

Transformation in localities toolkit

May 2018





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Foreword

England's 201 district councils are the closest and most accountable public authorities to the people they serve. We cover over 60% of England's land mass, providing two thirds of the local services that contribute to making better lives and stronger economies.

Districts are focused on improving quality of life and solving problems for our residents and businesses one family, street and place at a time. Through our unique understanding of our local economies, we also grow the national economy, one local economy at a time.

Society is changing and councils need to change with it to remain relevant in the 21st Century. Working with the grain of people's lives and expectations whilst preserving local democratic accountability and representation will be crucial. Districts are perfectly placed to provide that local leadership.

As our work with Grant Thornton shows, increasingly, District Councils are the building blocks of collaboration and partnerships in new local geographies that do not always respect the administrative boundaries set down generations ago.

This evidence-based toolkit highlights the importance of districts seizing the opportunity to reflect the economic, labour, health and commuting geographies that our residents experience as they live their lives. Using this toolkit will help those district councils that wish to cooperate with neighbours beyond their boundaries to demonstrate, to themselves and partners, the opportunities to work on a broader canvas whilst achieving even more for those we serve.

The evidence in this report also paints a clear picture of the great opportunities for districts working closely with LEPs to ensure our unique role as the planning and housing authority is recognised and represented in each functional economic area. It demonstrates to the NHS that our well-evidenced role in health prevention over a whole housing market area can reduce demand for health and adult social care services. Crucially it emphasises the importance of districts as local democratic gatekeepers in shaping future transformation.

This is an important and unique body of work, published at a pivotal point for local government, which will help all districts in reflecting a future that is shaped by our residents. It recognises that Councils have a more noble role than just the simple provision of transactional services and shows how much more can be delivered through moving forward to shape our new canvas without diluting the historical ties that bind us.



Cllr. John Fuller

Chairman of District Councils' Network and Leader of South Norfolk District Council

Grant Thornton is a purpose-led organisation. We are passionately committed to creating a vibrant economy across the UK in which communities and business can thrive.

We are delighted to have worked in partnership with the District Councils' Network on this research project, and hope to make a positive contribution to the ongoing evolution of local public services.

This is not a traditional piece of thought leadership, neither is it a top-down prescription for the future shape of the sector. Instead, we hope this is a celebration of localism, and a recognition of the scale and diversity of innovation in local approaches to securing improved outcomes for people and places across England.

Our intention is to shine a light on the range of vibrant and innovative local partnerships who are redefining the limits of what can be achieved through positive collaboration, and to share some reflections and lessons learned that may resonate with other places as they consider how best to meet their local ambitions on behalf of communities.

At Grant Thornton we are passionate supporters of all parts of the public sector and we recognise that the solutions to the fundamental challenges facing the UK are deep-rooted and complex. We hope that this toolkit will provide much needed support to place-based partnerships as they tackle these challenges together.



Paul Dossett
Head of Local Government
Grant Thornton UK LLP





Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the DCN Members's Board, the DCN Chief Executives group and the DCN officer team for their support to this project. We would especially like to thank our case study areas and the reference group of district chief executives who have supported our work throughout.

An accompanying guide to the legal considerations associated with transformation and collaboration has been produced by Trowers & Hamlin LLP and is available on their website: www.trowers.com/dncollaborate



Executive summary

“Up and down the country, districts are working with their partners to develop proposals to transform the services they deliver for their residents, both through structural and non-structural solutions. By developing a transformation toolkit the DCN can support districts with an appetite for transformation to capitalise on the opportunities available and help them manage transformation in the most efficient and effective way.

It is recommended that the District Councils’ Network develop a toolkit for districts to support them in developing their proposals for local government and wider public sector transformation.”

District led collaboration APPG report – July 2017

This piece of work was commissioned by the District Councils’ Network members’ board, following a recommendation by the All Party Parliamentary Group Enquiry into district-led collaboration, which was published in June 2017.

Local authorities are on the front line of dealing with the most significant challenges facing the country. They are central to government’s ambitions to modernise the economy, accelerate the pace of home-building and put health and social care on a sustainable footing for the long term. They must ensure that a growing and ageing population enjoys a good quality of life spent in safety, comfort and prosperity, whilst supporting local businesses in an uncertain and changing context. An intense national debate is taking place as the UK prepares to leave the European Union, but many of the risks and opportunities that arise will be for local leaders to navigate.

In this challenging context, and as always, district councils will continue to work intensively with the residents and businesses in their areas. However, the ways in which people live their lives and local economies function are not limited to municipal boundaries, which have essentially remained unchanged since the 19th Century.

District councils therefore have the opportunity to work with their local partners to act over wider areas that better reflect how their places work in practice. District councils are stepping up to offer innovative solutions through local partnerships and exploring a wide variety of models of collaboration. Whether working in informal clusters, developing shared services, aligning strategies and resources, or exploring mergers and unitary reorganisation, districts continue to form natural building blocks for collaborative work to improve lives and grow local economies.

By virtue of their numbers and their democratic mandate, districts are also gatekeepers to the consensus that must underpin public sector reform in areas where local leaders have chosen to explore this.

It is important to recognise the scale of ambition offered by the best district councils. Local leaders across the country have shown repeatedly that they are not content with waiting to be told what to do by others or simply manage the status quo. They have high aspirations for their places and are willing to make the first move, innovate, invest and take risks. They now need further levers to realise their ambitions and the calls from district leaders are set out in this toolkit.

Principles for district-led collaboration

Drawing on our engagement with innovative district partnerships across the country, some clear principles have emerged. District-led collaboration is:

- built on the powerful tools that districts have always had at their disposal
- boundary-blind and driven by a place-based vision for success
- rooted in and responsive to a detailed understanding of locality, residents and businesses
- entrepreneurial, commercial and innovative
- focused on local economic growth to support the wider economy
- consensus-led and supportive of the aspirations of place-based partners
- founded on robust democratic accountability and transparency.

There are many myths surrounding collaboration in Shire areas. As the evidence in this toolkit shows, the truth is that:

- districts under different political control routinely work together to the benefit of local communities and businesses, whilst saving money and increasing the resilience of their organisations
- innovation and collaboration is alive and well in district and county areas. Through positive relationships and effective collaboration, there is no intrinsic or structural constraint on what can be achieved by these organisations
- districts are actively engaged with key place-based partners such as health bodies and local enterprise partnerships and are recognised as a vital part of the fabric of local public services
- far-reaching transformation and public sector reform is being achieved within localities without compromising on democratic accountability.

How to use this toolkit

The toolkit is modular and is not designed to be read end-to-end; readers should dip into the parts that reflect their local plans and interests.

Each section provides a short summary of the latest relevant national developments and a number of tools and resources to support local reflection and planning.

The document is intended for use by district councils as they consider how to achieve their local ambitions through collaboration with other organisations in a context of local economic geography. The document has been developed in close collaboration with a reference group of District chief executives, with invaluable input from councillors and senior officers across the country.

We recognise that District Councils work in a wide variety of local contexts. Most districts will already be underway with a number of collaborative initiatives, often acting with a range of partners over different geographical footprints.

In discussion with Districts across England, we have decided to focus on three key questions:

- Why collaborate and with whom?
- How do we move from intention to action?
- What is the right approach to achieving our ambitions?

Why collaborate, and with whom?

District Councils are both closely connected with communities and exercise a democratic mandate to respond to their needs and interests. Collaboration with local partners has always been a natural approach to achieving this. District Councils are outward-looking and engaged in their localities, and understand the challenges and priorities of partners. They offer a vital collaborative partnership to other local organisations and often act as a convenor and facilitator to ensure collective action to the benefit of local residents.

There are compelling strategic opportunities on offer for local partnerships who can work together to grasp them. These include:



Growing local economies – districts can act as the building blocks for local economic growth, working with each other and alongside LEAs to shape place-based approaches to delivering growth and supporting the development of local industrial strategies.



Helping to put health and social care on a sustainable footing – health and social care may be heading for wholesale transformation. As part of their local health and wellbeing ecosystems, districts are increasingly recognised as making a fundamental contribution around public health and preventative work.



Accelerating housing delivery – after Brexit, housebuilding is the number one priority for central government. As planning authorities and increasingly as house builders in their own right, districts are already at the heart of this agenda. However, working in cross-boundary partnerships and geographic clusters across housing market areas can shift delivery up a gear and unlock new funding from central government.



Speaking with a single voice on funding and fiscal devolution – as the Fair Funding review continues and further business rates pilots are expected, districts can speak with one voice alongside the rest of the sector to make the case for funding that matches the true responsibilities, influence and impact of local government.



Achieving efficiency and resilience through sharing – district-led partnerships are breaking new ground with shared service models and leveraging their collective assets and resources. This is enabling them to find new ways to maintain financial resilience and protect the quality of services over the long term.



Re-engaging with devolution discussions – with a new framework for devolution expected imminently, local partnerships may have the opportunity to re-energise devolution discussions and re-engage partners in the debate about taking more control locally in achieving shared ambitions for place.



Managing local labour markets – with local payment mechanisms already in place, districts can make the case to DWP to take on greater local responsibility for managing the entirety of local labour markets, engaging with the universal credit and skills agendas.



Reframing local economies in the context of Britain's departure from the EU – Brexit is a national debate, but the risks and opportunities will also be local. Districts can work together to ensure that powers from Brussels do not stop in Whitehall, new opportunities and funding accrue locally, and local businesses are focused on a global marketplace.



Setting out positive visions for public sector reform with communities at their heart – public sector reform is a live debate in many areas. Local leaders have the opportunity to set out bold and innovative proposals for improving local government within their localities, and to provide innovative solutions to local issues which command the support of the residents they serve.

In order to seize these opportunities as and when they arise, there are some fundamental preparations that districts must make with their partners:

- Continue to strengthen partnerships, proving the reciprocal benefits of collaboration within a geography that makes sense of how the local economy works and how local people live their lives
- Establish a shared evidence base on local economies and the wellbeing of communities
- Develop a compelling place-based vision that is rooted in a distinctive local identity
- Agree and articulate asks of central government
- Consider what local reform and transformation is required, if any, to support delivery of the above

How do we move from intention to action?

Districts, as the elected representatives of the localities they serve, have the democratic legitimacy to convene local partners around a shared vision for place. A unifying place-based vision, linking local prosperity and economic growth, is key to mobilising local partnerships. There can be important practical hurdles to overcome around developing shared language, resourcing and programme management, and alignment of cultures and behaviours.

Creating time and space for partners to come together at all levels is key to making collaboration stick. When determining the best governance models for collaboration, a number of factors must be carefully weighed, these include efficiency and savings, better service outcomes, stronger place-based leadership and empowerment of communities.

What is the right approach to achieving our collaborative ambitions?

Collaborating for better lives

Districts can help to improve the sustainability of health and social care services. They are providers of key preventative services including housing, homelessness, leisure and environmental health. There is a clear and evidence-based case for strategic health partnerships to recognise the role of these services as part of their local health care ecosystem, and ensure that they are leveraged to improve public health outcomes and reduce demand for social care and acute health services.

Forging operational partnerships with health bodies takes persistence and a focus on evidence, but leading districts are showing the way. The most successful joint initiatives between districts and health have often begun with a relatively simple value proposition to health partners and have snowballed as evidence of impact has grown. As one of our interviewees said of local health partners: **“through collaboration they could see that by helping us do more, they are helping themselves.”**

Districts call on national and local health partners to:

- recognise districts’ key health and social care role in prevention and managing demand downstream
- recognise districts’ key health and wellbeing role in addressing the wider determinants of health
- work with districts to ensure appropriate involvement and representation within local health systems, such as health and wellbeing boards, and sustainability and transformation partnerships.

Districts themselves should:

- develop a locally-responsive ‘prevention offer’ drawing on the range of services and community support districts provide
- work with health and social care partners and communities to develop a whole-system approach to health and wellbeing, focusing on prevention and the wider determinants of health and wellbeing
- ensure that public health and health prevention principles are embedded within core services such as housing, leisure and environmental services.



Collaborating for stronger economies

Districts have the opportunity to work together in clusters that reflect functional economic geography, amplifying their strategic influence over local economies and accelerating the delivery of new homes, whilst also providing democratic accountability. As many leading clusters have shown, working on a “boundary-blind” basis and with other local partners also enables a louder voice in regional and national discussions, increases resilience through pooling of resources, and can unlock new funding from central government.

There is also a key opportunity to move beyond cooperation within economic areas and to set out a bold place-based economic vision aimed at inspiring confidence in business and helping to shape local industrial strategies.

As planning authorities, districts are key partners to Local Enterprise Partnerships in growing the local economy. In some areas, districts can coordinate with each other to ensure their voices are heard in local discussions around growth and investment based on coherent economic areas.

Districts call on central government to:

- ensure that the incentives for housing growth such as the New Homes Bonus remain, and that the central role of districts in enabling housing and economic growth is recognised.

Districts call on local partners to:

- work closely with districts to draw on their detailed understanding of local businesses and economies in developing plans and policies, and determining funding and investment decisions
- ensure that districts are appropriately engaged and represented on local enterprise partnerships and are integral to the process of developing local industrial strategies.

Districts themselves should:

- utilise their deep understanding of local economic geography and ensure that robust place-based partnerships and collaborative clusters are put in place to reflect it as closely as possible
- work hard to form mature relationships and “boundary blind” long-term strategies within economic geographies in order to maximise the shared benefits of growth.

Achieving resilience and impact

District Councils have always led the way in innovation with shared services, and continue to break new ground in this area, showing that significant savings and operational improvements are available whilst also achieving resilience and greater strategic influence within localities.

It is clear that even the most radical examples of shared services can still effectively support sovereign democratic bodies and offer sufficient flexibility to respond to nuances within different Council areas. It is also clear that shared services can lay a path for progressive integration that may support further local reforms where leaders feel that this is the best way to continue to serve local interests.

District Councils are also at the heart of discussions around fair funding within localities through, for example, active participation in business rates retention schemes.

Districts call on central government to:

- Ensure that increased funding is made available to support housing delivery and reflect changes in demand

Districts call on local partners to:

- Look afresh at the scope for sharing and leveraging resources and assets to maximise financial resilience and protect the quality of services over the medium to long term
- Work across the family of local government to speak with a single voice on issues relating to fair funding and seize opportunities for new money

Districts themselves should:

- Reflect on their existing shared services arrangements and consider whether further operational and strategic benefits are available from further integration
- Continue to put themselves at the heart of place-based funding discussions such as business rates reform, acting as facilitators of local discussions where required

Delivering devolution and public sector reform

The new Secretary of State has given early signals that he will continue on the trajectory set by his predecessor with regard to devolution and transformation within localities. The devolution agenda may therefore be gathering pace once again, with a new national framework in development. Related issues about structures and governance are very much a live debate.

In areas where local leaders have chosen to explore devolution and structural reform, districts must continue to serve the interests of local people at the heart of these discussions, and have a crucial and positive role to play as champions of their communities and localities.

By virtue of their numbers and their understanding of localities, District Councils are also necessarily gatekeepers to the local consent that central government recognises must underpin any changes to local governance.

Districts have called on Government to:

- Bring forward Devolution guidance which recognises the central role districts must play in devolution and allows sufficient flexibility for localities to respond with solutions that work for local residents and economies
- Reignite the potential of local devolution whilst recognising the importance of place
- Ensure that proposals for transformation are from the bottom up, locally-led, driven by a strong consensus across organisations involved, and have the support of local residents

District themselves should:

- Ensure that all Members are engaged with and buy into transformation proposals
- Ensure that local residents understand and are engaged with new proposals for transformation
- Build iteratively on existing partnerships and relationships to deliver

Case studies



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What's in the toolkit?

The toolkit is modular, and does not need to be read end-to-end. The intention is that district councils and their partners can dip into the document based on areas of local interest, as summarised below.

Building on previous research published by DCN and others, which has highlighted the range and vibrancy of collaboration involving districts, this document is not intended to be a further contribution to the academic debate around collaboration and governance. Instead, it aims to provide practical guidance and insight distilled from our research and discussions with leading areas, and to share lessons learned for the benefit of district councils.

It is also important to avoid the fallacy of “lift and drop” best practice – every place and every partnership is different and faces its own challenges. We hope to provide ingredients and ideas for you to re-work and synthesise into a local approach that will work for your partnership, your place and your communities. For the same reason, in this toolkit we do not advocate for any particular structures or models of collaboration and transformation. It is for local leaders, in consultation with the public and local stakeholders, to determine what will work best for their people and places.

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Why collaborate, and with whom?

District Councils are closely connected with communities and exercise a democratic mandate to respond to their needs and interests.

Place-based collaboration with local partners has always been a natural approach to achieving this. District Councils must be outward-looking and engaged in their localities, and understand the challenges and priorities of partners. They offer a vital collaborative partnership to other local organisations and often act as a convenor and facilitator to ensure collective action to the benefit of local residents.

There are compelling strategic opportunities on offer for local partnerships who can work together to grasp them.

In order to seize these opportunities as and when they arise, districts can make some fundamental preparations:

- Continue to strengthen partnerships, proving the reciprocal benefits of collaboration within a geography that makes sense of how the local economy works and how local people live their lives
- Establish a shared evidence base on local economies and the wellbeing of communities
- Develop a compelling place-based vision that is rooted in a distinctive local identity
- Agree and articulate asks of central government
- Consider what local reforms and transformation are required, if any, to support delivery of the above

Tools and resources in this section

Understanding opportunities

[Key opportunities for collaborative districts](#)

[Planning for and influencing EU exit](#)

Understanding place

[Defining places](#)

[Key place and economic datasets](#)

Understanding partners

[Stakeholder mapping](#)

[Prioritising and engaging partners](#)

[How collaborative is your place?](#)

[Example: overcoming barriers to collaboration](#)



Understanding opportunities

Collaboration is natural and intrinsic to District Councils. The research commissioned recently by the All Party Parliamentary Group for district-led collaboration identified a wide range of innovative and imaginative practices, and showed that districts are not constrained by their geographical boundaries when forging collaborative arrangements. Collaboration enables districts to operate across a wide range of public services on a sub-regional and regional basis.

- **Collaboration between districts** is commonplace and often a necessary response to long-term reductions in funding. A number of innovative district partnerships are taking district-led collaboration into new territory, including the creation of brand new organisations.
- **Collaboration with other organisations** is increasingly prevalent. Districts are leading a vibrant and inventive range of collaborative work with place-based partners including health services, local enterprise partnerships, housing providers and communities themselves. Districts are also closely connected with communities and have a democratic mandate to protect their interests. Exercising this mandate properly often means influencing local partners and holding them to account.

Taking opportunities and making opportunities

“It can be easy to work together when everyone knows the rules of the game. Writing your own rules is much harder, but can be much more impactful.”

District interviewee

Many district councils are skilful opportunists. They are outward-looking and alert to the circumstances of their neighbouring councils and other partners, and proactive in making connections around shared opportunities in terms of win-win outcomes, such as providing new funding, enabling progress against housing targets or retaining key employers

within the wider area. Often this type of pragmatic approach cuts through political differences and can lay the foundation for a more strategic partnership in the longer term. To explore this further, we would like to suggest a distinction between **taking** opportunities and **making** opportunities:

- **Taking opportunities:** opportunities are often handed down to local partnerships from central government – for example business rates retention pilots or the prospect of devolution deals. The evidence shows that local partnerships can often mobilise rapidly and effectively around these opportunities and speak with a single voice to take them.
- **Making opportunities:** it can be more difficult to convene and mobilise partners in the absence of an external stimulus. In a context where resources and capacity are stretched, the “what’s in it for me” question has a less immediate answer. However, as the case studies we explore in this document show, the most radical examples of collaboration, which have yielded the greatest long-term benefits, have all been realised by proactive districts who have forged new partnerships on the basis of a locally-developed vision, based on a shared understanding of the local needs of communities and the economy.

It is important to recognise that one can lead to the other. New relationships that are developed through collaboration around statutory processes can lay the template for effective long-term collaboration on other issues. It is telling that in many district/county areas where devolution discussions in 2015/16 did not bear fruit, innovative joint working remains has nevertheless been maintained.



How to use these tools?

The tools and resources in this section can be used flexibly by district councils and their partners. They may serve as tools for individual or group reflection, or be used in a workshop setting with partners.



Key opportunities for collaborative districts

Collaboration has always been in districts' DNA, but today there is a compelling array of strategic opportunities available to districts, which can only be taken through effective collaboration:

- 1 New place-based approaches are needed to grow local economies** – the government's Modern Industrial Strategy sets out a requirement for place-based local industrial strategies, and the role of LEPs is being strengthened to help deliver this. District Councils have a key opportunity to collaborate around functional economic areas and engage robustly with LEPs to ensure that opportunities and benefits accrue to local businesses and communities, and to participate fully in the development of local industrial strategies.
- 2 The devolution agenda is likely to be re-energised** – a new framework for devolution is expected to be published shortly, and the requirement for metro mayors in non-metropolitan areas – a sticking point for some district and county areas – may be relaxed. Local partnerships will have the opportunity to revisit and refresh their proposals for devolution, or enter the discussion for the first time.
- 3 Be part of the solution to reform of health and social care** – reform is badly needed within the current health and social care landscape. Districts have long played a key role in preventing demand for health and social care services and managing failure around the edges of the system through services such as housing and benefits. Recent changes in ministerial portfolios have led some to speculate that systemic reform might be on the cards – now is the right time for districts to position themselves at the forefront of the discussion about how their work on wellbeing, prevention and housing can re-shape the debate.
- 4 Districts are at the forefront of meeting demand for housing** – whether as planners or – increasingly – developers in their own right, districts are already at the forefront of delivering the priorities set out in the government's white paper on housing. To have the greatest possible impact, districts must work together with neighbours and local partners to plan for and manage sustainable growth around functional economic areas, whilst finding innovative ways to ensure that associated infrastructure needs are met.
- 5 Approaching DWP to manage local labour markets** – district councils already have in place mechanisms for local revenue collection and payments linked to Council tax and benefits. As the devolution agenda unfolds, there may be an opportunity for clusters of districts to make a case for localised administration and support to labour markets linked to Universal Credit, enabling greater flexibility in response to local need. Any such local approach would clearly require adequate funding from central government.
- 6 New money is on offer in response to innovative and partnership-led proposals** – for better or worse, deal-making is now a key part of the central / local government relationship. From devolution deals, to housing deals, to business rates retention pilots to local industrial strategies and the future Shared Prosperity Fund – there are many opportunities for districts to collaborate with their peers and make the case for additional funding.
- 7 EU Exit is a national debate but the risks and opportunities are local** – in Whitehall all eyes are on delivering Brexit, but it will be the job of local leaders to fight for opportunities and manage risks within their localities, including managing relationships with key investors, influencing local skills and labour markets and ensuring that successor funds are disbursed equitably. The sector must also be unified in ensuring that powers repatriated from Europe do not simply accrue to Whitehall. The referendum results suggest that people want locally accountable democratic institutions.



