. As well as summer activities, Oldham Splash runs at Easter and during half-term breaks.

"Splash can make a big difference to Oldham," says Chief Insp David Boon of Greater Manchester Police. "Young people have the opportunity to enjoy stimulating activities while the creation of such diversionary activities has also brought about a significant reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour in the community."

House burglaries were almost halved between August 2000 and 2001, 25% fewer cars were stolen and there were significant reductions in vandalism and juvenile nuisance. Drug offences were also well down.

The scheme also demonstrated the clear benefits of local agencies working together.

Crime figures for August 2001 and August 2002 show that on average, all 'Splash' areas saw a 4.7% reduction in burglaries.

Just one click for constabulary

More and more forces are finding new ways to use websites to catch criminals and reassure the public

Police websites are proving to be a useful resource in preventing and tackling crime and in helping victims. The most useful sites do not just provide information to the public, they provide new ways in which people can contact the police. They also free up police time, but catering for them can require extra effort.

Anyone can use the Avon and Somerset Police site to provide information to Crimestoppers as an alternative to the telephone. Over 30 people were charged as a result of the site by June 2003.

With over 300 dedicated pages of local information, members of the public can access a constantly-updated service for their area by entering their postcode. Other services include advice and online reporting for hate crime victims, a secure opportunity to report drug-related crimes, details on internet safety for children and safe online shopping.

"We are already leading the way in multi-channel delivery," says Scott Fulton, the force's Internet manager. "Our live service is available through over 30 touch-screen kiosks and interactively on mobile phones or through Sky Active television. "We get over 70,000 unique visits to our website every month and thousands of people have signed up to the dynamic e-mail bulletin service which features alerts and appeals for information, as well as Crimestoppers updates and job vacancies. And we have a dedicated team of five in-house programmers working full-time on the site." The site is hosted on the force's servers, which cost around £40,000.



We estimate that it could produce savings of approximately £7.6 million a year if it were adopted by all agencies across East and West Sussex, Brighton and Hove."

The force has also conducted a successful pilot partnership project in Crawley and Horsham to improve the sharing of information between the police, fire and ambulance services, local councils, health and voluntary groups. The Crime and Disorder Data Information Exchange (CADDIE) highlights unreported crime and disorder issues, enabling the police to target their resources better and the public to get a

better picture of local crime. The scheme is being rolled out across all of East and West Sussex in a £425,000 project due to complete by April 2004.

As well as enabling people to report a number of different crimes online, Northumbria Police use their website to show people they wish to trace, including those involved in disorder captured on camera at football matches.

Launched in March 2003, appeals to identify and trace football hooligans generated over 44,000 visits to the specific pages on the first two days and led to 55 arrests.

The 'portal' project, developed by the Police Information Technology Organisation has stimulated all UK police services to improve access to the public and meet Government targets to have all public services available on line by 2005. Many of the websites benefited from additional funding from the Treasury's Invest to Save Budget.

Sussex Police offers an online service to people seeking to check if stolen property has been recovered locally, with links to the national 'Virtual Bumblebee' system for recovering lost and stolen goods. This helps officers to find owners of recovered property that is suspected of being stolen, enabling them to proceed with a case and increase detections. The national database had a 900% increase in visitors after just one day of publicity via the Sussex website.

"Each year, 32,000 vehicles are illegally dumped in Sussex," says Tim Saunders, the manager of the Sussex Police Operation Crackdown Project. "To help tackle this, we've developed an online facility where local people can report abandoned cars. The site has an interactive map to help them pinpoint the location and they can upload a digital picture of the car. Since September 2001, we have removed over 3,000 cars thanks to the project.

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Persistent offenders

Blackpool police knew much of the crime in their town was drug-related and committed by a small group. The worst 27 offenders committed 1,113 crimes before 2000.

The Tower Project started in January 2002 after police teamed up with key local agencies. It has led to dramatic reductions in burglary, car theft and street robberies. Tower involved two senior officers working with CPS, the Drug Action Team, a senior probation officer, and NACRO.

The Tower team used computer technology to identify just over 100 people, mainly men in their late 20s and 30s, who were the most likely to be convicted or arrested for drug offences and burglary. These re-offenders were offered the choice of further prosecution or a chance to get every help to live a drug and crime-free life. Only five have refused all help. As participation is voluntary, court orders were not needed, allowing the measures to start quickly.

