

Reform in action : local government

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New Labour and Local Government

- An everyday story of partnership, distrust and manipulation
- Local government key to delivery in several public services and politically important
- A lottery strategy: more initiatives than Man City's defensive blunders
- Inspection, selection, leadership support, by-passing

Money matters

- After initial parsimony real growth in central funding
- Accompanied by strategy to increase burden on council tax
- New but limited freedoms for capital spend
- No long term resolution of funding position but moves may be underway

Management Moves

- Best Value bought time but no step change
- Local Public Service agreements and Comprehensive Performance Review: some evidence of impact but early days
- Rewards for the good and punishments for the bad?
- Peer review and support of IDeA and growth of delivery culture within ODPM
- Encouragement of strategic partnerships with private sector
- Evidence of better management but decreasing satisfaction and little achieved in media coverage

Political positioning

- The encouragement of executive leadership
- The commitment to user engagement
- The rise of strategic partnership
- A more focused leadership but limited increased engagement

By-passing

- Education: schools and skills
- Crime prevention through partnership or single service boards
- Social care: a different trajectory?
- A future regionalisation of the fire service?
- A bidding and blame culture, with modest joining up

Positive change has occurred but no one cares

- Local government better led and managed than a decade ago and substantially better led and managed compared to the high point of welfare state
- Political responsibility has shifted upwards: local government a better agent but not a political partner
- The rise of New Localism: too little, too late?