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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **The Management Styles and Characteristics of Local Authority Housing Benefit Managers DWP Research report No. 218**

The findings of a research study into the characteristics of housing benefit managers in well performing or 'turnaround' local authorities are being published today. The research was designed to 'hallmark' management and leadership practices and skills employed in seven case study local authorities.

A management and leadership framework developed by the researchers was used to examine aspects of the managers' behaviour in the case study authorities. It was found that there is no one universally applicable management style. For example, an organisation in need of performance improvement may require a strong top-down driven style of management, while an authority already at the top end of the performance league may require a steady management style, with a 'safe pair of hands' approach.

The ideal manager that emerges from the case studies has qualities that may appear paradoxical, for example:

- Is personally knowledgeable, 'knows the answers', but works to get the best from others
- Has an open, listening style, uses humour, yet does not suffer fools
- Is not/not expected to be 'visionary', yet sees the bigger picture
- Manages change well, but creates stability.

*"I work to the staff as much as I work for my head of service."*

#### **Case study HB Manager**

In the case study of Local Authorities, it is the ability of the managers to deploy a balance of management and leadership qualities that distinguishes them. This appears to reflect the particular context of Housing Benefit service delivery – it is a process and output-driven service that relies on effective team working to attain high performance standards.

Amongst the case studies the researchers found a clear willingness to place emphasis on developing and valuing management and leadership capacity as key to achieving high performance in delivering Housing Benefit.

It was found that people in the case study authorities are enthused and motivated to perform at the higher levels when they share and subscribe to the personal values imparted by their managers and senior management team.

Individual members of staff at middle management and lower levels tend to find it difficult relating to high level corporate values; instead they are more likely to be

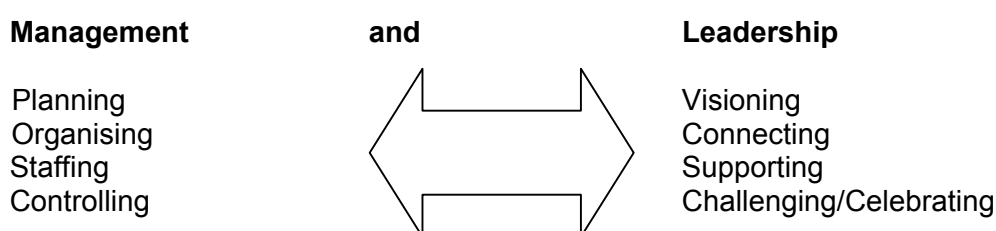
"turned on" by the example set by their direct line managers. This in turn manifests itself in terms such as "integrity", "honesty" and "trust".

The research has not uncovered a model of management style that guarantees success. Rather what have emerged are some distinct trends for the factors that impact on high performing services.

#### Notes to Editors:

1. A management and leadership framework was developed to explore two distinct aspects of management behaviour – namely "management" and "leadership". The framework is summarised in the diagram below.

#### **Management and Leadership Framework**



2. The full report of these research findings is published for the Department of Work and Pensions by Corporate Document Services "*Management Styles and Characteristics of Local Authority Housing Benefit Managers*" (ISBN 1 84123 726 4) Research Report no. 218 September 2004.
3. The research was carried out by IRIS Consulting.
4. The authors of the report are Lisa Grainger, Dr Emma Bird and John Harvey
5. It can be obtained from:  
Corporate Document Services, 7 Eastgate, Leeds LS2 7LY  
Tel: 0113 399 4040. Fax: 0113 399 4205  
E-mail: [cds@corpdocs.co.uk](mailto:cds@corpdocs.co.uk)

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<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2003-2004/rrep218.asp>

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