Key opportunities (continued)

- 8 Build financial resilience in a context of uncertainty around future funding** – local authorities face very significant uncertainty around funding after 2019/20, pending the next spending review. The Fair Funding review is well underway, and DCN and its members have engaged positively in the surrounding discussions. As proposals are made public, districts can work together in localities and across local government as a whole to ensure the best possible settlement for the sector.
- 9 Be on the front foot with public sector reform** – as the devolution agenda gathers momentum once again, and debates around governance and structures play out across the country, the stage is set for local partnerships to come forward with bold proposals for their places, linked to new funding and powers. To succeed, these proposals must reflect a strong consensus across the organisations involved and come with local backing. Districts have a positive role to play at the heart of this process, ensuring that the interests of their localities and business are served effectively.
- 10 Because it is the right thing to do for residents, customers and communities** – the most significant challenges facing the country are deep-rooted and complex. These include delivering growth in productivity outside London and the South East and, addressing societal divisions and inequality. No single organisation can solve these challenges within their own locality.



Planning for and influencing EU exit

Once powers from Brussels are repatriated, where is their natural centre? Districts can make the case for greater local powers in areas previously driven by EU legislation as the Brexit vote partly reflected the desire for greater control over decision-making and increased local accountability.

While EU Exit negotiations happen at a national level, the risks and opportunities created must be addressed locally. It is vitally important that the differences in risk exposure and new opportunities at the local authority level are both understood and acted upon.



Brexit Planning Framework

Grant Thornton have designed a Brexit planning framework to assist local authorities with planning for potential impacts and creating place resilience. The framework focuses on the key areas of EU funding, regulation and economy & society.

Funding

Districts have an important role to play in re-designing the successor funding regime post-Brexit in a way that works for local communities.

The Conservative election manifesto pledged that the structural fund money that comes back to the UK following Brexit would be used to “create a United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund, specifically designed to reduce inequalities between communities across our four nations”.

The design of a successor regime to EU funding is seen as a key opportunity to rethink skills and growth funding. The current administration of EU funds – with priorities for allocation of EU funding being set centrally and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) very much in an advisory role – was not favoured by the majority of respondents in a Grant Thornton-CIPFA survey among 450 local government finance professionals.

Districts and their partners should consider:

Analysing levels of exposure to EU funding

- Level of EU structural funds committed and contracted, and level of dependence on future EU funds flow

Gap analysis and scenario planning

- Full assessment of project and programme-contingent EU funding, assessment of alternative funding streams, gap analysis for future funding streams
- Viability analysis of individual projects and strategic options, including those receiving European Investment Bank Funding

Influencing the design the Shared Prosperity Fund

- Districts and their partners will soon have the opportunity to feed into the upcoming Shared Prosperity Fund consultations (see more on this in the [‘Collaborating for Stronger Economies’](#) section)

Please see ‘Influencing resources’ below for further ideas on influencing mechanisms.



Regulation	Districts and their partners should consider:
<p>Procurement frameworks have largely been driven by complex processes to ensure a level playing field across suppliers EU-wide. The UK's exit from the European Union is a chance to ensure more flexible procurement which engages with local businesses and thus stimulates local growth.</p> <p>There is likely to be a public procurement regime post-Brexit.</p>	<p>Assessing current and future procurement needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and timing of current and future procurements, and options • Consideration of appropriateness and efficiency of EU procedures for future high value projects, and any alternate approaches • Assessment of UK market appetite amongst non UK businesses for public service contracts, and therefore deliverability
Economy and society	Districts and their partners should consider:
<p>A key issue to consider is the level of exposure of the local economy to trade with the EU and any dependence on major businesses.</p> <p>EU Exit can also present an opportunity to analyse the availability of local skills and increase the level of qualifications locally.</p>	<p>Measuring exposure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenario planning for different levels of market access and future trade relationship • Assessing the local reliance on foreign owned businesses and plans to relocate outside UK <p>Capitalising on comparative advantage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the strength of local supply chains, partnerships with universities and sectors with low reliance on foreign skills or EU workers <p>Re-shaping local labour markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic analysis of the local population – scale of immigration and impact analysis of material changes on benefits and assets (eg housing, school places, hospital beds) • Impact on local council workforce of potential reductions in EU migrants around core council and NHS services • Exploring opportunities to develop local skills and qualifications



Influencing the post-Brexit funding regime

Some district councils have sought to proactively navigate the uncertainty on behalf of their businesses and communities, and in some instances have set up Brexit liaison officers and Task & Finish Groups.

The Local Government Association's Brexit Task and Finish Group has recently published a report¹ focusing on the design of Brexit successor funds and the engagement of local authorities within this process.

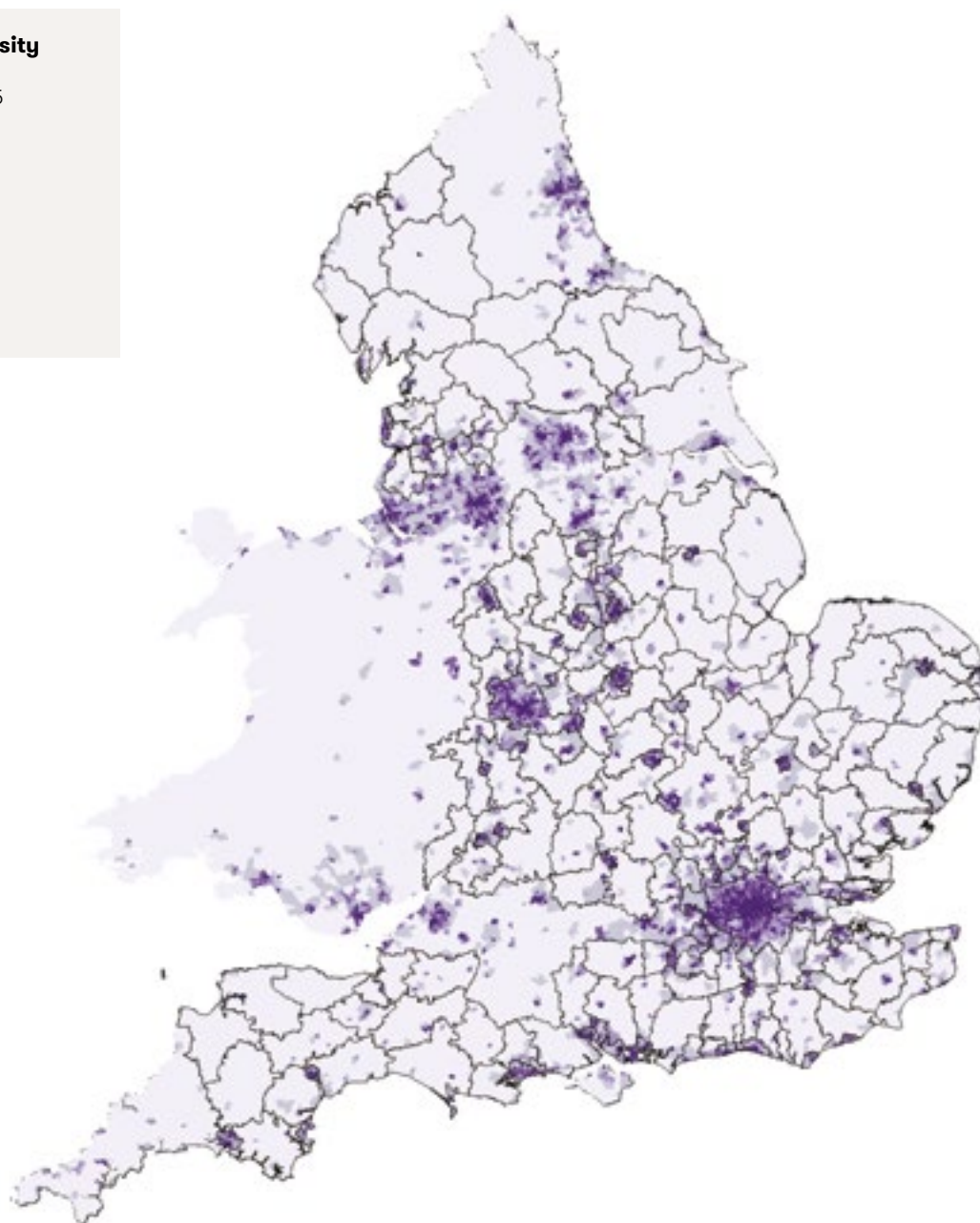
1. <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/european-and-international/beyond-brexit-future-funding-currently-sourced-eu>



District boundaries and employment density

Employment density

- 18.02 to 1,603.45
- 8.2 to 18.02
- 3.98 to 8.2
- 1.12 to 3.98
- 0.01 to 1.12
- Districts





Understanding place

An understanding of place is critical in thinking through the challenges and opportunities of collaboration. Individual places are fundamentally shaped by the relationships they have with other areas. People travel between places for work, study and leisure. Supply chains for businesses stretch across multiple administrative boundaries. Understanding these flows as well as the social and economic strengths and weaknesses of individual places is therefore an essential tool to support local collaboration.

Some places will be net importers of people by offering greater opportunities, for example higher skilled, better-paid jobs. Others will attract people based on other social or environmental factors, be that lower levels of deprivation or the quality of the natural environment. In this context, it is clear that different places have very different roles and relationships with other places.

At the outset it is important to note that there is no single approach to defining the functional economic market area of places. The patterns and flows will vary significantly depending on which local markets and which particular elements of the economy are being considered. In fact the most effective means of defining places is to look across multiple market and catchment areas that best reflect the key priorities for that place.





Defining places

How a place is defined will depend entirely on the approach to measurement used. Some of the more common options are set out below:



Administrative boundaries – in one sense this is the simplest. This uses the legally documented and attributed jurisdictional boundary. Administrative boundaries fit neatly in a spatial hierarchy and are also the unit of measurement for the vast range of national statistics. However, they do not always reflect the real world. People and business flow freely between these boundaries, dramatically affecting the roles and responsibilities of a place. More recently in the UK the hierarchy of administrative boundaries has been complicated by the introduction of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in 2011 and Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STP) areas in 2015. Neither of these spatial levels fit neatly into the traditional hierarchy. In the case of LEPs the fact that some places sit within overlapping LEP areas adds a further layer of complexity to their relationships with local partners.

Labour market – this is the most widely accepted approach to defining places outside of administrative boundaries, and is particularly common in defining ‘functional economic market areas’. This approach is based on “Travel To Work Areas” (TTWAs) and measures the extent to which the labour market is ‘self-contained’. A commonly used definition of ‘self-containment’ is that at least 75 per cent of the resident economically active population work in the area². For some places it may be appropriate to further vary the level of ‘self-containment’ or to only include commuters in certain occupations. It is worth noting that TTWAs are the only sub-regional economic area robustly defined under the remit of National Statistics.

Housing market – this approach analyses data relating to three different sources of information: (i) assessing patterns in the relationship between housing demand and supply using house prices to provide a ‘market based’ reflection of housing market boundaries; (ii) household migration and search patterns to identify the extent to which people move within an area (excluding long distance moves); and (iii) other contextual data such as TTWA or school catchments.³ In some instances housing market areas will overlap, requiring collaboration between the local planning authorities⁴. In considering the housing market, thought should be given to particular geographical sub-areas, to affordability and to low demand.

Supply chains – data on the flows of goods, services and information is extremely difficult to get without primary research. However, understanding the different sectoral clusters within a place can help define both the role of an individual place as well as identifying other places suitable for collaboration. For some locations, that might require collaboration with places offering specialisms at different points in a supply chain: for example steel and aluminium production and its supply to the automotive sector. For others it may mean collaboration with places that share similar sectoral strengths, for example the authorities surrounding Hinckley Point, Sizewell and Dungeness have opportunities to collaborate around the nuclear sector and supply chain.

2. Source: DCLG Functional Economic Market Areas: An Economic Note. For TTWAs, with 25,000 or more workers living in the area, this requirement is often relaxed to 66.67 per cent, ONS Statistics www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/ttwa.asp

3. Source: DCLG Housing and Economic Needs Assessment.

4. See www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-to-cooperate



Transport networks – transport networks by their nature have a fundamental influence of the flows of people. Often, for example, local bus networks can be used to create a proxy visual of economic geography. Using data on commuting patterns provides an interesting view on the definition of a place. It will show places that vary significantly in scale, based on different modes of transport such as national and local rail, and bus networks. It will also highlight issues around the ease of getting to key economic centres to benefit from opportunities within the local economy, or participate in local democracy. The limitations of this view are that transport networks and the investment in their creation, maintenance and improvement are primarily the subject of national as opposed to local policy decisions. Alongside this, commuting time will vary significantly based on personal preference and the experience of commuters.

Economic geography – an international perspective

As an illustration of how these concepts have been applied elsewhere in Europe, we suggest a report by the World Bank published in 2013 on “re-shaping the economic geography of Romania”⁵ Taking a national view of a wide range of travel-to-work and other economic datasets, the report considers the relationship between rural areas and centres of economic activity, and how to connect people with economic opportunities through improved infrastructure⁶.

What are some of the challenges facing metropolitan areas in Romania?



Further resources: key place and economic datasets

In order to support authorities in developing a robust understanding of place there are a number of key national statistics available. These include:

- ONS Travel to Work data: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/traveltoworkareaanalysingreatbritain/2016>
- Land Registry House Price data: <http://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ppd/>
- MHCLG data on housing: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics>
- ONS data on business and employment sectors: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforbusinesses/businesssurveys/businessregisterandemploymentsurvey>
- ONS data on labour markets: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

In considering functional economic market areas it is often important to understand the relationship and dynamic with key economic centres. The Centre for Cities defines the UK's 63 largest towns and cities, as primary urban areas (PUAs): <http://www.centreforcities.org/puas/>

Turning data into insight: a shared approach

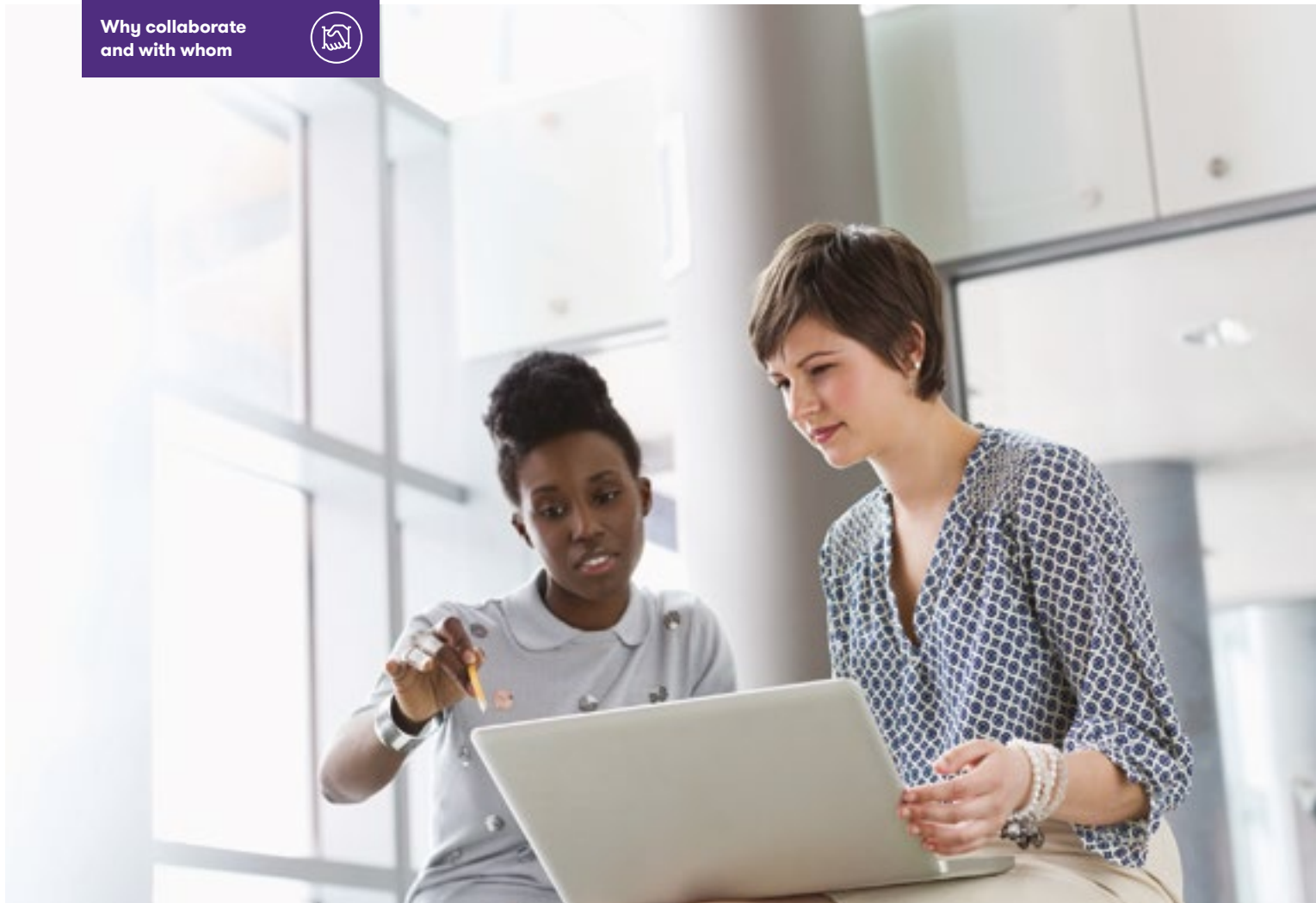
All local authorities need access to skilled and suitably equipped analysts to turn the large volumes of freely available data into insight and evidence. The best analysts are in demand and are often highly mobile.

Increasingly, local authorities are choosing to share analytical capacity across local partnerships – either in the form of shared roles or through data-sharing tools such as local observatories. This approach saves money and can improve the ability to recruit and retain good analysts, but sharing data across organisations also increases the quality of insight that is available.

This type of shared approach has often been key to creating the evidence base for compelling place-based strategies and proposals to central government – for example, many of the metropolitan areas with combined authorities and devolution deals had shared teams of economists and analysts building an evidence base long before devolution discussions opened.

5. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17559>

6. <http://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/metropolitan-development-central-romania-s-economic-development>



Understanding partners

Districts must use their influence and relationships within complex networks of organisations in order to achieve their ambitions for people and place. As democratically elected bodies, they exercise a mandate to do so. As the APPG Inquiry confirmed, districts operating within complex networks have three main roles:



Place-shaping, or being able to forge partnerships and joint working arrangements with external bodies to provide and improve public services and to ensure they are responsive to local problems.



Facilitating and enabling, attempting to influence and shape the decisions of other agencies operating locally and to bring them into some shared vision and a set of objectives for the development of services within the locality.



Stewardship, or holding to account other agencies operating within their locality which lack a democratic mandate for their policies and actions.



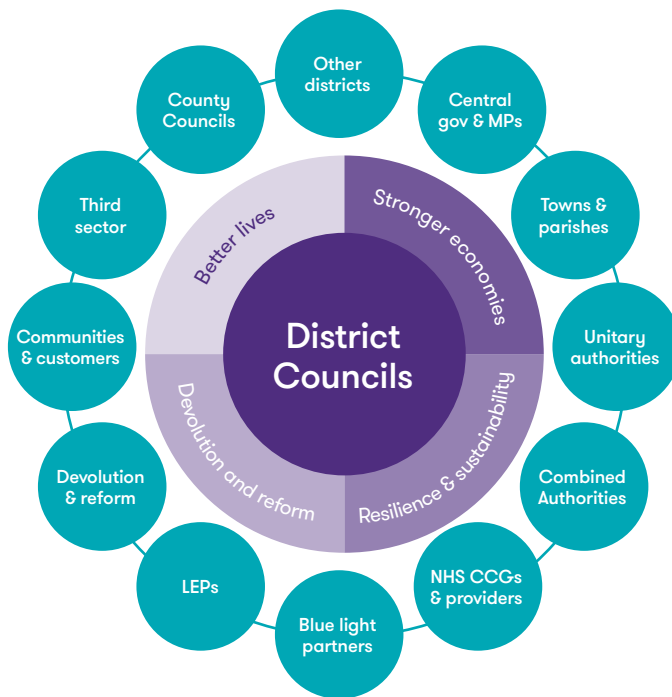
How to use the tools in this section

The tools in this section are designed to support individual or group reflection on selecting the right partners for local collaboration, as shaped by your strategic goals and the geography you wish to act over. The following sections suggest potential approaches to:

- 1 Identifying stakeholders based on priority outcomes for your place
- 2 Thinking about the “collaboration readiness” of your place
- 3 Identifying and removing the barriers to collaboration
- 4 Prioritising and engaging with partners



Stakeholder mapping



In order to achieve their ambitions for place and solve local problems, districts have the opportunity to work with a wide range of local and national partners.

The nature and membership of partnerships will vary from place to place depending upon the geography in play and the specific outcomes desired. We have suggested an outline stakeholder map as a tool for local reflection, as well as identifying typical partners for the four key collaborative outcomes identified within this toolkit.



Better lives

Working to improve the wellbeing of communities and reduce demand for acute health and social care through provision of high-quality services and targeted public health interventions.

Typical collaborative partners:

- clinical commissioning groups, NHS trusts and GPs
- county councils and other local authorities
- housing providers
- DWP/Job Centre Plus
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- the public.



Stronger economies

Working to help create the physical and social conditions for successful and resilient local economies, whilst inspiring confidence in businesses to grow and invest locally.

Typical collaborative partners:

- local enterprise partnerships
- local businesses and employers
- housing developers
- central government
- county councils and neighbouring authorities.



Achieving resilience, sustainability and scale

Working to safeguard the quality of services, capacity and resilience over the long-term, whilst enhancing strategic influence within the wider locality.

Typical collaborative partners:

- county councils and other local authorities
- other place-based public service providers
- central government.



Devolution and reform

Working to strengthen leadership of place and rebalance powers and responsibilities across central and local government.

Typical collaborative partners:

- central government
- neighbouring local authorities
- other place-based institutions and businesses
- the public.

