

# Who's accountable?

*The challenge of giving power away in a centralised political culture*

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# Summary

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All parties appear to support greater localism but given the tendency to hold ministers accountable for all aspects of public service performance is it really possible for government to 'let go' in our centralised political culture?

Ministers will understandably be reluctant to devolve powers if they are still held accountable for things if they go wrong. Conversely, however, they may be more inclined to devolve power where lines of accountability are clear and when they can be assured that once they've let go the public, the media and the opposition will accept that responsibility rests at the local level. The question therefore arises about how best to devolve power and accountability.

Original research by PwC and ippr suggests that although the public does hold the government in Westminster responsible for core parts of public service delivery, public perceptions of accountability – and hence credit and blame – will change if devolution is well communicated, clearly enacted, and if real powers are transferred to highly accountable bodies. When this isn't the case, responsibility tends to stay with Westminster, regardless of formal accountability structures.

# Introduction: Localism in a centralised world

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*“The task of modernising the British constitutional settlement is not yet complete: we must be prepared to give power away ... devolving and decentralising power even further throughout our country” Gordon Brown.<sup>1</sup>*

*“Our society has been undermined by an over-centralised state that saps responsibility and initiative from people. An essential step to tackling the great challenges of the day ... is decentralising responsibility and power. Localism holds the key to economic, social and political progress in the future. We want nothing less than radical decentralisation to reach every corner of the country.” David Cameron.<sup>2</sup>*

*“We need to take control away from central government, where bureaucrats and ministers are in charge, and give it to local government, people and communities.” Nick Clegg<sup>3</sup>*

Today all the main political parties claim to be in favour of decentralisation. Indeed it might be said that we are all localists now. But despite the apparent consensus that excessive centralism has had its day, there remain a number of barriers to achieving greater localism.<sup>4</sup>

These include a lack of agreement about which powers should be devolved, particularly when it comes to financial powers, and to what level, and to whom, since decentralisation concerns not only giving power away to local government, but also to civil society, communities and individuals themselves.

Added to this is the general scepticism within Whitehall - and amongst the public - about the capability of local government to competently exercise new powers. Frustratingly for local councils this scepticism persists despite the significant improvements that many, though by no means all, councils have made in the last decade.

Another major barrier rests with people themselves and their hostility to ‘post-code lotteries’ and a concern that decentralisation will lead to unacceptable variations in outcomes. Localism, it is argued, runs counter to the traditional UK account of social citizenship which rests on the notion that citizens are treated the same wherever they happen to live.

Perhaps the most important barrier to localism, is a highly centralised political and media culture which tends to hold ministers responsible for all aspects

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<sup>1</sup> Building Britain's Future June 2009

<sup>2</sup> Control Shift: Returning power to local communities

<sup>3</sup> Policy Briefing 7, Liberal Democrats

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Lodge G ‘Central-local relations: why it is so hard to let go’ in (ed.) Brooks R Public Service at the Crossroads (London: ippr 2007)

of public service delivery. Ministers worry that while they may be able to devolve powers and functions downwards, it is difficult in our political culture to devolve accountability for exercising those functions.

When local problems arise national politicians are often judged responsible by the media, opposition parties and members of the public. There is a long tradition in Britain of holding ministers accountable. In as long ago as 1904 the political commentator, Sidney Low, argued that when things go wrong in Britain we will always want 'to hang the minister'. It seems that the constitutional doctrine of ministerial responsibility – the idea that ministers alone are accountable – is deeply ingrained in the national consciousness.

The other reason ministers tend to get blamed is because of the absence of strong accountability mechanisms at the local level - think of the low profile and visibility of local councillors - which ensures that responsibility is quickly passed back to the centre.

These two issues, a belief in the omnipotence of national politicians and the relative weakness of local accountability structures, are connected and have produced a vicious cycle of centralism: because ministers are held responsible for the performance of services at a local level they naturally seek to control those services, hence the proliferation of targets and the appetite to micro-mange from the centre. Such interventions both erode the role of local government at the local level and reinforce the accountability of central government ministers.

A highly centralised media, combined with a toxic adversarial model of politics, also serves to concentrate responsibility on Westminster. Columnist Simon Jenkins has argued that if a story is important enough for national coverage then the media assume that responsibility for dealing with it must also rest at the national level.<sup>5</sup>

Of course by asserting their control over local services it is only right that central government shares the burden of accountability. In a highly centralised political system such as the UK's responsibility very often does reside with national politicians. The challenge for localists, however is whether a political culture that has got so accustomed to holding national governments accountable for the quality of local services will be able to adjust to a world in which responsibility has moved elsewhere.

Understandably central government ministers will be reluctant to devolve powers if they are still held accountable for the decisions of other bodies, especially if they go wrong. This would amount to accountability without control, a politicians' worst nightmare. As one leading opposition spokesperson told us:

*"... you will find that anyone who goes in for new localism on a grand scale will regret it. They will find that they are being blamed for things which they no longer have any control of"*

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<sup>5</sup> Simon Jenkins *Thatcher and Sons: a revolution in three acts*

Is there a way out of this centralist bind? We argue that real localism depends on the ability to transfer powers *and* the accountability for exercising such powers to the local level. In other words ministers may be more inclined to give up powers where lines of accountability are clear and when they can be assured that once they've let go, the public, the media and the opposition will accept that responsibility rests at the local level.

