
Spending review 2010

The Jury's verdict

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Introduction

The PwC Citizens' Jury

As part of our contribution to the debate on the tough decisions being faced by government in dealing with the deficit, PwC commissioned BritainThinks to convene two sessions of a Citizens' Jury.

The aim of the Citizens' Jury has been to complement the Government's own research, by capturing the public's ideas and views through a deliberative research process. The participants were provided with a significant amount of time to absorb information, work with experts and deliberate amongst themselves to consolidate ideas and viewpoints and develop informed recommendations. Giving people the time and space to consider complex trade-offs and look at the issues

through the eyes of people with different circumstances encourages individuals to move quickly from a 'me and mine' to an 'us and our' perspective.

The first Jury of 24 people was convened for 3 days in July 2010 to discuss 'Dealing with the deficit'. The purpose of this event was to help inform the Coalition Government's thinking by providing insight into citizens' attitudes and views on the deficit, and to understand the criteria important to citizens that government should use when selecting where and how to make cuts in public spending. 24 citizens, broadly representative of the population, were brought together in Coventry to develop a set of citizen's criteria to guide the Spending Review decisions. 18 members of this Jury reconvened in London in November 2010 to discuss their reactions to the Spending Review and look in detail at some specific policy issues.

What we did

The key objective of the first meeting was to develop a set of Citizens' Criteria for the Spending Review. A set of 7 criteria was developed and presented to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander – see Appendix 1. The full report of this Jury is available at http://www.pwc.co.uk/eng/issues/a_citizens_view.html.

Following the success of their first meeting, the Jury was reconvened in London in November 2010. 18 members of the original Citizens' Jury met to discuss their reactions to the Spending Review, consider how well it had met their criteria and to look in detail at two areas of future policy: education ages 0-19 and charging.

On education, they were asked to consider:

- How do we create a pre-school and school system that most effectively meets the vision the Jury defined for a more fair and equal society where everyone can fulfill their personal potential?
- What criteria should guide the distribution of the pupil premium to create fairer and more equal opportunities for disadvantaged pupils?
- What principles and guidelines should be applied to the reform of school structures?

On charging, the Jury were asked to:

- Assess the role of charging in nudging behaviour and managing demand for services when money is tight
- Develop criteria for when charging is acceptable

The reconvened Jury heard 'evidence' from a number of experts and deliberated extensively amongst themselves, before presenting the results of their discussions to Danny Alexander. Evidence at the second Citizens' Jury was provided by:

Spending Review highlights:

- Ian Mulheirn, Social Market Foundation
- Julian McCrae, Institute for Government

Education:

- Chris Husband, Institute of Education
- Lee Elliot-Major, Sutton Trust
- John Howson, Education Data Services
- Mark Lehain, Bedford & Kempston Free School
- Melanie Warnes, PwC

Charging:

- Chris Dobson, PwC
- David Halpern, Institute for Government & Cabinet Office
- Sonia Sodha, Demos
- Professor Stephen Glaister, RAC Foundation & Imperial College
- Charles Tarvin, PwC

Report structure

This report summarises the key findings and implications from the Jury's deliberations, starting with their reaction to the Spending Review before moving onto the areas of education and charging.

Citizens' Jury supports direction of spending review

Objectives

The Jury was asked to discuss their reactions to the Spending Review.

Summary & implications

Overall the Jury believed the Spending Review to be heading in the right direction with some good decisions made, such as raising the age at which State Pension is paid, welfare reform, and reform of some parts of the public sector such as the criminal justice system.

However, the Jury was concerned that the Spending Review did not appear to go far enough in driving the culture change that they believe is needed for the long term – changing the mindset from state dependency to personal responsibility.

Of most concern to the Jurors was the lack of engaging, effective communications around the Spending Review, particularly in terms of setting out a clear long term vision for the country which they could buy into.

Consequently, the Jurors felt that the Spending Review had come across very negatively with the focus exclusively on cuts rather than the opportunity for economic growth and positive change.