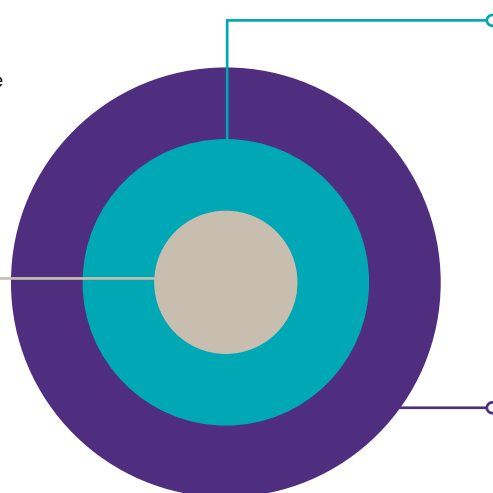


Prioritising and engaging partners

We often heard that engaging with partners can place significant demand on leaders' time and capacity. This simple tool is designed to support reflection on the partners that really matter to your intended outcome, and focus your efforts where they are needed the most.

Core collaborators

- Co-creators of the case for change
- Equal partners in decision-making



Enablers

- Involved in specific areas of interest
- Provide expertise and connections
- Provide resource and staff

Influencers

- Informed and involved when necessary
- Bring a useful perspective
- Can become enablers

	Core collaborators	Enablers	Influencers
Key questions	<p>Which organisations are central to us achieving our desired community outcomes? Who can't we work without?</p> <p>Which organisations have a direct stake in solving a system-wide problem (for example, those dealing with demand pressures)?</p>	<p>Which organisations play a part in us achieving our desired community outcomes?</p> <p>Which organisations hold the resources, expertise and community links we need to achieve the desired outcomes?</p>	<p>Who will be affected by changes?</p> <p>Who can bring a new perspective?</p> <p>Who do we ultimately need to bring with us?</p>
How do we engage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular formal and informal opportunities for leaders to interact and plan • Close collaboration at an operational level, eg blended project teams or steering groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership boards or reference groups • Opportunities to develop networks across organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation and engagement exercises • Invitations to participate



How collaborative is your place?

Different challenges necessitate different levels of collaboration. Relatively simple initiatives may require no more than loose coordination between organisations at an operational level. However, the most complex issues being tackled by district councils require multiple organisations to work together intensively to analyse problems, determine solutions and implement them. This relies on a good and reciprocal understanding of the capabilities, resources and constraints of your partners.

There are often a range of perceived and real barriers standing in the way of truly integrated, place-based

approaches to collaboration. These can be as simple as different professional vocabularies, or more complex barriers rooted in funding arrangements and powers. The majority of barriers, however, stem from a simple lack of mutual understanding. In order for collaboration to progress, these differences must be addressed head-on and in the open.

The “Collaboration Continuum⁷” proposes seven distinct stages of collaboration, introduces the concepts of “trust” and “turf” as key factors in determining the level of collaboration achieved across partnerships, and describes how these dynamics can operate over time.

Trust



Complete	Co-exist	Communicate	Cooperate	Coordinate	Collaborate	Integrate
Competition for funding, resources, partners, public attention.	No systematic connection between agencies.	Inter-agency information sharing (eg networking), usually driven by a statutory process.	As needed, often informal, interaction on discrete activities or projects.	Organisations systematically adjust and align work with each other around shared outcomes.	Longer-term interaction based on shared mission and goals – shared decision-makers and resources.	Fully integrated programmes, planning and funding.

Turf



7. Arthur T. Himmelman, Collaboration for a Change: Definitions, Decision-making Models, Roles, and Collaboration Process Guide. January 2002, Himmelman Consulting, Minneapolis, MN. Source: Tamarack Institute



Turf



Turf issues are most common where there is either a real or perceived imbalance of rewards and responsibility across the collaboration partners. Among partners there is the perception of unequal relationships – either due to size, decision-making power or distribution of benefits.

Districts also operate in an environment of direct political accountability, which is inevitably tied to a specific locality. As one interviewee put it **“Members see the boundaries because they are ultimately accountable. We should not forget that”**.

Collaboration presents political and officer leadership with a challenge: for politicians the challenge is to suppress a narrow focus on organisational outcomes, and for officers – to demonstrate the value of collaboration in terms of efficiencies and service improvement for residents.

Trust



Low levels of trust can be influenced by a previous negative experience of collaboration, lack of understanding of how sector, agencies and professional communities operate, or personality factors such as ‘bullishness’ or dominant characters as partner representatives.

Time



Trust and collaborative structures take time to develop. Relationship-building requires constant engagement and investment of time and energy.



Key questions

- Where would you place your relationships with your key partners? Where would they place them?
- Are your collaborative relationships where they need to be?
- If not, how do you build trust and move away from a focus on turf?



Example: overcoming barriers to collaboration in a health context

In the table below we use an example of collaboration with health to illustrate how making barriers explicit using the ‘Turf-Trust-Time’ matrix can unblock barriers to collaboration. Some of these issues are explored in more detail in the later chapter on “[Collaborating for Better Lives](#)”.



Turf – typical barriers

“The consistent person in the room is usually the district council, not the health person.”

District officer

“We have had to reinforce the importance of the democratic accountability element with our health partners.”

District Councillor

“Although district councils therefore have their hands on many of the wider determinants of health, public health reform seems to have passed them by.

Despite being so well placed, they have no statutory seat on health and wellbeing boards and no direct public health grant.”⁸

King’s Fund



How can these be overcome?

Some of the ‘Turf’ barriers stem from the different financial and policy incentives in the health and local government sectors – health bodies work to the national priorities set by central government and these are not always aligned with local needs. Furthermore, priorities and goalposts in the NHS shift frequently following national reorganisation, making it difficult for local bodies to plan and ‘plug into’ shared agendas.

Districts must respond to the differing needs of their local electorates and are directly accountable for doing so. Overcoming these fundamental differences requires significant investment by partners to engage and build relationships, incrementally building up trust between colleagues and developing an understanding of what is going to work locally.

Districts also find it difficult to get their voice heard at strategic place-wide forums such as STPs. This is to a certain extent due to STPs being largely NHS driven and owned, but also due to the sheer number of partners in the room, (individual accounts suggest that numbers of people in the room can reach up to 55 at times).

Part of the solution is developing a compelling district ‘prevention offer’, which is targeted at addressing the needs of the local health system. This is outlined in details in the section ‘[Better Lives](#)’.

8. King’s Fund. The district council contribution to public health: a time of challenge and opportunity, 2015
https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/district-council-contribution-to-public-health-nov15.pdf



Turf – typical barriers

“Health wanted to focus on specific diseases. However, we had to explain that local government is a few steps upstream in terms of prevention.”

District Councillor

“For districts, care and prevention are very similar things. For counties, care means buying services or the commissioning of care. Health’s ‘version’ of care is very much the county and unitary councils’ version of care, which is looking after people who are too frail or cannot look after themselves.”

District officer



Trust – typical barriers

“CCGs and health workers don’t necessarily know the difference between a county, a district or unitary authorities, and the different services they provide. They don’t understand the sort of help they can get from local authorities. But to an extent this doesn’t matter if we are joined-up.”

District officer

“The message to NHS colleagues would be engage with your district councils, they have got an awful lot to offer. They can help align their objectives with yours. They can help you with planning issues in particular on healthcare infrastructure – but critically, they’ve got community leadership skills that can help you achieve place-based outcomes.”

Charles Lant, Chief Executive – Wealden DC
[at DCN Conference]



How can these be overcome?

“You [districts] are in a unique position to change demand on public services as a whole. ...Local government stands on the cusp of revolution over its involvement in public health. Councils and local health bodies are “natural, unavoidable partners”.

Rt Hon Stephen Dorrell, NHS Confederation
[at DCN Conference]

Different institutions can naturally focus on very different areas of detail rather than stepping back and seeing the big picture. Working collaboratively can create important opportunities to do this together.



How can these be overcome?

Building trust is about understanding partners, their individual strengths and what they bring to the table, as well as how a partnership can be better than the ‘sum of its parts’.

District council officers also report that key to success when working with CCGs, NHS trusts and individual GP practices is ‘relentless awareness raising’ about the range of services districts provide and demonstrating the way they can add value. One Chief Executive stressed that **“You should never assume that other parts of the public sector know how districts work. Knowledge of local government should not be taken for granted”.**

They also added that nurturing mutual understanding is a two-way street. In order to understand what form prevention should take, **“Districts need to be smarter about understanding what drives demand for primary or acute care, or ‘who’s going through the GP surgery or the hospital ward”.**

Navigating the various services different types of local government offer represents significant ‘transaction costs’ to health partners. In the section [‘Collaborating for better lives’](#) we outline how districts in West Kent and Lincolnshire have combined their forces to streamline and simplify access to their services.



Trust – typical barriers

“Health practitioners are very evidence-driven. It’s not the anecdotal case studies or the lived experiences of people in the community that ticks their boxes – it’s hard data.”

District officer

“The NHS traditionally presents change from an evidenced-based and population-benefit perspective, and local government often sees such change from the individual constituents’ day to day life circumstances and their holistic social need.”⁹

Head of NHS A&E

“District councils need to have better information and be clearer about the cost-effectiveness and return on investment of their actions on public health, and functions that affect it.”¹⁰

King’s Fund



How can these be overcome?

Differences in ‘language’ were also often cited as a barrier to building trust and common understanding, both in terms of 1) how the effectiveness of interventions is measured but also in terms of 2) how care and prevention are conceptualised.

NHS practitioners were seen as preferring statistical evidence or ‘hard data’ whereas districts use more qualitative methods to measure subjective wellbeing. One of the recommendations of the King’s Fund report on public health was for districts to increase their understanding of health economics and health impact assessment, in order to show ‘hard’ evidence of improvements in health outcomes.

Previous collaborative experiences have also shown that outcomes in the health sector are defined in ‘medical terms’: in many STPs, prevention is seen as a way of ‘keeping people out of hospital’ as opposed to keeping people ‘fit and well’. Districts have an important part to play in shifting the narrative around health and prevention towards a more holistic view of a person’s wellbeing.

These examples in a health context demonstrate that many of the real and perceived barriers to collaboration stem from a lack of mutual understanding as well as differing leadership and funding structures. Overcoming these barriers requires sustained effort across partnerships over a period of time but with the right approaches this can be successful. The next chapter explores in greater detail how this can be achieved.

9. Professor Willet, <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2018/02/englands-top-ae-doctor-says-we-must-seize-once-in-a-generation-opportunity-to-remake-nhs-and-local-government-partnership/>

10. King’s Fund. The district council contribution to public health: a time of challenge and opportunity, 2015 https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/district-council-contribution-to-public-health-nov15.pdf







Moving from intention to action

Districts, as the elected representatives of the localities they serve, have the democratic legitimacy to convene local partners around a shared vision for place.

A unifying place-based vision, linking local prosperity and economic growth, is key to mobilising local partnerships. There are also important practical hurdles to overcome around developing shared language, resourcing and programme management, and alignment of cultures and behaviours.

Creating time and space for partners to come together at all levels is key to making collaboration stick. When determining the best governance models for collaboration, a number of factors must be carefully weighed, these include efficiency and savings, better service outcomes, stronger place-based leadership and empowerment of communities.

Tools and resources in this section

Creating the infrastructure for collaboration
[The Collaboration Curve](#)

Mobilise – getting partnerships off the ground
[Key enablers: selflessness and distributed leadership](#)

[Using data to unlock collaboration](#)

[Partnership and engagement strategies](#)

Change – relationships and behaviours
[Key enablers: boundary spanners and shared insight](#)

[Building a shared vision for your place](#)

Consolidate – making collaboration stick
[Key enablers: communication, resourcing and programme management](#)

[Aligning organisational cultures](#)

[Appraising governance models](#)



Creating the infrastructure for collaboration

Extensive research has already been undertaken into what makes collaboration work in practice and it is not our intention to add to the literature on this topic. In particular we recommend:

INLOGOV research commissioned by the District Councils' Network¹¹: The report concludes that **“Behaviour, culture and trust are far more important to success in collaboration than the structures through which people work. Recognising that this is more than just a cliché – and, acting on it – will lead to a stronger focus on boosting the skills of collaborators.”**

Collaborate CIC and Lankelly Chase work on “Building Collaborative Places”¹², which explores the preconditions for successful collaboration in detail.

In this chapter, we have drawn on feedback from our case study areas to propose a simple framework – the Collaboration curve – for thinking about how collaborative behaviours between districts and their partners can be actively grown and encouraged over time. Using this framework, we share practical examples and learning from across the country and suggest a range of tools that districts can consider using locally.



The Collaboration Curve

Whether starting new collaborations or trying to reinvigorate old ones, an understanding of how partnerships work is helpful. Building on the ideas of Turf, Trust and Time outlined in the previous section, the collaboration curve shows how over time, relationships can be moved from a place of entrenched organisational boundaries (‘Turf’) to one of ‘Trust’ based on a shared vision and outcomes. We are suggesting three loose phases for this:

- **Mobilise: getting collaboration off the ground** – by helping partners explore the ‘art of the possible’ and rally behind a common cause or a problem. The enablers that mobilise collaborations at this stage are crucial to generating goodwill and encouraging partners to think beyond organisational boundaries.
- **Change: relationships and behaviours** – for collaboration to work, hearts and minds must be won and behaviours must change. This means plenty of opportunities for partners to work together, formally and informally. It also includes the development of a shared vision and a common vocabulary and evidence base.
- **Consolidate: making collaboration stick** – the tools contained in this stage will aid you in embedding change and ‘make it stick’. The enablers here represent the key structures and processes that need to be wrapped around the emerging partnership to sustain momentum, generate trust and build resilience.

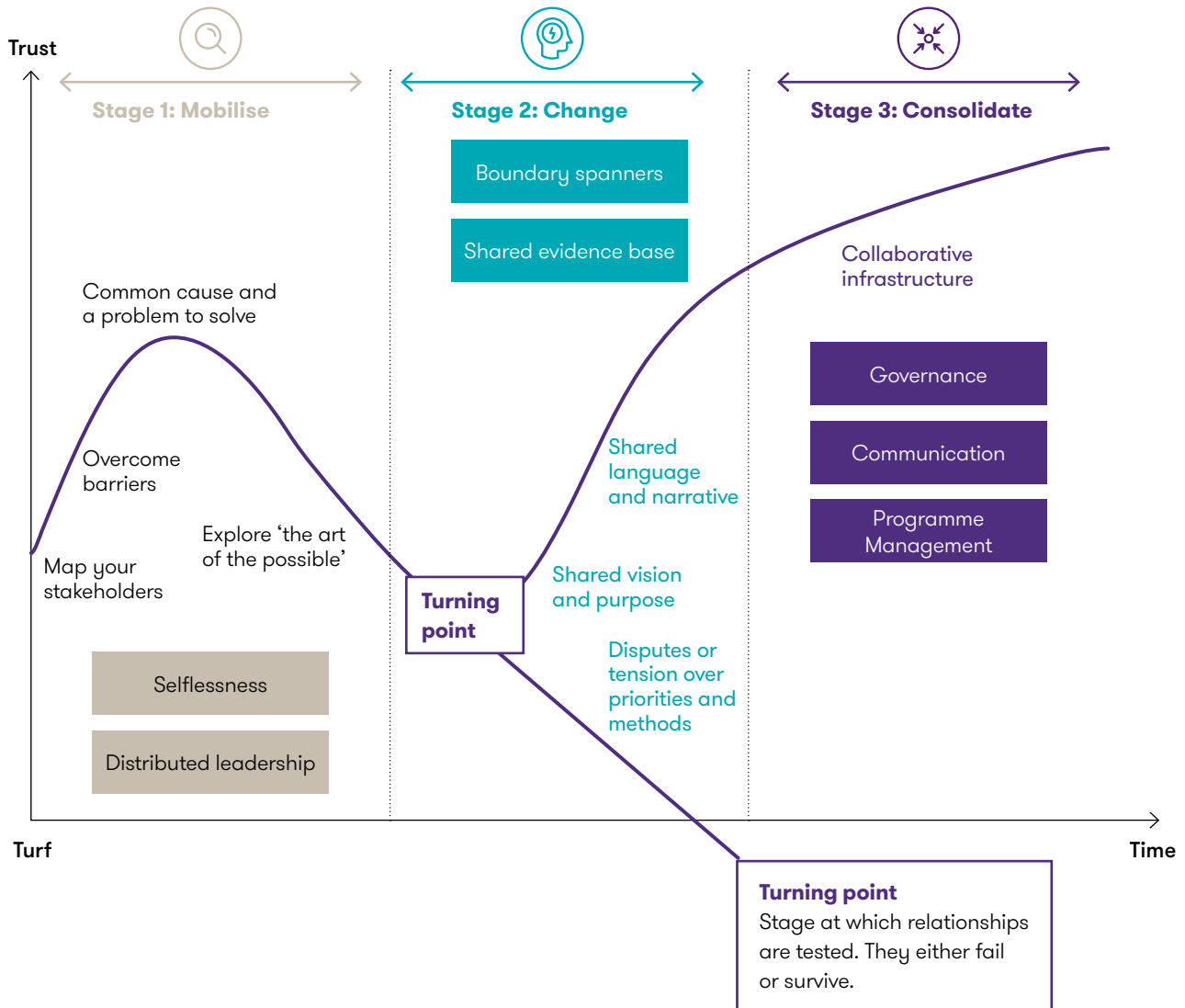
11. <http://districtcouncils.info/building-better-collaboration/>

12. http://wordpress.collaboratei.com/wp-content/uploads/Building-Collaborative-Places_Digital-Report-Pages-2.pdf



For each of these three phases we propose a number of enablers (things districts can do to speed up the collaboration process) and further tools, resources and case studies.

The Collaboration Curve





How to use the Collaboration Curve model?

The Collaboration Curve model can be used as a tool for reflection by individual organisations or in discussion with partners.

The horizontal axis (Time) demonstrates how relationships develop and mature over time. It also illustrates some of the key enablers needed to accelerate collaboration and build momentum. Change happens as trust grows. However, as discussed in the section '[Exploring the art of the possible](#)' below, partners can adopt different engagement strategies based on the pace and scale of change they are comfortable with, which will influence the angle of the curve.

The vertical axis (Turf-Trust) shows how – to achieve true collaboration – relationships with partners need to mature away from a 'turf' mindset towards a more open approach based on trust.

There are also several key stages in the evolution of the relationship – for example achieving alignment of goals and priorities – where disputes and tensions can be dissolved through effective leadership and selflessness.



Mobilise – getting partnerships off the ground

The ‘Mobilise’ stage is a period of flux – this is when partners have identified a common cause or a common frustration – but no firm commitments are being made. Partners are exploring the ‘art of the possible’ but have reached no clear commitments. Trust starts to pick up as barriers are overcome. There are two key enablers at this stage: **selflessness** and **distributed leadership**.

Key enablers

Selflessness

It is often the case that someone needs to make the first move to build collaborative relationships.

In areas where collaboration is at an early stage, conveners – usually civic leaders with a good reputation amongst partners – can initiate a new relationship with a gesture of goodwill. As one of our interviewees described it: ‘giving something for nothing’. The literature describes this as “selflessness”.

Selflessness is key to mobilising new relationships, but in a context of limited capacity and resources it needs to be used sparingly and be supported by a clear understanding of the intended goal and value proposition to partners.

One district council interviewee described placing a housing officer within hospitals as an experiment or ‘proof of concept’ which ultimately demonstrated that delayed transfers of care can be reduced by addressing housing needs in a hospital setting. This act of ‘selflessness’ was in fact a managed risk based on professional experience and independent evidence.

Distributed leadership

Successful collaboration requires ‘leaders who can collaborate and also collaborators who can lead’.¹³

Leaders and senior executives clearly set the tone for collaboration. However, a different type of leadership is

needed to sustain it and build resilience. This is commonly referred to in the literature as ‘distributed leadership’, and is crucial to place-based collaboration. One of the DCN Conference roundtables described it as ‘ceding control but gaining influence’.

Distributed leadership means moving away from a leadership style based on control and towards sharing leadership across local networks with different sources of authority, legitimacy, accountability and expertise. Distributed leadership, however, requires strong collaborative infrastructure, including the right governance and a clear, shared vision of success.

For place leaders, this requires recognising that many of the complex social and economic outcomes for their residents lie beyond their immediate control. For example, success in the context of the Greater Norwich Growth Board was defined by one of the Chief Executives as overcoming competition among partners in favour of a more joined-up approach to promoting growth: **“when a company comes in to look, we don’t fight over the location but present a coherent approach across the patch. It is all about knowing when to let go for the greater good.”**

For further exploration of these concepts we recommend the 21st Century Public servant¹⁴ published by Inlogov at the University of Birmingham, which describes one of six essential leadership characteristics as “(rejecting) heroic leadership in favour of distributed and collaborative models of leading, traversing organisational and sector boundaries”

13. NLGN, Leaders Who Collaborate, Collaborators Who Lead, 2016 http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/wp-content/uploads/Leaders-Who-Collaborate_EVENT-WRITEUP.pdf

14. <https://21stcenturypublicservant.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/21-century-report-281014.pdf>



Building the case for change

In getting collaboration off the ground, one of the challenges is generating a sense of urgency and convincing partners that action can be taken to mutual advantage. Building a compelling and data-driven evidence base for change is important to unlocking some partnerships, especially with health bodies.



Using data to unlock collaboration

The case for collaboration can be made more effectively through use of data in a way that speaks to partners.

“Create the evidence base on the back of which to make the pitch.”

District interviewee

For example, when seeking to build relationships with local GPs, Sevenoaks District Council quickly realised that ward, parish, or district-level data did not provide them with a helpful picture. One of the officers explained: **“we as districts work on ward or parish boundaries or district boundaries; when we were looking into partnerships with GPs and into influencing the wider determinants of health, we had to make it work around GP practices. Their area is wider than specific political wards”**.

The Council went to GPs with a fresh view of the data based on their catchment areas. This showed a picture of the wider health determinants around each GP practice and a list of the health facilities and activities available to people in that area such as open spaces, leisure centres and support services. GPs were also provided with information on how they and patients can access local services. This evidence has supported much closer working with GPs and improved update of local services.

When making a data-driven case for collaboration, districts should:

- Make this data as visual as possible. Use graphics and if possible, geo-spatial data. For example, an initiative focused on safer communities could show on maps where crime is committed against where services are located.
- Consider creating a high-quality research report, one that can: clarify the problem in local terms, gather baseline data for your community, and create a focal point for the public launch.



Partnership and engagement strategies

A consistent message we have heard throughout our research is that **“Looking at a static end-point is not a good idea”**. Many spoke about pursuing a strategy of incremental alignment with partners – **“starting small, proving the premise ... and then opening doors to high-level conversations on integration”**.

Partners will have different ideas around the scale and pace of change required. At the initial stage of forming relationships, it is important to understand perceived limits. One concern we heard was ‘doing too much, too quickly’ and not understanding the boundaries and sensitivities of partners. Places where collaboration broke down due to a partner leaving or scaling back their involvement often cited insufficient time and investment dedicated to building goodwill and trust.



