"To rebuild people's trust, local government must demonstrate its trustworthiness…"

TRUST IN PRACTICE

Jonathan Birdwell
Faizal Farook
Samuel Jones

DEMOS

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First published in 2010
© Demos. Some rights reserved
Magdalen House, 136 Tooley Street,
London, SE1 2TU, UK

ISBN 978 1 906693 41 1
Series design by modernactivity
Typeset by Chat Noir Design, Charente
Printed by Lecturis, Eindhoven

Set in Gotham Rounded
and Baskerville 10
Cover paper: Flora Gardenia
Text paper: Munken Premium White

Mixed Sources
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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Improvement and Development Agency for supporting this project. In particular, we would like to thank Teresa Payne for providing absolutely crucial support, advice and guidance throughout the second phase of this research. We would also like to thank Jane Aspden for her contributions in shaping the second phase of the research.

This project would not have been possible without the participation of politicians and officers at our three partner councils. Special thanks are due to Paul Hayes, Rhiannon Hood, Sarah Buckler, Anna Harrison, Edward Knowles, Kevin Sheehan, Paul Jackson and Liz Dart for their time and contributions. We would also like to thank all of those individuals who took part in the research, including councillors, council officers and members of the public.

Many people have contributed to the ideas in this report. We would like to thank everyone who participated in our steering group meetings, including Jonathan Carr-West, Eddie Gibb, Marek Kohn, Indy Johar, Jesse Norman, Ben Page and Simon Parker. We would also like to thank everyone who came to the dinner discussion in December at the RSA for their contributions that helped shape the direction of this second phase, including, Sir Christopher Kelly, Andrew Campbell, Dan Corry, Matthew Taylor, Steve Beet, Matthew Elliott, Matthew Sinclair, Dave Smith, Sarah Smith, Henneke Sharif and Sara Williams. At Demos, we would like to thank Jamie Bartlett, Peter Harrington, Julia Margo, Richard Reeves and Tom Tabori for helpful comments and support.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of either CLG or the IDeA. Any errors or omissions are our own.

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February 2010

Summary

This pamphlet presents the second phase of our research into the factors that affect levels of trust in local government. The first phase was published in *State of Trust* in 2008.[1]

The restoration of trust in our political institutions must come from the bottom up, at the level of local government. However, devolving power to local governments, creating more elected mayors and introducing more referendums will not alone be enough to restore trust. These structural reforms, along with conventional accountability measures, miss the nuance of behavioural values and personal interactions that are crucial to trust.

Although trust is not synonymous with related concepts such as 'esteem', 'confidence' or 'overall satisfaction', it is clear that these concepts contribute to and are connected with trust. Issues that affect overall satisfaction in local councils are necessary for trust but not sufficient.

There are three key components of trust in local government:

- trust in service quality
- trust in the perceived fairness of council decision making
- trust developed through personal interactions.

Efforts to improve trust cannot treat the public as an undifferentiated mass with the same values and concerns. Going beyond traditional social marketing segmentation, we have identified that the level of dependency on council services ('Haves' and 'Have nots'), as well as whether one was more individually or community-minded (thinking in terms of 'I' or 'we'), affects the weight given to the importance of trust in these three different areas. Using these dimensions we have created a 'truster typology' consisting of four resident groups: 'I haves', 'I

have nots', 'we haves' and 'we have nots'. Details of the resident groups are presented in figure 3.

This phase of research aimed to develop the principles behind the different truster types. It draws on three case studies based in three separate councils which are ahead of the curve in terms of incorporating considerations of trust into their thinking in order to examine what lessons could be learned if councils put *trust* at the heart of their actions.

Local government representatives need to move beyond mechanistic thinking of ways to 'build' or manufacture trust, toward providing the opportunity and space where they can demonstrate their trustworthiness. This requires councils to put relationships at the heart of the equation.

The following were the key learning points to emerge from our research:

- There was little evidence of a spill-over effect whereby if trust was gained with one resident group it was then disseminated through social networks to others in the community.
- When trust was gained it was often attributed to individual actions or personalities, and could not be applied generally to all those in a similar role; for example, if the public have trust in one councillor it did not improve their perceptions of councillors in general.
- Community empowerment initiatives can offer a crucial space for the development of trust; however, improving trust with the council as a whole depends on such initiatives being clearly tied to the bigger function of the council.
- Trust is a mutual endeavour, entailing mutual risk: councils must demonstrate their trust in the public before those less inclined to trust will be willing to do so.
- Community engagement initiatives can provide councillors with a chance to engage with residents and demonstrate their trustworthiness, thus giving their constituents the chance to make a better judgement about their performance.

Our research also reconfirmed a number of the findings of *State of Trust*:

- Trust between citizens and local councils depends just as much on *experiences* as it does outcomes.
- Willingness to trust was closely related to direct contact and experience with council officers or councillors and knowledge of their actions and how the council functioned, thus highlighting the importance of communication.
- Face-to-face communication was seen as very important for developing trust, and was particularly important for certain resident groups that are more dependent on council services.
- Key visible services and getting the basics right provided an important basis for trust across all resident groups.

Policy recommendations

- *Move beyond satisfaction measures as a measure of effectiveness.* Public trust will be best achieved via indirect means, however, councils could survey residents periodically directly about trust in order to provide a baseline. National indicators measuring community cohesion (NIs 1, 2 and 4) and experience of service (NI 140) are good indirect indicators of trust. Additional indicators measuring contact with councillors and officers, and the experience of this contact, could help councils work towards outcomes that could – if trust and trustworthiness are aligned – improve levels of public trust.
- *Develop community capacity.* Emphasis on equalising the footing between citizen and council was a key element of building trust with 'we have nots'. Increasing capacity for self-organisation and self-help can increase trust with segments of the community less inclined to trust and can result in savings in the long run.
- *Create space for individual staff to build trust.* Trust at a council level was more elusive. The role of individuals – councillors, council officers and frontline staff – was essential for those who were more inclined to trust.
- *Prioritise community engagement in strategic decisions and understanding needs.* Early engagement of this sort is not without its own difficulties, and is not always appropriate, but it is at the strategic stage where citizens can have a tangible influence on the direction of decisions.

- *Hold open days to meet middle management*. Council officers could play a key role in being the face-to-face link between trust in decision making and trust in personal interactions. This would increase the transparency and accountability of council decision making and give officers an opportunity to explain why difficult decisions had been resolved in a particular way.
- *Create citizen advocates*. Considering the importance of first and second-hand experiences, councils should seek to create citizen advocates who can work to disseminate information about council decisions in their own communities.
- *Promote the role of councillors.* Lack of contact and knowledge were barriers to better relations between residents and councillors. Councils should help to raise awareness of how councillors can assist citizens and provide clearer information to service users and residents about who their councillors are and how they can be contacted.

1 Introduction

Trust is at the heart of the relationship between citizens and government… even if formal service and outcome and targets are met, a failure of trust will effectively destroy public value.[2]

For the past ten years politicians, journalists and public sector managers have been caught up in a debate about how to restore trust in politics. From a populist perspective, politicians have always worn a badge of mistrust. In the UK, 'politicians generally' are consistently the least trusted of professionals to tell the truth, always among the bottom three professions, which also include journalists and government ministers.[3]

More recent history has intensified debate around trust, as our trusted institutions, political and economic, appeared to fail us. The towers of Canary Wharf stood sentinel over the City for a decade, and now people read stories of inflated bonuses and high-risk loans, which caused the recession-induced redundancies and penny-pinching currently felt. In politics, people had trusted their local MPs and got stories of duck-houses and moats with the 2009 MPs' expenses scandal. The scandal and the erosion of trust it engendered were not confined to Westminster. National and local newspapers pored over local councillors' expenses claims leading to high profile stories such as the leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council's 'lavish trips' to New York[4] and, more recently, the suspended sentence for Ian Clements, deputy to the Mayor of London, convicted of abusing his GLA expenses.[5] In the wake of the MPs' expenses scandal, trust in 'politicians generally' is at an all-time low with only 13 per cent of respondents 'generally willing to trust them'. The chains of events that caused these failures are complex and comprise many links. One effect, however, may be binding: the erosion of trust in our institutions.

The restoration of trust in our political institutions must come from the bottom up, at the level of local government. It must start from here not simply because of the consensus around the need to devolve power. Each of the three major political parties in the UK believes that the problem of a lack of trust in politics is the result of increasingly centralised and distant government. Although this is partly true, the research presented here shows that devolving power to local governments, creating more elected mayors and introducing more referendums will not alone be enough to restore trust. These structural reforms, along with conventional accountability measures, miss the nuance of behavioural values and personal interactions that are crucial to trust.

Nor does good performance from the perspective of efficiency necessarily create trust with residents. Whether performance is 'good' depends on both objective and subjective factors: experience of a service counts just as much as the eventual output. Accountability systems work to create acceptable outcomes; what are also needed are acceptable experiences. Restoring trust in politics will require councils to put relationships with residents at the core of their strategy.

Why trust is so important

Democratic participation depends on a certain level of mutual trust between citizens and their government representatives. Although mistrust of a politician or political party can motivate citizens to vote and participate in public consultations, perceptions of *systemic* mistrust – in politics or political institutions as a whole – can lead to a severe decline in democratic participation and increased feelings of apathy and powerlessness.

In a healthy private sector, consumers will turn to other service providers when trust in their service or product is lacking. In the public sector, choice can be limited. A lack of trust can lead people to avoid using services unless absolutely necessary.[6] It can also require greater investments in time and money to reassure the public that decisions are being made correctly and

funds are not being misused.[7] This includes accountability checks and statutory requirements for excessive transparency, which may, perversely, result in undermining trust.[8]

Until now discussions about restoring trust in politics have failed adequately to address the fact that trust in public institutions also depends on public institutions demonstrating trust in the public. Efficient service design is increasingly seen to depend on earlier and more substantive engagement with service users. In the absence of trust, residents are less inclined to participate in such engagement exercises, viewing them cynically as 'window dressing'. A more trusting relationship between local government and residents will lead to a better quality of engagement and better results stemming from it. It can also lead to greater public acceptance that 'mistakes happen' – assuming they are recognised and amended.[9]

The growing emphasis on devolution and service personalisation requires a new, more involved relationship between citizens and councils, which makes trust all the more important. The success of these agendas will require local governments to give greater consideration to the effects of their actions on levels of public trust.