The Jurors' concerns imply that there remains a need for a national communications and engagement campaign to raise awareness and understanding of the need for spending cuts. Communications could include a US Presidential style 'State of the Nation' address, which is a milestone event, not just another political speech, that becomes the focus for national debate. The Government's transparency agenda will have limited impact unless the public is engaged with, and fully understands, the information made available and therefore shifts the culture towards greater personal responsibility.

The Jury's experience also clearly demonstrates how deliberative public engagement could make it easier for politicians to make complex decisions involving trade-offs that result in radical reform, and that there could be a role for other public juries of this type to inform Government thinking. For instance, having understood the fiscal context and the pros and cons of the options, the Jury accepted the case for road user charging, which is contrary to the experience of many petitions and polls.

Jury findings

The three principles outlined by George Osborne encapsulate the 7 criteria developed by the Citizens' Jury in July. Jurors were asked to assess how effectively the Spending Review delivered against those criteria. We have grouped the criteria under the Chancellor's principles:

Principle 1: Growth

Related Citizens' Criteria

- Give us a long term future
- Invest to save

This was the principle that Jurors felt had been least well delivered by the Spending Review with the only perceived evidence of success (though very important) being the positive IMF reaction to the Spending Review and the reaction of the markets.

The failure to communicate a clear vision and purpose for the country left the Jury unable to fully assess whether the Spending Review will give us a long term future. The decisions in education (e.g. reducing investment in school building programmes and the significant rise in tuition fees) were thought to undermine this principle as Jurors saw education as key to future economic success.

"It feels like there is a purpose BUT we haven't been told what it is"

Principle 2: Reform

Related Citizens' Criteria

- Make administrative savings
- Encourage people to take personal responsibility
- Be prepared to start again

The Jurors felt strongly that reform is necessary, both structural reform and cultural reform.

In terms of structural reform, Jurors thought there were some encouraging signs with the abolition of some quangos, prison reform, defence reform – including sharing resources with France – and welfare reform.

In terms of cultural reform, the Jury thought that some steps had been taken, but not enough. There was a strong feeling that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the government to drive changes that will support reforming our culture from one of dependency to one of greater personal responsibility. Jurors strongly supported cutting benefits and ensuring that it always pays to be in work.

Against this backdrop of the need for major change, Jurors were supportive of the use of charging and other non-financial measures such as time credits as mechanisms for helping achieve culture change by nudging behaviour. For instance, there was some support for road user charging whereby those who use roads more pay more if a 'deal' could be struck, say offsetting the road user charge paid with reductions in road tax and fuel excise duty. Similarly, there was support for time banking approaches whereby credits were built up for volunteer work and could then be drawn down when the individual or their family need help themselves.

As Jurors were given more evidence on proposed policies in education from 0-19, they felt that decisions such as the pupil premium and free schools may offer examples of a bold preparedness to start with a clean sheet.

Principle 3: Fair

Related Citizens' Criteria

- Share the pain
- Postpone nice to haves

The Jury did not believe that the Spending Review was entirely fair. There was real concern that 'the people in the middle' were going to be hit hardest, along with working people living on low incomes. There was therefore support for Child Benefit to be means tested, though some were concerned by the particular approach taken.

The Jury was surprised that pensioners were not required to share equally in the pain. Whilst there was strong support for the universal pension, there was an equally strong belief that some benefits could have been withdrawn from wealthier pensioners such as Winter Fuel Allowance and free bus passes. The Jury were also surprised that the statutory pension age had not been increased further and faster.

The Jury thought that there was little evidence to suggest that the very wealthy and the business sector were 'sharing the pain', although they also recognised the risk of 'pricing people out of Britain'.

Postponing some defence investment decisions was supported as evidence of a preparedness to delay some spending but the government's decision to increase international aid by 40% was thought inappropriate at a time when the country's own finances are in such poor order. This increase was something that the Jury considered could have been delayed and was unpopular.

Communications, information and involvement

A communications failure

The biggest criticism was around government's communications leading up to and around the Spending Review. The Jurors are now well informed and engaged in the debate about the future of our economy. However, they remembered only too well how ill-informed they were when they began the Jury in July and were clear that none of their friends or families are any better informed, as they were still asking why spending cuts are needed.