Key questions

- Do your partners share the same expectations and ambitions for the partnership?
- Do you understand your mutual challenges (including resources, time, and funding)?
- What are the limits of collaboration in your organisation, both politically and in terms of organisational capacity? Are all the stakeholders realistic about what the partnership can achieve?
- Do you have clear lines of communication and engagement?
- Are you clear what each partner brings to the table, and what their role is?

An interesting finding of our fieldwork was that –intentionally or not – districts adopted a number of strategies to working together and with partners, depending on a shared understanding of the scale and pace of change desired.





What type of partnership do you need?

Transactional partnership	Coalition of the willing	Whole-system, whole-place collaboration
<p>An opportunity, often time-sensitive, to solve a shared problem or multiple problems within partner organisations.</p> <p>“Be outward-looking and alert to the situations of your partners – if you spot an opportunity then be fleet of foot.”</p> <p>District interviewee</p> <p>Examples from our case study areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two councils exploring a merger to address different financial weaknesses • Councils overcoming historical differences to put forward successful proposals for business rates retention pilots • Using the departure of a chief executive to explore options for sharing management with a neighbour 	<p>A call to action and working with whoever steps forward based on shared goals, values and aspirations.</p> <p>“Don’t worry about getting everyone on board on day one – you get who you get. If you wait for everybody to sign up, you never start. Some people might be ambivalent or even dissenting but be brave enough to go ahead.”</p> <p>District interviewee</p> <p>Examples from our case study areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building shared service arrangements and opening them to new partners • Working across boundaries in geographical clusters to accelerate housing delivery and meet separate targets 	<p>Partners working to systematically identify problems and develop solutions, with a strong focus on people and place.</p> <p>“See yourself as part of the system and not an organisational silo – leave your organisation at the door.”¹⁵</p> <p>Examples from our case study areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating multiple services across local partnerships, working across district and county councils, health and police • Bringing forward proposals for local transformation and reform backed by a high degree of local support and consensus

15. Working across boundaries: a Collection of Case Studies and Personal Accounts from Suffolk leaders



Change – relationships and behaviours

Once partners have rallied behind a common cause and overcome some of the initial barriers to collaboration, their next challenge is to develop a shared vision and set of desired outcomes, and to put in place new ways of working to achieve them. This means changing the dynamic of previously existing partnerships, and embedding a new set of behaviours necessary to solve shared problems. This is a risky time for new partnerships, and often a point of failure due to insufficient investment of time and effort, or disputes and tensions over priorities and methods.

Two key enablers at this stage are **boundary spanners** and **shared evidence and insight**.

Key enablers

Boundary spanners

Boundary spanners are the “do-ers” within partner organisations who carry out the joint work to bring collaboration to life.

For example, the Kent directors of finance group (see case study on [page 68](#)) was instrumental in developing proposals for participating in the business rates retention pilot scheme, and in working with their respective leaders and chief executives to reach agreement on proposals that were ultimately successful.

Effective boundary spanners:

- Achieve success through influencing and negotiation
- Understand partners’ challenges and differences as well as similarities: **“it’s about understanding the unique challenges and common needs of each partner”**
- Spend time where they need to. In the case of developing shared services across two councils, one officer asked: **“does working for two councils mean that you split your time 50/50? I don’t sit there thinking I’m doing more for one than the other. The authorities have got to a culture where time is spent according to need – for all intents and purposes, you work for one authority”**
- Manage roles, accountabilities and motivations¹⁶ across a variety of partners, both operationally and strategically

Shared evidence and insight

Shared evidence and insight creates a shared evidential basis for decision making and defining outcomes.

The nature of evidence and insight will vary depending upon the focus of the partnership. For example: district councils seeking to work with health providers around prevention and demand management have often cited difficulties around sharing data around individuals and households, and concerns around legal restrictions on sharing data have frustrated many partnerships.

Many partnerships have been able to overcome these difficulties and find a way to share insight and intelligence successfully. We suggest that “making systems talk to each other” may be too much to aim for in many cases, and that finding other and more pragmatic ways to share appropriate data and information may be a better first step.

16. <http://districtcouncils.info/building-better-collaboration/>



Building a shared vision for your place

Moving quickly and developing a shared vision is essential to ensuring that the collaboration is not dissolved prematurely. Effective visions are a combination of ideas that express:

- purpose and core values
- what a place is striving to become
- its value proposition and what makes it unique
- what a place is good at and why it matters
- the strategic intent, and stretch goals linked to future aspirations.

Visioning is often described as a mixture of art and science. The ‘science’ lies in creating a common evidence base on which to build shared priorities.

The art is in the act of story-telling and creating a shared narrative about how the future looks and feels – rooted in heritage, identity and local aspirations. This goes beyond coordinating strategies and plans of separate organisations in a place – it is actually involving the community, its leaders and inviting fresh perspectives from outside the traditional partnership to challenge and feed into the vision. Most people and businesses feel an emotive connection to place, and it is important for leaders to take them on the journey.

Thinking about “culture of place”

Grant Thornton and SOLACE’s publication ‘Culture of Place’ explores a range of stories about places and how they link to the place-shaping role of local leaders. It summarised some of the key lessons learnt by leaders when creating a vision for place:

- **The place leader is the story teller** – leaders need to be more deliberate in their storytelling, helping communities make sense of a complex world, the past, present and possible futures.
- **Being clear about what people want to see** – there is a strong need to create an environment that gives people permission to care, to be innovative, to take action themselves, to adapt and experiment.
- **Socio-economic situations often drive the vision** – the uniqueness of socio-economic factors leads to a recognition that one place will never be like another – and, in fact, should not aspire to be so – instead tailoring their approach to the areas’ specific strengths.
- **It’s all about context** – areas within Britain can be local, national and international all at the same time, learning to live with, and get the best advantage from, what’s on our doorstep is key.

“One of the lessons learnt is having a clear narrative to present to both government and communities, together with being consistent as to why we are doing it. The story must be about the place as a whole and the benefits which will be felt. What does it mean for the area? What does it mean for the local economy, the infrastructure, digital connectivity? What does it mean for employment and jobs?

Perhaps most importantly it is about making it real for individuals and families and not about buildings and units.”

District interviewee



Case study:

Horizon 2050: a place-based vision for Basingstoke and Deane

“Horizon 2050 is about having a clear and joined up vision for the kind of place we want to be in the future.”

In a context of stalled devolution talks, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council sought to reignite collaborative working across the area by developing a strategic place-based vision that moves beyond economic growth and development and takes an objective, long-term view of the borough's future, to consider the role of the borough and its partners in the both the national and sub-national economy. Horizon 2050 is that expanded vision.

Horizon 2050 is bolder, more specific and more distinctive than previous visions.

From the start, the Council was clear that it wanted to democratise the process rather than develop bland statements behind closed doors, and partnered with IPSOS Mori to connect with a wide range of stakeholders and residents. The Council also recognised the need to draw in further best practice and expertise, engaging with experts including the Institute for Public Policy Research and NESTA.

The Council engaged in “grown up conversations” through a series of in-depth workshops with stakeholders including Hampshire County Council, EnterpriseM3, Basingstoke Area Strategic Partnership, Queen Mary's College, Basingstoke College of Technology, North Hampshire Hospitals NHS Trust, Basingstoke Voluntary Action, Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government and local communities.

The vision is made up of goals which are public facing, inclusive and non-bureaucratic. Strategic goals are underpinned by specific metrics and targets that will enable the council and its partners to track progress towards their shared aspirations.

The council has identified several key success factors for collaborations of this type:

- The importance of acknowledging where expertise lies
- Injecting a significant level of resident and partner engagement into the process
- Constant self and peer-challenge on the robustness of engagement plans
- Having close 1-2-1 conversations with colleagues in other places to spot any “brick walls” ahead and navigate around them
- Collecting a wide and deep evidence base to support credibility of proposals
- Putting significant effort into communication along the way – thinking carefully about language and style to make the vision compelling to a wide range of stakeholders
- The vision should be made up of two sets of goals: 1) the aspirational, which outline the vision and the 2) operational
- When engaging with central government and lobbying for big infrastructure project funding, demonstrating credibility on delivery is just as important as having a narrative



Case study:

Great Place Lakes and Dales, Craven DC, South Lakeland DC and two National Park Authorities

Promoting and developing culture as a catalyst for revitalising rural areas

The rural corridor linking Skipton (Craven) in the south and Grasmere (South Lakeland) in the north has an ageing population, with 44% fewer 16-34 year olds than the national average and a significant proportion of second homes. Unless more families and young people can be retained and encouraged into the area, communities are at risk of losing village schools, depriving rural areas of cultural, community and service delivery centres. There will also be a lack of skilled employees for local businesses, and subsequently an impoverished cultural offer.

The area extends into both the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Parks and straddles two partnering local authorities – Craven and South Lakeland District Councils. The area has outstanding natural and cultural landscapes which inspire creative people and visitors, yet the population continues to age and the local economy is already, and will continue to suffer from fewer economically active residents.

Promoting culture as a catalyst for change, Great Place Lakes and Dales seeks to revitalise the rural economy and create new collaborative opportunities with cities across the Northern Powerhouse including Leeds, Lancaster and Manchester. The programme will pilot innovative ways of working and new partnerships to help retain and attract young people to the area.

The two district councils and the two national parks are entering into a formal partnership agreement and will contribute financially to deliver the programme. They will also be represented on the Creative Board, which has been established to provide overall strategic direction and decision making and will meet at least twice a year.

The message from Craven District Council in relation to governance is **“Keep it simple, be transparent and minimise governance so it doesn’t compromise delivery”**. Hence minimising complex bureaucracy is vital to dedicate maximum time to ensuring and influencing specific outcomes for long term legacy delivery.



Further resources: developing a place-based vision

If you and your partners intend to embark on a visioning exercise, the recently published 'Futures Toolkit' by central government and several NESTA publications may be a good starting point:

- The Futures Toolkit:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674209/futures-toolkit-edition-1.pdf
- NESTA: <https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/democratising-future-how-do-we-build-inclusive-visions-future>
- NHS Improvement Guide 'Creating a vision for your change':
https://improvement.nhs.uk/uploads/documents/01-NHS104-Phase_2_Creating-a-vision-for-your-change_210817_A.pdf



Key questions

- Do partners have a clear narrative? Who are the story-tellers?
- Do partners have a shared understanding of how communities see the present, past and future of their place?
- What is the story we are giving to politicians which they can then pass on to our local communities?
- Do partners have a clear, shared and evidence-based picture of desired future outcomes for communities?
- Do partners speak the same 'language' when it comes to measuring outcomes?
- Do partners have a shared understanding of local variation in outcomes, service quality and standards?



Consolidate – making collaboration stick

Much research has been undertaken on how place-based collaboration should work in practice. This phase is about building the collaborative infrastructure to ‘make it stick’ – to embed the change and prevent it from unravelling.

We asked all participating district councils how they brought their collaborative efforts to life, and heard about two key enablers: **communication** and **resourcing and programme management**.

Key enablers

Clear and consistent communication

As one district chief executive put it “**in the early days, get a clear and shared set of messages, make sure they are well understood by everyone, and then stick to them like glue**”.

Particularly when it comes to the creation of spin-out companies or proposed changes in structures, it can be easy for those not directly involved in discussions to reach their own conclusions about the intended purpose and effect of changes. It is important to counter this through clear and consistent communications across all stakeholders.

If partners are intended to develop shared proposals for consideration by others, especially to central government, then speaking with a single voice is especially important in order to demonstrate strong relationships and singularity of purpose.

Resourcing and programme management

Collaborative partnerships need an investment of effort and money to get off the ground.

Often it is leaders and chief executives who will drive the initial stages of transformation proposals before assigning responsibilities to officers within respective organisations. Experience shows that this has mixed results as officers can struggle to focus on collaborative work alongside the “day job” and momentum can be lost.

Many districts describe the commitment of money and the recruitment of a shared post as the key moment that their collaboration began to come to life. The commitment of money is a symbolic as much as a practical gesture that, in the words of one chief executive, demonstrates “**skin in the game**”.





Building Collaborative Places

“Building Collaborative Places”¹⁷ research undertaken by Collaborate CIC and Lankelly Chase identifies nine building blocks for collaborative places:

Place-based strategies and plan	A vision for place based on a shared understanding of local challenges
Governance	A cross-sector, cross-cutting governance structure, which holds the whole system to account
Outcomes & accountability	Outcomes and metrics which have a direct line to the experience of citizens and communities
Funding & commissioning	Shared commissioning, driven by social value and community assets
Culture change & people development	Changing culture and behaviours to increase collaboration readiness.
Delivery	Combining a 'hard' focus on implementations with building trust and networks
Data, evidence & evaluation	Generating collaborative insights that facilitate joint learning and go beyond data sharing
Collaborative platforms: digital & physical	Creating shared spaces – either virtual or in person to build connections
Communications & engagement	Feedback loops built into delivery

17. http://wordpress.collaboratei.com/wp-content/uploads/Building-Collaborative-Places_Digital-Report-Pages-2.pdf



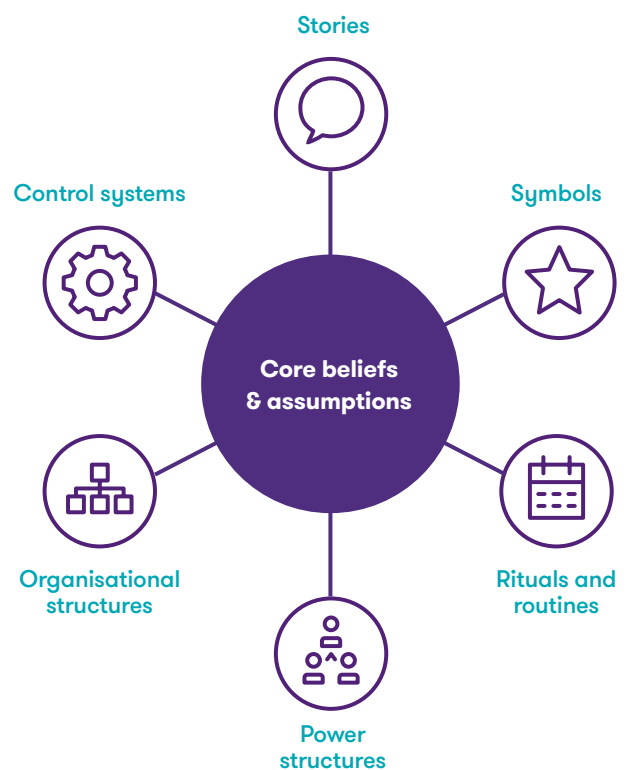
Aligning organisational cultures

Aligning organisational cultures is one of the biggest challenges described by our case study areas. In the first instance this can mean overcoming simple barriers around achieving a common language – for example we heard several times that simple terms such as “prevention” can mean very different things across local government and health.

However, as partnership organisations get progressively closer, and in particular where they are considering integration or transformation such as shared services or creating new organisations, it becomes increasingly important to bring together the best elements of pre-existing organisational cultures whilst also reinforcing the new behaviours and values required to make the partnership work in practice.

This requires time and intensive effort, and active engagement within partner organisations to co-design and co-create a shared culture and set of values. As a tool to support initial reflection on organisational culture, we suggest use of the “cultural web” in a shared workshop context – this provides a framework for sharing deep insights about how it feels to work within organisations and exploring overt and hidden aspects of culture.

The ‘Cultural Web’”



Core beliefs and assumptions

These are the core set of assumptions that are held in common in an organisation – they are the things which are taken for granted.

What activities or actions “go without saying” here?



Stories

The stories shared across organisations will reflect what is held in high regard in the culture. Stories legitimise the types of behaviour we see in organisations.

**What stories are famous here?
And which ones are infamous?**



Symbols

Symbols tell us how the culture is brought to life in the organisation – these are often visible.

What do we do with our office layouts, allocation of parking spaces, job titles, the dress code and ‘trophies’?



Rituals and routines

These highlight what activities people do on a regular basis and what is seen as important. Attendance and outputs reflect on the organisational culture.

**What regular meetings are held?
How well attended are these?
When was the last time this was adapted for improvement?**



Power structures

This acknowledges who has authority in the organisation, and to what extent this complements processes and protocols.

Who do we need to talk to, to make things happen around here?



Organisational structures

The organisational framework by which roles and responsibilities are determined; the hierarchy and use of departmental verticals.

Does the organisation have an “open door” policy? How does this work in reality?



Control systems

These are the processes, systems and measures that the culture will align to. If controls have a direct impact on reward and/or performance management, it will have an impact on people's behaviour.

What KPIs are most closely monitored? Does the organisation use a ‘carrot’ or ‘stick’ approach to performance?



The case study below illustrates the first steps of a new collaborative partnership.



Case study:

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and Harborough District Council: considering options for closer collaboration

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council and Harborough District Council (the Councils) already have extensive shared services both with each other and with other districts within Leicestershire. Based on these pre-existing strong relationships they have been undertaking work for the last six months to analyse and consider options for closer collaboration between themselves and other Districts in Leicestershire.

The Councils have undertaken a series of independently facilitated workshops with senior management on both sides to:

- understand the motivation for collaboration, develop a shared purpose and set of desired outcomes
- outline a set of strategic options for closer collaboration across the Councils and consider the opportunities and risks attached to each of them
- through these discussions, the Councils identified a shared and compelling vision for collaboration, which revolves around:
 - resilient and sustainable services
 - achieving value for money for communities
 - enhanced outcomes at a locality level
 - improvements to democratic accountability
 - stronger strategic impact and place-based leadership.

As part of the work, the Councils undertook high-level analysis of the savings potentially available through sharing or merging services, and considered a range of alternative delivery models that could enable greater flexibility around future partnerships. The Councils also considered how closer collaboration can support strategic positioning in relation to wider regional and national debates around public sector reform.

Work remains underway by the Councils to determine their preferred future model of collaboration, so as to share this initial work more widely with their members. As this progresses they are investing in light-touch programme management arrangements to support further work, and engaging wider local partners to explore opportunities and options from their perspectives.



Appraising governance models

To begin with, the governance of many collaborative efforts may be based on informal partnerships, often between senior officers and elected representatives of local authorities. These partnerships can be fragile and based on consensus and relationships, so more robust governance arrangements may be required over time in order to protect the resilience of partnerships. In due course these may evolve into legally-defined governance arrangements such as joint committees or joint venture companies.

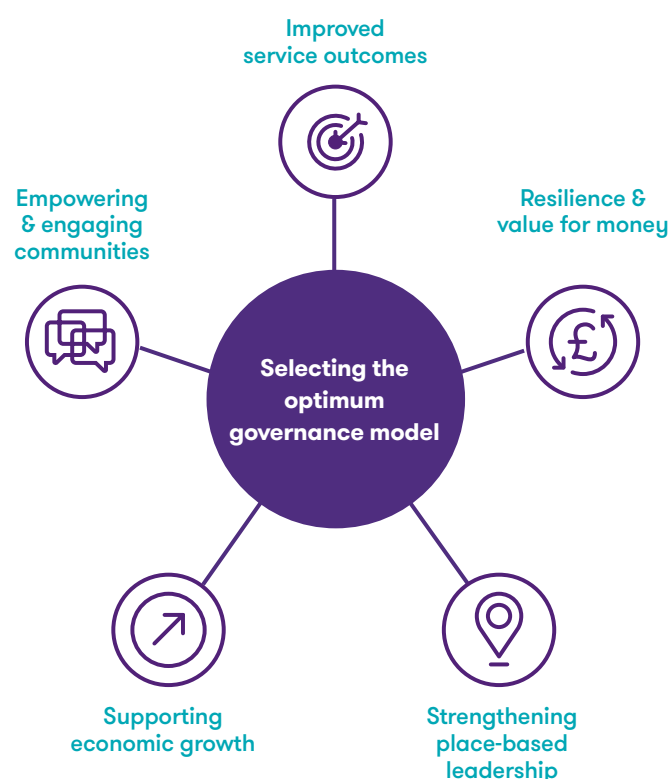
Clear accountability – on both an individual and organisational basis – is key to the ongoing success of partnerships. To begin with, partnership boards should work to a clear terms of reference or memorandum of understanding and a defined membership.

Arrangements for feedback and performance management should be put in place based upon metrics that cut across organisational silos and provide evidence of success and progress towards shared goals.

“Governance arrangements should be as light-touch as possible, whilst still demonstrating transparency and accountability.”

Local authority chief executive

When considering the governance models that are appropriate for your partnership, it is important to focus on the likely outcomes for people and place, and to take into account a range of factors that go beyond the scope for saving money. We propose a set of five balanced questions that also map loosely to the criteria identified by MHCLG for consideration of proposals for local changes to structures, as explored in the final chapter.



For further information and guidance on governance models for collaboration, please refer to accompanying guidance provided by Trowers & Hamlin LLP at: www.trowers.com/dncollaborate





Collaborating for stronger economies

Districts have the opportunity to work together in clusters that reflect functional economic geography, thereby amplifying their strategic influence over local economies and accelerating the delivery of new homes, whilst also providing democratic accountability.

As many leading clusters have shown, working on a “boundary-blind” basis also enables a louder voice in regional and national discussions, increases resilience through pooling of resources, and can unlock new funding from central government.

There is also a key opportunity to move beyond cooperation within economic areas and to set out a bold place-based economic vision aimed at inspiring confidence in business and helping to shape local industrial strategies.

As planning authorities, districts are key partners to LEPs in growing the local economy. In some areas, districts can coordinate with each other to ensure their voices are heard in local discussions around growth and investment based on coherent economic areas.

Tools and resources in this section

Clustering to drive housing delivery and economic growth

[Clustering in practice](#)

[Key learning points on clustering](#)

Collaborating on infrastructure and investment

[Land value capture](#)

Collaborating with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

[Representation on LEP boards](#)

[Seven ways to engage LEPs](#)

[Shaping local industrial strategies](#)



Clustering to drive housing delivery and local economic growth

“These are clearly challenging times for local authorities and public servants across the country, but at the same time there is also an unprecedented opportunity for district councils to be involved and drive forward their local economy. They are absolutely at the forefront of navigating the landscape, and I thank my hon. Friend for this opportunity to pay tribute to district councils, the District Councils’ Network, his APPG and all people who work in our local government family, including every civil servant in town halls across our country.”

Jake Berry MP Parliamentary debate for the APPG on district-led collaboration¹⁸

The government’s “Modern Industrial Strategy” recognises that “every region in the UK has a role to play in boosting the national economy”, and that “economic growth does not happen in the abstract... [it] happens in particular places”. Whether working individually or in partnership, districts have always facilitated local economic development, working directly with residents and businesses to create the conditions for local prosperity.