Yet despite the importance of this issue to the current debate about localism there has been very little research into who the public holds responsible for public service performance. The core assumptions have never been tested in a systematic and empirical way. This paper is intended to help fill that gap.

In order to understand this debate we need a much better understanding of who the public holds accountable for different types of public service delivery and why.

### Methodology

To help inform policy thinking, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) and ippr commissioned a major new body of research<sup>6</sup> to understand the factors that impact on public perceptions of accountability across a range of service areas. This paper presents some initial findings from an opinion poll of 2709 members of the public, designed to understand who the public hold to account when things go wrong, as well as who they credit for when things go well, and how this varies according to a range of different factors.

The online survey set out to test two specific issues. Firstly, we wanted to test the degree to which the 'government in Westminster' is actually held responsible for the performance and delivery of core public services. To test this, we were interested in seeing how perceptions of responsibility varied across different public services - health, education, policing, transport and refuse collection - and by geographical level, so that we could compare who the public held accountable for a problem which arose in their local area or across the country as a whole.

Participants were therefore asked to consider various scenarios in which public services were seen to have deteriorated across the whole country as well as at a local level. Further details are provided below.

The second issue we set out to test was the degree to which it is possible to shift accountability for public service performance from the Westminster government to other bodies. This goes to the heart of the debate about localism and accountability since it allows us to see whether it is possible to give power away *and* decentralise responsibility for exercising those powers within a centralised political culture. To test this we looked at a range of bodies, which included: devolved institutions; the Scottish Government;

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<sup>6</sup> We commissioned Brand Democracy, an independent research consultancy – [www.branddemocracy.co.uk](http://www.branddemocracy.co.uk) – to conduct an online poll with 1505 members of the public (GB-wide), alongside 'booster samples' of 505 adults in Scotland, and 654 adults in Greater London. The total number of people surveyed was 2,709. All samples are representative of the populations from which they were drawn in terms of age, gender, social economic grade, and region.

London Mayor; local authorities; quangos, using the example of the qualifications authorities; and private companies, where we looked at the impact of transport companies.

Given that identifying the difference made by the presence of devolved assemblies was a core part of this research, the majority of statistics reported here refer to England only – so that they can be fairly compared to those from Scotland where necessary.

## Section 1: Who's accountable?

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Participants were asked to consider various scenarios in which public services were seen to have deteriorated across England as well as at a local level and then asked to say who they hold most responsible. In each case they were given a range of options to choose from.<sup>7</sup>

We used the following scenarios:

- Health: who would you hold most responsible if hospital waiting lists got longer across the country as a whole/in your local area?
- Crime: who would you hold most responsible if the police force across the country as a whole/in your local area became less effective at fighting crime?
- Education: who would you hold most responsible if school results across the country/in your local area got worse?
- Transport: who would you hold most responsible if transport across the country/in your local area got significantly worse?
- Refuse: who would you hold most responsible if rubbish bins in your local area were not emptied for a number of weeks?

### Findings

The public 'default' is to hold Westminster most responsible for public service performance. For problems arising at a national level in the fields of health, education and policing, our survey revealed that the public held the 'government in Westminster' more accountable than any other option with which they were provided.

This was not the case for transport where most respondents believed that the transport companies were most responsible if the performance of public transport declined. We discuss each service area in turn below.

### Health and policing

When we asked respondents who they hold most responsible for failures in health and policing across England, the government in Westminster came top by some way. As shown in [Figure 1](#), just fewer than 50% of respondents held Westminster most responsible, followed by the leaders of service delivery - health trusts (26%) and police chiefs (29%), with core providers being held much less responsible, hospital managers (11%) and the police (12%).

- If waiting lists got longer across England, 48% would hold the government in Westminster most responsible
- If police became less effective across England, 45% would hold the government in Westminster most responsible

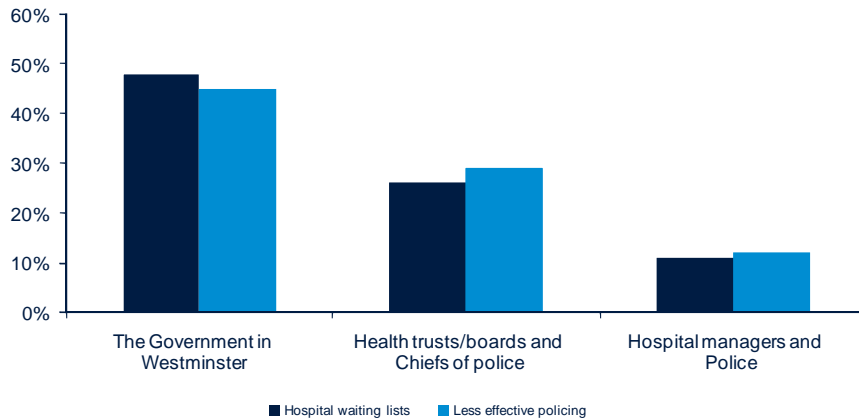
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<sup>7</sup> Core options included: Government in Westminster; Scottish Government /Welsh Assembly; MPs in your area; local councils in your area; staff; providers e.g. health trusts, schools etc; Mayor of London; managers in providers



Figure 1: Health and policing across the country:

If waiting lists/policing effectiveness got worse across the country who would you hold most responsible?