The Jury was frustrated about the government's failure to educate citizens about the current situation in terms of explaining the difference between what a deficit is, as opposed to debt, what will happen if we don't tackle it and where our money goes now. All of this is considered essential knowledge to have before anyone can reasonably comment on the Spending Review itself or be expected to engage with it constructively.

De-politicising the issue

The Jury in July had called for a 'Minister for the Deficit' and for a 'State of the Nation' speech by the Prime Minister to be broadcast to communicate, in straightforward terms, the nature of the problem and the proposals for dealing with it. The 'State of the Nation' address would not be a one-off political speech, but would be along the lines of the US President's State of the Nation – an annual event which US citizens are expected to watch, is announced well in advance and is shown simultaneously on all main channels. This would then form part of a long term communications campaign to explain big issues to the public and the rationale for change.

The Jury was extremely disappointed that there has continued to be a reliance on political speeches and debate reported by the media as the primary means of communication – this is thought to be highly ineffective for 'real' people and the adversarial nature of the debate prevents the public from engaging and diminishes the gravity of the debate.

The Jury again called for a 'State of the Nation' address and recommended that people other than just politicians talk about the situation. The need is for direct, de-politicised communications with straightforward, jargon-free explanation. Jurors described the journey from information to involvement that they believed would help contribute to a culture change where there is a real shift towards greater personal responsibility with less dependence on the state. Greater understanding of why a change is needed will help to encourage culture change.

Accessible information

Transparency of decision-making and more accessible information are considered essential tools for rebuilding trust in government and the procedures of government. Whilst there is recognition that most people won't engage with government communications, there are many opportunities for sharing information in an accessible way which can change behaviour. For example when a hospital writes confirming a medical appointment, it could state the value of the appointment and what it will cost taxpayers if you miss it.

The voice of the public: the use of juries

The Jury also called for a mechanism to help inform policy development. In particular, this was called for on issues involving complex decisions and trade-offs where politicians could benefit from an informed public voice, making it easier for them to make decisions. An example of this type of issue is road user charging where the case is a finely balanced one with significant implications for individuals and businesses, and trade-offs to be made (as discussed further in the section on charging).

Jurors thought that the government should learn from the high levels of trust in the criminal jury system and consider whether this approach could be replicated and institutionalised at the heart of government.

One Jury recommendation was that the Government set up a 'Third Chamber', not to replicate the representative role of the House of Commons but to focus on the type of complex issues set out above. This could, for instance, comprise a Citizens' Jury convened once a month to look at a key policy issue. It could be organised in a similar way to a criminal jury, with people called to serve, although not necessarily obliged to do so. The Jury would hear evidence and deliberate before arriving at recommendations to be delivered to government. This model could also be replicated at a local level to help local politicians deal with issues relevant to their locality.

Citizens' jury supports educational reform

Objectives

The Jury were asked to consider:

- How do we create a pre-school and school system that most effectively meets the vision the Jury defined for a more fair and equal society where everyone can fulfill their personal potential?
- What criteria should guide the distribution of the pupil premium to create fairer and more equal opportunities for disadvantaged pupils?
- What principles and guidelines should be applied to the reform of school structures?

Summary & implications

Education investment

Jurors felt that an approach to education that continued to champion attainment above all else risked increasing disenchantment with the school system. If there was to be one rule underpinning the distribution of education funding across the age range it should be to focus on the end game: supporting children at each stage of education to ultimately become productive and responsible members of society.

From fostering an appetite for learning in the early years, thereby laying a foundation for the rest of the child's education, to building an adult that can live in the real world as the child embarks on GCSEs (or equivalent) and their final years in school, investment in the education system needs to prepare children for their next stage in life as well as support them in achieving the qualifications necessary for making the transition to the real world.

And if any stage of education should take priority the Jury felt it needed to be early years. In their view, the evidence showing that investing early accrued the greatest benefits further down the line was all-persuasive. Catch that child early they argued and set them up for life, if necessary through making pre-schooling compulsory.