"The project has been remarkably successful," says DI Eddie Thistlethwaite. "We've seen 90% of those on drug treatment programmes turn up regularly. House burglaries fell by 45% in a single year. And nobody died from drugs in Blackpool in 2002."

Joined-up justice

Delays in bringing criminals to justice are obviously very frustrating for victims and witnesses alike. All too often they make it harder for those working in the criminal justice system to do their job efficiently.

This has been recognised as a problem nationally. A pilot is underway, bringing together the CPS, Office of Public Services Reform, police and other CJS partners to improve standards of victim and witness care and reduce the rate of ineffective trials. Pilots in five CPS areas will be evaluated in March 2004, and will inform revised National Standards of Witness Care and Best Practice Guidance for Local Criminal Justice Boards.

And in a local initiative, agencies in Warwickshire joined forces to speed up the system. Work has started in Nuneaton on a purpose-built justice centre, the first of its kind in the country. A second centre is planned.

The centres will house an operational police station with custody suite, state of the art court complex and integrated office space for judicial services, magistrates administration, the CPS, Probation, Youth Offending Teams and in the South, Crown Courts.

Each building will also have enhanced facilities for victims and witnesses including separate waiting areas for defence, prosecution and vulnerable witnesses. There will also be facilities for probation service accredited programmes with offenders.

A new integrated and co-located victim

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and witness service is being piloted this year – agencies will work together to provide a telephone helpline and drop-in-centre to support victims and witnesses. There will be integrated working using new business processes and integrated IT systems, including secure e-mail.

The centres will help to pioneer the secure electronic exchange of court documents between agencies, and defence and prosecution lawyers to help improve communications and speed up justice. Victims will eventually be able to track the progress of their case online.

"When the system is up and running, it should reduce delays and improve the quality of prosecutions," says Chief Supt Richard Lyttle, project co-ordinator. "We believe that will ensure that victims and witnesses get a better deal." The project is receiving £21.7 million from the Government's Capital Modernisation Fund.

“Our neighbourhood has been transformed”

An increasing number of councils are working with local people to reclaim neighbourhoods

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Our area was awash with drug dealing problems and related anti-social behaviour,” recalls Celine la Freniere, co-ordinator of Talacre Gardens Neighbourhood Watch in Camden, North London. Her local council and the police joined together to make real use of a relatively new way of tackling the problem.

“The success in obtaining Anti Social Behaviour Orders has led to our neighbourhood being transformed into a relatively quiet and peaceful place to live,” says Celine. Orders have also been used in Camden to settle potentially violent neighbour disputes over loud noise, where those involved are not council tenants, and to prevent aggressive begging. The council also plans to use them more to deal with hate crimes, including racist abuse.

Once a magistrate imposes an order, police have powers to put an end to persistent and serious antisocial behaviour. If a person breaches the order they can face imprisonment – a two

week sentence is typical in Camden for an adult breaching their order for the first time – though sentences have lasted three months. The law allows a maximum five-year sentence.

Orders last for at least two years. Recent legislation has strengthened the hand of councils and the police by allowing interim orders, to ensure the order comes into force immediately pending a full magistrates’ hearing.

The strengthened orders will not only apply to Camden but can be used to prevent a repeat offence across England and Wales. Camden has already used one order to prevent a male sex offender caught spying in women’s toilets from entering any women’s toilets in the country.

Camden’s success with the orders has led to them explaining to other authorities how they can work successfully. But their big effect is improving the quality of life for residents. Local people strongly support the orders. Harvey Bass, chairman of the King’s Cross Residents Action Group said: “Hopefully, there will be more

orders. Why should we be stepping over junkies?”

Just over 10% of the population of Rochdale, in Greater Manchester, is from an ethnic minority: most are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin. Though the borough is near Oldham, it avoided civil disturbances in 2001. The borough believes its partnership approach to community relations was one reason for this.

Central to Rochdale’s strategic partnership is a strong involvement by local communities, ensuring that their priorities become its priorities. Much is done to celebrate diversity and there is a strong emphasis on enhancing community safety.

Four ‘township committees’ have been linked with the council to give a direct voice to different neighbourhoods in the borough. These committees are treated like other council policy committees, and they have developed local approaches to housing and regeneration.

There is recognition that orderly and peaceful communities depend on linking policies to improve

community safety with those that promote cohesion. So, the council’s drug action and youth offending teams are integrated into local community safety partnerships.