Base: Hospital waiting lists: 1334 (All English adults); Police effectiveness: 667 (Split A, English adults)

At a local level, however, the public's position shifted with more respondents holding those in charge of service delivery - health trusts and police chiefs most responsible if services deteriorated, than those who blamed the government in Westminster.<sup>8</sup> This raises important questions about the accountability of health trusts and police chiefs. Many commentators have pointed out that local bodies are often insufficiently accountable to the public and have suggested ways of improving this, for example the Conservative Party wants to introduce directly elected police commissioners who would hold the police chief to account.<sup>9</sup>

- 37% of respondents in England would hold the Health Trust most responsible if waiting lists got longer in their local area compared to 27% blaming the government in Westminster
- 36% of respondents in England would hold the police chief most responsible if policing became less effective in their local area compared to 29% holding Westminster to account

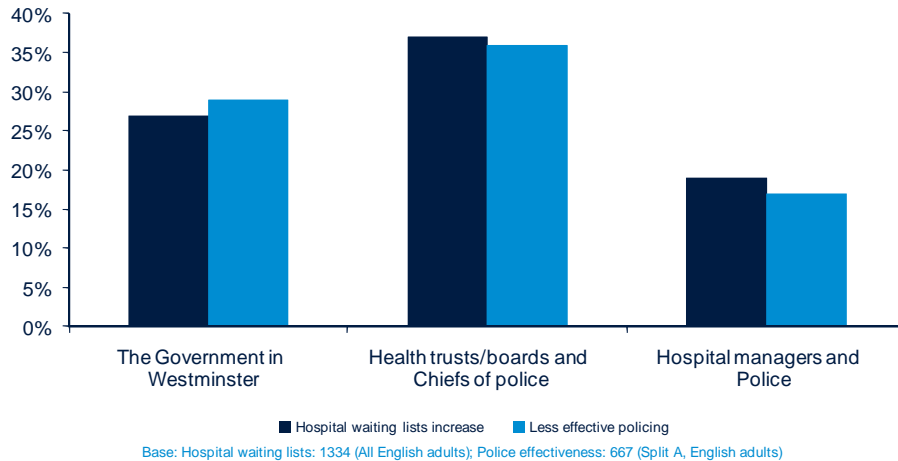
But as Figure 2 below suggests even when a problem arises with health and policing in a local area, respondents still felt that the *elected body* they hold most responsible is the Westminster government.

<sup>8</sup> We also note that the pattern of accountability at the local level remained concentrated on the same three groups that were held responsible at the national level (those in charge of service delivery, government in Westminster and public service providers)

<sup>9</sup> See for example R Muir and G Lodge *A New Beat: Options for more accountable policing* (ippr, 2008)

Figure 2: Health and policing at a local level

If waiting lists/police effectiveness got worse in your local area who would you hold most responsible?



## Education

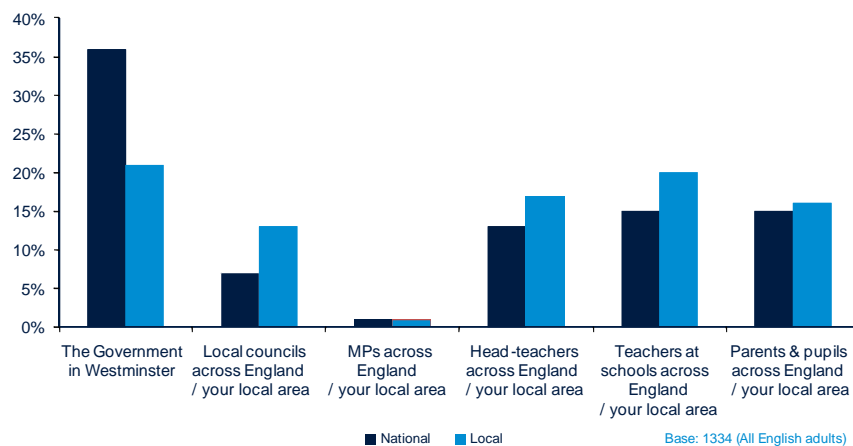
Responsibility for failure in education is more diffuse than it is for health and policing with teachers, head teachers and parents themselves being held responsible if school results were to get worse. Nonetheless it is still Westminster that is held most responsible at both a local and a national level.

- If school results got worse across England, 36% would hold the government in Westminster most responsible, compared to 15% for teachers, 15% for parents and 13% for head teachers
- If school results got worse in the local area in England, 21% would hold the government in Westminster most responsible, compared to 17% for teachers, 16% for parents and 20% for head teachers

The fact that 16% of respondents believe that parents are most responsible for school results in the local area would seem to chime with recent calls, including from David Cameron, for parents and individuals to take greater responsibility for improving educational outcomes.

Figure 3: Blame for failure in education is more diffuse

If school exam results got worse across the country / your local area who would you hold most responsible?