Alongside this, Jurors drew on their experiences as parents to recommend that extra attention also be paid to children as they make the transition from primary to secondary school.

Supporting pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds

In the Jury's view, if any one measure would contribute to improving the overall standard of education it would be improving the quality of teaching. The pupil premium therefore needed, above all other objectives, to make a difference to an individual child's learning.

In keeping with their general view that untying teacher's hands was the way to galvanise a school, the Jury felt that schools should have the freedom to spend the premium in a way that most engaged with an individual child's needs. However, underperforming schools would benefit from having their use of the premium appropriately monitored.

In distributing the premium the Jury were in favour of the funding being delivered from Whitehall to schools. But in doing so the Government needed to obey one key rule: the total amount of per pupil investment for disadvantaged children should be the same across the country.

School reform

If there was to be one watch-word for any programme of school reform designed to narrow the attainment gap, for the Jury this needed to be 'freedom'. The freedom to teach in ways most appropriate for the particular pupils in a school, and untying teachers' hands to enable them to innovate, were key for all members of the Jury.

But it was clear from what the Jury were saying that their attributes for an excellent school didn't require facilitation through a new structural model. Effective approaches to narrow the gap that the Jury supported – from committed school leadership to improving teaching standards – were deliverable through the current system.

Though clearly impressed with the passion and enthusiasm being brought to the issue of school reform by the founders of free schools, there were concerns that, if not implemented carefully, structural reform could be divisive within the local community. This could either be through new schools attracting good teachers away from other schools, or in the make-up of new establishments themselves, particularly if they were overtly faith-based.

Healthy competition within the sector was not to be dismissed, but if this was to lead to benefits for one element of the community at the expense of others it was a step too far.

Key points at different stages of education

Ages 0-5	Ages 5-9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At ages 0-5, the objectives of investment in education should be “to prepare children to learn and foster an appetite for learning” • This might be delivered through creative play and structured play activities • The government should consider making pre-school education compulsory from the age of three onwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At ages 5-9, the objectives for investment in education should be “to sort out the basics and instil discipline” • The basics should go beyond the three R’s, to include social skills and learning about respect for others
Ages 9-14	Ages 14-19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At ages 9-14, the objectives for investment in education should be “to help the child through a big transition” • Identifying how each child learns best, their strengths and weaknesses, giving children the opportunity to taste a wide variety of subjects and ways of learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At ages 14-19, the objectives for investment in education should be to “build an adult who can live in the real world” • Decisions taken at 14 should not be ‘binding’ – options should be kept open as long as possible • Alongside great teaching, schools should offer great advice and guidance – particularly on careers, but also on life choices • Focus should be on life skills such as money management and decision-making, as well as about getting qualifications

Jury findings

Criteria for investment at each stage of education

Jurors felt that education and the educational establishment seemed to have lost sight of the purposes of education. Key debates taking place within the education sector seemed to the Jury to be preoccupied with funding structures and high-level rules, rather than the outcomes in terms of what sort of people emerge from each stage of education.

For Jurors, decisions about investment in education should be guided by the sorts of outcomes that are desirable at different stages in a child’s education. The objectives at each stage were not solely about academic achievement, and were often related to social issues such as discipline, respect and personal responsibility.

Following a presentation of evidence about the impacts of investment at different stages in a child’s educational career, Jurors felt that the benefits that flow from early years investment (both ages 0-5 and 5-9) should take priority.

- Jurors were in favour of compulsory pre schooling (at around the 15 hours per week currently offered)
- Jurors did not feel that pre schooling should start at age 2 as this could reduce the responsibility that parents feel for their child’s growth and progress.

Jurors noted that the age group from 9-14 covers the transition from childhood to adolescence, and from primary to secondary schooling. For many Jurors this is the age when, as a parent, you start to lose influence over your child – who they socialise with, who they listen to and what they do.

- Jurors identified the transition to secondary school as a period when children need to be better prepared and better supported.

