



House of Commons  
Public Administration Select  
Committee

---

**From Citizen's Charter  
to Public Service  
Guarantees:  
Entitlements to Public  
Services: Further  
Government Response  
to the Committee's  
Twelfth Report of  
Session 2007–08**

---

**Sixth Special Report of Session 2008–  
09**

*Ordered by The House of Commons  
to be printed 15 October 2009*

**HC 993**  
Published on 21 October 2009  
by authority of the House of Commons  
London: The Stationery Office Limited  
£0.00

## The Public Administration Select Committee

The Public Administration Select Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioner for England, which are laid before this House, and matters in connection therewith, and to consider matters relating to the quality and standards of administration provided by civil service departments, and other matters relating to the civil service.

### Current membership

Dr Tony Wright MP (*Labour, Cannock Chase*) (*Chairman*)  
Mr David Burrowes MP (*Conservative, Enfield Southgate*)  
Paul Flynn MP (*Labour, Newport West*)  
David Heyes MP (*Labour, Ashton under Lyne*)  
Kelvin Hopkins MP (*Labour, Luton North*)  
Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger MP (*Conservative, Bridgwater*)  
Julie Morgan MP (*Labour, Cardiff North*)  
Mr Gordon Prentice MP (*Labour, Pendle*)  
Paul Rowen MP (*Liberal Democrats, Rochdale*)  
Mr Charles Walker MP (*Conservative, Broxbourne*)  
Jenny Willott MP (*Liberal Democrats, Cardiff Central*)

### Powers

The powers of the Committee are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 146. These are available on the Internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

### Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at <http://www.parliament.uk/pasc>

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Steven Mark (Clerk), David Slater (Second Clerk), Pauline Ngan (Committee Specialist), Louise Glen (Senior Committee Assistant), Lori Verwaerde (Committee Assistant) and John Kittle (Committee Support Assistant)

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Public Administration Select Committee, Committee Office, First Floor, 7 Millbank, House of Commons, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 5730; the Committee's email address is [pasc@parliament.uk](mailto:pasc@parliament.uk)

## Sixth Special Report

---

The Public Administration Select Committee reported to the House on *From Citizen's Charter to Public Service Guarantees: Entitlements to Public Services* in its Twelfth Report of Session 2007-08, published 22 July 2008 as HC 411. The Government response was received on 28 October 2008 and published as HC 1147. The Chairman wrote to the then Minister for the Cabinet Office on 11 November 2008.<sup>1</sup> A further Government response to this letter was received on 30 September 2009.<sup>2</sup>

### Appendix 1—Letter from the Chairman of the Committee to Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP, the then Minister for the Cabinet Office

---

The Committee is grateful for the Government response to our report, *From Citizen's Charter to Public Service Guarantees: Entitlements to Public Services*. There is a great deal of information in the response about the Government's commitment to improving public services, which the Committee welcomes. We would, however, like to clarify the Government's position on the proposals contained in our original report, as the wording of the response is somewhat opaque in relation to some of our recommendations. In particular, the response does not directly address our central contention that there should be clear and precise statements of people's entitlements to public services in the form of Public Service Guarantees.

To this end, we would appreciate clarification of the response to our main recommendation (number 5) about the need for clear statements of people's entitlements to public services. The Government response states that: "...the Government will act to end unfairness by enshrining universal entitlements to basic standards and to eradicate remaining pockets of underperformance". This appears to accept the principle that people's entitlements to certain standards of public service provision should be recognised and articulated. It would be helpful to have more definite details about how the Government intends to implement this commitment and, specifically, if it will be through the adoption of the type of Public Service Guarantees that we recommend in our report. We would also like to know if the "universal entitlements" will be to precise standards or levels of provision, and whether they will contain details of enforceability and redress should standards of service delivery not be met.

The more general point we would make is that the Government response tends to focus on the aspect of our recommendations concerned with determining minimum standards for public services, rather than on the importance of setting out people's

---

<sup>1</sup> Published below as Appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> Published below as Appendix 2

entitlements to public services. Clearly, defining and raising standards is an important part of any discussion of public service provision. Equally important, in our view, is for people to be made aware of and empowered to claim the public services they are entitled to. A central aim of our report was to urge the Government to spell out public service entitlements as a way of strengthening people's attachment to public services and encouraging them to take a more active role in claiming their rights to good public services. Any further light you could shed on the Government's position on promoting people's entitlements to public services—and what more it intends to do to express and communicate those entitlements—would be very much appreciated.

11 November 2008

## Appendix 2—Government Response

---

### Letter from Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP, the then Minister for the Cabinet Office, to the Chairman of the Committee

1. Thank you again for your engagement with the Government's work on strengthening entitlements in public services. As I mentioned at the seminar in July, I have very much valued the work of the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) in developing this agenda.

2. I understand that there is an outstanding request from you for the Government to clarify its position on public service entitlements in response to the proposals set out in the PASC report, *From Citizen's Charter to Public Service Guarantees: Entitlements to Public Services*. I am sorry that this was not followed up earlier. However, I think that now is a good opportunity to briefly set out how our thinking has developed since your report.

3. In *Building Britain's Future*, published July 2009, we set out how the next stage of reform in public services will be characterised by moving from a system based primarily on targets and central direction to one where individuals have entitlements over the service they receive. We announced a move to a range of entitlements in the core public services: health waiting times and health checks, the pupil and parent guarantees including new entitlements to catch-up tuition, and a strengthened policing pledge. The aim is to ensure high quality standards for all and, by increasing the power of people to demand services reach these standards, help drive up service performance and efficiency. I think that it reflects the overall approach advocated by PASC.

4. In developing this approach, we have sought to learn from the experience of charters in Britain and entitlements in other countries. We consider that entitlements should focus on the critical aspects of quality service, rather than try to specify all elements of customer services. This is where, like the Committee, we consider entitlements will be most empowering for citizens and embed quality and equity in public services.

5. Crucial to our approach is underpinning entitlements with simple forms of redress – particularly forms of redress which trigger immediate improvements in services and avoid having to go through complex court processes. Following the commitments to entitlements made in *Building Britain's Future*, we are currently developing a range of redress approaches appropriate to different services. Drawing on international best practice, we are looking at where we can offer alternative provision, trigger reviews of services, and make complaints processes easier for people if their entitlements are not met.

6. I am looking forward to continuing to work with you and the Committee as we now bring entitlements from policy and into practice, and would welcome any further work in this area you may undertake.

29 September 2009