## Transport

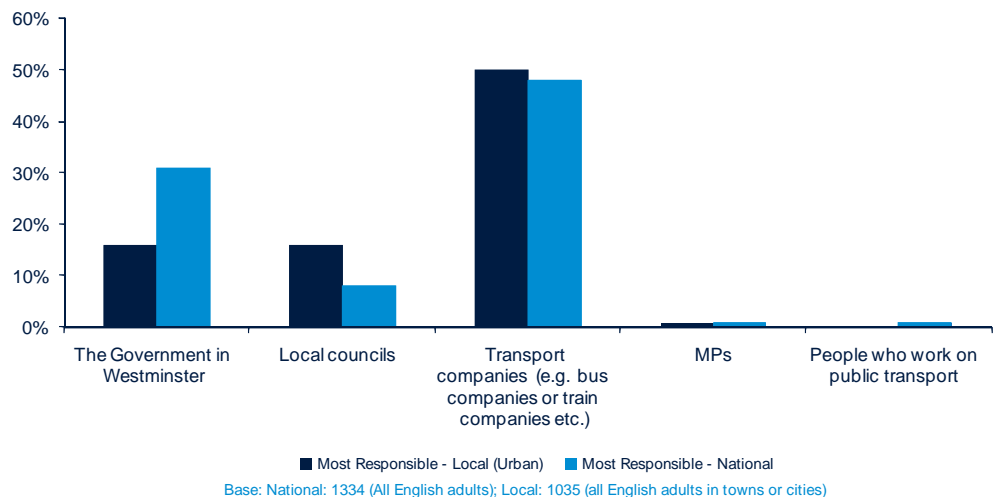
Unlike in health, policing and education, where Westminster was consistently held most responsible for nation-wide problems, respondents were more likely to point the finger at private transport companies for problems with public transport. This also proved to be the case at the local level.

- 48% of respondents in England said they would hold transport companies most responsible if public transport got worse across the country compared to 31% for Westminster
- At a local level 50% of respondents in England said they would hold transport companies most responsible in their city or town, compared with only 16% for the government in Westminster.

We discuss a possible explanation for why transport might be different below.

Figure 4: Transport at the national and local level

And which ONE of the following would you consider to be MOST responsible if public transport across England / across the city or town you live in got significantly worse?



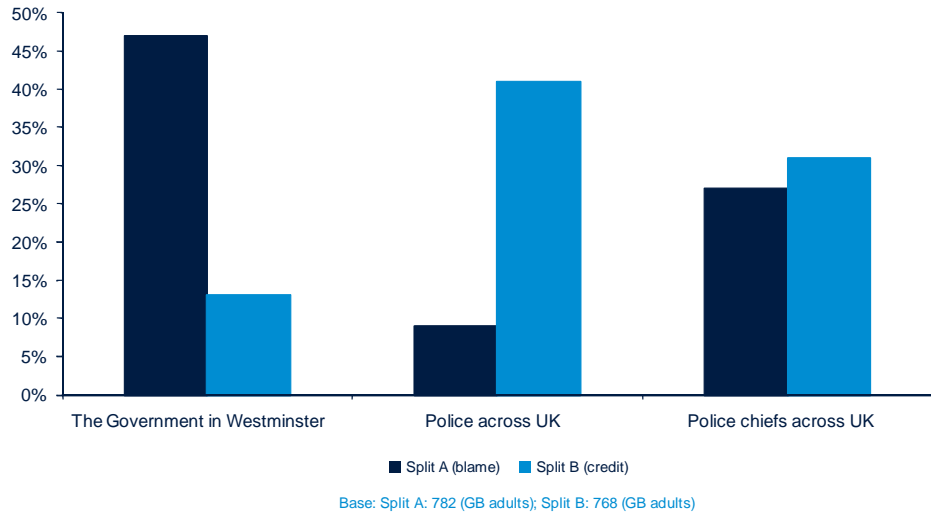
## Who takes the credit for things going well?

We were not only interested in who the public associates with things going wrong but also sought to see who they would reward for success. The findings across Britain do not necessarily make comfortable reading for politicians.

Our survey shows that while the government in Westminster is held accountable for things going wrong, it is not given the credit when things go right. For example, if policing gets worse, 47% of respondents hold the government in Westminster. But if it gets better, 41% of respondents gave credit to the police.

Figure 5: Who's get the credit when things go right?

And which ONE of the following would you give the MOST credit to / hold most responsible if the police force across the United Kingdom became more effective / less effective at fighting crime?



### Summary

The public 'default' is to hold Westminster most responsible for public service performance, especially where the failure is seen to be country-wide

The profile for accountability varies by service. Health and policing have concentrated profiles on Westminster with the main delivery leaders/bodies taking most responsibility. Education, in contrast, has a more diffuse profile, with parents and teachers sharing accountability alongside the government. Where the involvement of private organisations is well understood, as in transport, these are held most responsible.

It also varies by geography where responsibility for failure varies according to whether a problem occurs in 'my local area' or 'across the country'. At a local level delivery agents tend to be held most responsible, which raises important questions about how these bodies are made publicly accountable. But even when a problem arises 'in my local area', the government in Westminster is the *elected body* that most people hold most responsible.

## Section 2: Giving power away – is it possible to shift responsibility?

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The second thing we set out to test is the extent to which it is possible to shift accountability once power has been transferred to other bodies. We looked at the following bodies: the Scottish Government, the Mayor of London, local councils, quangos and private providers. Each is discussed in turn below.

### Transferring risk to devolved institutions - Scottish Government and London Mayor

Our survey revealed clearly that devolution to an elected body needs to be wholesale and well publicised if perceptions of responsibility are to move from the default option of the government in Westminster to devolved bodies.

We looked at the impact of the Scottish Government and the Mayor of London to examine the degree to which these devolved institutions have changed public perceptions of accountability.