Local people have been given more control over how areas are revitalised. The allocation and management of the neighbourhood renewal fund has been delegated to tenants associations.

The council has been praised for its racially integrated housing development. It has doubled its own ethnic minority workforce in three years. There is a culture where diversity is valued, but it is OK for people to disagree.

“In Rochdale, we see community cohesion as being about more than race, culture and religion,” says Andy Wiggans, Executive Director with responsibility for community cohesion. “It’s about paying attention to the small things which can cause tension between people and communities, as well as stepping back and considering how they affect the bigger picture. Community cohesion is a journey, not a destination, with many unforeseen twists along the way.”

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Making inner London greener

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Green spaces are at a premium for anybody living in a built-up area. Providing safe and popular parks is a challenge for urban authorities.

Yet access to parks can greatly improve quality of life, something Hammersmith and Fulham council recognised when it sought to make the most of its open space by asking local people what they wanted.

The council sees secure open spaces as important for healthy living, and in supporting regeneration. So when Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush town centres were being regenerated, priority was given to the development of open green spaces.

And parks were improved with the help of Groundwork, New Deal for Communities and the Architecture Foundation.

Local people are involved at every stage not just through formal consultations, but by involving community groups – discussing what works best. Housing estate improvements were

made after consulting their tenants and residents.

Parks need to be safe to be enjoyed properly. So the council worked with local police to introduce the Parks Constabulary to patrol public parks. Their presence has helped to cut crime and reduce antisocial behaviour.

A greater emphasis is also placed on using the borough’s open spaces for play and sports. Park playgrounds and games pitches are funded through the programme.

The council places great emphasis on good quality design in new urban developments and replacing worn-out facilities. Not only will they look better, they will cost less to maintain.

The result has been a much more focused and holistic approach to the use and development of Hammersmith and Fulham’s green spaces. They are better used by local people and contribute more to their quality of life. And that in turn helps the borough’s plans for economic, social and environmental regeneration.

For further information see p28

Partnerships create jobs in the North

Many authorities are working with other organisations to encourage regeneration

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Many things prevent people from accessing jobs. And removing those barriers often requires interventions at different stages of people's lives. That's the view of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, which has developed strong partnerships to improve employability for all its residents.

Rotherham attributes its success to tackling barriers through a life-cycle approach from early years to older people. It tries to focus all its services on individual rather than provider needs. It is not afraid to try new ideas and it works with business and community partners. The council has placed great emphasis on and achieved success in improving its traditionally under-achieving schools. Its family literacy project allows parents to learn new skills and improve confidence working alongside their children. Teenagers, particularly those in care or from disadvantaged backgrounds, receive extra help to get into work through work experience. Some 2,000 additional childcare places have supported lone parents taking jobs or training.

Phoenix Enterprises, the borough's New Deal company has facilitated training and practical work experience for potential employees in the skills required by local firms. Rotherham Youth Enterprise helps young people set up their own businesses. A community advice and guidance initiative helps those without basic qualifications. Innovative catering training has been provided for young people with learning disabilities through the commercially run Rix Café. The All Pakistan Women's Association catering company provides training in food hygiene management, customer care and accounting which will help Asian women build confidence by working toward National Vocational Qualifications.

An employer coalition maximises the involvement of local employers. The result has been a better deal for local people. Local schools are improving faster than the national average. Unemployment has been halved between 1998 and 2003 (according to the claimant count). 80% of young people assisted by Youth Enterprise are still trading. Rotherham's New Deal is among the most successful in Britain. Its community employment programme helped over 1,200 people find work in the last 18 months.

Like many towns and cities dependent on manufacturing, Blackburn faced a major challenge when the traditional jobs started to disappear. The local economy needed to diversify to attract new jobs for local people. For Blackburn with Darwen council, the answer lay in building new partnerships. The local authority could not do everything by itself. So through The Blackburn Partnership, the council worked with major employers, and with community organisations. To attract new jobs, the Partnership needed to

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ensure that the right infrastructure was in the place. Specialist accommodation and facilities have been provided at the Technology Management Centre and at a new 10-acre Technology Park. Close links were developed with the local FE college to support business skills needs. The Partnership recognised existing firms of all sizes would need to embrace IT to remain competitive. It developed a practical 'technology and innovation support programme' to help over 100 companies apply IT to their operations. An e-commerce project promoted internet trading locally, too.