Jurors felt that our education system places too much weight on academic performance and doesn't support children who learn in different ways or for whom a more practical, work-based path may be more appropriate. Jurors felt that education should keep academic and vocational options open for pupils for as long as possible and certainly past the age of 14.

Supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds

Thinking about how best to spend the pupil premium, Jurors felt that the following key principles should apply:

- The premium should go straight to schools from central Government, and good schools should have the freedom to spend the premium as they see fit
- However, the premium should be spent in a way that relates to the educational needs of that particular child, rather than simply contributing to overall teaching budget. So, for example, if a child who carries a premium is felt to be particularly creative, the premium could be spent on activities such as class visits to museums or galleries.
- The total premium associated with taking on a child from a more disadvantaged background should not vary between local authority areas. So the premium should bring all areas of the country to the same level of extra funding per poorer pupil.
- The way that the premium is spent should absolutely not create stigma for the child.

Free schools

Jurors were supportive of the aims of the free school idea – particularly ‘untying teachers’ hands’ and the example that free schools could set for other schools looking to improve. However, they did not have a preference between the free school structure and other structures that could also produce excellent schools.

- Jurors felt that the current system is not working – especially for children ‘in the middle’ who are neither high achievers, nor at the lower end of attainment. Given the inadequacy of the current system, trying different structures is the right approach.
- Jurors were concerned that free schools could be a divisive force in a local area and were opposed to the idea of ‘faith-based’ free schools, believing that free schools should serve the whole of an area, not just a particular community therein.
- Jurors recognised the risks associated with opening new schools – particularly the danger that a free school could ‘hoover up’ talented teachers from nearby schools, but also the issues around parents seeking to move into a particular area in order to get into the school.

Citizens' jury believes charging can help drive culture change in the UK

Objectives

The Jury were asked to:

- Assess the role of charging in nudging behavior and managing demand for services when money is tight
- Develop criteria for when charging is acceptable

Summary & implications

On the basis of their enhanced understanding of the fiscal situation, the Jury was strongly supportive of charging as a tool for creating behavioural and cultural change in the UK, which they believe is essential if we are to achieve a long term vision of a better, fairer UK. Jurors generated around 100 ideas for where/how government could charge citizens.

The Jury felt that charging can create a fairer society, particularly if mechanisms other than purely financial are established as a means of payment, e.g. credits for contributing time and skills. Time credits would encourage greater personal responsibility, and contribute to developing a fairer society, by encouraging people to contribute their efforts. A smart card, or something similar, would need to be developed to manage time banking.

Communications are critical to the successful introduction of charging. Jurors were very supportive of charging as a result of a keen understanding of the current financial situation and the need to achieve change. They were concerned that charging would be very unpopular without a better informed, more engaged society.

When members of the public are provided with clearly communicated information, given time to understand and clearly consider different options, they are more supportive of charging than might otherwise be expected. Road user charging policies, for example, may be an acceptable option for finding additional funds to invest in maintaining the UK's infrastructure, if the public are given the right information, and if the 'deal', in terms of balancing taxation and charging is acceptable.

Jury findings

The Jury believe that charging can be used as an effective instrument to change culture and behaviour in Britain as well as raising revenue. It should be limited to services that are not ‘civil essentials’, are valued, and expected to be provided through general taxation, such as defence, essential health, free education (up to 16 at least), emergency services and welfare (although the Jury were in favour of reducing some welfare payments).

Purposes

Charging can be a powerful lever with a number of benefits including behaviour change (incentivising positive life choices, penalising irresponsible behaviour such as missed appointments, making people aware of the cost of services), leading to a fairer society with better, more responsive services and greater access to choice. Charging can also raise revenue (e.g. by charging for premium services), help to manage demand in the context of limited resources, and stimulate more effective supply leading to better value for money. This applies both to individuals and to businesses.

Fairness and personal responsibility

The Jury was keen to suggest that options for payment other than purely financial should be included such as volunteering time/skills in exchange for services or payment that might be transferable to other areas and/or people.