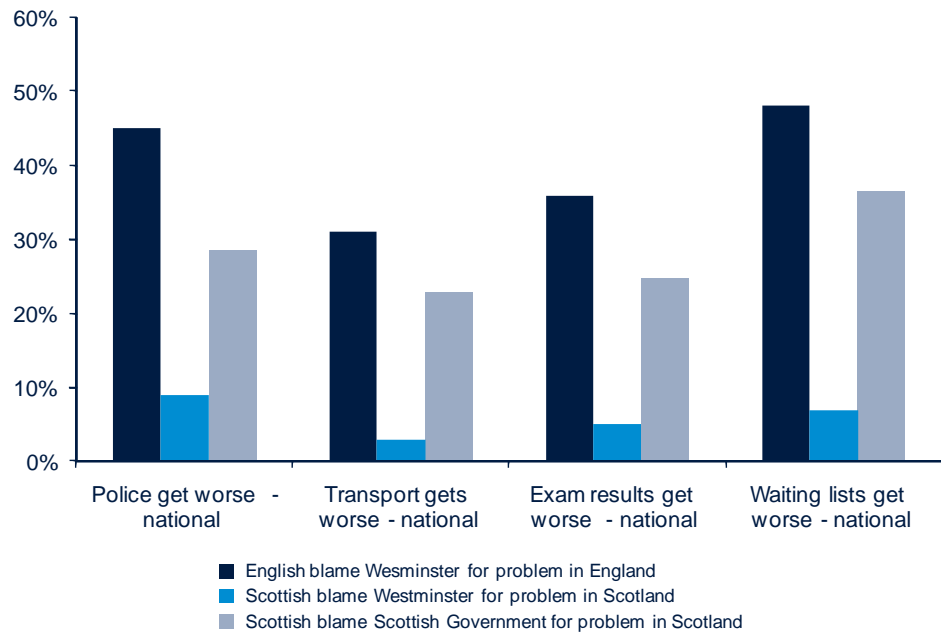
In Scotland – where the Scottish Government’s powers are clearly defined and communicated and where Scottish Government ministers have a relatively high profile – the devolved Scottish government tends to be held to account rather than the government in Westminster. For example, if waiting lists were to get longer across Scotland, only 7% of Scottish adults would hold the government in Westminster to account, while 37% would hold the Scottish government most to account.

Indeed, as [Figure 6](#) below indicates, Scottish respondents were much less likely to hold Westminster accountable for problems in Scotland. The good news for those who support decentralisation, therefore, is that this suggests that public perceptions can shift if real power is given away from the centre.

- 37% of Scots said the Scottish Government was most responsible for any rise in waiting lists in Scotland, compared to only 7% who held the government in Westminster most responsible
- 29% of Scots said the Scottish government was most responsible for any decline in police effectiveness across Scotland compared to 9% for the Westminster government
- 25% of Scots said that the Scottish government was most responsible if school results got worse across Scotland compared to 5% who hold the government in Westminster most responsible
- 23% of Scots would blame the Scottish government if transport got worse in Scotland compared to just 3% who would point towards the government in Westminster.

## Figure 6: Devolution of power to the Scottish Government

And which ONE of the following would you hold MOST responsible if [service] got worse across England / Scotland?



Base: Transport / exam results / waiting lists: England: 1334; Scotland: 664.  
Police: England: 667 (Split A, English adults); Scotland: 330 (Split A: Scottish adults)

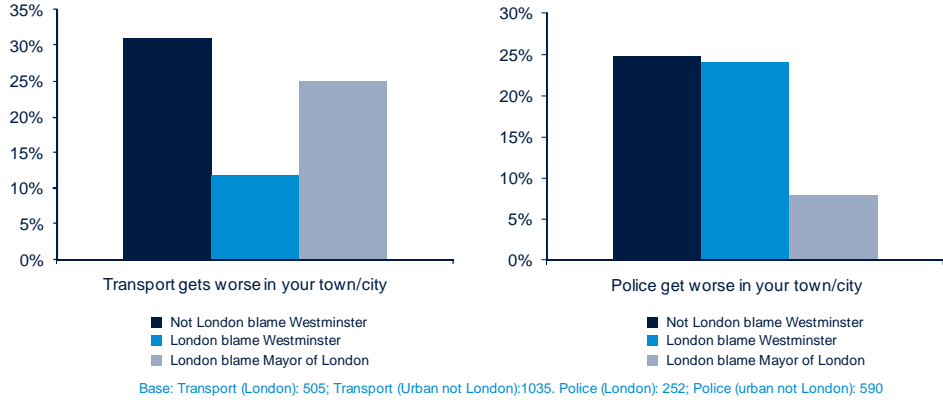
Our survey does not provide longitudinal data but it is possible to compare our results with other research in this area to get a sense of how things have changed over time. The 2007 *Scottish Social Attitudes* survey, for instance, asked Scots who they thought exercised 'the most influence over how Scotland is run' and records that the proportion who believed it to be the Scottish Executive<sup>10</sup> rose from 13% in 2000 to 28% in 2007. Although we asked a different question, our own data and this evidence from the SSA would seem to suggest that over time the Scottish people appear to have got more used to their new institutional arrangements and have come to recognise the increased importance of the Scottish Government in Scottish public life.