Trust in practice: this pamphlet

This pamphlet presents the second phase of our research into the factors that affect levels of trust in local government. In the first phase, published in *State of Trust* (2008),[10] we asked what affects people's trust in local government, and how local governments can operate to ensure that trust is maintained and increased. Trust in politicians as professionals – compared with teachers, doctors and lawyers, for example – has always been low but there has been a growing sense that trust in politics is declining even further. This is in part due to broader shifts in social attitudes: people are less likely to trust other people in general, and are more likely to perceive politicians as being purely self-interested.[11] Combined with these broader social trends, we have seen the emergence of a 'perception gap' at the level of local government in the UK,[12] in which improvements in service

quality are not sufficient for ensuring that residents *trust* their local councils and representatives. In other words, *average satisfaction with services* is almost always higher than *satisfaction with the council*, a trend that indicates the poor reputation of local government and lack of trust. For example, in the city of Oldham, the best value performance indicators show that 67 per cent of residents on average are satisfied with public services while only 40 per cent were satisfied with the council.[13] This has been deemed a 'performance paradox'.

Part of the explanation for this performance paradox is that trust in the council as a whole depends on three areas: trust in service quality, trust in the perceived fairness of council decision making and trust developed through personal interactions. All three of these are important elements, but the relative importance of each varies for different residents. Going beyond traditional social marketing segmentation, *State of Trust* demonstrated that the level of dependency on council services, as well as whether one was more individually or community-minded, affects the weight given to the importance of trust in these three different areas. Using these two dimensions to produce a 'truster typology' consisting of four resident groups, we offered a number of recommendations to improve trust with each of these groups (this is discussed further in chapter 2).

In this second phase we sought to put these recommendations to the test. To do this we worked with three councils that were ahead of the curve in terms of incorporating trust considerations into their decision making. We use the term 'decision making' to describe actions taken by the council that impact on people's lives. We asked them to identify decisions taken that they believed increased trust with different segments of the population. We then analysed these decisions looking at how trust among the public was affected and what the contributing factors were. Of particular importance in this phase of the research was the role of councillors in building trust between the council and the public.

Some of the findings presented here confirm previous thinking from *State of Trust*, in some cases strengthening

recommendations about how to engage different types of residents using our truster typology. However, the second phase findings also raise questions about the possibility of *building* institutional trust.

2 Trust in context

Whether you stand on the left or the right, 'local' has become almost synonymous with virtue. The Labour government has expressed its vision for stronger local government in *Communities in Control*, adopting the vision of Sir Michael Lyons in his 2007 *Inquiry into Local Government*, and most recently in the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG's) consultation paper *Strengthening Local Democracy*.[14] The Tories and Liberal Democrats are similarly committed to devolution.[15] Regardless of who wins the next election, devolution will figure highly on the agenda.

Driving this shift is the realisation that centralised intervention lacks the flexibility to deal with social problems effectively in their local circumstances. Greater devolution can strengthen and localise democratic accountability, promote better value for money by giving councils greater oversight over the money spent in their area, promote economic development and deliver personalised services. It recognises that citizens have a right to influence the decisions that affect their local areas by electing local government officials and ensuring that they have the power to enact their vision. Underlying these arguments for stronger local government is a concern for restoring trust in the political system.

Sir Michael Lyons describes this new role for local government as 'place-shaping': local authorities using their powers and influence to increase the well-being of their communities and local areas.[16] At the heart of the place-shaping vision is the assumption that local residents trust their local representatives and councils, and will welcome more of the council's influence in their everyday lives. Also, that simply enacting these structural changes, moving power down to a local level, will be enough to restore trust in politics. There are reasons to think that this might not be the case.

The shift to 'place-shaping' raises an important distinction between public satisfaction in local government's *competence* versus a deeper trust in its *motivations* and *integrity*. With the bulk of decision making coming from Westminster, trust in local government performance has often been limited to its competence in delivering services. As local councils began relying on commissioning services such as social care and housing to external organisations to increase efficiency, the remit of direct service provision for local councils was further narrowed. This complicates the issue of accountability, which is central to public trust.

Local council accountability and the performance paradox

Recent research shows that members of the public are more inclined to hold Westminster or direct service providers accountable for mistakes even when mistakes are local.[17] This was true in education, health and policing. This presents an obstacle to the new localism agenda, as ministers will be hesitant to devolve powers when they are likely to still be held accountable.

The services for which the council is viewed as accountable are refuse collection and problems with local litter, as well as local leisure facilities (82 per cent), social housing (76 per cent) and planning and development controls (72 per cent).[18] With the emphasis on local strategic partnerships, and further commissioning of key services, councils will have to contend with the public holding them accountable for services provided by external partners, as is the case with housing and potentially crime and policing. Housing especially will continue to be a crucial issue, particularly in light of the recession, which has raised demand for social housing.

On what basis will local populations decide how much their local councils can be trusted with these new powers? The lessons of Scotland and London demonstrate that public perceptions of accountability do tend to follow devolution of power, but only after a significant time.[19] More generally, although Westminster was held accountable for failures, it was

not rewarded in equal measure for successes. The 2008 Place Survey of local government performance has demonstrated that the same is true at the level of local government.

DCLG's Place Survey is the new tool by which central government manages the performance of local governments: its new emphasis on local area reflects the new leadership role for local government. The first Place Survey was conducted in 2008 with the results released in 2009.[20] It revealed signs of performance improvements on a number of measures over previous surveys: residents are more likely to be satisfied with their local area and less likely to see anti-social behaviour and litter or refuse collection as problems. However, it gave further evidential support to a local government performance paradox: local councils have been successful on these and other measures (which include, notably, those services they are most likely to be seen as accountable for) and yet they did not receive credit for these improvements. The percentage of residents satisfied with their local council overall *decreased* significantly despite the improvements to services councils had introduced. If this is the situation local governments currently face, a concern for encouraging trust in their competence and judgements at the outset could help to ease the transition into the place-shaping role.

Trust in the downturn

A further context in which trust must be considered is the recession and the inevitable cuts that will be made to public spending. Chancellor Alistair Darling has predicted two full parliaments of intensifying financial austerity to return government borrowing to acceptable levels.[21] Serious funding issues are already apparent across local government: a recent survey of councillors reveals significant concern about the financial state of local authorities and trepidation about the future.[22] A renewed emphasis on efficiency could have significant implications for trust. From a public perspective, the bankers' bonuses are back and MPs still draw their salaries and yet it is at the local level the bite of the recession will be felt. Cuts will come

just as the public trust in economic and political institutions is at an all-time low.

Local government cannot view an approach based on trust as a luxury reserved for better times. Trust is most important when local government needs the patience and understanding of residents. In fact, greater trust could result in greater savings in the long run. The absence of trust can necessitate spending time and money on accountability measures instead of public services. In the face of inevitable cuts to services, councils should think about which cuts would have the least impact on the factors that influence whether citizens trust the council. In other words, efficiency and cost saving measures will rest not just on doing things the right way, but more importantly on doing the right things.[23] Parallel research in the consumer sector reveals that even in the midst of the credit crunch, when assessing companies, customers value customer service above price.[24]

3 State of trust in local government

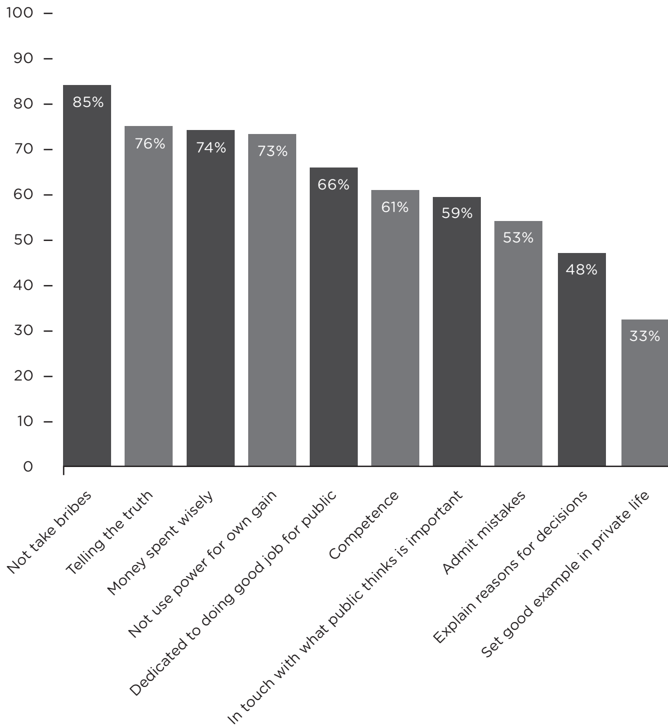
When it comes to trust, local government seems to have a slight natural advantage: trust in institutions and public officials declines as they become more distant from our everyday lives. The 2006 and 2008 Public Attitudes Surveys conducted by the Committee on Standards in Public Life showed respondents were more likely to trust local councillors to tell the truth (43 per cent) than MPs in general (29 per cent) or government ministers (23 per cent).[25] Nevertheless, a gap exists between what the public expects from public office holders and what they get in reality.

Figure 1 presents the most important behaviours for public office holders, according to the 2008 Public Attitudes Survey, in order of their importance.

These behaviours are similar to those that the public believe are of most importance for local councillors, with slight differences reflecting their particular office. An Ipsos MORI survey in 2005 found that the public thought the most important behaviours for local councillors were to ensure that public money is spent wisely (54 per cent), to be in touch with what the public thinks is important (47 per cent), to work in the interests of the neighbourhood (44 per cent) and to do what they promised when they were elected (39 per cent).[27]

Although local councillors are considered more likely than MPs to tell the truth,[28] perceptions by the public of honesty among local councillors remain low: only 36 per cent thought that they tell the truth all or most of the time, and 53 per cent believe they do so only sometimes or rarely. Local councillors are seen as not likely to keep their promises, not effective in ensuring that money is spent wisely, and – to a lesser extent – not in touch with what the public thinks is important.[29] Part of the reason for these figures is that the public lacks contact with councillors and

Figure 1 **The most important behaviours for public office holders**



Source: Committee on Standards in Public Life, Public Attitudes Survey 2008[26]

knowledge about what they do: 65 per cent of respondents to a recent survey had never met a local councillor, 54 per cent felt they did not know very much about what their councillors did, and more than a quarter felt they knew nothing at all about their activities.[30] This lack of contact with councillors and knowledge about what they do was also evident throughout our research.