Local economies are shaped by the ways in which capital flows, businesses and their supply chains operate and people live their lives. These patterns continue to evolve over time, driven by changes within society, the development of new infrastructure and technology, and the influence of the state.

The boundaries of individual local authorities, many of which date back to the 19th century, may not always reflect the functional economic geography of which they are a part. The size and agility of district councils makes them natural building blocks for a different approach. Districts who wish to increase their influence over local growth therefore have the opportunity to collaborate with neighbouring organisations in partnerships framed by shared functional economic areas.

District clusters within economic areas can:

- achieve a more strategic view of housing development and investment in infrastructure
- create a more compelling platform from which to engage local and national partners
- save public money and increase resilience through pooling resources.

In an environment where funding for local authorities will increasingly be through retained business rates, healthy local economies are also crucial to protecting the quality and resilience of universal services such as leisure, refuse and recycling and housing.

As housing and planning authorities, and place-shapers, district councils are one of the main enablers of housing growth and employment space in England and a key partner to central government in delivering the ambitious targets set out in the recent Housing White Paper. At the heart of Government’s proposals is a commitment to “deliver a million homes by 2020 – and half a million more by the end of 2022”. Districts have shown that they can collaborate across administrative boundaries and bring forward solutions to support this dramatic acceleration in the supply of housing. We argue that these planning and housing partnerships should also be shaped by local economic geography and fall naturally into clusters around functional economic areas.

18. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-11-15/debates/5B849B80-0C8D-4B03-B7A8-84835A25DCB9/DistrictCouncils>



What does clustering mean in practice?

Each district council is located in its own unique setting and must therefore determine its own strategic partnerships on economic growth and housing. Typical approaches include:

Clustering around shared geography

Neighbouring districts working together within a continuous area on the basis of good relationships and mutual interests. May include:

- sharing services and resources relating to planning and economic development
- producing joined-up local plans and mechanisms for funding redistribution such as CIL and S106
- governance tends to be through informal partnership boards or formal joint committees/economic prosperity boards
- joint representation across the wider area for example within Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Clustering around functional economic areas

As above, but in areas that are framed by functional economic geography, for example as measured by the level of “self-containment” of the local labour market. As discussed in earlier chapters, an area in which 75% of residents both live and work may be considered to be self-contained.

Alignment to centres of economic activity

Districts forming an explicit relationship with surrounding unitary local authorities covering metropolitan areas. As illustrated by many existing Combined Authority areas, cities can expand their potential for growth through their connections with their hinterland.



Case studies: existing economic and housing delivery clusters

In the following pages we explore three case studies of district-led partnerships covering these issues in different ways.

- The City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey District Councils have created a joint and single planning authority for Central Lincolnshire based on the economic footprint of Lincoln City
- North Essex District Councils, in collaboration with Essex County Council are working together to bring to life a number of new Garden Communities within the area
- District Councils in North Worcestershire have merged economic development and regeneration functions to create a shared team supporting joined-up work across the partnership



**Case study:****Central Lincolnshire Planning Authority****“Facilitating growth by working together.”**

Central Lincolnshire faces a range of challenges, in particular the need to improve social and economic conditions in the area, including health, housing, jobs, and the range and quality of facilities. At the same time partners are conscious of the need to ensure that the environment is improved and that growth does not erode the area’s environmental and heritage assets or exacerbate pressure on natural resources.

Central Lincolnshire is the joint planning authority for the 3 local authorities of Lincoln City, North Kesteven and West Lindsey in the form of a joint committee. This joint committee was created at a time when each council was under a different political administration. There is also formal county council involvement in the joint committee, enabling integrated planning for infrastructure delivery.

Each council nominates three elected members to sit on the committee, with a further three members representing the county council. The purpose of the joint committee is to establish a local development framework for Central Lincolnshire, which covers a population of approximately 300,000 people.

The authorities have worked together for a number of years following the 2008 East Midlands Regional Plan which recommended that Lincoln had a single development framework, and a shared Local Plan Team was established in May 2010.

The partnership has developed a shared infrastructure delivery plan with agreed priorities, a community infrastructure levy sharing mechanism, and an agreed set of funding parameters to support economic growth and housing delivery. The three districts have also each saved over £100k per annum through sharing of the Local Plan Team, and have achieved greater quality and resilience within the team than might have been possible through three separate functions.

Housing growth for the city of Lincoln is constrained by administrative boundaries and the City must therefore rely on the two surrounding districts of North Kesteven and West Lindsey to provide space for new developments. Partners follow a ‘hybrid’ approach of defining suitable locations for growth without drawing settlement boundaries.

Partners have worked hard to achieve a maturity of discussion that does not focus on administrative boundaries, but instead on the sustainability of the place as a whole. This means a shared focus on factors such as access to facilities, the local economy, landscape and service provision.

Key benefits for the area include:

- 1 Accelerating growth in Greater Lincoln through better planning.** Planning across geographical and administrative boundaries has enabled a joined-up approach to growth in Greater Lincoln. The Greater Lincoln Transport Strategy, for example, has facilitated cross-border:
 - pooling of S106 funds to bring forward the East-West transport link across the city
 - use of the community infrastructure levy for shared priorities such as the delivery of the Lincoln Eastern Bypass
 - shared approaches to economic development, which is enabling the delivery of the largest business park development in Lincolnshire and targeted county council investment in highways infrastructure
 - the partnership was recently able to work together to dissuade Siemens – a large employer in Lincoln – from leaving the area in search of more space. The councils worked together to find a development on the edge of the city, albeit within a different local authority area, that met Siemens’ needs and enabled them to retain the shared economic benefits within the wider area.
- 2 Greater resilience through a one team approach.** The councils are jointly procuring research and planning expertise, in large part through a service level agreement with Peterborough City Council who have an experienced local planning team.
- 3 More streamlined processes, enabling focus on delivery and efficiencies.** Creating one Local Plan instead of three has enabled all three districts to make significant efficiency gains and focus resources of delivery. Preparing one Local Plan rather than three effectively requires one evidence base not three, and one formal planning process not three.



Case study: North Essex Garden Communities

“One of the lessons learnt is having a clear narrative to present to both government and communities, together with being consistent as to why we are doing it. The story must be about the place as a whole and the benefits which will be felt. What does it mean for the area? What does it mean for the local economy, the infrastructure, digital connectivity? What does it mean for employment and jobs?

Perhaps most importantly it is about making it real for individuals and families and not about buildings and units.”

Colchester Borough Council, Braintree District Council, Essex County Council and Tendring District Council are collaborating to deliver large-scale growth across North Essex in the form of Garden Communities. These will consist of infrastructure-led, mixed-use developments, including employment opportunities, commercial units and community provision.

This collaboration came about as in total the three district councils need to deliver 2,315 homes a year to cope with demand, as well as the employment opportunities, schools, health facilities and infrastructure to support these communities.

Faced with this challenge, a strategic director at one of the councils who was a planner in the 1980s recalled the nine principles of “garden communities”¹⁹ and suggested that these would be a good fit for what the partnership was trying to achieve, especially the focus on “infrastructure first”.

Following initial discussions between leaders, chief executives and directors, the councils had a series of bilateral discussions to work through issues and challenges to get to a joined-up conversation about the future of their place and the greater good of North Essex.

Locations for three future Garden Communities have been identified and have the potential to deliver a combined capacity of at least 40,000 new homes, over a twenty to thirty-year period, together with transformational new infrastructure and considerable local economic growth opportunities along the A120 growth corridor.

The councils made a substantial investment in programme management to bring this initiative to life. To begin with, three directors (one from each district) together with the County Council met every Thursday and did the initial work for the first six months alongside their day jobs. The authorities have now committed £0.25m each, and brought in external support and advice. Finding these sums was a challenge, but the partnership has been able to identify a £2m “fighting fund” which has now allowed them to set up North Essex Garden Communities with the four Councils being equal shareholders.

“In principle” support for the proposals has already been obtained from Government, with MHCLG agreeing to fund over £1.5 million under the national ‘Locally-led Garden Cities’ initiative. The bid was supported by the Leaders of all the Councils, the Haven Gateway Partnership and South East LEP. The Councils were also receiving assistance from the Major Projects Division of the Homes and Communities Agency (Atlas) and Garden Cities Developments, a CiC established by senior Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) members to help ensure that the adopted solutions are true to the underlying principles of Garden Communities.

The establishment of the North Essex Garden Communities’ Local Delivery Vehicles and funding requirements have been approved. This means that it has attracted a hard hitting Managing Director who can get into government departments to influence and work in partnership with them. His focus over the next two to three years is to get the local plan and infrastructure ready first, as this investment is needed to get the garden community running from day one. This is “big picture, long-term stuff”, but work is well underway.

19. <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/garden-city-principles>



Case study:

North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration

“By joining up, particularly for districts, you start to get that critical level of capacity and resilience that will put you in a better position overall than if you tried to plough your own furrow.”

In 2010, Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest Councils merged their separate economic development and regeneration functions to create a shared North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) team. All three district councils are in both the Worcestershire LEP and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP.

The project was born out of a desire amongst key stakeholders for simplicity, clarity, efficiency and improved impact. The purpose of the NWEDR shared service is to promote and enable growth and sustainable development within North Worcestershire. Through this partnership, the Districts are identifying ambitious and coherent plans for business and growth, providing a “red carpet” approach to prospective inward investors and working with the County Council and the LEP to shape investment in infrastructure in the area.

North Worcestershire Economic Development and regeneration programme has gained traction where other similar projects have struggled, due to an explicit long-term commitment amongst partners, an awareness of the need for flexibility, and robust relationships.

The initial partnership agreement is for a 10-year period, which provides sufficient time for the shared service to show what it can achieve. The 10-year agreement demonstrates councils are committed to making the shared service work long term.

There is an informal governance structure in place, with a client management group providing oversight. The group consists of cabinet members from each partner district, the chief executives of Bromsgrove and Redditch and a director on behalf of Wyre Forest. At this point there is no desire for more formal governance arrangements as the current model is felt to work well and provide much-needed flexibility.





Key learning points on clustering for housing delivery and economic growth

Becoming “boundary-blind” takes sustained and ongoing time and effort

Firstly, as explored in previous chapters, relationships and trust are the fundamental bedrock that underpin collaboration arrangements of this type. In the absence of these, then despite the most robust economic case for collaboration, concerns around fairness and equity within administrative boundaries can be hard to overcome.

As one of our interviewees put it: **“it took time to build trust across the different councils and to ensure all partners were aligned to a common vision... this was achieved through focusing on shared ambitions for growth over the next 20 years and a focus on ‘working the problem rather than attacking the people’”.**

Once an initial consensus has been established, it requires constant maintenance. This is especially important if there are changes to key individuals within the partnership. Each decision about funding, investment and growth represents an opportunity to reinforce trust across the partnership or to place it in jeopardy. As another interviewee summarised: **“Momentum from the projects in progress is what keeps the arrangement harmonious. As long as there are things happening and results are being seen, and being seen to be fair, the three councils are happy.”**

A “human” story of place and a shared evidence base are important

In previous chapters we have discussed the importance of a unifying narrative and “story of place” and how this can focus the joint efforts of collaborative partners. Language is important, especially in a context of growth and place-shaping.

Housebuilding and growth are often discussed in terms of numbers of units and the technical language of planning and infrastructure. Whilst it is important to understand and evidence collaborative work in these terms, there should also be a public-facing narrative around families, households, communities and quality of life. This will be especially important to harness the support and engagement of existing communities in relation to new development, as well as elected members and wider stakeholders outside the world of planning.

Collaboration for growth takes time to bear fruit

As one of our interviewees said: **“this is big-picture, long-term stuff”.** Both North Essex and Central Lincolnshire are explicitly planning over a timeline that spans multiple decades. This means that visions, partnerships, governance arrangements and delivery models must all be sufficiently robust to withstand changes in personalities, politics and the priorities of surrounding organisations.

It may be possible to save money in the short term by pooling resources and to bring forward smaller joint projects, but delivering sustainable growth at scale is long-term work and the results may not be visible within a given political administration.



Key learning points on clustering for housing delivery and economic growth

Governance arrangements must be proportionate

Having “just enough governance” is key, balancing flexibility with control and accountability. Each of the three case studies explored above has approached this in different ways reflecting the nature of the partnership and initiative.

- In the North Worcestershire partnership, governance remains informal based on periodic meetings of the lead members and senior officers, although the districts are represented jointly on the boards for both the Worcestershire LEP and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP
- In North Essex, a standalone company has been created by local partners which is jointly owned by the local authorities involved
- In Central Lincolnshire a formal joint committee has been created with representation by each of the partner authorities

Resource-sharing mechanisms can be tricky to establish, but build trust and place-based resilience

Pooling funding streams such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) requires clear agreement of spending priorities across all partners, but can lead to a more strategic and joined-up view of investments and benefits. For example, the Greater Norwich Growth Board have put in place a CIL pooling mechanism covering the districts of Norwich City, Broadland and South Norfolk, based on a joint Core Strategy.

Working together enables a louder voice in regional discussions

Districts who work in collaborative clusters have an opportunity to speak with a single voice in wider regional and national discussions around funding, infrastructure and investment: **“when a company comes in to take a look, we don’t fight over the location but present a coherent approach across the patch”**.

From the perspectives of key place-based partners such as Local Enterprise Partnerships, having a coherent partnership of districts expressing a unified view makes life a lot easier, and simplifies the administrative effort required for consultation, engagement and relationship. Conversely, partnerships of districts may have more influence within these discussions.

The same is true in negotiations with central government – thinking and acting as a cluster can allow district partnerships better access to deal-making process such as city, devolution and housing deals.

For further information on potential governance models including Economic Prosperity Boards please refer to accompanying guidance from Trowers & Hamlin LLP at: www.trowers.com/dcnccollaborate



Collaborating on infrastructure and investment

Local infrastructure funding mechanisms such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) often do not generate sufficient capital to support the level of investment in infrastructure required to match the growth ambitions of local authorities. By working together in economic partnerships and clusters, districts are successfully making the case for new infrastructure funding for their localities and finding innovative ways in which to raise it themselves.

Government has also shown a clear appetite for receiving joined-up proposal from local partners on infrastructure.

Many of the existing devolution deals, and the Oxfordshire housing deal, represent specific central government interventions on infrastructure and this “site-specific” investment is likely to be accelerated through the adoption of Local Industrial Strategies. Learning from our case study areas shows that it is important to be bold and up-front in making requests of central government in relation to infrastructure investment.

Housing deals – a new approach

The Housing White Paper makes it clear that the government is: “interested in the scope for bespoke housing deals to make the most of local innovation”. The first of these housing deals, in Oxfordshire, is interesting in that it reflects a consensus across the six Oxfordshire districts who have otherwise struggled to reach agreement on proposals for devolution and reorganisation. Achieving agreement on this new housing deal starts to build a track record of collaboration and joint working that may build confidence on the part of central government, developers and investors, whilst also helping local partners to build stronger collaborative arrangements within the area.



Case study:

Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

“The deal represents a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing Oxfordshire’s housing, infrastructure and economic challenges. It demonstrates the Government’s commitment in working with Oxfordshire and recognises the critical role the county will play in driving forward the UK economy post-Brexit, attracting global investment.”

Cllr. Bob Price – Oxford City Council

The Oxfordshire Growth Board is a joint committee with representatives from each of Oxfordshire’s six councils – Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council – and Oxfordshire LEP.

The Oxfordshire Growth Board secured £215m of Government investment for new homes and infrastructure across Oxfordshire via an Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal that was announced in the November 2017 budget. This deal, which is the first of its type, will provide £60m for affordable housing and £150m for infrastructure improvements, including road and rail. This new funding will

support the ambition of building 100,000 new homes across Oxfordshire between 2011 and 2031 to address the county’s severe housing shortage and expected economic growth.

The amount of funding provided falls well short of the total investment in infrastructure that partners believe is required to achieve the level of housing growth needed within the area. Partners hope that the deal will form the basis for a long-term and iterative relationship with central government in the interests of growing the economy of Oxfordshire and continuing to support its national and international reputation as a source of innovative and high-value science, research and business activities and part of the wider Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor.

The Oxfordshire Growth Board will be accountable for the successful implementation of the deal as agreed with Government. The partnership is in the process of finalising a shared delivery plan and seeking a mandate from each of the partner local authorities to proceed with the deal.²⁰ The HCA (now Homes England) played an active role in securing the deal and will continue to provide support to the partnership as they implement it.

A second housing deal has recently been struck between MHCLG and the West Midlands authorities, with a number of further areas reported to be under consideration. The Housing White Paper is clear that government **“asks local authorities to be as ambitious and innovative as possible to get homes built in their area.”** Other areas who are interested in working

collaboratively to attract new funding and accelerate the pace of housebuilding should seriously consider taking joint proposals to central government.

Housing Infrastructure Fund awards to district councils

Homes England recently released £866 million in infrastructure funding to local authorities across England, the first tranche of a £5 billion fund. Over half of the projects funded on a competitive basis were proposed by district councils.

20. <http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/b15069/Housing%20and%20Growth%20Deal%20report%20to%20the%20Growth%20Board%20Thursday%2001-Feb-2018%2014.00%20Oxfordshire%20Growth%20B.pdf?T=9>

**Case study:****Business rates retention pilot in Kent**

A partnership of 15 principal authorities including 12 Kent District Councils, Kent County Council, Medway Council and the Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) were successful in their proposal to pilot 100% Business Rates Retention in 2018/19.

The pilot aims to increase financial stability, respond to the pressures on local authority services resulting from population and business growth, and drive future housing delivery and commercial growth. Proposals have been signed off by the Section 151 officers for each authority. The total value of business rates collected in Kent and Medway in 2017/18 is expected to be around £637 million, with projections indicating that 100% retention could result in an additional c.£25 million being retained in Kent and Medway.

The proposal for the pilot was initially discussed at the bi-monthly Kent Leaders' meeting, where Leaders (and some chief executives) come together to discuss issues of mutual interest. Initial agreement on proposals was difficult to achieve. Gravesham Council was recognised by peers for financial acumen and as taking a robust and even-handed approach to partnership issues, so accepted the challenge of designing proposals that would be equitable to all partners.

The overarching aims agreed at this stage sought to ensure that the model is as equitable as possible, taking into consideration the differential impacts growth may have on participating authorities, especially:

- those authorities who will have to deal with some of the externalities of growth, such as poor air quality
- neighbouring boroughs, especially in relation to traffic congestion
- those authorities who aspire to growth but need to develop additional infrastructure to support it
- those authorities moving into negative RSG, including the need to develop a mechanism to assess their needs

Against this backdrop, Gravesham BC officers shared the draft model at a S151 meeting where various indicators of these pressures were modelled. Through use of a live data model, S151 officers reached consensus on an approach that included a “baseline element” for each authority (based largely on

populations), with a “variable element” on top of this (taking into account population growth and business rates growth over the past five years). These two elements served as proxies for the pressures felt by each authority and therefore distribution of the funds. S151 Officers then recommended the model to their respective authorities.

The model also clearly recognised the difference in responsibilities across different types of authorities in Kent and Medway, and the need for each authority to see an outcome commensurate with those (ie in the county/district areas, the proceeds were split between the districts and the county council, whereas in the unitary area a “double allocation” was provided to reflect the fact that they had both sets of pressures).

The final scheme was made up of two elements: a Financial Sustainability Fund and the Housing and Commercial Growth Fund.

The Financial Sustainability Fund (FSF) will provide greater certainty to all Kent and Medway local authorities and support them in managing the pressures associated with growth. In 2018/19, it is proposed to account for 70% of all business rates growth. It is the principal mechanism within proposals that will manage the risk of fluctuations in business rate proceeds. The FSF has the effect of ensuring that every authority benefits from the business rates growth across the entire functional economic area, but resources are directed to those areas facing the greatest pressure and demands on local services. It also smooths out significant differences in outcomes.

30% of retained growth will be invested in the Housing and Commercial Growth Fund (HCGF), which will pool a sufficiently large level of resources to make a significant difference to support future delivery. It is likely that the mix of funding requirements will vary across Kent and Medway's three economic areas, given their different growth opportunities and viability pressures. In managing the HCGF, funds will be pooled in three ‘clusters’, for North Kent, East Kent and West Kent, with the distribution based on each area's share of total business rate receipts.



Land value capture

“Since public transport generates significant positive externalities, it is not efficient for fare payers to cover all capital expenditure. In the past, general taxation has funded the gap (including business rates and government grants). But as the funding requirement grows, without alternative funding sources, there is no obvious way of paying for major network upgrades and extensions, other than increasing the burden on general taxation. Land value capture (LVC) is one such alternative funding source.”²¹

Transport for London

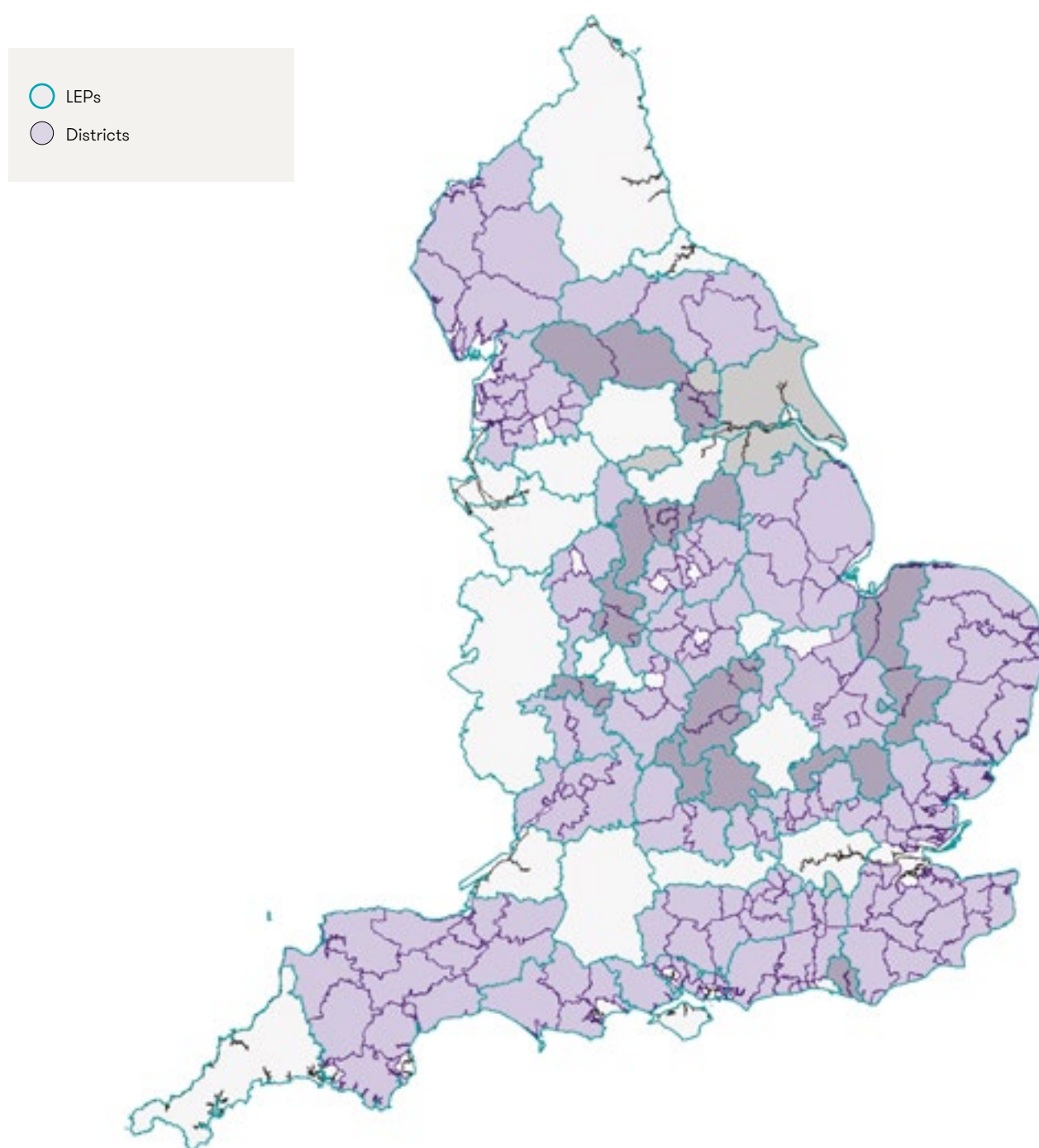
Land value capture refers to a set of mechanisms used to monetise the increase in land values that arise in the catchment area of public infrastructure projects. This mechanism is being used to support ambitious housing development plans across the country – for example within the North Essex Garden Communities programme.