In London, the results appear to confirm the Scottish experience. For instance, where the Mayor's role is clearly understood – as in public transport - it appears that he soaks up responsibility for failures from Westminster. But the same is not true of policing, where the distribution of responsibility is much less clear. If public transport got worse in London, 25% of Londoners would hold the Mayor responsible, whereas only 12% would see it as the government in Westminster. In contrast, if policing became less effective, only 7% of Londoners would hold the Mayor to account, while 24% would hold the Westminster government responsible. It appears that where the division of powers is much less clear, as in the case of policing in London, then respondents reverted to their default position and hold the government in Westminster to account. However, where powers are clear, it appears that a directly-elected mayor can make a big difference.

<sup>10</sup> The SSA survey was conducted before the Scottish Executive changed its name to the Scottish Government.

Figure 7: Public perceptions of Mayoral accountability

And which ONE of the following would you consider to be MOST responsible if public transport / police effectiveness across the city or town you live in got significantly worse?



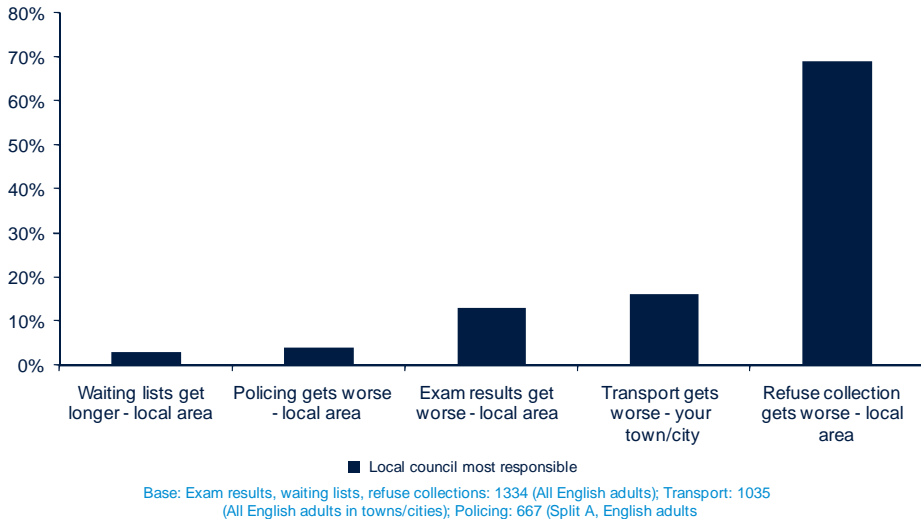
### Transferring risk to devolved institutions – local authorities

Our survey shows that when something goes wrong in a local area, councils are very rarely felt to be the most responsible body. The one notable and unsurprising exception to this for the scenarios we tested, is refuse collection, where the great majority of the public hold the council most responsible. It is also the case that at a local level the same number of respondents held the local council and Westminster most responsible if public transport got worse.

These results shouldn't surprise us. Given the scaling back of local governments' powers over local services in the last thirty years why would the public hold them responsible for the performance of services they either do not control or control in a limited way? This of course assumes that respondents were aware of the division of powers between central and local government: though we note that respondents hold councils least responsible for health and policing at a local level but hold them most responsible for refuse collection which does seem to correspond to the actual division of powers.

Figure 8: Accountability of local councils across service areas

And which ONE of the following would you consider to be MOST responsible if health / policing / education / transport / refuse across the city or town you live in got significantly worse?



To really understand the relationship between powers and attitudes towards responsibility at a local level we would need to see whether the pattern identified here changed if real powers were decentralised.

It might be argued that public perceptions of accountability would shift to the local level once significant powers were transferred to local government. The evidence above shows that this has happened in the case of the Scottish Government and the London Mayor.

There are, however, reasons to be cautious about such a view. Whereas the Scottish Parliament and the London Mayoral model (for transport at least) appear capable of absorbing responsibility and therefore insulating the Westminster government from being held accountable for the decisions taken by the devolved bodies, it is questionable whether governance arrangements in local government, as currently constituted, are sufficiently accountable for the transfer of power that some advocate.

As one leading Conservative front bench spokesperson told us:

*“I always argue that one of the problems with local government in England is that nobody takes local responsibility for anything, there is no local accountability. Everything that goes wrong at the local level is blamed on the national government.”*

There is ample evidence to suggest why this may be the case: local authorities tend to have a low profile in their communities with very few members of the public being able to name their local politicians. For instance a recent Mori poll for NLGN found that 71% of the public could not name their council leader. Another obvious indicator is the low turnout in council elections.

It may be that local governance arrangements would need to change as a *quid pro quo* for greater powers. A number of policy proposals have been suggested to address the weak level of accountability at a local level. Two in particular stand out: directly-elected mayors and directly-elected commissioners of public services, such as the idea of an elected police commissioner to hold the police to account. Both are intended to deliver more visible accountability by providing the public with a name and face to hold to account.<sup>11</sup>

Given the interest in the options we asked our respondents whether they supported their introduction. [Figure 9](#) shows that both are popular, with over 40% supporting directly-elected mayors, and just under 60% backing the idea that the public should be able to directly-elect people to run public services.