Trust in the council

Perceptions of councillor trustworthiness are an important component of trust in local government, but it is only a small piece of the puzzle. Media reports about local councillor misappropriation of expenses seemed to affect trust levels as seen in the low turnout for local elections in 2009. However, according to the Standards Board for England (SBE), public trust in local councils is more closely tied to the level of council tax and experience of services than to councillor behaviour. Nor, as we have seen in the performance paradox, is satisfaction with public services the only component of trust in local government. Previous research has identified a number of key components to ensuring trust in local government.

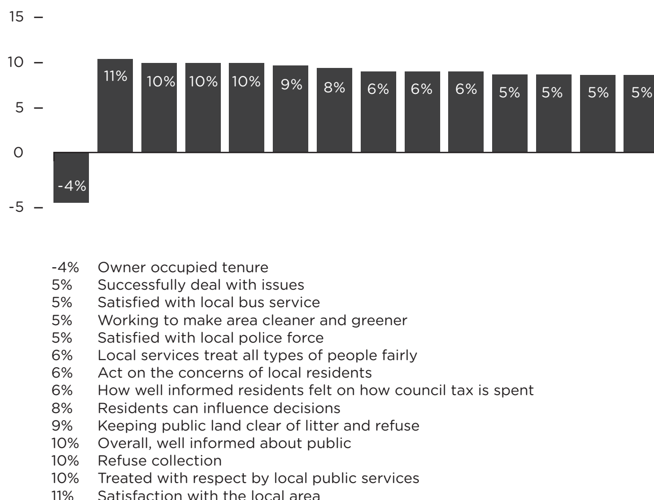
MORI research into trust in public institutions identified perceptions of openness, levels of being informed about council activities and first and second-hand experience of services and the council.[31] Analysis based on the DCLG's Citizenship Survey show strong associations between perceived ability to influence local decisions and trust in local political institutions.[32] There are also correlations between levels of trust and the management of councils as judged by comprehensive performance assessments, the quality of political leadership and the perception of independent and effective accountability.[33] Our own research has revealed three key drivers of trust: service quality, the quality of personal interactions and the perception of fairness in the decision making procedure.

Distinguishing trust from satisfaction

In *State of Trust* we defined trust as 'firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability or strength of someone or something'.[34] Although trust is not synonymous with related concepts such as 'esteem', 'confidence' or 'overall satisfaction', it is clear that these concepts contribute to and are connected with trust. However, the following three themes distinguish trust from other concepts:

- Trust has to be built in an ongoing, two-way relationship.
- It has to be based on honesty, reliability and regularity.
- It goes beyond the rational – there is an important emotional aspect to trust.

Figure 2 **Key drivers affecting overall satisfaction in councils**



-4%	Owner occupied tenure
5%	Successfully deal with issues
5%	Satisfied with local bus service
5%	Working to make area cleaner and greener
5%	Satisfied with local police force
6%	Local services treat all types of people fairly
6%	Act on the concerns of local residents
6%	How well informed residents felt on how council tax is spent
8%	Residents can influence decisions
9%	Keeping public land clear of litter and refuse
10%	Overall, well informed about public
10%	Refuse collection
10%	Treated with respect by local public services
11%	Satisfaction with the local area

Source: Duffy and Chan, *People, Perceptions and Place*[36]

Nonetheless, trust in public institutions and overall satisfaction in their performance remain closely connected: issues that affect overall satisfaction in local councils are also likely to affect trust. For example, previous research has shown that satisfaction in the council is linked to how informed residents feel themselves to be about council decisions, as well as perceptions of councils providing value for money.[35]

Recent research by MORI based on regression analysis of the 2008 Place Survey reveals a more detailed picture of factors that affect satisfaction in one's council, including 13 positive drivers and one negative driver, as shown in figure 2.

Some of these issues are the 'hygiene' factors of delivery: basic street-level and liveability services – such as rubbish collection and litter removal – which are valued by all residents.

Some are more emotional factors – ensuring that people feel respected and well informed – that are especially important for trust. Communication and information provision are also crucial. First and second-hand *personal experiences*, as the basis of making judgements of trustworthiness of the council, are especially significant.[37] This is one area where trust can be distinguished from satisfaction. From the perspective of satisfaction, a one-way producer–consumer relationship is sufficient to ensure high marks for a council's effectiveness. In a trust context, however, information provision must be more about two-way conversations as opposed to one-way communication.[38] Thinking about trust as a measure of effectiveness should lead councils to be 'more personable' in all manners of operation, including provision of information, the visibility of services and direct contact with residents through frontline staff and call centres.[39] It is not just the content of the information received but also the tone and style in which it is conveyed that influences the public's perceptions.[40] This type of regression analysis is insightful but it fails to highlight myriad issues that are important for particular groups of residents, for example, social housing. For many residents who are dependent on services such as housing or care, how they are run is closely connected to willingness to trust.

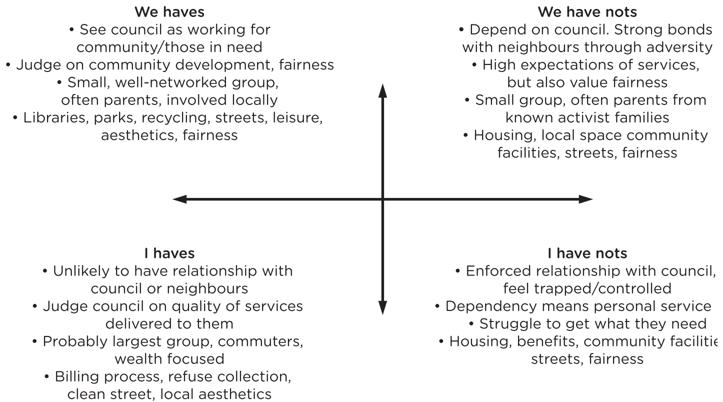
Moving beyond the socio-economic

Efforts to improve trust cannot treat the public as an undifferentiated mass with the same values and concerns. Focus groups with members of the public revealed that residents felt differently about trust depending on:

- the extent to which they were dependent on council services
- whether they were more community or individually minded.

Quantitative research undertaken by Sunderland Council and Ipsos MORI supports these group conceptualisations in terms of segmenting the individual services that are the biggest priorities for each. Among other things they found that:

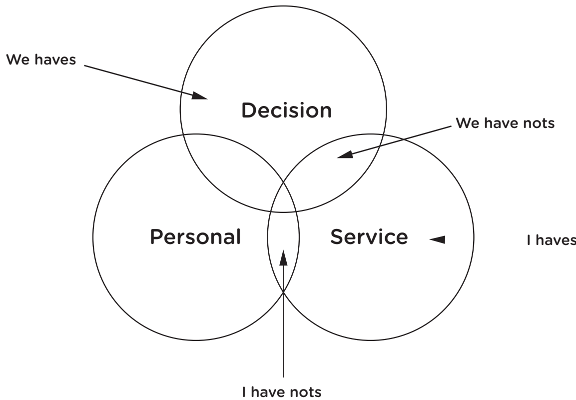
Figure 3 **Different types of trust**



- 'I have nots' were most satisfied with services but least satisfied with the council, and least likely to think that the council did enough for 'people like them'.
- Those in the 'we' group generally had a more positive outlook than those in the 'I' group.
- 'We have nots' proved the most positive about the council overall and were the bedrock of support for the council and the services it provides.
- Communications seemed to play a key role in influencing the image of the authority among those in the 'I' group.

This 'lens' provides local authorities with a better sense of the values and concerns of different types of residents, going beyond traditional marketing segmentation of age, gender and income. These resident types are not meant to supplant other socio-demographic information in crafting communications strategy, nor do they provide the only type of segmentation possible for considerations of trust. The groups in the typology are not static: someone who could be typically described as an 'I have' may adopt a 'we have' disposition when it comes to certain issues, or at a different point in their lives. And in doing so it

Figure 4 **Different priorities for different types**



helps provide the basis for a more nuanced strategy to improving public trust at an individual service level.

For example, 'I haves' are primarily interested in service quality, and simply want their services delivered efficiently and without need for complaint. 'I have nots', although similar in their focus on service quality, have more frequent contacts with the council or service delivery partners because of their greater dependency on council services. This dependency makes personal interactions more emotionally charged, and a bad experience can diminish trust. 'We haves' are affluent activists, with strong community networks, and judge the council on its work for the community as a whole. For them, the fairness of the decision making procedure, and the strategic decisions made, are most important. Finally, the 'we have nots' are activists and advocates on behalf of their communities, seeking to ensure they receive the quality services they are entitled to. These different priorities can be visualised in figure 4.

Using the typology it is possible to examine further research on drivers of trust into greater detail. For example, the perception of opportunities for participation in decision making has been identified as a driver of trust;[41] however, this is not

necessarily the case for all residents, but rather more likely a greater concern for those we describe as 'we haves'. Opportunities for participation on strategic decisions are more important for 'we haves', while involvement on service-based decisions, particularly around issues like housing, are of greater concern for 'we have nots'.

Many residents will not want to have more frequent conversations with the council; rather, they will want to be kept informed, but with as little effort on their part as possible – through email, online and newsletters. This approach is both sufficient and appropriate for the 'haves' in our typology. However, for the others in a more dependent relationship with the council, greater face-to-face interaction is crucial, and this can be expensive. Councils therefore need a means of prioritisation according to type of user and type of issue.

MORI research has suggested a socio-demographic approach, outlining a number of correlations between overall satisfaction and factors outside the council's control. Previous analyses identified links between overall satisfaction scores and council type[42] as well as levels of deprivation, ethnic diversity and regional differences.[43] A further recent MORI report, *People, Perceptions and Place*, adds further specificity identifying the following factors:

- the proportion of population in higher managerial and professional occupations (positive correlation)
- the proportion of population under age 10 (negative correlation)
- the proportion of housing in Council Tax Band C (positive correlation)
- the region (North East is positively correlated)
- urban settlements located in rural or sparsely populated areas (negative correlation)
- the inflow of people aged 1–14 (likely to be a reflection of general population churn).[44]

By virtue of differences between areas, some local authorities will simply have a harder time achieving high overall satisfaction scores than others. The same is likely to be true for

figures relating to public trust. These exogenous factors are significant because they are closely connected to residents' perceptions and expectations of the council, both of which are important to trust and 'overall satisfaction'. Councils operating in areas with high scores on indices of multiple deprivation, ethnic diversity, the number of young people, high 'population churn' or turnover, and poor physical living conditions will have a more difficult time achieving high overall satisfaction scores. Whether they are urban areas, and depending on their region (North East reports highest scores, while London reports the lowest), also matters.