Transport for London have recently published a useful discussion paper on Land Value Capture which, although framed in a London context, covers a range of approaches and tools that all areas can consider incorporating within their local approaches to this area.



21. https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/land_value_capture_executive_summary_transport_for_london.pdf

Overlapping footprints: LEP boundaries and district council boundaries





Collaboration with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

As leaders and representatives of place, districts play a key liaison role with local businesses, employers and investors – existing and potential – to enable expansion, make the case for investment and inspire confidence within the business community.

LEPs provide a forum for these discussions and are key place-based partners. Their role is likely to be strengthened, as they become the local delivery vehicles for the Modern Industrial Strategy and gatekeepers to Shared Prosperity Funds.

LEPs are here to stay and their influence is growing

“We want to ensure that LEPs have the right governance structure, accountability and capability to take a leading role in driving economic growth, and that all local partners, including district councils, have a voice. That work will build on the recent review of LEP governance and transparency that was published in October. I hope we will find an opportunity to engage district councils in that review and to talk to them about the role that they can play in their LEP.”

Jake Berry MP – Commons debate on district council collaboration and devolution in England, November 2017

Outside city regions with combined authorities and metropolitan mayors, Government remains “firmly committed to Local Enterprise Partnerships”²² as part of the fabric of place-based leadership, and in particular playing a key role in delivery of the national Modern Industrial Strategy and the development of local counterparts. There is also a recognition, based on work by the National Audit Office²³ that the performance of LEPs has varied and that transparency and accountability have not been consistently strong in all places.

Following the publication of a new national assurance framework²⁴ for LEPs November 2016, a review of Local Enterprise Governance and Transparency was reported in November 2017.²⁵ The Industrial Strategy White paper is clear that a further and more fundamental review will be undertaken:

“We are reviewing the roles and responsibilities of Local Enterprise Partnerships and will bring forward reforms to leadership, governance, accountability, financial reporting and geographical boundaries. We will work with Local Enterprise Partnerships to set out a more clearly defined set of activities and objectives in early 2018.

These will be driven by influential local leaders, acting as figureheads for their area’s economic success, and a clear strategy for local and national partnership.”

This review, led by Jake Berry MP, is currently underway.

22. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf

23. <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/local-enterprise-partnerships/>

24. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/567528/161109_LEP_Assurance_Framework.pdf

25. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/655188/Review_of_local_enterprise_partnership_governance_and_transparency.pdf



Representation on LEP boards

There is no single template for LEP governance, and LEPs have significant local freedoms to determine their arrangements according to local needs. Each LEP has developed its own arrangements for decision-making which reflects its legal structure, the complexity and needs of the locality and compliance with requirements to ensure value for money, local engagement and democratic accountability.

We have heard from a number of district councils during this process that they feel they struggle to get their voices heard within the Local Enterprise Partnership. Our central messages in this section are that:

- It is within the gift of district councils to coordinate amongst themselves to ensure that their existing district representation on LEP boards is made to count. Many district partnerships have already done this, by ensuring that one district representative is empowered to speak on behalf of a geographical or economic cluster of neighbouring authorities.
- In a context of scrutiny on governance, responsibilities and boundaries, and growing responsibility for place-based industrial strategies it is more important than ever before for LEPs to recognise the value and democratically accountable voice that district council partners bring to the table in discussions around economic growth, and ensure that all districts are able to have a voice where it matters.

The 2016 assurance framework sets out an expectation that:

“Local Enterprise Partnership boards must have a private sector chair, with at least 50% of the rest of the members also coming from the private sector. Other board membership should be drawn from local authority leaders and other relevant public sector organisations. The main Local Enterprise Partnership Board must include an identified board member to represent and engage with the SME business community”²⁶

Our research shows that 23 of the 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships areas in England contain district councils. In all of these areas with the exception of Greater Cambridgeshire & Peterborough (see note below table), district councils have at least one representative on the board. For the remaining 22 LEPs on average a third of the districts in each LEP area are directly represented on the board, and district leaders constitute an average of 17% of the total members of LEP boards in these areas.

26. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/567528/161109_LEP_Assurance_Framework.pdf



LEP areas containing district councils	Count of district councils in LEP area	Count of district reps on LEP board	Count of LEP board members	% of districts represented on LEP board	% of board who are district representatives
Buckinghamshire Thames Valley	4	4	10	100%	40%
Coast 2 Capital	12	1	16	8%	6%
Coventry & Warwickshire	5	5	15	100%	33%
Cumbria	6	3	11	50%	27%
Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham & Nottinghamshire	15	1	16	7%	6%
Dorset	6	1	16	17%	6%
Enterprise M3	14	4	19	29%	21%
Gloucestershire (GFirst)	6	1	11	17%	9%
Greater Birmingham & Solihull	7	5	20	71%	25%
Greater Cambridgeshire & Peterborough*	-	-	-	-	-
Greater Lincolnshire	7	2	14	29%	14%
Heart of the South West	13	2	21	15%	10%
Hertfordshire	10	3	14	30%	21%
Lancashire	12	2	19	17%	11%
Leicester and Leicestershire	7	2	15	29%	13%
New Anglia	14	4	16	29%	25%
Oxfordshire	5	4	18	80%	22%
Solent	8	1	14	13%	7%
South East	29	6	28	21%	21%
South East Midlands	7	3	18	43%	15%
Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire	8	5	23	63%	23%
Worcestershire	6	2	10	33%	20%
York, North Yorkshire & East Riding	7	3	15	43%	20%

Note

Data is sourced from BEIS lookup tables on local authority LEP membership and from a manual review of LEP websites. These numbers show a straight numerical count of district representatives on each LEP board and do not take into account representatives from one district council who formally represent others at their respective LEP boards.

* the Greater Cambridgeshire & Peterborough LEP ceased to operate in April 2018. All District Council leaders in Cambridgeshire are members of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority Board.



We have looked in detail at published information on governance structures for the four LEPs, drawing on our case study areas and others. Our conclusions are that there appear to be other mechanisms for districts in those LEP areas to feed in; however they vary between each LEP ranging from formal joint committees to informal meetings of leaders meetings.

Coast 2 Capital LEP

Only one district council is represented on the LEP board.

The LEP operates a number of committees, which include representatives from the remaining district councils in the area. It also operates a periodic partnership forum, which provides a further opportunity for engagement by all local partners.

Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham & Nottinghamshire LEP (D2N2 LEP)

A single district council from each County area is represented on the LEP board.

There are separate economic prosperity boards for each County which have a recognised role in advising the D2N2 LEP on investment priorities for each area.

Heart of the South West LEP

Two district councils are represented on the main LEP board, however the LEP describes them as representing other District Councils in their respective Counties.

Periodic leader meetings are held with the other district councils to inform those who sit on the LEP board.

Worcestershire LEP

There are two district representatives on the LEP board. The representative from Wychavon DC formally represents the south Worcestershire area comprising of Malvern, Worcester and Wychavon. The representative for Bromsgrove formally represents the North Worcestershire cluster of Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove and Redditch. The three North Worcestershire Districts also have a single representative on the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP board.

Governance arrangements for LEPs should continue to be determined locally between partners pending the findings of the ongoing national review led by Jake Berry MP.

Where they have not already done so, it is within the gift of districts to coordinate amongst themselves, formally or informally, to ensure that existing representation on LEP boards is made to count. For example, existing district representatives should be provided with a mandate to speak on behalf of clusters of districts representing functional economic areas within LEPs, or where this is not possible simple geographical partnerships of districts.

Although each leader's formal mandate is clearly restricted to their electoral area, an informal mandate on behalf of a wider footprint could bring economic benefits to the area as a whole. Better-coordinated representation by districts would ensure that discussions about economic growth can be more joined up and coherent and will benefit fully from districts strong understanding of place and businesses.





Seven ways to engage with your Local Enterprise Partnership

In discussion with the national LEP network, we would suggest seven ways to strengthen relationships with your LEP:

- 1 Engage directly**

The contact details for LEP chairs, boards and chief executives are generally published on each LEP website. If you do not feel that your partnership with the LEP is strong enough, then do not wait to be engaged or consulted, but make direct contact and begin the discussion.
- 2 Engage through formal or informal governance arrangements**

Districts can coordinate amongst themselves to make the most of their collective representation on LEP boards. If your district is not formally represented on the LEP board, then how can you coordinate with neighbouring councils to ensure that districts speak with a collective voice that reflects local economic geography more than administrative boundaries? If there is not already an informal meeting of Council leaders aligned to LEP decision-making schedules, can you put one in place?
- 3 Engage through the ongoing LEP review**

The ongoing minister-led review of LEPs is expected to publish its findings in the summer of 2018. As well as considering the remit and governance of LEPs, the review is also expected to lead to changes in LEP boundaries in at least some areas.

When these findings are published they will create a significant and time-sensitive opportunity for local partners to engage in a debate about the local implications and, if necessary, to take the opportunity to re-set their relationships with their LEP.
- 4 Engage on Local Industrial Strategies**

LEPs are seen by government as the driving force behind the development of local industrial strategies (further detail later in this chapter) and work on these is progressing at different rates across the country. To succeed, local industrial strategies must reflect a broad place-based picture of aspiration and potential rooted in local identity, and be visibly supported by key local partners. Given the ongoing LEP review, in some areas there is uncertainty around the geography over which local industrial strategies will need to be developed. Districts, with their detailed understanding of localities and local economies, are in a position to start to define some of these geographies, irrespective of whether LEP boundaries eventually change. They have an important role in adding their knowledge and intelligence to this process, shaping local strategies as they emerge or even beginning the thinking process where this has not yet been picked up locally.



5

Engage on the Shared
Prosperity Fund

Following the UK's exit from the European Union, the government has given a commitment to put in place a Shared Prosperity Fund **"specifically designed to reduce inequalities across our four nations"**. LEPs are expected to be the bodies with responsibility for administering these funds. There is little detail currently in the public domain around these funds, but the publication of proposals in due course will create another critical opportunity to engage with LEPs around funding mechanisms. It is also likely that areas with demonstrable unity of purpose and a clear place-based vision for economic growth will represent an easier target for investment from the perspective of central government.

6

Engage through local scrutiny

The Ney Report raises the issue of scrutiny of local enterprise partnerships concluding that: **"this is an area for further development which would give increased independent assurance"**. All LEPs are currently scrutinised by their respective accountable bodies in line with the existing assurance framework. As part of the evolving shift towards greater accountability, districts have the opportunity to step forward as scrutineers of LEPs focusing on activity and investment within their own footprint or partnership cluster. This activity would need to be coordinated across the LEP area in order to ensure that sensible use is made of LEP resource in responding to scrutiny by local democratically-elected bodies.

7

Engage on the evidence base
for economic growth

The processes of collecting, recording and analysing data about economic growth and predictions for future growth are often undertaken by multiple organisations within a given locality, and often this work is not joined up to ensure a single version of the truth and a single evidence base for development of shared strategies, policies and plans. LEPs also tend to be small organisations with limited capacity. Many areas – both rural and metropolitan – are saving money, reducing duplication and improving the quality of economic analysis by pooling resources into a single place-based function. Districts can engage LEPs and other local partners in exploring this option or, as a minimum, ensuring a community of practice and shared evidence base amongst existing analytical and economic development functions.

**Case study:****Basingstoke and Deane District Council and the Enterprise M3 LEP****“Find mechanisms to learn to dance together and then to enjoy dancing together.”**

Since the inception of the Enterprise M3 LEP, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has been closely involved. The LEP board has 6 councillors (2 from the Hampshire district councils, 2 from the Surrey district councils and one from each County Council).

The JLB helps to advise Enterprise M3 on strategic priorities for growth and provides a mechanism for coordinating the combined contribution of councils on actions and activities to deliver the Strategic Economic Plan, and the resources required to implement them.

The JLB gives an equal voice to each member, no matter the size of the Council. This helps to ensure that special interests are not overlooked. The forum provides leaders with an opportunity to meet with peers every 6 to 8 weeks, and discuss shared priorities formally and informally. This is felt to have been helpful in building relationships between leaders and developing a stronger shared voice across the partnership.

Relationships with the LEP are also supported by each Council having a nominated account manager to support joint working at an officer level.

Having a clear strategy right at the beginning identifying “growth” and “step-up” towns has been important to ensure economic growth and investment is achieved across the area rather than looking at schemes in isolation. An example of this big picture thinking is how the areas are trying to work together to link up 3 separate geographical clusters of businesses specialising in video games, supporting them to work together rather than compete with each other.

A successful LEP requires a good quality Chair and Chief executive, the Chair to broker understanding between the public and private sector and the Chief executive to recruit good people and build relationships with those with resources to get things done.





Shaping local industrial strategies

“The role of district councils has never been more important in delivering growth across our country, and we need them to be fully engaged with our industrial strategy. We want them to build the homes we need and deliver services that work for everyone, as part of a country that works for everyone.”

Jake Berry MP Parliamentary debate for the APPG on district-led collaboration²⁷

The government published its Industrial Strategy²⁸ in December 2017 aimed at creating “an economy that boosts productivity and earning power throughout the UK”. Whilst this is a national vision, it recognises the importance of place-based approaches to reflect the different strengths,

assets and needs of each part of the UK. This is to be addressed through the development of “Local Industrial Strategies” and importantly Local Enterprise Partnerships are seen as a route to “strengthened local leadership” of these outside Combined Authority areas.

District Councils have a rich understanding of how local markets function and often strong relationships with local businesses. They also have the right flexibility and scale to act in clusters aligned to functional economic areas, marrying democratic accountability with a range of powers and levers to support growth. It is crucial that these two key strengths feed directly into the process of developing local industrial strategies.

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To prepare for the development of local industrial strategies, districts and their partners should:

Define the geographical components of their local industrial strategies

District councils can often work in clusters that reflect functional economic areas or align naturally to their surrounding economic geography. Irrespective of whether LEP boundaries change, these clusters can begin to make sense of the geographies that local industrial strategies must engage with and offer democratic accountability within them.

Coordinate cross-sector leadership and relationships

Districts must continue to focus on strategic coordination with their neighbouring authorities and with LEPs to ensure that a coherent, shared and genuinely place-based vision for economic growth and opportunity is put forward regionally, nationally and internationally. Districts also tend to have close relationships with local businesses, and can draw on these networks to support this vision.

Contribute their deep understanding of place and local economies

Local industrial strategies will need to rest on a robust evidence base around industrial sectors and a strong grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of local economies. Given their close connection with localities, districts are well placed to supply this rigour, as well as adding a strong qualitative picture of local identity and heritage.

Coordinate on planning and strategic investment

Spatial planning is a key policy lever within the development of local industrial strategies. Through working in collaborative clusters where appropriate, district planning authorities can join up strategies, policies and investment frameworks to take a wider view on economic growth and housing delivery, in a way that aligns to the key economic and industrial opportunities for their areas.

Get started

Outside of the three areas being supported by BEIS, there is mixed progress in the development of local industrial strategies. Especially in areas where LEP boundaries may change, partners may be reluctant to invest limited resources and capacity in the process until there is clarity on this issue. Irrespective of progress amongst the wider partnership, district partnerships have the opportunity to begin framing their own thinking on growth, productivity and prosperity around the pillars of the industrial strategy, and therefore help to set the pace for other local partners.

27. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-11-15/debates/5B849B80-0C8D-4B03-B7A8-84835A25DCB9/DistrictCouncils>

28. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf





Collaborating for better lives

Districts have a significant contribution to make to the sustainability of health and social care services. They are providers of key preventative services including housing, homelessness, leisure and environmental health.

There is a clear and evidence-based case for strategic health partnerships to recognise the role of these services as part of their local health care ecosystem, and ensure that they are leveraged to improve public health outcomes and reduce demand for social care and acute health services.

Forging operational partnerships with health bodies takes persistence and a focus on evidence, but leading districts are showing the way. The most successful joint initiatives between districts and health have often begun with a relatively simple value proposition to health partners and have snowballed as evidence of impact has grown. As one of our interviewees said of local health partners: “through collaboration they could see that by helping us do more, they are helping themselves”.

Tools and resources in this section

The prevention offer

[Making the offer to health partners](#)

[Building the evidence base and measuring return on investment](#)

[Tools available to districts as housing authorities](#)

Strategic collaboration with health partners

[Moving towards whole-system approaches to public health](#)

[Understanding the health planning cycle](#)

[Whole-system approaches](#)

[Co-producing with communities and individuals](#)

[Building capacity in the voluntary and community sector](#)



The prevention offer

Current thinking in the NHS has evolved in favour of a ‘population health approach’ – an area where districts have a natural advantage and can draw on a long history of commitment to better lives and reducing health inequalities in their communities. A population health approach is defined by a focus on the wider determinants of health and the conditions in which ‘people are born, live and work’.²⁹ This was acknowledged by Department of Health and Social Care guidance: **“Delivering integrated care can extend beyond traditional perceptions of health and social care into areas involving: early intervention, prevention, self-care, promoting and supporting independent living.”**³⁰

Districts are providers of services which relate to key determinants of health. They are also well placed to shift the debate away from a medical model of care based on treatment of disease and towards a more holistic view of health outcomes based on person-centred wellbeing and lifestyle choices.

Districts councils are also key to ensuring the sustainability of the social care system nationally. Ahead of the publication of the Green paper on adult social care in July 2018, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health Jackie Doyle-Price emphasised the importance of looking beyond social care provision before Parliament: **“it is important to highlight the broader support and services that help people to live independently for longer. Well-adapted, specialised housing is becoming increasingly important. The means-tested disabled facilities grant helps with meeting the cost of adapting a property to the needs of a person with a disability or support need.”**³¹

29. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-care-how-to-comply-with-monitors-requirements/complying-with-monitors-integrated-care-requirements>

30. Department of Health, Complying with Monitor’s integrated care requirements, 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-care-how-to-comply-with-monitors-requirements/complying-with-monitors-integrated-care-requirements>

31. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-12-07/debates/F7AD5D1D-C8D6-411D-BF42-B432955B2A8E/SocialCare#contribution-AB8C4199-1079-4082-B8D1-0696C2444953>



The Secretary for Health and Social Care also announced the seven principles which will underpin the Green paper:

The seven principles ³²	The role of districts
Quality and safety in service provision and commissioning.	As housing authorities, districts provide crucial services that increase safety and independence in the home for the elderly, including home adaptations and handyperson services.
Whole-person integrated care	Districts – through their embeddedness in communities and links to the voluntary and community sector – understand the health needs of local populations. In the following section, we provide many examples of district-led integrated care models and whole-system approaches to public health.
The highest possible control given to those receiving support	Districts – through the provision of a range of wellbeing services, lifestyle support and joint programmes with the voluntary and community sector – enable options for greater independence and control.
Better practical support for families and carers	<p>The Green Paper seeks to address the underlying causes of loneliness by building partnerships between the state, individuals and wider civil society.</p> <p>Districts have an understanding of care which goes beyond simply treating medical conditions and extends into tackling complex conditions such as loneliness. In the following section, we provide many examples of districts working with GPs, carers and other partners on social prescribing, community connector, befriending, and time-banking schemes.</p>
A sustainable funding model for social care supported by a diverse, vibrant and stable market	Through their crucial role in prevention, districts can ease demand for services further downstream by reducing hospital admissions and delayed transfers of care.
A valued workforce	In their place-shaping and planning authority roles, districts have a crucial role to play in the location of integrated services that enable ease of access to services and targeted care. In a lot of the bottom-up integrated care model provided below, staff morale increases due to the greater sense of ownership over the design of these initiatives.
Security for all	The Secretary of State emphasised the affordability of care and ensuring financial wellbeing in old age. Being on the frontline of community support, districts are normally the first ones to be confronted with families struggling to cope with an unpredicted illness or those living with disability and complex conditions.

32. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-need-to-do-better-on-social-care>



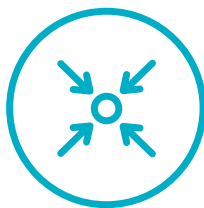
This shift in national policy represents both an opportunity and a challenge – an opportunity to engage with partners and demonstrate the value of the services districts provide, but also a challenge in navigating a fast-moving policy agenda and increasingly complex partnership structures.

To make the most of the opportunities for collaboration, districts need to present a coherent value proposition to partners, which can be broadly articulated as a ‘prevention’ offer to Counties, the NHS and communities. In this section we outline what this prevention offer can contain.