Not all the new jobs are high-tech. Small workshops and offices are supported at a local business development centre, which provides 20 units for small firms, and helped launch over 100 small businesses. A 'Guardian Angels' programme provides large business mentors to help embryonic firms. There is also specific help for the town's Asian community to help start up new niche businesses. The effect of this imaginative partnership has been considerable for local people – 8,000 new jobs have been created over the last seven years, offering lasting employment. Over £100 million of new investment has been secured in the local economy. As a result, Blackburn with Darwen's jobs growth rate has been three times that of the North West average, and well above the national increase.

Blackburn's success shows how local authorities are most effective when they enable and facilitate others to provide the most appropriate services. An effective partnership with business and the community has ensured that job prospects remain good despite the decline in traditional industries.

New town – familiar problems

Fifty years ago, Stevenage in Hertfordshire was Britain's first new town. It attracted many Londoners with new housing and growing industries. But the decline of defence and manufacturing created new challenges.

Stevenage's answer was to develop a neighbourhood renewal strategy which relied on partnerships and community involvement. By focusing on five themes – improving community capacity, education, health, crime and the environment – the council helped reverse the decline of the early 90s.

Through the Stevenage Partnership Group, involving public, private, voluntary and community organisations, matched by alliances in each neighbourhood, local bodies have placed neighbourhood renewal at the centre of their activities, committing time and resources to the goal.

The community is fully involved with surveys, fun days around regeneration and focus groups. A community work skills course at the local college has helped local people to become more engaged in the process. The borough council (and Hertfordshire County Council) has devolved some decisions to six local committees. Priority has been given to developing three neighbourhoods – in those areas, new enterprises have been encouraged, including a 'nappy co-operative' to provide affordable baby clothes to assist low income families.

New community resource centres provide courses in IT skills in partnership with the college and other facilities for local people. Secondary and college students have benefited from a greater range of vocational courses, which reduced drop-out rates. Younger children are supported through nursery education, and school breakfast and homework clubs.

New sports and health centres are being built to improve people's physical and mental health. And a friendship club has helped older people to socialise, rather than living in isolation. A new community safety officer and neighbourhood wardens are helping to cut crime.

These projects are complemented by improvements to the physical environment. Local shops are being helped to be more competitive.

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Good practice websites

You can find more examples of good practice as well of lots of useful help and resources from the following websites

Cabinet Office sites

Office of Public Services Reform

<http://www.pm.gov.uk/opsr>

Delivery and Reform Online

http://www.civil-service.gov.uk/reform/delivery_reform/reform_strategy.asp

The Cabinet Office's work to transform public services to meet the needs of customers.

Public Sector Benchmarking Service

<http://www.benchmarking.gov.uk>

Free knowledge sharing service for all public services.

Charter Mark

<http://www.chartermark.gov.uk>

The national public services standard for customer service.

Education

Beacon Schools

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/beaconschools>

Teachernet

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk>

DFES resources for teachers

Talking Teaching

<http://www.talkingteaching.co.uk>

Online community for UK teachers.

Learning and Skills Council

<http://www.lscdata.gov.uk/quality/goodpractice/database.html>

Good practice in colleges.

Specialist Schools Trust

<http://www.specialistschooltrust.org.uk>

National College for School Leadership

<http://www.ncsl.org.uk/>

Health

NHS Modernisation Agency

<http://www.modernnhs.nhs.uk>

National Knowledge Service for Health and Social Care

<http://www.nks.nhs.uk>

National Electronic Library for Health

<http://www.nelh.nhs.uk>

NHS Confederation

<http://www.nhsconfed.org>

Organisation for NHS Managers.

National Performance Advisory Group

<http://www.npag.org.uk>

Helping NHS managers and staff to share experiences within the NHS.

Policing

Police Reform

<http://www.policereform.gov.uk>

Information on the police reform programme.

Police Skills and Standards Organisation

<http://www.pssso.co.uk>

The standard setting body for the UK Police Service

Association of Chief Police Officers

www.acpo.police.uk

Police Superintendents' Association

<http://www.policesupers.com>

Local Government

Beacon Councils

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/beacons>

Sharing good practice from Beacon Councils.

IDEA Knowledge

<http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk>

A free, web-based service

ODPM Local Government Performance site

<http://www.bvpi.gov.uk/home.asp>

Local Government Information Unit

<http://www.lgiu.gov.uk>

The LGIU is an independent research and information organisation.

Electronic Library for Social Care

<http://www.elsc.org.uk>

Best practice, guidance, standards, etc.