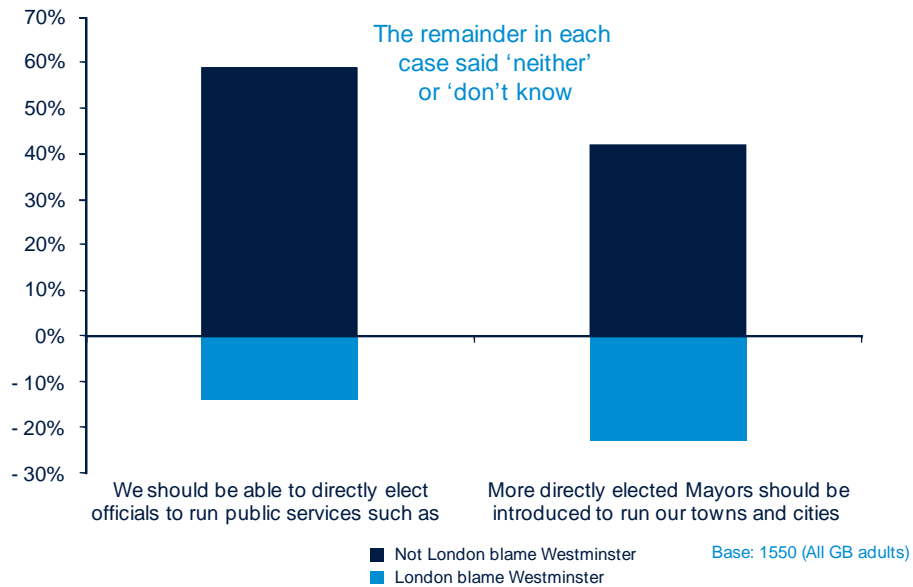
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<sup>11</sup> There is some evidence to suggest that directly elected mayors can deliver this accountability. 67% of Newham residents were able to identify Sir Robin Wales as their mayor in a recent survey.



Figure 9: Support for directly elected officials

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



## Quangos

Governments often set up quango's to perform specific and discrete functions. But is it possible to delegate accountability to these bodies or does the public still hold government responsible? The evidence from our poll is a little mixed although the main message appears to be that it is possible to transfer risk to quangos, but only if the public believe that such bodies are genuinely independent and responsible for their actions. If the public suspect that the government has interfered with the way they work then accountability for their performance moves back to Westminster.

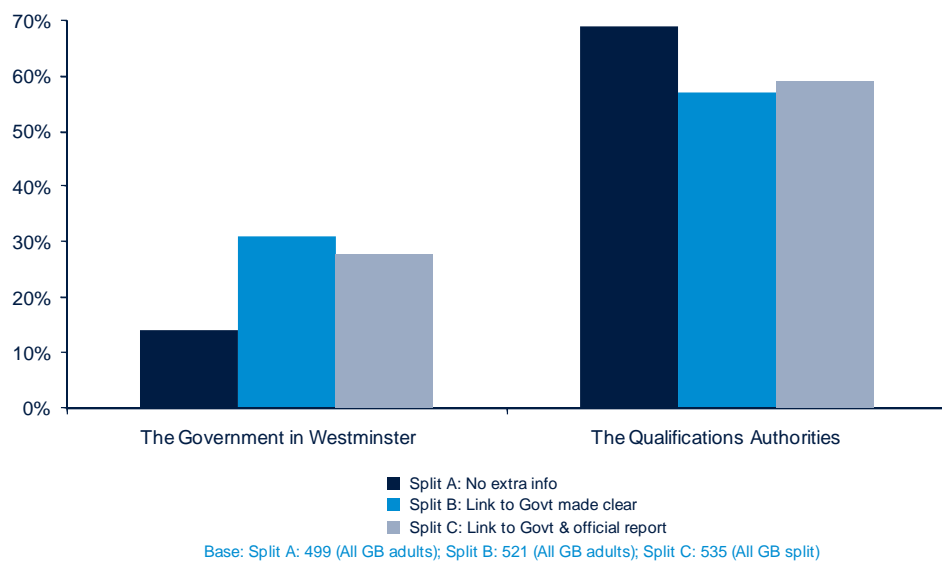
To test the 'quango effect' we used a set of questions looking at the late delivery of exam results. We divided respondents into three separate groups ('Splits'), each of which was given a slightly different scenario, providing more or less information about role of the qualifications authorities. They were then asked to say who was most responsible from a list which included "the Qualifications Authorities" alongside seven other options such as "The Government in Westminster" and "local councils".

- Respondents in Split A were simply told that there had been a delay in exam results "because of a problem in the marking process". The role of the qualifications authorities was not mentioned.
- Alongside describing the delay as above, those in Split B were also told that exam authorities responsible for marking the papers had been set up by the Government to be independent and manage the process.
- Respondents in Split C were given both pieces of information above, as well as being told that "An official report finds that the Qualifications Authorities 'failed to deliver' and did not manage the marking process effectively".

As Figure 10 shows, the majority of respondents in Split A felt that the exam authorities were most responsible (69%). But amongst respondents in Split B (who were told that the exam authorities “had been set up by the Government to be independent and manage the process,”) perceptions of their responsibility begin to fall (by 10%) and the number holding Westminster to account rises: in fact it more than doubles. Even when told that an official Government report blamed the exam authorities, respondents in Split C still shifted responsibility towards the Government and away from the quango.

While a majority (56%) believed that an independent organisation ought to be responsible if something goes wrong, a larger majority (66%) felt that, because government has a role in setting the remit and resource for such organisations, they can never really be independent.