This district offer to health and social care can be seen in the context of the prevention agenda and especially the importance of early intervention in reducing demand for services further downstream, including primary, acute and social care. As one of the interviewees said **“Through collaboration, they [health partners] could see that by helping us do more, they are helping themselves.”**

The District Councils’ Network Report ‘District Action on Public Health’ summarises the district offer based on the range of services districts provide.³³

District councils’ prevention offer



Wider determinants

- Economic development and business support
- Housing
- Advice and support
- Community safety



Health improvement

- Smoking cessation
- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Healthy eating and physical activity



Health protection

- HP powers
- Food safety
- Air quality
- Contaminated land
- Private water supplies
- Noise control
- Pest control

Taking public health forward

33. District Councils’ Network District Action on Public Health, 2013 http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/11215/district-action-on-public-health_2013_rtpi_endorsed.pdf



Making the offer to health partners

Some partners – especially those experiencing financial or capacity pressures – may not have the resources to incorporate individual districts’ offer into their strategic planning considerations. Equally, districts have to navigate a number of national and county-level health structures such as Health and Wellbeing Boards, STPs, ICS, CCG, Provider and County Boards, integrated care models and in the future, Accountable Care Organisations.

Districts should therefore focus on creating an offer containing a set of interventions which may be most impactful to partners. The offer should demonstrate a clear financial and economic case, but equally emphasise the

social benefits of working with districts. In Sevenoaks, for example, local health priorities were to save money, reduce the number of days spent in hospital, and reduce the number of people accessing GP surgeries for non-medical reasons. Using the Better Care Fund, Sevenoaks DC placed an adviser in GP surgeries. GPs identified their 25 ‘most persistent patients’ and in most cases, these were not the most physically ill patients but those experiencing mental ill health, loneliness, depression and debt problems. Most of the time these patients required non-medical solutions, and the District is now involved in arranging community solutions to these problems.





The two case studies below illustrate two successful district-led offers to county councils in the area of public health.



Case study:

West Kent 'District Public Health Offer' to Kent County Council. The 'One You' service

West Kent's One You service is a devolved public health service hub emerging out of three districts' offer to the county council.

The three West Kent districts – Sevenoaks, Tonbridge Wells and Tonbridge & Malling submitted a ten-point enhancement plan to Kent county council covering ten public health initiatives they can deliver jointly with the county council. The Director of Public Health saw the prevention benefit of the One You brand nationally and was willing to collaborate with districts to make it work locally. The One You brand mostly covered physical activity but the districts have since expanded it beyond nutrition, exercise and fitness to also include referrals for poor housing, debt, mental health, loneliness, and employment advice.

Identifying the issue and targeting the solution

Creating a joint West Kent-wide 'district offer' made sense to both the three districts and the county council. The county council was commissioning districts and other providers in silos – customers had to be referred separately to each service. The intention was to 'wrap all of these services around the individual and bring them forward at the right time for the individual', delivering a more seamless and cost efficient service.

One You is funded by Kent Public Health grant. Under the previous fragmented model, the county council and the three districts were spending about £1m individually (through grants to VCS and a range of community projects) on maintaining and commissioning separate services.

One You advisers or 'Lifestyle advisers' are also accountable to the individual districts who provide the service locally and ensure that local services are tailored to local needs. One You teams have also delivered tangible benefits in terms of rapid discharges from local hospital and to GPs due to the close working with housing adaptations, HERO (Housing, home energy and retraining options) and Housing Advice teams.

Lessons learnt for Sevenoaks DC – who are part of the One You district consortium – include:

- **The importance of political and managerial leadership.** The joint prevention offer was personally championed by Sevenoaks DC's Chief Executive and the portfolio holder, who liaised directly with the Leader of the county council. Negotiations at the political level unlocked further conversations at officer level.
- **Creating district-wide forums in which to agree a 'District offer'.** For example, the West Kent Integration Board has successfully developed a joint position on prevention across the three districts, which could then be taken to health partners.
- **Take and create opportunities as they arise.** Through relationships with the county council and the West Kent Integration Board, districts were alert to the county council's plans to create a countywide preventative service strategy as well as the 'radical upgrade to prevention', required by the Five Year Forward View, and agreed jointly on the best model of aligning their strategy to make the most of this alignment of national and county priorities.



Case study:

Lincolnshire Wellbeing Service: a joint bid by seven districts

The seven district councils in Lincolnshire successfully bid for the provision of the Lincolnshire Wellbeing Service on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council. The Wellbeing service contract is managed by East Lindsey district council and is delivered by four delivery partner councils (East Lindsey, West Lindsey, North Kesteven, and City of Lincoln) through formal partnership arrangements, with active support from three further stakeholder councils.

Lincolnshire's advice on making a successful offer

The value proposition was based on districts' community links and key role in influencing the wider determinants of health, but also on a clear commercial offer. The below is a summary of some of the key elements of the offer:

- Embedding the Wellbeing Service into the core services of all seven district councils. This ensures a customer-centred approach, a more streamlined process and ease of access to the right service
- Access to the tools available to districts as strategic housing authorities
- Understanding of countywide strategic priorities through districts' involvement in strategic networks and partnership, including the Health and Wellbeing Board, Health Scrutiny Committee, Lincolnshire Safeguarding Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, etc
- Co-location of local teams with district councils: many of the district authorities in Lincolnshire co-locate with strategic partners, eg DWP, the NHS, Adult Social Care and Community Groups
- Districts are locally accessible and accountable to local residents and elected members: **"We are easy to find, known and trusted by residents and partners. Rooted in our communities, District Councils are highly sensitive to the needs and opportunities to support our residents: we can't up and leave if the going gets tough! Our councillors are elected by local people. They scrutinise service quality and performance to ensure they meet local needs"**

- Governance and performance management
 - Each partner has clear roles and responsibilities set out in formal management agreements, underpinned by a single IT performance management solution
 - The Wellbeing Service Management Board brings together the four delivery partner councils overseeing contract delivery

Lessons learnt

- **Understanding the boundary lines of statutory services is key.** Covering such a large area, Lincolnshire's statutory services often have different boundary lines. For example, GP surgeries might cover an area crossing two or more district councils; while clinical commissioning groups do not follow the same split as Adult Social Care teams. These boundary issues impacted on the initial separate delivery of the Wellbeing Service. Joining the service across the whole of Lincolnshire removed these boundary issues.
- **Understanding partners' service strengths and gaps.** Districts are also able to identify possible service gaps between partners, allowing them to develop strategies to fill these gaps, ensuring equitable access to services throughout the County.



Building the evidence base and measuring return on investment

“We’ve learnt over time that to get health – especially GPs – on board you need to demonstrate the value of the relationship.”

The most successful collaborations so far have been instances where districts have taken the first step and demonstrated in practice how they can add value. One interviewee described this approach as:

“The traditional public health approach needs to be flipped on its head: you can’t be scientific about it – ie you define a cohort, define an intervention, and then demonstrate that it works. You need to perform first, and show that it works before creating a joint intervention with health”

Some of the stakeholders shared that a significant cultural shift in teams working with health partners was required to create an evidence-driven culture. Measuring and building the evidence base was seen as a ‘distraction from innovation’, but this was crucial to get more partners on board and overcome initial scepticism.

Measuring the ‘return on investment’ is becoming increasingly important in terms of targeting organisational resources at interventions which can demonstrate measurable benefits. This feeds back into overcoming some of the ‘language barriers’ with the NHS and CCGs and the differing views around measuring success.





Drawing on a number of sources, we have distilled and articulated an evidence-based offer which districts can take to partners. It quantifies the size of the prize and the numerous benefits collaborating with districts can bring to partners.³⁴

	Homelessness prevention	Leisure, parks and green spaces	Planning	Advice (housing, benefits and employment)	Home adaptations, DFG, Handyman service
Prevention offer by districts	2015/16 district councils prevented or relieved 66,327 homelessness cases, 30% of the England total	Through provision of leisure and green spaces, districts prevent physical inactivity and mental ill health before they become a burden on health	Design of healthy, active places increases active commuting or physical activity	Districts can provide unique intelligence on the most hard-to-reach and vulnerable people in local communities, helping partners target interventions	District councils spent £2.2bn a year to help the elderly live independently at home
Benefits to partners	Potential to save the NHS £85m in annual cost	1.7bn saving from avoided healthcare costs of sport Parks provide £34bn of health and wellbeing benefits, saving the NHS £111m per year through prevented GP visits ³⁵ 10% increase in exposure to green spaces translated into five years in age terms Every £1 invested in innovative district-run reduced-cost or free access leisure services generates up to £23 in value	Physical inactivity causes up to one in five premature deaths and costs the UK economy over £7 billion a year Increasing walking by 1.75 per cent could outweigh the costs 60-fold Increase in high-quality public spaces in Copenhagen led to 65% increase in cycling	County Council saving Average cost of residential care for one year £29,000 against average cost of housing adaptation £4,400 = potential saving of £24,600	NHS savings £1.36bn avoided cost of cold homes to the NHS £1 saves £108.27 over 10 years in prevented falls Handyman service yields a saving of £7.50 for every £1 Every £1 spent on housing adaptations is worth more than £2 in care savings and quality of life gains
Practical measures to demonstrate success	Reducing hospital admissions Preventing delayed transfers of care Supporting care at home or in the community Decreasing health inequalities				

34. King's Fund. The district council contribution to public health: a time of challenge and opportunity 2015 https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/district-council-contribution-to-public-health-nov15.pdf

35. <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/research/Revaluing-Parks-and-Green-Spaces-Report.pdf>



Social return on investment – only 6% of local authorities measure SROI compared to 30 percent of housing associations.³⁶

The social return on investment can be used to demonstrate the wider social, environmental and economic value achieved through interventions. The Cabinet Office Guide³⁷ and Social Value UK³⁸ website provide useful guides on the steps involved in measuring SROI.

CfPS³⁹ and Grant Thornton have also published a Toolkit aimed at Members on how to drive SROI through effective scrutiny of outcomes.

A 2018 report by the Fields Trust builds on the HM Treasury Green Book to develop a methodology for the economic valuation of improvements in health and wellbeing associated with the frequent use of parks. Full report can be found here: www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/research/Revaluing-Parks-and-Green-Spaces-Report.pdf

Cost-benefit analysis

The resources below provide a range of techniques for quantifying the health and wellbeing benefits of housing intervention, relative to their cost.

- **King's Fund, The Economics of Housing and Health:** https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/Economics_housing_and_health_Kings_Fund_Sep_2016.pdf
- **LSE, National Housing Federation. Prescription for Success: How housing can make the economic case to health:** http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/59502/1/_lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_shared_repository_Content_PSSRU_Prescription%20for%20success_2014.pdf
- **Handyperson financial benefits toolkit:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handypersons-financial-benefits-toolkit--2>

36. <http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/wp-content/uploads/A-DESIGN-FOR-LIFE.pdf>

37. https://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/Cabinet_office_A_guide_to_Social_Return_on_Investment.pdf

38. <http://www.socialvalueuk.org/resources/sroi-guide/>

39. http://www.cfps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/cfps_social_return_on_investment.pdf



Tools available to districts as housing authorities

The 'housing' tools below can be used as conversation-starters when approaching partners locally. As one of the most powerful levers available to districts, these have been tried and tested with a proven track record of delivering results for local communities.

The renewed national 'Memorandum of Understanding to support joint action on improving health through the home'⁴⁰ set out shared vision across more than 25 organisations for a renewed focus on collaboration to realise the health benefits of housing. Some of the commitments include:

- establish and support national and local dialogue, information and decision-making across government, health, social care and housing sectors
- co-ordinate health, social care, and housing policy
- enable improved collaboration and integration of healthcare and housing in the planning, commissioning and delivery of homes and services
- promote the housing sector contribution to: addressing the wider of health; health equity; improvements to patient experience



DFG, Home Adaptations teams, and Handyperson service

All of the three tools forming part of the District toolbox are perfectly suited to start conversations with partners. Since the inclusion of the DFG in the Better Care Fund, districts can demonstrate the value of home improvement and adaptations to delayed transfers of care. As Sevenoaks DC's Cllr Michelle Lowe summarised it:

"One brilliant way of getting our foot in the door is the DFG grant (disabled facility grant). Getting the adaptations team working together with hospitals or GPs surgery to adapt people's homes is a great win as partners see the results and want to know what more we can do."

Home repairs can also prevent admission by enabling independence at home, preventing the escalation of need and supporting wellbeing. Evidence collected through this initiative shows there is a clear economic case to be made.

⁴⁰. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-health-and-care-through-the-home-mou>



Case study: Lightbulb: Our 'Housing offer' to health

Lightbulb is a partnership programme supported by the seven district councils in Leicestershire, Leicester City Council, and Leicestershire county council. It is an integrated service model across housing, health and social care. It brings together a range of practical housing support for local residents into a single point of access or referral. A holistic housing needs assessment (the Housing MOT) has been developed to ensure that housing support needs are proactively identified and that the right solution is found.

The partnership was officer-driven and emerged out of housing officers' conviction that housing services can make a difference to people's health and wellbeing. Partners worked hard to engage with health, and achieved success through:

- **having a district-wide 'housing offer to health'**
- **communicating the 'offer' in a language that was meaningful to NHS bodies**
- **doing 'something for nothing' when starting the relationship.**

The seven districts commissioned the Chartered Institute of Housing to look into local examples of service/programmes having a positive impact locally. This research served as the basis for their 'Housing offer to health' and an action plan about what more districts can do for health in terms of housing.

However, effective communication and engagement was needed to bring the offer to life for NHS partners: **"Health people are very evidence-driven. It's not the anecdotal case studies that ticks their boxes – it's hard data"**. The initial challenge was to demonstrate in measurable terms how district housing services can be part of the solution to demand pressures by reducing hospital admissions and delayed transfers of care.

When approaching partners it is also important to show a degree of 'selflessness'. In order to gather the 'hard data' and provide the evidence, the districts offered to place a housing officer in hospitals for a week. The trial showed that around 42% of the people that were seen had a housing need they needed help with. Adopting the language of health unlocked the relationship.

The approach to collaboration was based on **"starting small, proving the premise and then the evidence that there was something behind that. This opened the doors to having those high-level conversations"**.

Maintaining the momentum behind collaboration

Putting together the right resources and project management structures was crucial to scaling up the partnership. Partners were fortunate in being able to access MHCLG's Transformation Award funding, providing resource to build customer insights, metrics and return on investment.

The greatest challenge was achieving a shift in culture and mindset. Developing a sense of ownership by staff over the redesign of processes and pathways was crucial to enabling pooled staffing and funding arrangements. Leadership of different strands of the work programme is distributed across organisations to remove the impression of a top-down approach, although work is coordinated through a dedicated project team.

Governance structures have been kept relatively simple, with a Programme Board acting as the decision-making body, and a Steering group of operational managers driving day-to-day change. As Chief executives and directors are represented at the Programme Board, they are also able to link up to the county-wide Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure effective overall coordination. This link at the strategic level has really moved housing up the agenda at county level, and when the Better Care Fund programme was initially designed, the Lightbulb project took on a central role.

Lessons learnt

- Address legal, IT and financial aspects early on to avoid them becoming barriers. Budgets need to take account of one-off costs (eg redundancy cost arrangements). Pooling staff and resources involved delegating duties and functions as well as understanding TUPE rules. Whilst you may have partner agreements, it could take longer than anticipated for them to be finalised
- Start thinking about information sharing agreements early on as they will prevent you from demonstrating your value



Case study:

Getting home with District Direct: housing as part of integrated hospital discharge⁴¹

South Norfolk, Breckland, Broadland, North Norfolk District Councils and Norwich City Council have placed Home Improvement Agency officers and Housing Options Officers at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital (NNUH) integrated discharge team.

To date the pilot has supported 184 patients, undertaken 290 interventions and provided wider information and

advice. Patients have ranged from 31 to 96, with an average age of 71 years.

Due to the simple interventions below, the districts managed to save 725 bed days over 29 weeks (5-day week) pilot leading to a saving of £181,250 (leading to an annual saving of £325,000) and reduced average length of stay by 36%.



Planning

Planning can be used as a tool to both facilitate better health outcomes directly but to also enable access to better health and community collaborative infrastructure.

Regarding the first use of the tool, planning can promote physical activity and healthier lifestyles by creating ‘a high quality built environment’ such as green spaces, cycle paths or low density of fast-food outlets.’

The second use of planning as a collaborative tool is especially important in the context of health and social care integration. One district officer working closely with health emphasised

that STPs need the local authority planning function more than ever. Current local plans include implementing clusters of GP practices and hubs, co-locating services, and agreeing on what a local offer looks like for local people:

“They [STPs] have to rely on planning officers in local authorities to help them with that – they are needing to develop land, upgrade GP facilities, look for premises to rent for GP practices and hubs. Our role is looking at what the offer is across districts to see how they can be helped to achieve this.”

District interviewee



Case study:

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Health Impact Assessments⁴²

South Cambridgeshire planning project aims to bring together health colleagues from the county council Public Health Team, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the voluntary sector to give the Local Planning Authority a steer on the public health implications of new developments using health impact as a requirement for every major development within the district.

The starting point was the concerns raised by local GPs on the high level of mental distress being presented in the new village of Cambourne. Further research by colleagues in NHS Cambridgeshire confirmed that the population was experiencing higher than average mental health distress. The suggested causes related to lack of facilities – such as a shop, or community centre, due to the lag time between occupation of houses and the provision of amenities.

The solution was in the gift of the Local Planning Authority by involving stakeholders in the consultation response

to major planning applications. The council’s policy is that planning applications for major developments must submit a health impact statement to demonstrate that the applicant has addressed the proposal’s ‘impact on health’. To help developers the council produced a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Supplementary Planning Document, which provides guidance for developers about the contents and process of an HIA.

The Council works with public health colleagues in the county council to produce a jointly considered response to HIAs. It is engaging with the CCG through the Local Health Partnership in planning consultations, particularly for the new Town of Northstowe where the CCG will help shape the “Vision” for the new town and help ensure that public health concerns are addressed through the local development control system.

⁴¹. <http://www.nnuh.nhs.uk/news/2017/11/getting-home-with-district-direct/>

⁴². Source: DCN District Action on Public Health



Enabling suitable housing

“A good housing policy is essential to increasing wellbeing amongst local residents. By understanding the needs of the local population, Housing Authorities can increase supply of purpose built older persons accommodation which in turn frees up family homes. This also helps reduce over-crowding – another cause of yet more health issues”⁴³.

Cllr Michelle Lowe, Sevenoaks District Council

Districts – through their control of housing policy and provision of wide range of housing options for a variety of needs – can ensure that existing and new homes promote health and wellbeing.

The LGA's recent publication 'Building our Homes, Communities, Future', estimates that 74% of projected household growth will be made up of households with someone aged 65 or older. At present, however, housing for older people accounts for just 6% of existing stock. Districts can influence the wider determinants of health through strategic housing decisions such as allocating well-located land for older people's housing in Local Plans, introducing the Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106 exemptions to increase viability and encourage the private sector to build healthier homes⁴⁴.

Releasing land can be one of the tools available to districts to increase supply of affordable homes and housing for specialist needs. For housing associations alone, land availability was the most important solution to accelerating collaboration with health to build suitable homes (56.7%, (127 respondents). Using surplus land to achieve wider socio-economic outcomes could generate savings in areas such as social care or temporary accommodation.⁴⁵

Another tool is collaborating with the NHS to provide land for further development – according to the NHS Confederation, there is space for 14,000 homes on currently unused NHS land.⁴⁶



Social prescribing

Districts can promote their 'prevention offer' services that social prescribing schemes can refer to. Also known as community referral, social prescribing is a way for districts to work with primary care and social services by either funding or directly providing services 'on prescription'.

⁴³. Cllr. Michelle Lowe. District Councils are the missing piece of the STP jigsaw. Public Sector Executive: <http://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/Public-Sector-News/district-councils-are-the-missing-piece-of-the-stp-jigsaw>

⁴⁴. LGA Housing Commission Final Report: Building Our Homes, Communities and Future, 2018

⁴⁵. NLGN, National Housing Federation. Working Together for More Homes. http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/wp-content/uploads/Working_together_for_more_homes_full_report.pdf

⁴⁶. LGA Housing Commission Final Report: Building Our Homes, Communities and Future, 2018



Case study:

‘Healthy Homes on Prescription’: Wycombe District Council⁴⁷

Wycombe District Council’s ‘Healthy Homes on Prescription’ allows medical or social care practitioners to refer patients for simple, fast-tracked housing solutions to support independent living at home. This could include a stair lift or central heating system. People with a long-term chronic health condition can apply for up to £5,000 without means testing to help support their physical and mental well-being at home, preventing hospital admission and GP attendances.

It is already saving the NHS £53,476 and social care £132,984. And, by increasing uptake of physical activity by residents, nearby Chiltern and South Bucks District Council estimates that is saving local healthcare services more than £65,000, and yielding a further £365,168 in wider health benefits such as quality-adjusted life years.



Social prescribing – key questions

- Which district services should accept referrals? Is the council providing the services directly, or is it funding voluntary and community sector partners?
- Can we use Health and Wellbeing Boards as a strategic forum to make the case for social prescribing to the NHS?
- Is there joint ownership / involvement from all partners locally, including the NHS and voluntary sector?
- Do we need to increase capacity within district in-house services and the voluntary and community sector to cope with the likely increase in referrals?

- Can we involve other professionals such as pharmacists, nurses and social workers in referring to schemes, not just GPs?
- Are there robust evaluation and performance monitoring mechanisms to track achievement of outcomes in place?

For additional ideas on social prescribing – including district council case studies – please consult the following LGA Guide: <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/just-what-doctor-ordered--6c2.pdf>

⁴⁷ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2018/02/englands-top-ae-doctor-says-we-must-seize-once-in-a-generation-opportunity-to-remake-nhs-and-local-government-partnership/>



Connecting with the most vulnerable

District councils can use their trusted position within communities to support access to services offered by health partners. Acting as a mediator can help overcome the initial suspicion and mistrust between local communities and other partners who normally operate at the national and regional level.



Case study:

Greatwood Estate and tackling loneliness, Craven DC and partners

Greatwood and Horseclose is the most deprived area in Craven and ranks in the 20% most deprived areas in England. Levels of income, employment and skills are well below the national average and the rate of benefits claimants is high. In July 2012 a multi-agency steering group was established to investigate and understand the issues facing people living in the South Skipton area, which is in the main the Greatwood and Horseclose estate.

The core partners in the South Skipton Project include Yorkshire Housing, North Yorkshire County Council, Craven District Council, Jephson Housing (now Stonewater Housing), Sanctuary Housing, Craven College, the Greatwood and Horseclose Residents Association, the Greatwood and Horseclose Estate Committee, and North Yorkshire Police. Also participating are a number of voluntary agencies.

Key success factors

From the start of the project, there was a focus on building multi-agency partnership, community engagement and delivery through establishing specific 'task and finish' projects focusing on health and well-being, education, communications and engagement, and the Community Hub.

