

For immediate release

Public unconvinced about need for cuts

Only a quarter of the public believe there is a need to cut services to reduce the national debt concludes a report commissioned by the RSA and the 2020 Public Services Trust.

The report *'What do people want, need and expect from Public Services'*, published today and written by Ipsos MORI, shows that while 50 per cent do not think cuts are necessary, 48 per cent think more rather than less, should be spent. And 75 per cent believe efficiencies alone can deliver savings needed without damaging services.

The report concludes this suggests that the public are either not facing up to, or are not aware of, the hard choices facing the country, with public borrowing due to hit around £170bn this year.

The MORI research shows that the public:

- want public services to be based on notions of the public good, rather than just what's good for me – 50% think the government's priority for public services should be society as a whole;
- understand the public good largely in terms of universalism, with equality of access to benefits - 70% think treatments should only be available on the NHS if they are available to everyone, regardless of where they live;
- are prepared, with prompting, to consider types of equality that relate to outcomes rather than access;
- see more potential in playing a strong role in public service development locally rather than nationally – 48% would like to be involved in decision-making in their local area versus 43% nationally; and

- struggle to see a compelling or urgent case for reforming public services to cope with economic pressures and social changes, and divide evenly on whether to support service cuts or tax rises.

The research comes as the Commission on 2020 Public Services publishes its interim report 'Beyond Beveridge: If not now, when?' which concludes that the current political debate is too short term and narrow, and that it misses the point about the need for fundamental change to our public services.

Commenting on the report Chair of the 2020 Public Services Commission, Sir Andrew Foster said:

"We are emerging from the longest recession since the 1930s and facing huge challenges. But what we are being offered by politicians is a narrow and limited set of choices - cut now or cut later. We cannot just go on doing the same things with less money. If we do, we will continue to fail those who rely on public services the most. We need a new approach - one that is positive, coherent, consensus based and long term. It should be built on sound principles that are in tune with our times, and deliverable if we stay the course."

Notes to Editors

1. **For more information or a copy of the report contact Luke Robinson, RSA Head of Media on 020 7451 6893 or 07799 737 970 or luke.robinson@rsa.org.uk.** Or Ben Page, Ipsos MORI on +44 7917 603 356 or +44 207 347 324. Or Ashish Prashar, 2020 Public Services Trust Communications Manger on 07775 501 839 or ash@2020pst.org