Conventionally, attempts to understand perceptions have been addressed socio-demographically, or using consumer classifications such as Mosaic UK.[45] However, when considering so subjective an issue as trust, the foundation of place-shaping, considerations such as the particular context and need of the users must be taken into account. Demos' truster typology is an attempt to do this.

Shifting analysis to the resident's perspective

Long ago the consumer sector realised the importance of customers' emotional experience. Companies such as Apple have a business model predicated on both a high quality product and a good customer service experience.

In public services, the emphasis has tended to be on the rational aspects of judging performance. Recently, however, greater attention is being paid to the effect of emotions in civic life and lessons have been drawn from the fields of social psychology, behavioural economics and neuroscience.[46] In healthcare, for instance, it has been found that patients who received an acceptable outcome but felt that they had received poor service in the process had a lower perception of the quality of care they received.[47] Consequently, there is little correlation between a physician's incompetence (subsequently proven) and the likelihood of their being sued at the time, but there *is* a correlation between litigation and whether patients perceived the physician to be a poor communicator.[48]

In relation to public services, residents with lower income and who are more dependent on services have a different and more difficult relationship with the council, which can be highly emotionally charged. This is extremely important when thinking about how to improve trust with residents. In order to contribute to satisfaction, promises made must be fulfilled, but it is through face-to-face contact that is empathetic and upfront that trust will be maintained.[49]

Trust factors in practice at the local level

In the second phase of our research we sought to test and develop the principles behind the different truster types. The next chapter presents three case studies based in three separate councils who are ahead of the curve for incorporating considerations of trust into their thinking. We wanted to examine what lessons could be learned if councils put *trust* at the heart of their actions. The decisions we analysed related to regeneration, service delivery and participatory decision making. Each of these contexts involved interaction between the council and different groups across the truster typology:

- case study 1: 'I have nots' and 'we have nots'
- case study 2: 'I have nots'
- case study 3: 'we haves' and 'we have nots'.

However, at the same time, we were able to gather a range of insights from all four of the groups. In particular, we were interested in the role that councillors played in their communities as a link between the decision making and personal interaction realms of trust: in other words, did councillors have strong relationships with residents and did they communicate council decisions and the decision making?

4 Trust in practice case studies

The case studies presented below were carried out in three of the four local areas that comprised our research in *State of Trust*. Although each of the councils was controlled by the Labour party at the time of the research,[50] each council and area presents an interesting mix of factors. Although engaging with all of the truster types in case study 3, most of our research was purposely based in areas and around decisions that affected truster types that are typically less inclined to trust. We also sought a mix of different decision types: regeneration, service-based and the introduction of new community-based decision making forums. Councils were asked to select a decision that they believed improved levels of trust, and that councillors played a role in this. Details of our methodology, including who we interviewed are presented in the appendix to this report.

In each case study details of the decision are provided as well as the socio-demographic context of the local area and views of the council taken from census data, surveys of residents and the Place Survey, providing a snapshot of the key issues that may have a bearing on trust. For example, Lewisham has higher levels of ethnic diversity and deprivation, thus overall satisfaction and public trust with the council may be more difficult to achieve, in light of research discussed in the previous chapter. We then move to perceptions of whether each decision improved levels of public trust and the factors that emerged through our research as integral to this.

Case study 1

In 2002 Wakefield Council agreed with Channel 4 to deliver a major regeneration of the area to be carried out and filmed in a series of episodes called 'the Castleford Project'. One of the key

projects filmed over the five years of the programme was the creation of a 'Playforest' playground for the small village of Cutsyke. One of the key goals for a local Cutsyke community group, formed in 2000 in response to issues of housing and anti-social behaviour in the area, was lobbying for a new playground for the neighbourhood children in a secure area to protect it from being vandalised and overrun by local youths and used as a place to drink and smoke. The community group proposed this to the council and it was admitted as one of the projects within the larger regeneration. The community group led in choosing the architect, submitting their plans and requirements, seeing the project through to completion and providing maintenance afterwards. When asked to participate in this second round of research, Wakefield Council identified the process of creating the Cutsyke Playforest as a decision where strong bonds between the council and the public were formed.

Context

At mid-year 2008 the population of Wakefield District was estimated at 322,000. Although the overwhelming majority of Wakefield residents are White British (96 per cent according to the 2001 Census), the Pakistani population has seen a significant rise from 1 per cent of the population in 2001 to 5.9 per cent in 2009. The two major urban centres within Wakefield District are Wakefield city centre and Castleford. It is in these two main urban areas where the highest levels of deprivation are concentrated: Wakefield District ranked 65th in the UK on the DCLG's *Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007*.[51] Once heavily dependent on the coalmines, there has been a 'dramatic restructuring of employment over the last 20 years with distribution and service industries replacing coal mining and other traditional industries'.[52] According to the council's website, 'ill-health, worklessness, and low educational and workforce skills continue to be of concern' while the rate of youth unemployment is higher than the national average.[53] Although unemployment rates have declined in recent years, the council notes that there are still parts of the district that remain

economically depressed. The community of Castleford and the small village of Cutskye located just south were both hit particularly hard by the closing of the collieries in the 1980s and 90s, resulting in high levels of deprivation and unemployment. According to the 2001 Census, Cutsyke has 1,657 residents; of the 1,139 residents of working age, 43 per cent were listed as economically inactive while more than half reported having no qualifications. Approximately 24 per cent of Cutsyke residents live in social housing.

Perceptions of the council and local area

Among the three local areas we studied, Wakefield had the biggest differential score between satisfaction with local area as a place to live and overall satisfaction with the council on the Place Survey results. Although 72 per cent of respondents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live, only 36 per cent were satisfied with the council overall; Wakefield Council rated 278th out of 316 district councils for this measure. Only 28 per cent of respondents felt that the council provided value for money. Despite a comparatively healthy score of 11 per cent of respondents having been involved in the decision making in the past 12 months, perceptions of whether the public had influence over decisions in Wakefield was lowest among the three case studies at 23 per cent. Moreover, while Wakefield experiences slightly more key crime offences than the UK average, there was a high perception of drug dealing and use in their area, with 45 per cent believing it to be a problem. In other performance measures Wakefield Council improved significantly over the three comprehensive performance assessments, receiving four stars in 2008.

Trust and the Playforest

In order to analyse whether the actions around the regeneration improved trust we held group discussions with council officers, the community group and a selection of Cutsyke residents who were not directly involved in the regeneration (‘the public’).

Although the members of the community group were generally 'we have nots' and 'we haves', those in the general public group discussions included 'I haves' and 'I have nots'.

Among council officers and the community group there was a strong sense of mutual trust, particularly between key individuals. Although council officers spoke of how the actions around the regeneration improved trust, the community group felt that trust predated the regeneration and was in fact part of the reason why the regeneration was successful. Among the public the regeneration had no apparent effect on trust in the council, which was considerably low. The role of councillors did not appear to be integral in the regeneration among the community group or the public, and participants in both groups were generally mistrustful of councillors.

Factors affecting trust

This case study highlighted a number of crucial factors affecting trust, including:

- creating a balanced power dynamic
- lack of spill over to the wider public
- key dynamics of engagement
- the importance of issues such as housing
- possible tensions between councillors and 'community champions'.

Balanced power dynamic

Early in its existence, the members of the community group recognised the need for key capabilities in order to function as an effective advocate for the community. Members of the community group undertook training offered by a nearby 'regeneration' school. It was felt that this training provided them with the knowledge and confidence to approach the council, speak up for the community's rights and submit successful applications. This know-how earned the group the particular respect of the council. As a result of the community group's

confidence in its ability to negotiate with the council on its own terms, council officers consciously made an effort to establish a working relationship with the group based on parity and equality. This was true before, during and after the regeneration project.

Lack of spill over

Among those in the public group there was wide distrust of the council, with issues around housing seeming to be a key driver of this dissatisfaction. Strong relationships between the community group and council officers did not appear to filter out into the wider community. In the absence of interaction with the council, council actions seemed opaque and closed off and the council was viewed as an unvaried whole: perceptions that did not bode well for trust. Members of the public group tended to view the motivations of the council as self-serving: the success of the Playforest was attributed to the community group driving the council rather than collaboration between the two. They also tended to base their judgements on first or second-hand anecdotes: the public felt that the streets were cleaned and councillors and officers attended events during filming for 'the Castleford Project', but not at other times.

Dynamics of engagement

A number of key points emerged about the quality and process of engagement. Trust was a matter of power sharing: the public's trust was dependent on the council demonstrating that it was willing to trust the public. The involvement of community members in strategic decisions, throughout the phases of the project but particularly at the outset, was crucial for maintaining a trusting relationship. Second, engagement with residents on a community level – at their kitchen tables, in the local pubs, at the community centre as opposed to the corridors of the council – was important in demonstrating that Cutsyke was a priority for the council.

Third, it seemed that the poor perceptions of the council among the public was at least partly derived from a sense of a

lack of face-to-face engagement. Despite the vocal mistrust, there was still a strong desire for more opportunities to interact with the council. Many residents cited the approach of a previous housing manager, who was located on the estate and would talk to people in person; the fact that this was no longer the case was noted by many in the group. There appeared to be resentment that they had to travel to the council if they had a problem, and the quality of the interactions was seen as poor. The public often cited broken promises as a basis for mistrust, but when probed further these 'incidents' became less clear and concrete, demonstrating the effect of second-hand anecdotes on perceptions.

Finally, the frequency and depth of interaction appeared to have an effect on residents' perceptions. Members of the community group had a better appreciation for how the council functioned and the difficult and demanding job that council officers had, which translated into greater willingness to accept mistakes or negative outcomes. This contrasted sharply with the public who had little interaction with the council: among this group there were very poor perceptions of the council and unrealistic expectations.

The importance of housing

This case study demonstrates that for 'have not' residents, the provision and management of a key social service such as housing was a significant space in which trust with the council as a whole was going to be gained or lost. When we asked about the council, housing was the first thing people mentioned. This was despite the recent creation of a separate housing trust as landlord. The public often had to be reminded that we were not talking about the housing trust, but about the council and that the two were separate – a distinction which they did not perceive to bear on their daily experience. This highlights issues of accountability raised above and the possible complication of connecting services back to the council with the proliferation of commissioning and partnership working.