Figure 10: Giving power away to quangos

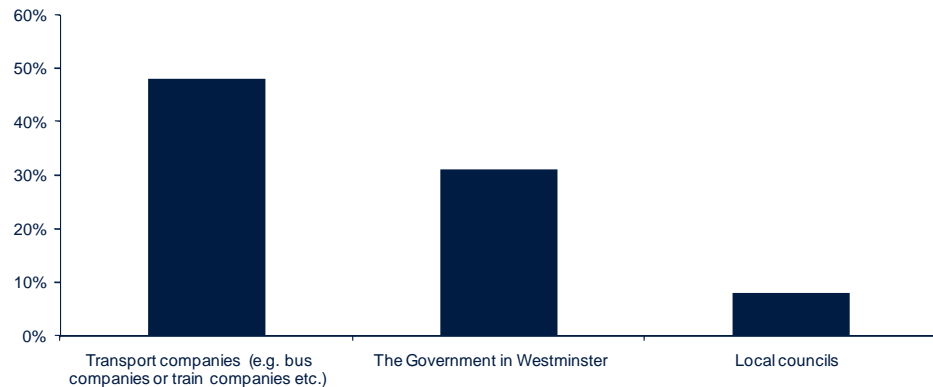


## Private Providers

Private providers are held responsible when people interact with them day-to-day (as set out previously in public transport). Unlike health, crime and education, where the government in Westminster was consistently most held to account for nation-wide problems, respondents were more likely to hold private transport companies responsible for problems with public transport. Why might this be? Firstly the public has had time to get used to the privatised operators, and regularly interacts with them on a daily basis. And secondly because unlike in other public services where the role of private companies tends to be ‘hidden’ beneath a public service brand (such as the NHS), in transport the private operators have highly developed and publicly-recognised brands with which the public are familiar.

Figure 11: Giving power away - private transport companies

And which ONE of the following would you consider to be MOST responsible if public transport across got significantly worse?



Base: 1334 (All English adults)

## Summary

These findings demonstrate a number of things. Most importantly they show that it is possible to shift perceptions of accountability if devolution is well publicised and if real powers are transferred to highly visible and accountable bodies such as the Scottish Government, and the London Mayor (for transport policy at least). However, we can also observe that there is a lag in this transition, where it appears to take time for public perception of responsibility to catch up with the reality of devolved powers.

Giving power away to quangos can also work, but the independence is fragile and any government involvement moves accountability back to the government in Westminster. Private providers are held responsible when people interact with them day-to-day (as in public transport).

We can only speculate but the data also appears to suggest that members of the public have a good sense of how to allocate responsibility for the various scenarios to which they were asked to respond in our survey. Determining who to hold responsible appears to depend on the extent to which a body has the powers to make a difference. In London they felt that the Mayor was more responsible for transport than policing which appears to reflect the balance of power between the Mayor and the Westminster government. At a local level they held councils responsible for refuse but not for health or policing.

## Conclusion

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This paper has sought to explore the degree to which it is possible to devolve responsibility for decisions within our highly centralised political culture.

Although it shows that the public does tend to hold Westminster responsible for core parts of public service performance, it also shows that it is possible to give power away and transfer accountability to other bodies if certain important criteria are met.

In particular, public perceptions of accountability will change if decentralisation is well communicated, clearly enacted, and if real powers are transferred to highly accountable bodies. When this isn't the case – when lines of accountability are unclear, where the public does not know who is in charge, and where the division of power is murky - then the public reverts to holding the government in Westminster responsible for the performance of public services.

Contrary to what many assume our research tends to suggest that when the public come to allocate responsibility they tend to do so with a relatively good awareness of whether particular bodies have the powers to act in a particular area.

However, it also appears that it can take time for public perceptions of accountability to change once power has been transferred to a new body, as the experience with the Scottish Government appears to show. The public it seems need time to get used to understanding who is responsible for exercising powers at the devolved level.

This presents a challenge for politicians as it implies that there will be a period of time in which they will still be held responsible for the outcomes of decisions taken by a devolved body once they have let go. We believe politicians in Westminster need to hold their nerve if they are to rise to the challenge of giving power away in our centralised political culture.

## About PricewaterhouseCoopers

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PricewaterhouseCoopers' Government & Public Sector practice has been helping government and public sector organisations locally, regionally, nationally and internationally for many years. We work with organisations across sectors as diverse as health, education, transport, home affairs, criminal justice, local government, housing, social welfare, defence and international development.

Our people combine deep specialist expertise with a genuine understanding of the public sector. Our Government and Public sector practice now comprises of approximately 1,300 people, over half of whom people work in our consulting business, with the remainder in assurance and tax.

The Smarter State forms part of our [Forward Thinking](#) programme which provides a platform for this new thinking by bringing together politicians, policy makers and shapers, market experts and practitioners to share knowledge and provide new insight on the most pressing challenges being faced in the public sector today and in the future. For more information please visit our Public Sector Research Centre at: [www.psrc-pwc.com](http://www.psrc-pwc.com)

## About ippr

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The Institute for Public Policy Research is the UK's leading progressive think tank, producing cutting-edge research and innovative policy ideas for a just, democratic and sustainable world.

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With offices in both London and Newcastle, we ensure our outlook is as broad-based as possible, while our international and migration teams and climate change programme extend our partnerships and influence beyond the UK, giving us a truly world-class reputation for high quality research.

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