The Jurors developed a number of criteria that would need to be considered in order to establish a fair charging:

- Proportionate across society – both in terms of income levels and also across individuals, businesses and other organisations
- Protecting the vulnerable and those unable to care for themselves
- Providing opportunities to pay for premium services to generate additional revenues
- Providing clarity and transparency of information
- Relating charges for non essential services to level of use, where possible
- Ring-fenced, in part, to improve services that are being charged for
- Flexible with a variety of methods of ‘paying’

Selling charging

Communications was again raised as being crucial. Jurors recognised that their support for charging as a principle was as a direct result of the educational journey that they had been on. Without this understanding and appreciation of the need to deal with the deficit, Jurors felt that they would not have been as ready to accept charging. They believe that there remains a need for effective, non-political and informative communications that set out the need for change to educate the public about the reasons for introducing additional charging for services.

In order to get the support of the public, charging also has to be considered as part of a total revenue mix and cannot simply be additional – Jurors believe that the government has to consider the range of options available. For example, an effective mix for road user charging was considered to be reduced road tax and reduced fuel duty alongside road user charging for using busy roads/ motorways. This type of policy mix could also be used to fund new roads, i.e. through tolls.

Risks

The other fundamental concern was that the drive for revenue raising might encourage service providers to put profit before care and could deter people from using important services and/ or lead to misuse of facilities and, inadvertently, encourage less responsible personal behaviour and less prevention activity.

Appendix 1: Citizens' Criteria for the Spending Review July 2010

The Citizens Criteria are outlined below, in order of priority. The points under each of the numbered headings are illustrative examples of what the criterion might mean:

1 Encourage people to take personal responsibility

- Recognise those who work hard and those who have contributed to society.
 - It must always pay to be in work.
 - Maintain state pension.

2 Give us a long term future

- Don't make short term savings at the expense of our long term future.
 - Invest in high quality education, science and technology.
 - Support Britain's long term prospects for having strong and respected industries, e.g. developing green technologies.

3 Make administrative savings

- Protect frontline jobs and services by standardising and streamlining.
- Reduce middle management and bureaucracy.
- Share administration across several councils/ schools etc.
- Emergency services share control rooms, admin etc.
- Use technology to reduce costs and improve services.

4 Postpone 'nice-to-haves' – focus on the 'must-haves' until the economy is in a better state

- High speed rail link can wait.
- Cancel the next Census.

5 Be prepared to start again – don't just amend what we have

- Take a clean sheet approach e.g. benefits.
- Look at new ways of doing things involving private and voluntary sectors.
- Be "ruthless" about tackling under performance.
- Unemployed people should 'volunteer' to 'earn' their money and develop skills and experience.

6 Invest to save – make short term investment for longer term savings

- Invest in prevention/ intervention, e.g. tackle alcohol abuse.
- Help people into jobs.

7 Share the pain

- Be fair and share the pain amongst people from all walks of life.
 - Delay payment of state pension to 67.
 - More means testing, e.g. Child Benefit, Winter Fuel Allowance, Bus Passes for over 60s.
- Consider contributions to the cost of services.
 - e.g. 'hotel services' at hospitals.
- Reform public sector pay and pensions.
 - Freeze pay.
 - Bring pensions in line with private sector.
- Tighter controls over immigration.

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About PwC

PwC's Government & Public Sector practice has been helping Government and public sector organisations locally, regionally, nationally and internationally for many years. We work with organisations across sectors as diverse as health, education, transport, home affairs, criminal justice, local government, housing, social welfare, defence and international development. Our people combine deep specialist expertise with a genuine understanding of the public sector.

Our Government and Public sector practice comprises of approximately 1,300 people, over half of whom work in our consulting business, with the remainder in assurance and tax.

For more information, please visit us on:
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About the BritainThinks

BritainThinks is a consultancy that puts the public at the centre of community, corporate and societal thinking. It believes that involving people in an informed and mature dialogue, recognising and valuing the contribution of non-expert thinking, creates a better, more empowered and energised society.

Viki Cooke and Deborah Mattinson have pioneered the use of deliberative methods for involving British citizens in shaping the policies and decisions that impact on their lives and have established BritainThinks to take this to a new level.

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