Trust and councillors

Finally, this case study revealed the potential tension between community champions – 'we have nots' – and councillors, and thus the possible tension between participative and representative democracy. The community group and the public did not believe that councillors played a prominent role in their community. The community group had little interaction with councillors; its members felt to a degree that they were fulfilling the role councillors should play in the community by acting as advocates for people in the community when needed. There was also the perception that the majority of councillors were only active in their neighbourhood around election time.

Case study 2

Our second case study focused on the impact on trust of council decisions on social care service delivery; this included changes to Meals on Wheels food provision and a review of the quality of home care services. These instances were chosen due to the consultative approach taken as part of the decision making process. Sunderland City Council's Meals on Wheels service currently provides approximately 2,650 meals per week to residents. In response to user surveys expressing a desire for more flexibility in the service, the council decided to introduce frozen meals in addition to the hot meals already provided. When the change to service was introduced many service users thought that the change of service meant that frozen meals were set to replace hot meals, and that this was a cost saving measure. An entire review of the Meals on Wheels programme ensued and it was this process that we analysed.

The second element of the case study involved a review of home care provision. Following a complaint to a councillor that agency home care staff were arriving to put a resident to bed earlier than the agreed time, the Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee instigated a review of home care provision, which included consultation with service users, carers, frontline staff and care service providers through focus groups and interviews in order to understand the way that services were currently being

delivered and what needed to change. This culminated in a detailed service review of home care services and changes to how the service was provided.

Context and perceptions of the council

Sunderland has a population of around 280,300 people and, like Wakefield, is also a relatively homogenous area with 94.6 per cent of the population White British. It ranks between 7th and 43rd on the six local authority district measures of the *Indices of Deprivation 2007* and has lower percentages of residents in higher managerial or professional positions. It also has the highest percentage of working age residents receiving benefit among the three areas we focused on, according to the 2001 Census.

According to the 2008 Place Survey, approximately 44 per cent of Sunderland respondents were very or fairly satisfied with the council. Research by Ipsos MORI suggests that this satisfaction score is higher than the socio-demographics of the area would have led them to predict.[54] This could be for a number of reasons, two of which are worth noting. First, Sunderland City Council was singled out as a high performing council in the 2007–08 comprehensive performance assessment as one of the few councils that received four stars in four out of five themes, including for adult social care.[55] Second, 75 per cent of respondents to the Place Survey reported that they were treated with respect and consideration by their local services in the last year, which is a higher figure than the national average of 72 per cent. It is also worth noting in the current context that Sunderland received especially high results from the Place Survey on perceptions that older people living in the area receive the support that they need to allow them to continue living in their home as long as they like: 36 per cent thought this was the case, placing Sunderland 40th out of 353 district and borough local authorities (the national figure is 30 per cent).

Adult care and trust

To determine what effect this process had on trust we spoke to three council officers, four councillors and seven residents ('service users') who receive Meals on Wheels and home-based care.[56]

Our research demonstrated the importance of involving all levels of council staff in engagement and the consultation process, including senior managers, middle managers and councillors. It also highlighted how internal communication between officers and councillors can affect public trust with service users. Councillors can play an important role through their advocacy and scrutinising function in the council. However, our research seemed to suggest that although trust was improved with service users directly involved in the decision review consultation, there was little awareness of the decision making process among other service users; this lack of spill over was similar to that seen above in case study 1. Among service users who were not involved in the consultation process, the basis for trust in the council when it existed appeared to be derived from their positive experiences with frontline staff. Those who did not trust the council were primarily influenced by their perception of how decisions were taken about the services they received and what they saw as a lack of adequate communication about these changes.

Factors affecting trust

This case study highlighted a number of areas in which decision making processes could demonstrate greater trustworthiness, particularly communication and the role of councillors. The following factors appeared to play an important role in building trust in this context:

- the effect of internal communication
- publicising role of councillors
- contact with decision makers and frontline staff
- accountability and partnership working
- effective communication and lack of spill over.

The effect of internal communication

Although this report focuses on communication between the council and residents as important for trust, this case study demonstrates that internal communication within councils between council officers and councillors can also have an effect.

Council officers felt that the initial misperception that changes to the Meals on Wheels service were part of a cost saving measure was the result of a lack of engagement and consultation at the beginning of the process, particularly with councillors who are involved in the decision making process. This resulted in a temporary breakdown of trust between officers, councillors and service users; officers then had to engage in meetings and group discussions in order to correct the negative impressions of service users who felt threatened by the changes. This highlighted the potential for internal dynamics within the council, between officers and members, to affect public trust. Although this was not perceived to be of significant concern, examples were offered for how better communication could facilitate better outcomes. As the decision on frozen meals demonstrated, without extensive internal conversations during the decision making process, some councillors may be unclear why a decision has been made. At the same time, in their role as community advocates, councillors could at times take up issues for residents and promise an outcome that may not be achievable. Better interaction between councillors and officers can enable councillors to operate more effectively as advocates and community leaders.

Contact with decision makers and frontline staff

Council officers played a critical role in the consultation process in this case study. Rather than being stereotypically ‘faceless’ bureaucrats, these personal interactions helped to encourage service users to engage more often with the service and service decisions. Council officers felt that the users involved in the consultation were, as a consequence, more likely to seek out information on the service, and more willing to give feedback about the service itself. In general, it was felt that the interaction had created a more two-way reciprocal relationship. For officers unaccustomed to dealing directly with the public, the

experience proved positive and many were keen to maintain regular contact.

The role of frontline services in creating trust is unsurprising considering the central role that care services occupy within the lives of those who depend on them. Key behaviours that were mentioned were being listened to, feeling that staff genuinely cared and that they did their job well by working with them to meet their needs. Positive experiences appeared to have a bigger impact on creating trust in the council for individuals who had not had other interactions with the council.

When considering the content of communication, it was recognised that although trust was dependent on receiving a good service, people did not necessarily demand 'miraculous' service but just that what is promised is delivered. Being clear about what the council could and couldn't do was key to conversations. This highlights the importance for care managers and frontline staff to have up-to-date information about council actions and priorities. Frontline staff need to be given the autonomy to make certain decisions quickly to avoid causing unnecessary ambiguity, and explain these decisions in discussions with users. Saying no quickly was felt to be better than delaying bad news. Council officers and councillors felt that people were reasonable and understood that the council worked within limits, but conceded that it was sometimes difficult for councils to communicate details particularly at the frontline.

Accountability and partnership working

The role of frontline staff in improving public trust raises questions for councils about the extent to which councils can control the nature of these interactions within services that are outsourced. High turnover of staff, or employing staff for short-term or partnership contracts, adversely affects interactions with users. In the past, care staff employed by the council may have stayed in their roles for a longer period and have had greater autonomy with which to resolve any problems that service users had, which helped to maintain good personal

relationships. A particular risk for councils is that they will be held accountable by the public for poor performance by private service providers.

Effective communication and lack of spill over

Finally, the council officers and councillors to whom we spoke noted that communications with service users and the wider public was a central issue that often proved difficult. This view was reinforced by our interviews with service users. There did not appear to be a trust 'spill over' from the consultation and engagement process to the wider service user group. There also appeared to be the perception of limited opportunities to communicate with a particular group of service users as a whole, or the wider community. Equally, there was little awareness of the decision making process among service users or how to effect change within a service other than through the complaints mechanisms.

Councillors often acted as an information channel between constituents and the council, feeding back council progress on service issues and passing information from users back to the council. However, the uptake of more systematic methods of councillors communicating with service users was limited, particularly as most of the users in question did not have access to email or the internet (Sunderland has put in place several methods for communication). This was compounded by wider changes in society, possibly leading councillors to have less day-to-day contact with constituents than they would have done in the past. Councillors may live outside their ward, use a car instead of public transport, or shop at supermarkets instead of local shops, reducing the opportunities for informal conversations about council work and citizens' concerns.

The role of councillors as 'people champions' within the council was felt to be poorly understood by the public at large, and most did not know who their councillor was. As shown in chapter 2, this is not a situation unique to Sunderland. Council officers and councillors felt that it was difficult for the council to publicise councillors' roles and achievements as citizen advocates

as it may be misinterpreted as canvassing rather than the effective functioning of political scrutiny. They considered that the local media was rarely interested in council successes and more likely to report stories about the council's mistakes. Service users had very little appreciation of the scrutiny role of councillors in general, or in this particular instance. When asked about their level of trust in councillors, service users are likely to base their response on one of three factors:

- previous contact or knowledge of a particular councillor
- councillor stereotypes from the media, particularly in light of the expenses scandal or politicians in general
- complete lack of knowledge, in which they could not express a judgement.

Finally, it should be noted that Sunderland Council has recently launched a community leadership programme designed to increase trust and satisfaction with the council primarily through better communications. Its main priorities include:

- to improve the range and quality of support to enable councillors to operate most effectively in their ward
- to recognise the value and importance of any form of customer feedback (eg contact centres, petitions, complaints, member queries), gathering it effectively and using it to shape not just service planning, but also the way in which services are delivered
- to identify key situations where more effective engagement with customers will have a high positive impact on the way local residents perceive the council.

The goal of the programme is that by April 2011 local councillors will be able to identify and act on issues that have an impact on public satisfaction far more speedily and effectively, giving them more influence over frontline service and standards. They will, in effect, become the principal agents for more responsive local services.

Case study 3

In early 2008 Lewisham Council announced the creation of local assemblies within each of the 18 wards in the borough. The local assemblies are designed to provide forums in which issues of concern to citizens could be addressed at a local level, and in which people could take ownership of decisions affecting their neighbourhoods. Objectives for the local assemblies include:

- establishing a universal approach for all Lewisham's wards, providing a strong focal point for engaging with the council and other service providers
- promoting active citizenship, enabling local people to get things done by themselves
- influencing decision making by strengthening the articulation of local priorities
- improving accountability and service delivery
- creating more opportunities for innovative new initiatives like 'participatory budgeting'.[57]

Since they began in March 2008 most assemblies have met three or four times and have a good attendance by residents. According to research by Lewisham, the assemblies are attracting a representative cross-section of Lewisham residents by ethnicity, but in common with other trends in consultation, they are attracting a greater proportion of older people and not enough younger residents 24 years and younger.[58]

In the first local assembly sessions participants agreed to a list of local priorities, including the allocation of the annual £10,000 Locality Fund for small-scale changes in each ward. In two of the assemblies, including one which was the subject of our research, the Locality Fund was allocated through participatory budgeting procedures and voting. Lewisham Mayor Steve Bullock has presented a further £50,000 to each local assembly to use on local priorities. The assemblies are led by one of the ward councillors, in partnership with a core group of volunteers who act as a coordinating group. Each local assembly also has a 'link officer' who serves as a liaison to tie the decisions of the local assembly to the broader council service delivery.

Research by Lewisham Council has shown that the assemblies have been successful in increasing knowledge about local issues, increasing perceptions of influence, and fostering greater cohesion among residents.[59] Our goal was to examine them as a locus for trust, gathering the views of those individuals who participated in the local assemblies to determine if they were more or less willing to trust the council as a result.

We interviewed three councillors in charge of three separate local assemblies ('councillors'), and held separate group discussions with members of the local assemblies' coordinating groups (the 'volunteers') and a group of Lewisham residents and local assembly participants (the 'public'). Members of the public were recruited to provide representation across the truster lens: eight were recruited, with two of each resident group. Volunteers were considered to be on the 'we have' side of the spectrum.

Context

The London Borough of Lewisham has a population of approximately 250,000 residents and represents the most diverse area of the three case studies presented in this pamphlet. At the time of the 2001 Census 39 per cent of households came from BME communities, but by 2007 this figure had risen to nearly half (49.4 per cent) of all households.[60] One member of the public described Lewisham as 'communities within communities' with little interaction between ethnic groups, but also little ethnic tension. On two of the three key cohesion measures Lewisham had a high score: 73 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the local area as a place to live (NI 5) while 78.3 per cent felt that people from different backgrounds got on well together (NI 1) – seventh and fifth, respectively, among London boroughs.[61]

There are significant pockets of deprivation: Lewisham ranks 37th among local authorities in England on the DCLG's *Indices of Multiple Deprivation*.[62] The three local assemblies on which our research focused represent three wards that have been identified as containing the most significant pockets of deprivation.[63] Lewisham scored lower on perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour by the public than the other two case

study areas, despite the fact that the British Crime Survey reports a reasonably high incidence of crime in Lewisham.

Finally, according to the 2008 Place Survey, just under half of respondents (48.8 per cent) felt that they 'belonged to their immediate neighbourhood', placing Lewisham ahead of only Barking and Dagenham and Tower Hamlets among London boroughs on this measure.[64] However, participants in our focus groups felt a greater sense of belonging to their locality or ward than to the borough as a whole: discussion of different issues within the borough revealed different perspectives from different wards.

Perceptions of the council and influence

Half the respondents to the 2007–08 Lewisham Residents Survey wanted to know what the council was doing but did not have a desire to get involved or contribute, while a third of residents (34 per cent) wanted to have more of a say over what the council does. People's views on this question varied by income and social grade, with those in the higher income bands more likely to express a desire to be involved. Results from the 2008 Place Survey suggest that Lewisham residents are more likely to be involved in decision making: 16 per cent of Lewisham respondents had been involved in decision making over the past year compared to a 14 per cent national average. A higher percentage of Lewisham respondents (37 per cent) felt they had the opportunity to influence local decisions. The Residents Survey presents similar results. However, it is also notable that a comparable proportion of residents (35 per cent) disagreed that they had the opportunity to influence local decisions; furthermore, just 29 per cent of residents in the C2 social grade were likely to perceive opportunities for influence.

Local assemblies and trust

Volunteers and the public felt that the assemblies fostered greater cohesion and trust between residents. There was a general consensus that the assemblies increased their knowledge of local

issues and the concerns of their fellow residents, and helped them get to know each other better.

It was also felt that the local assemblies were more effective than councillor surgeries in strengthening ties and increasing trust with certain councillors. This was particularly true among the volunteers who worked closely with councillors. However, this trust did not extend to councillors *as a whole*. It was felt that councillors were 'more receptive' than the council because of their democratic accountability.

The majority of volunteers and the public felt that local assemblies had not *yet* changed people's view of the council, nor, in their opinion, had it made them more willing to *trust* the council. However, from our wider analysis it was clear that the necessary conditions in which trustworthiness might be demonstrated were in place.

The view of councillors on this question was mixed. One councillor felt that the assemblies fostered a sustained sense of ownership among the community and developed a clearer sense of the public and the council's respective roles. The assembly functioned as a space for negotiation. However, another councillor thought it was too soon to tell and that the assemblies only reached a small number of people – those participating – as there was not a broader recognition of the assemblies among the rest of the public.

The important finding is that assemblies were thought to have provided crucial spaces for the interaction in which trust could develop. For example, they have helped strengthen the relationship and perception of individual councillors who were seen as 'doers' due to their year round engagement with the community. This was noted in contrast to those councillors who 'only appeared during election time' in the words of many participants. If we take active community engagement as a sign of a councillor's trustworthiness, then the local assemblies do appear to align the public's trust with trustworthiness more closely. In other words, the assemblies provided a closer, ongoing link between members of the public and their councillor, allowing them to make a more informed judgement on a councillor's performance (or trustworthiness).

Factors affecting trust in the council

It was clear from our focus groups that the local assemblies provided a space for the development of trust, particularly between residents and with individual councillors. Improving trust was not one of the objectives of the local assemblies, but it could be a potentially valuable indirect benefit that could be further supported. Our focus groups identified some key learning points in relation to how the assemblies were developing, and how they might more effectively progress if increasing trust is an objective. The following issues appeared to be obstacles to the local assemblies increasing participants' willingness to trust *the council*:

- information provision
- having a link to overall council decisions
- the ability to control the agenda.

These factors are in addition to the broader point noted above about trusting an individual or council department as opposed to making a judgement about 'trusting the council' as a whole.

Information provision

The assemblies serve a potential three-way purpose in terms of information. They serve as a forum of exchange within communities, facilitating conversations and helping to create shared priorities and improving social networks, and as a forum for exchange between residents and the council, increasing understanding of council decisions among the public and local priorities among those in the council. They could also potentially act as an information source for the wider community, communicating the actions of councils to the broader public through the social networks of those who attend the assemblies.

Other than the invitation letters, many we spoke to felt that there was little communication about how council decisions were made and how the activities of the local assemblies across the borough connected with and influenced overall council decisions. There was also the perception among the public,

volunteers and councillors that awareness of the local assemblies or their decisions was very low among the general public who did not attend.

Information provision and accountability are therefore a key element of trust building in citizen empowerment initiatives, without which participants cannot develop a deeper relationship with councils. Where communication occurred – between community residents, and between residents and councillors – first steps were taken towards a more trusting relationship. Where communication was still undeveloped – between the council, council officers and the local assemblies – trust remained elusive.

Having a link to overall council decisions

Opinion was mixed as to how effective and fair local assembly decisions were, as well as how they tied into overall council decision making. The local assemblies were designed to have numerous opportunities to link back to overall decision making, including reporting and placing agenda items to be discussed by the mayor and cabinet, communicating assembly priorities to a senior 'link officer' group and frequent 'marketplace' events bringing together officers, councillors and the public to meet and share experiences.

Volunteers had a more positive view and felt that the assembly opened up council decision making and gave residents a voice. However, the public saw the role of the link officers as being less clear in relation to how well assemblies connected back to the council. Although these views could reflect perceptions of how well a particular assembly was run rather than the assembly process in and of itself, focus groups also suggested there was a latent sense of mistrust about the council's decision making and openness. People perceived that the council often preferred to keep its decision making 'behind closed doors'. One resident, recruited as an 'I have not', felt that councils tend to make decisions before and even in spite of consultation with the public; in discussion, other respondents across the four truster groups concurred. Although this view of

council decision making may not be indicative of the opinion of the majority of Lewisham residents, it was the perception among a handful of residents in the public, primarily among 'we haves' and 'we have nots'. For volunteers and the public, this disposition towards mistrust and desire for transparency was one of the motivations for their becoming involved in the assemblies in the first place.

For another resident, a 'we have not', the perception of influence was diminished by the time between each assembly meeting and the need to have attended all of the assemblies to have a completely accurate picture of the process. Although there is an average attendance across the assemblies of 64 people per meeting, attendance has fluctuated at individual assemblies and across the different rounds of meetings. For example, round 1 saw the highest attendance, followed by a drop of 27 per cent for round 2, and then another increase in round 3.[65] In one assembly, quick wins and communicating them were key to establishing trust in the assembly's effectiveness: this is the starting point for a relationship in which trust develops.

Ability to control the agenda

Although residents in collaboration with councillors and the coordinating group determine the assembly agendas, some members of the public felt that the local assemblies' role was circumscribed and that the important decisions were being made elsewhere. Some felt that the councillors running the assemblies rather than the community itself were setting the agenda. Two possible reasons for this perception include: residents not being present at the meeting when priorities were set, and the perceived inability to discuss issues that were not already on the agenda. There was confusion about the role and objectives of the assemblies, with some viewing them as only a means to allocate the Locality Fund. Others felt that the amount of the Locality Fund was not large enough, and that the process gave them a limited say on a limited issue. The commitment of a further £50,000 for each local assembly through a Mayor's Fund will likely address these types of concerns among residents.

Interestingly, although housing was not cited as a priority by any of the local assemblies, it was the issue that was most frequently cited in our focus groups when we asked about the council. The issue that received the most attention within the local assemblies was the provision of activities for young people. Part of the reason for this disconnect could lie in the confusion about the local assembly objectives, with some viewing it only as a means for allocating the Locality Fund. It could also reflect issues of accountability discussed in chapter 1: while youth activities may be perceived as one of the biggest problems for a local area, the public is less inclined to hold the council accountable for this issue. Housing, however, is an issue identified above as having stronger ties of council accountability in the public's perception.

The local assemblies may or may not be the right forum for discussion of complex and difficult issues such as housing – and, as mentioned, housing was not an issue that received priority status in the context of the assemblies; however, our research demonstrates that in terms of trust, the existence of local decision making forums that are perceived as not addressing these bigger issues – whether or not that perception is fair – may not improve willingness to trust among the public. This point is related to the fact that trust has to be a reciprocal relationship. Not addressing bigger issues like housing can be interpreted by some residents, particularly those who themselves live in social housing, as the council's unwillingness to trust residents.

Community empowerment initiatives like the local assemblies have the potential to provide spaces in which trust in its various forms can develop. However, our research indicates that for these mechanisms to allow trust to develop *in the council* as a whole they require closer and explicit integration into the ways of working of officers and councillors. Such forums need to be treated, recognised and validated through communication and results as part of the fabric of council decision making and accountability rather than as a mechanism devoted primarily to neighbourhood decisions. This is clearly a difficult challenge, and is already an objective and performance measure of the local assemblies.[66] The local assemblies are still in very early days and,

as our research shows, they have served to foster better relationships (and thus the stepping stones of trust) between residents, and between residents and individual councillors.

5 Key findings and analysis

Five key learning points for local councils arise from our research:

- There was little evidence of a spill-over effect whereby if trust was gained with one resident group it was then disseminated through social networks to others in the community.
- When trust was gained it was often attributed to individual actions or personalities, and could not be applied generally to all those in a similar role; for example, if the public have trust in one councillor it did not improve their perceptions of councillors in general.
- Community empowerment initiatives can offer a crucial space for the development of trust; however, improving trust with the council as a whole depends on such initiatives being clearly tied to the bigger function of the council.
- Trust is a mutual endeavour, entailing mutual risk: councils must demonstrate their trust in the public before those less inclined to trust will be willing to do so.
- Community engagement initiatives can provide councillors with a chance to engage with residents and demonstrate their trustworthiness, thus giving their constituents the chance to make a better judgement about their performance.

Our research also reconfirmed a number of the findings of the first report:

- Trust between citizens and local councils depends just as much on *experiences* as it does outcomes.
- Willingness to trust was closely related to direct contact and experience with council officers or councillors and knowledge of their actions and how the council functioned, thus highlighting the importance of communication.

- Face-to-face communication was seen as very important for developing trust, and was particularly important for certain resident groups that are more dependent on council services.
- Key visible services and getting the basics right provided an important basis for trust across all resident groups.

Implications of limited spill-over effects

Judgements about whether to trust local government tend to be based on first and second-hand personal experience more than media reporting. In our first report, we hypothesised a spill-over effect in terms of improving a council's reputation: a positive experience with a group of residents with strong social networks could result in a general, if only marginal, increase in public trust within the immediate area. However, our research did not find evidence of a spill-over effect on public trust outside individuals who were directly engaging with the council. Whether at the level of consultations on services or community-level decision making, creating trust with the individuals involved did not spread trust to non-participants.

Although our sample was designed to explore further avenues for demonstrating trustworthiness and was too limited to extrapolate conclusions on this point, other initiatives such as the work done by the Campaign Company in Barking and Dagenham have shown some positive indications of reputation dissemination through peer social networks.[67] It may be that residents are more likely to discuss the council with people when the council makes a mistake than if the council introduces a successful or popular initiative.

If this is the case, councils should not expect to be able to win the public's trust quickly. Despite the fact that the regeneration project in Castleford was highly publicised, and dominated the area for almost five years, there was still low awareness of the project among members of the public we interviewed. Therefore it is important that councils view every opportunity and interaction as crucial to improving public trust: efforts to encourage council employees to be council advocates in their communications is more likely to have a long term effect

on trust and how the council is perceived than is a high profile event or decision.[68]

Trust in individuals, not institutions

Throughout our research, when asked if they trusted the local council, a number of people responded that they had no choice but to trust them (they felt the same about the NHS). But central to the concept of trust is the fact that it is something that has to be given and cannot be enforced. An individual must have a choice in order for the concept of trust to come in play.[69] This was not trust, but rather a sense of reliance or entrapment that was applied only at an institutional level. In contrast, the ability to express a judgement of trust towards an individual, often a council officer, councillor or even an entire department is a key determinant. Expressions of trust were only given after an assessment of an individual's behaviour.

Behaviours that were worthy of trust included the perception that an individual – in this case a councillor – was a 'doer', as opposed to someone who just came around during election time. Mirroring results in the Public Attitudes Survey presented in chapter 2, other trustworthy behaviours included telling the truth – 'telling it like it is' – which could include making disparaging remarks about the bureaucracy of the council, following through on promises, and willingness to engage with people on their own 'turf'.

People who did not trust the council seemed to mistrust the council as a whole. Those who had a more positive relationship appeared to trust a particular service or department rather than the council as a whole. Although trust in individuals did not appear to translate into generalised trust of the council, it did seem to change the default assumption about the council into a more positive one.

This poses challenges for local authorities. In theory a disaggregated view of the council could work to a council's benefit, since poor performance in one department need not reflect on other services. However, our research seems to indicate that although trust in individuals or a service is not transferred,

poor performance has an adverse effect on expectations of other services.

Demonstrating trustworthiness

As we have argued, the best approach to improving public trust is to increase the number of opportunities and spaces for local government and citizens to interact in order to allow local government representatives to demonstrate their own trustworthiness and allow the public to make a judgement on this basis. Demonstrating trustworthiness in this sense requires not only attention to the style and approach of communication – conversations, not communications – but also better consideration of what residents value. At its core, demonstrating trustworthiness demands that councils demonstrate their own willingness to trust the public. Trust is a mutual endeavour.

Dialogues and conversations

Whether at a service or community decision level, two-way dialogues were an essential component of trust. Councils were more likely to appear trustworthy when they created space for negotiation and were willing to respond and change their views. This applied at the level of individual service provision as well as for broader decisions. This did not mean that local authorities had always to agree or amend their decisions or processes, but that the council had to appear willing to respond to public input. As demonstrated in the Lewisham case study, community empowerment initiatives could provide an excellent space for residents to establish better relationships with each other and with the council staff operating the space. However, in order for the council as an institution to benefit from these interactions there needs to be a stronger link between these initiatives and overall council decisions. Councils need to make sure they understand what factors make residents view actions and dialogue as not being genuine or deep enough.

An important part of dialogues and conversations is the ability to manage expectations about what the council can

achieve. This is a delicate task: research by MORI has highlighted that attempts to manage expectations can also lead to low opinions of a council's ability and capacity.[70] Nevertheless, councils ought to act quickly to dispel false expectations, be clear about the limits of what can be achieved and about what the council can actually do. Because of the integral role played by frontline staff, it is essential that they have the knowledge to answer questions quickly and with confidence. Instances where frontline staff could not provide a direct answer could risk creating suspicion and the assumption of them having ulterior motives. Clear knowledge among the frontline staff of what is and is not possible should be supplemented with the ability to say 'no' constructively and to direct people towards alternatives; instead of leaving members of the public doubting the council's abilities, this would make them more likely to trust it.

Finally, emphasising dialogue over one-way communication highlights the importance of giving feedback to residents. Although one-directional information provision is welcomed and has its benefits, it does not necessarily serve to create trust as the public want feedback and information on what the council has done in response to their views and opinions. This is related to the point that dialogue requires the council to be willing to change its position. By advertising a consequent change in policy or position, a council can counteract the perception that it is engaging in conversation in order to justify its predetermined position.

Building capacity

The issue of capacity and independence in developing better trust was probably one of the strongest factors we observed in our research. Individuals who had greater knowledge and capacity to interact with the council were more confident of their ability to argue their case, displayed a more nuanced view of the council and showed a greater understanding of the limits of what the council could do. Having this capacity provided residents with the confidence needed to feel they were in a position to trust the council, as they were no longer dependent on them.

Capacity building in this respect should therefore be a part of council interactions with the public in most situations, including when making individual service decisions. At the level of community-based interactions, local authorities need to invest in building the personal skills and knowledge base of members of the public involved in the community-based work. This should also involve how to challenge the council and how to achieve goals and access resources independently of the local authority. At the level of individual interactions, this could entail explaining the process for resolving an issue clearly, giving individuals full details about how to get recourse if they are not happy, directing them to external individuals or organisations (eg Citizens Advice Bureau) which could also advise them, clearly explaining how they can influence a particular process, and advising them on how they could challenge a decision or resolve it without the council.

Opportunity for strategic influence

The point of involvement in decision making processes proved crucial to demonstrating trustworthiness with the public. In general, involvement of the public occurred too late in community level decisions. Where the public did not feel able to influence the decisions, the view of the council became overwhelmingly negative. Consultations proved to worsen frustration, as it appeared the council was not listening to citizens' concerns. Without the space to change or adapt in response to people's views, public interactions could potentially damage the perception of the council.

The opportunity to contribute to decisions did not in and of itself appear to increase trust. What was important was the ability to contribute to strategic decisions. Although different individuals appeared to have different priorities within decisions (some were happier than others about the opportunity to take part in smaller scale decisions), by and large the public participants in our focus groups wanted to feel that the council had given them an opportunity to contribute to strategic conversations and had responded to their views. Smaller decision

forums, such as localised participatory budgeting, left some of the residents we spoke to feeling that they had only a limited say while the real decisions that would affect people's lives would occur elsewhere.

Putting a face to the 'faceless' bureaucrat

Our research revealed that in some instances direct engagement between senior and middle managers could help to demonstrate the council's trustworthiness and provide information on council decisions and decision making processes. These individuals were usually invisible to the public, and as nebulous bureaucrats their unknown actions were often perceived to be negative. Where officers and managers were actively engaged with the public, they were able to be a bridge of personal trust with the decision making process, as was the case in the Wakefield case study. Members of the public were able to discuss their concerns and viewpoints, and equally officers and managers were able to listen to the public's concerns and explain the reasons behind council decisions. However, it was important that these interactions were perceived to be genuine dialogues, ideally among residents and officers who have had frequent interactions, rather than simply Q&A sessions. One important method was for council officers to go out into the community and conduct meetings around kitchen tables in people's homes or at the local pub: in Wakefield, this was an important symbolic gesture. This is already a widely accepted means of communication within community development but these approaches should be adopted more widely across all sectors of the council.

The role of councillors

One of the main objectives at this stage of the research was to identify the role of councillors in building trust between residents and their local councils. Echoing national survey data, there was poor awareness of councillors generally among the members of the public we interviewed. This was attributed to the fact that often the only channel for communication of councillor

achievements is the ward newsletter. Without knowledge of councillors' actions or direct contact with them it is very difficult for residents to make a judgement about their trustworthiness. Thus in general, unless they have frequent communication with the public, councillors are unable to play the key role of connecting trust in personal interactions and decision making. At the same time, as the Lewisham case study demonstrated, there could be strong links between residents and individual councillors perceived as 'doers' who were consistently engaged. The local assemblies in Lewisham demonstrated the possibility of community engagement initiatives by providing councillors with a chance to engage with residents and demonstrate their trustworthiness, thus giving their constituents the opportunity to make a better judgement about their performance.

There are also more structural issues relating to councils and councillors to bear in mind when thinking about trust. There is still a need for clarification around the role of councillors within the council, and the function of scrutiny committees in particular. On the one hand, such functions are essential to ensuring trust in the institution and in its decision making, and yet councils may be wary of highlighting this element of councillors' work for fear that it might cast the council in a negative light. This could in part also come down to possible tensions between officers and councillors – the majority of which result from lack of communication, where councillors could fear that officers were trying to mislead, and officers worried that councillors were championing a cause for political reasons and without fully investigating the council's point of view. As the Sunderland case study shows, these internal dynamics can have an effect on public levels of trust.

6 Recommendations

Behaviours matter more than words. If local authorities want to promote deeper more generous relationships between citizens then councils' own practice must reflect this.[71]

Improving and maintaining public trust in local government requires councils to continue ensuring that basic services, particularly more 'street-level' services such as litter and rubbish removal, are provided efficiently and are of good quality. It also requires councils to continue focusing on effective communication of the actions they are taking and the reasons behind them. This is important to ensure that residents can make judgements about the council providing value for money. These actions are important for all residents when it comes to levels of public trust.

However, trust between citizens and local councils depends just as much on *experiences* as it does on outcomes. Giving more priority to the experiential element of trust requires local governments to put the idea of *relationships* as opposed to one-off interactions at the heart of local government strategy. This does not need to be as involved as it sounds, for as our typology attempts to show, different people will desire different types of relationships with the council. Moreover, by putting relationships at the core of their mindset, local government representatives move beyond mechanistic thinking of ways to 'build' or manufacture trust, towards providing the opportunity and space where they can demonstrate their trustworthiness. As we've seen in the case studies, the demonstration of trustworthiness can mean different things to different people. For 'we have nots', it could entail investing or encouraging their self-capacity, a recognition of equal footing, engaging at the 'kitchen table' and engaging earlier in the process. It could also include recognition of the larger problems and frustrations,

for example, the issue of housing. Moreover, it is important to realise in light of the connection between socio-demographics and perceptions and expectations that trust may be a relative concept with different starting and end points in different localities. Nevertheless, the following recommendations ought to be of interest – and potentially of use – to all local authorities.

1 Move beyond satisfaction measures

Although we are not suggesting that councils abandon satisfaction measures, it is important that they give due consideration to measure other aspects of the relationship between citizens and their local authority. Although this could include a question about levels of trust in order to provide a baseline, public trust will be best achieved via indirect means. To some extent, the national indicators used by DCLG and the Audit Commission to measure local government performance already include indirect measures with a bearing on trust. These are the primary community cohesion measures:

- NI 1: the percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
- NI 2: the percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood
- NI 4: the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality.

NI 140 focuses on the experiential element of public services:

- NI 140: the percentage who would say that they have been treated fairly by their local services.

These indicators can therefore be used as indirect measures that are connected to trust. A greater attention to relationships and demonstrating trustworthiness, as we have argued, could also lead to a greater consideration of indicators that measure frequency of engagement, for example NI 3:

- NI 3: the percentage who have been involved in decisions that affect the local area in the past 12 months.

Additional indicators measuring the contact with councillors and officers, as well as the experience of this contact, could help councils work towards outcomes that could – if trust and trustworthiness are aligned – improve levels of public trust. Additional quantitative surveying of local authority residents using the basis for our truster typology could also help councils determine a baseline for improvement on these measures. For example, if a local area had significant pockets of deprivation, and scored highly on experiential measures of public service but low on perception of influence, councils could use strategies identified for 'we have nots' to improve their reputation and trust levels with these residents. Community engagement and consultation activities should also be thought about from the perspective of behaviour patterns (eg the trust typologies) rather than just traditional socio-economic categories. Finally, quantitative surveying should be accompanied by qualitative research to develop a richer understanding of the citizen–council relationship.

2 Develop community capacity

Emphasis on capacity building – equalising the footing between citizen and council – was a key element of building trust with the 'we have nots' within our case study. Increasing capacity for self-organisation and self-help can increase trust with segments of the community who are less inclined to trust and can potentially result in savings in the long run.

Councils should develop and/or promote training initiatives for grassroots community groups and social activists. Such courses should aim to give participants the skills and knowledge to navigate interactions with statutory bodies, find funding and progress the aims of their organisations, and include how to challenge council decisions. As part of this programme, community groups should have the opportunity to shadow council officers to better understand their roles and responsibilities, and develop

an insight into the considerations of local authorities. However, building capacity for self-help does not mean that councils can then sever these relationships and leave residents to get on with it. Rather, building capacity is the first step in a new, more trusting relationship between partners on an equal footing.

3 Create space for individual staff to build trust

Our and others' research suggests that building trust at an institutional level may be difficult as factors external to local authorities' actions may have considerable influence. Our research suggested there is potential for officers and frontline staff to build strong personal relationships that enable local authorities to operate more effectively. Councils should allow officers and frontline staff the space and power to build good relationships by increasing autonomy and offering training on how to build and maintain strong partnerships. A core element to a more effective role for frontline staff is the need to ensure that they have up-to-date knowledge of council actions and priorities to be able to provide residents with honest and immediate answers. Relationship building must be seen as a core role of the council and frontline and middle management.

4 Prioritise community engagement in strategic decisions and understanding needs

Under the DCLG's 'Duty to Involve' required of local governments under the Comprehensive Area Assessment framework, all councils must engage in consultation and engagement activities. At present, consultation and engagement activities often start too far into the decision making process. Councils should consult and involve residents in strategic decisions, especially those affecting localities, allowing people to highlight needs and shape solutions and not just decide between council-decided actions. Early engagement of this sort is not without its own difficulties, and is not always appropriate, but it is at the strategic stage where citizens can have a tangible influence on the direction of decisions.

5 Hold open days to meet middle management

All middle managers should regularly meet citizens and service users. Middle and senior officers should hold an annual 'open evening' where residents and service users can meet them to make their views known and officers could explain decisions that had been made and why. Such events should be held in community spaces rather than on council premises. This would increase the transparency and accountability of council decision making and give officers an opportunity to explain why difficult decisions had been resolved in a particular way.

6 Create citizen advocates

Councils have already begun to think of their employees as 'council advocates'. They could also seek to create citizen advocates who can work to disseminate information about council decisions in their own communities. The Campaign Company is currently developing an approach based on this principle in a number of local authorities, including Barking and Dagenham, with interesting results. In a similar fashion to the Expert Patients Programme, councils could seek to develop peer support networks. The Expert Patients Programme was launched by the NHS in 2002 with the goal of empowering people to manage their chronic medical conditions, supported by a network of similar patients. The same principle could apply more generally for those who have had extensive experience of interacting with the council, whereby they can give advice to people who are struggling to understand the system or progress an issue. This would be an opportunity for capacity building, too; local authorities could offer volunteers training and the opportunity to gain qualifications.

7 Greater promotion of the role of councillors

Councils should help to raise awareness of how councillors can assist citizens and provide clearer information to service users and residents about who their councillors are and how they can be contacted. Councils should also educate grassroots community organisations about the role of scrutiny committees

and how they can be engaged with. Within cabinet there should be a community relationships portfolio, so that councillors can play a bigger role in bringing together representative and direct democratic approaches.

Appendix: methodology

In addition to a literature review and conversations with academics, organisations, local government staff and other stakeholders, the research presented was based on a mixed methodology matched to the particular context of each case study. Our goal in each case study was to speak to those council officers, councillors and residents who were directly involved in the council decision we were analysing, as well as members of the general public. By virtue of the type of decision we chose to analyse, members of the public we spoke to tended to be in one of the four resident groups of our 'truster typology' (figure 3). For example, adult care service users were generally 'have nots' because of their dependency. However, we also attempted to recruit a cross-section of residents based on the typology. The Lewisham public focus group had the best representation of residents across the typology. A fuller exploration of the typology would have demanded running individual focus groups for each of the resident groups. This was beyond the scope of this project and would have been difficult in any case, because of the nature of the decisions we analysed and our methodology, which sought to look at these particular decisions in depth rather than look at decisions that stood a better chance of engaging all of the truster types.

Our research in this second phase necessarily built on our work presented in *State of Trust*. A detailed presentation of the methodology of the first phase is presented as appendix 1 to *State of Trust*. This is a breakdown by locality of the people we spoke to for this second phase of research.

Lewisham

In Lewisham the samples for our research were drawn from three local assemblies.

We had one-to-one interviews with:

- 3 chairs of sample local assemblies (councillors)
- 2 council officers.

We held separate focus groups with:

- 6 volunteers of local assembly coordinating groups (general public)
- 6 participants of local assemblies (general public).

Sunderland

We had one-to-one interviews with:

- 1 councillor
- 6 service users.

We held separate focus groups with:

- 3 adult social service council officers
- 4 councillors on the Health and Well-Being Board.

Wakefield

We held separate focus groups with:

- 7 council officers involved in Castleford regeneration
- 7 volunteers of the Cutsyke community group
- 7 members of Cutsyke general public.

Limitation

The sample size for the research was necessarily limited to the individuals involved in the decisions under scrutiny. In certain instances, finding research participants from the general public was limited because of the vulnerability of the sample group (eg

Sunderland) and/or data protection issues limiting access. Although not fully representative, the participants are varied enough to establish hypotheses of behaviour, which further research can test.

As this research project has no clear precedent, we were unable to establish a trust baseline before commencing. Therefore we cannot be certain about the latent levels of trust in each of the three case studies, and what effect this may have had on our eventual findings.

The case studies examined in this report should be viewed as examples from which we were able to generate testable hypotheses about trust behaviour, rather than a definitive explanation of the dynamics of trust.

Notes

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Politicians of all political parties are committed to devolving power to local government. This will require improving public trust in politics and politicians. The success of devolution depends on residents trusting their local councils enough to engage in decision making and welcome greater devolution.

This pamphlet presents the second phase of our research into public trust in local government. It builds on the new typology of 'truster types' presented in *State of Trust* and shows councils how to develop tailored trust-building strategies. Returning to three of the four local authority areas from *State of Trust*, this phase analyses 'trust in practice' by looking at local decisions that have resulted in improved levels of trust.

Drawing on new research, we argue that structural reforms and accountability measures will not alone restore trust in politics. The importance of personal interactions and the nuance of behavioural values to public trust requires that councils put relationships at the heart of the equation. Local government representatives need to move beyond mechanistic thinking of ways to "build" trust, toward providing the opportunity and space where they can demonstrate their trustworthiness.

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ISBN 978-1-906693-41-1 £10
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