The Council helped to build momentum by partly funding a project officer and chairing initial meetings of the partnership board. This commitment helped to secure the engagement of wider stakeholders.

Partners invested in shared capacity and began to drive forward the task and finish groups. Projects have been delivered on the ground including a permanent Community Café which has been a key engagement success.

In the initial stages the project was regarded with mistrust, scepticism, and a lack of interest or engagement with the key agencies responsible. However the community is now active, vibrant, growing in interest and ability, and on the cusp of being empowered to take the area forward without support.

Gaining funding to enable a Community Leadership Training and a volunteer training programme has been key to this success as well as building the confidence of the Residents Association. This success has been highly encouraging for the partners involved who have invested consistently through the years and have historically struggled to get effective engagement with the local community.



Strategic collaboration with health partners

This section focuses on scaling up districts' prevention offer across the whole health system, however defined.

If prevention is a 'no-brainer' and a national priority, then why do districts find some health partners difficult to engage with? Districts appear to be largely absent from place-based strategic discussions around health. Our review of all 44 Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships shows that districts are named partners in only two cases – Craven and Harrogate district councils, and both of them are part of the West Yorkshire STP.

One of the barriers we encounter in almost all of our conversations with stakeholders is the constantly shifting integration agenda, the lack of clarity and the moving goalposts around which relationships are built. One councillor spoke of a "revolving door of NHS partners". There was also the perception amongst the majority of districts that the narrative around health and social care is still very much owned by the NHS and is largely driven centrally by the Department for Health and Social Care. These centrally defined goals are not always aligned with the local focus and priorities of districts. The overview below represents a snapshot of the direction of travel:

Accountable Care Systems (ACSs), now Integrated Care Systems (ICS)⁴⁸

The NHS England 'Next Steps' document outlined the need for certain Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships to transition to Accountable Care systems, or what are now known as Integrated Care Systems. The national roll-out of these models will happen to challenging timescales, with plans for 20% coverage by the end of 2016-17 and 50% by 2020.

Integrated Care Systems are designed to build on the work of STPs; aligning commissioning behind their plans; incorporating the regulatory functions of NHS England and NHS Improvement; managing performance in their areas; and providing leadership across the system covered by the ICS. Responsibility for service delivery rests with the organisations that provide care within ICSs and many of these organisations are collaborating to put in place Accountable Care Organisations (ACOs) (see below).

Whilst 70% of councils have been involved in discussions about an Accountable Care System (as of May 2017) only a third have a clear understanding of what one is.⁴⁹ A Localis poll showed that different places interpret this new model differently: some saw it as a **"single budget for single system"** whereas others stated it was a **"collective of organisations working to a set of agreed objectives but without the pooling of budgets"**.

ICSs have been established in ten areas, two of which – Greater Manchester and Surrey Heartlands – are part of the government's devolution programme. ACOs are also currently under discussion in a small number of places and NHS England is developing a new contract to be used by commissioners wishing to go down this route.

Accountable Care Organisations (ACOs)

The concept of ACOs emerged in the United States at the time of President Obama's health care reforms. In an NHS context, an ACO would take responsibility for the health and care of a defined population by managing a budget under a contract with commissioners awarded after competitive procurement.

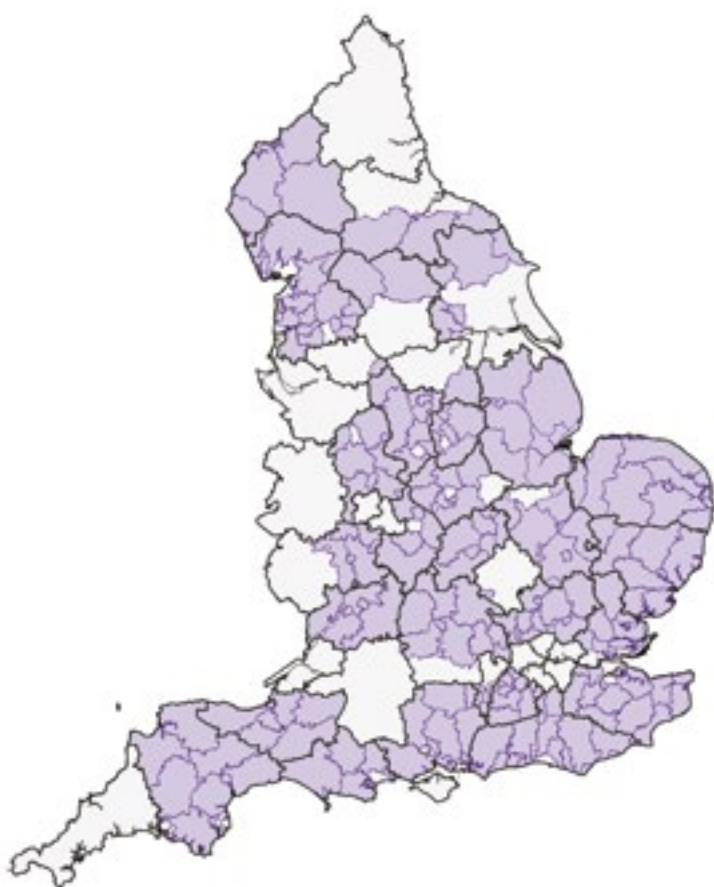
48. NHS Providers. STPs and Accountable Care Background Briefing, 2018 <https://nhsproviders.org/media/4200/stp-aco-briefing-li.pdf>

49. Localis. Rebooting Health and Social Care, 2017 <https://www.localis.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/HASC-report-final.pdf>



STP footprints and district boundaries

Source: Grant Thornton Place Analytics



Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships

The establishment of 44 sustainability and transformation footprints created the structures to accelerate the implementation of the NHS Five Year Forward View over the five-year period up to March 2021, and represented a shift to place-based health and care planning.

However, a recent NAO report⁵⁰ concluded that the original timetable was too ambitious, especially as overcoming local organisational, professional and legal barriers required significant investment in building relationships and trust.

For example, Northumberland's success in integrating services was the culmination of 25 years of sustained collaborative effort. Local government has also been conspicuously absent from the development of sustainability and transformation plans – only four of the 44 local STP footprint areas are led by local authority officers.

The map shows the geography of current health systems, as expressed by the 44 STP footprints.

While some STP footprints contain 2 or 3 districts, some in the South and East of England have up to 12 districts. There are also issues of co-terminosity with the boundaries of other place-based partners.

Conditions for success

NHS Providers acknowledge that “those systems progressing at pace often benefit from:

- a more manageable population size,
- coterminous boundaries between (some if not all) partners,
- fewer organisations in the footprint and
- a natural geographical boundary, consistent with how patients access services in that area.”⁵¹

50. NAO, Health and Social Care Integration. <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Health-and-social-care-integration.pdf>

51. NHS Providers. STPs and Accountable Care Background Briefing, 2018 <https://nhsproviders.org/media/4200/stp-aco-briefing-1i.pdf>



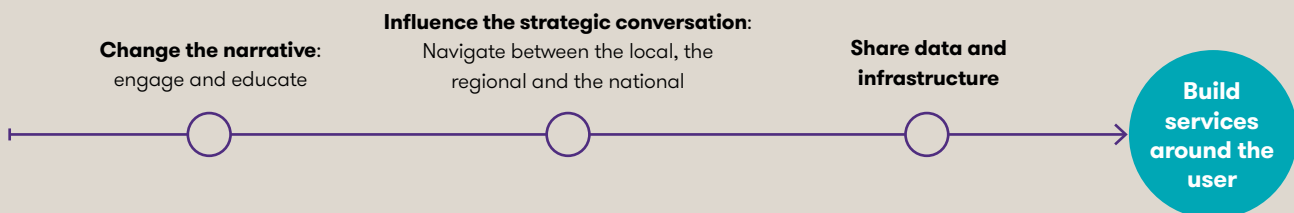
Moving towards whole-system approaches to public health

Thus far – through the STPs and the Better Care Fund – the health and social care agenda has focused on organisational and budgetary integration with County Councils. As Cllr Michelle Lowe wrote in the Public Sector Executive:

“When used holistically and strategically district councils are in a critical position to promote general wellbeing and prevent hospital admissions. Given the role that district

councils play every day in promoting an out-of-hospital care system it is vital they are given a seat at the STP preparation and implementation table; as they really are the missing piece of the public health jigsaw.”

We therefore outline a step-by step-guide to scale up individual, locality-based collaborations with health to more strategic, whole-system approaches to population health.



How can districts use these tools?

Districts can use the tools below to:

- 1 understand the state of collaboration in their health system
- 2 identify the strategic opportunities for collaboration that are available
- 3 shift the strategic health system narrative towards prevention
- 4 create a shared evidence with health system partners by sharing data and infrastructure
- 5 co-design health outcomes with communities

Change the narrative: engage and educate

All stakeholders currently working with health emphasised that there is the need to raise awareness of the range of services district councils can offer. We found that more often than not the lack of engagement from health is due to a lack of understanding of the value districts can bring. This lack of understanding was not restricted to operational staff: it was the impression of most district council interviewees that this applied to senior health leaders as well.

However, it was not enough to simply hold a workshop with some senior CCG members of staff – the district value has to be ‘framed’ in a language which both parties can identify with and has to be based on continuous engagement with health. This requires being alert to the biggest challenges facing partners and engaging with their agenda.



Approaching health locally also entailed understanding the current integration agenda such as STPs, now Integrated Care Systems. As the King's Fund stressed, the most ambitious forms of integrated care aim to improve population health by tackling the causes of illness and the wider determinants of health, which is aligned with the 'social model' of care promoted by districts. Although the current model of integration is very much led by health and social care integration, current forums (such as Health & Wellbeing, STP Boards) offer the opportunity to be informed about the priorities of local partners.



Key questions

- Is there agreement and a shared understanding on the objectives of integration and prevention, and what needs to change in order to achieve these objectives?
- Have system leaders created a shared purpose, which sets a clear vision of how to improve local people's health and wellbeing?
- Do leaders understand the benefits and challenges of integration, from both public and organisational perspectives?
- Have leaders taken responsibility for their contribution to improving health and wellbeing?
- Is there a shared and demonstrable commitment to a preventative approach, focusing on promoting food health and wellbeing for all citizens?
- Have system leaders gained commitment from all stakeholders to make the changes required for transformation?
- Are local systems designed around individuals and the outcomes important to them?

A further self-assessment tool on health integration can be accessed here: <https://445oon4dhpil7gjs2jih81q-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Stepping-up-to-the-place-integration-self-assessment-tool-WEB.pdf>



Understanding the health planning cycle

Now that Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships have moved from high-level footprint-wide plans to local delivery, there is more scope for districts to take ownership over improving the health and wellbeing of their local communities.

- Do you have a footprint-wide 'district offer' to health and county councils?
- Have you outlined the community assets in your area which can contribute to delivering local integration plans?

We suggest the timeline below as a useful tool for horizon scanning and planning for your district's engagement strategy with local health partners up to March 2021 when the NHS England Five Year Forward view of health and social integration needs to be revisited. Some questions to consider include:



Key questions

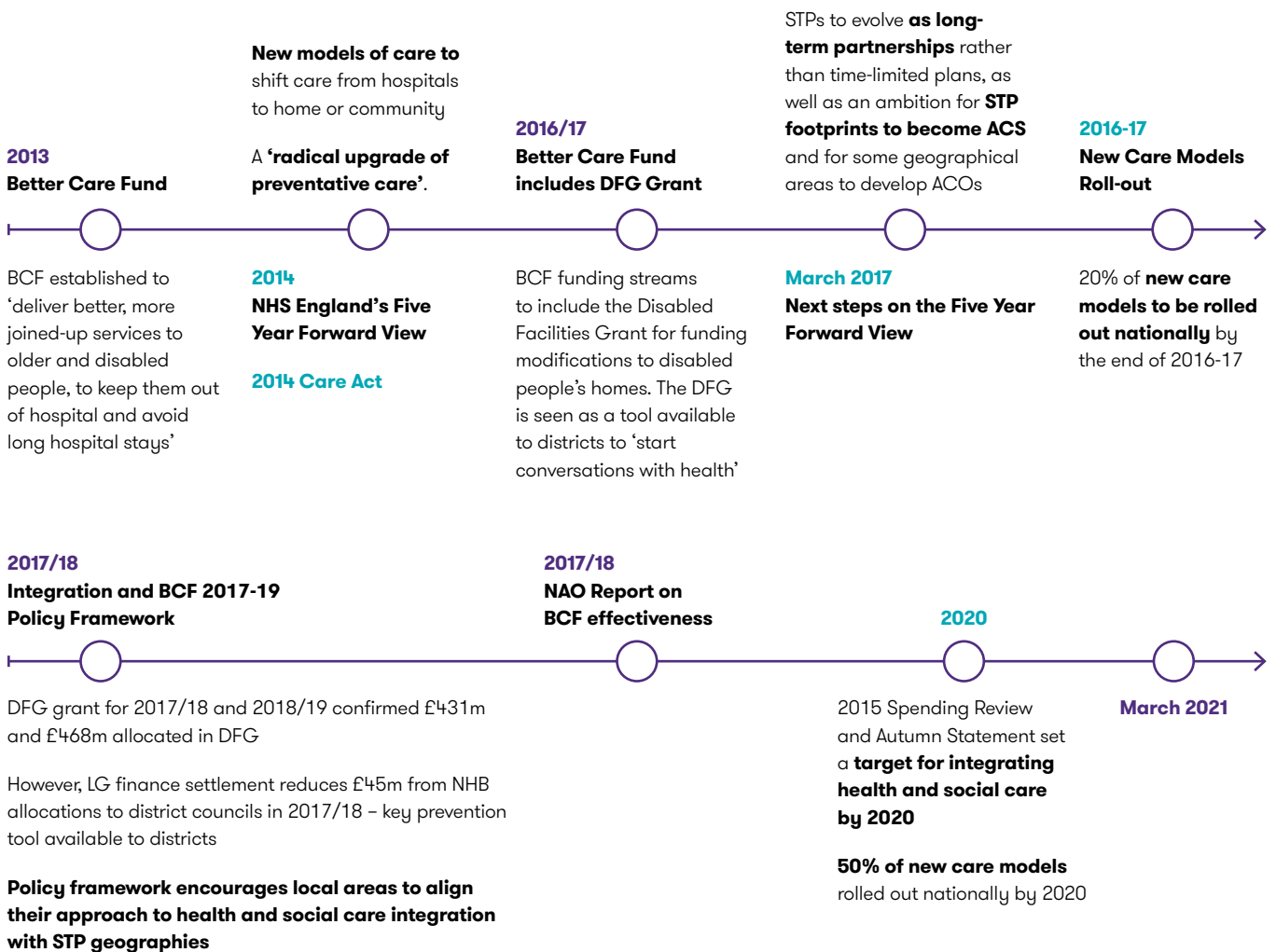
Forward planning engagements with health

- Is my district using the DFG grant to link up to STP priorities and Health & Wellbeing Board priorities?
- Is my area moving to an Accountable Care System, or an Accountable Care Organisation? Who is leading work on this? Do we have relationships with partners involved?
- Are any of the assets we hold – land and estates – suitable for co-location? Are any of the services we offer suitable for service integration with health and social care?



“The DFG grant is a way to demonstrate how districts can help. It got the adaptations team working in hospitals or GPs surgery to adapt people’s homes. Partners see the results and want to know what more we can do.”

District interviewee





The example below provides some insight into the different avenues districts can explore when engaging in strategic integration work:



Case study:

Craven District Council: Collaboration with health – Health Care Programme Board

“Prevention should be seen as ‘keeping people well’ as opposed to ‘keeping people away from hospital to relieve pressure on acute services.’”

Craven district council saw its role in the health agenda as twofold:

1 Removing short-term barriers to collaboration with health

In the short term, it sought local forums to showcase how districts can add value to the prevention agenda. As the Chief Executive described it: **“looking for a chance to influence your patch”**. One such forum was the Airedale, Wharfedale & Craven (AWC) Health Care Partnership Board, which is a joint forum for delivering the Accountable Care System vision across the three communities called ‘Three Communities, One System’.

The governance of the AWC has provided districts within the local health system with the opportunity to be both strategic partners and enablers of health and wellbeing in the community through:

- Commissioner-provider delivery sub-groups
- Cross-district Task and Finish groups, which act as strategy enabling groups
- Community groups focusing on the locality

The Health Care Partnership Board’s focus on smaller geography provided Craven District Council with the opportunity to ‘demonstrate’ what districts can do for communities rather than just ‘tell’ partners’. The current programme of work is targeted at addressing health inequalities across 3 community groups covering populations of around 50-60,000. Craven sees its role as providing the link to communities, established through years of expertise and building trust.

The Chief Executive has been actively involved in helping clinicians to understand how to work with communities and think further upstream in terms of prevention rather than treatment of disease. Craven’s Chief Executive and the Chair of the CCG also worked together to explain to GPs the range of statutory and informal prevention instruments available to districts, and how their work feeds into the whole system.

However, the Chief executive stressed that it is a two-way street. In order to understand what form prevention should take, districts need to be smarter about understanding what will work for health partners.

2 Changing the narrative around prevention and health & wellbeing

Long-term, Craven District Council is determined to work on engaging with health partners to change the way prevention is seen, and to place greater focus on the wider determinants of health and wellbeing. There is also considerable work to be done around breaking down cultural barriers and finding the middle ground for strategic collaboration. Prevention should be seen as ‘keeping people well’ as opposed to ‘keeping people away from hospital to relieve pressure on acute services’.

Lack of statutory powers was only part of the story. Lessons learnt from the joint administration of the Better Care Fund and districts’ statutory role in the context of the disabled facilities grant, has meant that districts need to reinforce the importance of their role with partners. Part of the districts’ job is to persist with creating a common currency and language.



Influence the strategic conversation

Navigate between the local, the regional and the national

The most successful district collaborators understand their role as a link to the community and are able to mobilise place leaders, while at the same time contributing to county-level organisations such as Health and Wellbeing boards. They clearly understand the interconnections between different centres of accountability and decision-making. Combining that awareness of local needs and national agendas requires the skills of ‘boundary spanners’ at all levels of the organisation: people who can provide both local intelligence and strategic insight.



Tools used by councils to ‘span boundaries’

Tools used by councils to ‘span boundaries’ include:

- Linking the **Local Plan up to Joint Strategic Needs assessment** and **Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy**, and lobbying at the Health and Wellbeing Board level for broader, more long-term discussions around health and wellbeing considerations.
- In 2012, Huntingdonshire District Council implemented a standard Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) rate of £85 and ring-fenced some of it for the hospital’s critical care centres.⁵²
- Establishing **shadow structures with other districts in the local areas to mirror county-level structures** such as Health and Wellbeing Boards in order to present a coherent district value proposition.
- **Co-location.** For example, Babergh & Mid Suffolk’s HQ is located in the ‘public sector village’ in Ipswich together with the CCG, Norfolk and Suffolk Mental Health Trust, two other districts, the County Council, and Fire and Rescue Service. Although the hub is located outside of both councils’ geographical boundaries, it is closely aligned with the local health and economic systems. This approach is seen as a stepping stone for working with partners to ensure closer integration of the health and wellbeing agenda.

52. King’s Fund. The district council contribution to public health: a time of challenge and opportunity 2015
https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/district-council-contribution-to-public-health-nov15.pdf



Case study: Huntingdonshire – Pathfinder House

“The intention is to raise awareness on the benefits of integration and getting people on the same page.”

Huntingdonshire District Council, Citizens Advice and the local Jobcentre Plus have come together to co-locate in Pathfinder House. Similar to other areas across the UK, Huntingdonshire has been witnessing rising demand relating to housing, homelessness and benefit related issues – and finding jobs for residents is a key solution to this issue. As traditional methods to tackle these challenges become costly for local authorities, the three organisations are now exploring an alternative method to providing integrated help to customers, whilst reducing operational costs.

For three bodies working on a range of similar issues, co-locating to the same site was an obvious step forward. By working together in the same space, the organisations look to achieve a triage approach to supporting service users. This provides value in terms of identifying the customer's needs and working collectively to deliver the quickest and most efficient solution. The integrated service helps with issues such as homelessness, employability, housing benefits and council tax and assists residents in finding better opportunities for housing and employment. With a population of roughly 170,000 residents, Pathfinder House serves as the primary customer-service location where customers receive face-to-face support.

This initiative was first suggested by local politicians and service managers, who began discussions about ‘a shared space to address shared issues’. The initiative gained momentum when other parties recognised the potential

value to this collaboration and came forward to help. The vision to create a shared space benefited greatly from a funding secured through the One Public Estate programme. The funds were then used to draw up designs for participants to visualise this collaborative work space and garner support for the proposal.

However, working in the same space came with its own set of challenges. For instance, collaborating with external bodies like the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) meant adapting to governance processes at DWP, who follow a rigorous approach to the design and pre-construction phase thereby prolonging the process. Furthermore, one of the participating organisations – Citizens Advice has a robust policy on confidentiality issues and information sharing on customers. This has led to the need to work through challenges around jointly assessing the needs of service users and has required tailoring of each organisation's operating models.

Partners have adopted a range of approaches to ensuring smooth integration between the three agencies. These have included informal staff socials, using facilitation skills from their transformation teams to undertake customer-journey mapping, encouraging employees ‘to think differently’ and acquire a different set of skills.



Share data and infrastructure

The use of common IT systems and data (for example, use of adult social care and housing systems) creates a common collaborative platform based on shared understanding of population-level needs, outcomes and priorities. The King's Fund examination of successful international population health systems identifies information sharing as a key success factor, and more specifically "population-level data to understand need across populations and track health outcomes, population segmentation and risk stratification to identify the needs of different groups within the population, and as a next step: integrated health records to co-ordinate people's care services".⁵³

As of 2015/16 less than 20% of NHS Trusts were providing digital information access to local health and care partners. The NAO also highlighted that locally there is a lack of understanding of how databases could be linked to generate meaningful insight for joint outcomes.⁵⁴ Overcoming this barrier could be a simple set of inquiries among local partners – one of the Councillors we interviewed described arranging several visits to local hospitals and CCGs to understand the type of data held, and how this can be usefully linked to home adaptations.

Some of the pioneer district-health collaboration projects have warned about the time and effort it takes to develop data sharing agreements and align use of joint databases. Although legally complex, data sharing is possible, both technically and legally, and can be achieved by starting conversations early on in the relationship.

For further information on the legal position on data sharing, see accompanying guide by Trowers & Hamlin LLP at: www.trowers.com/dencollaborate

53. The King's Fund. Population Health Systems: Going beyond Integrated Care, 2015 https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/population-health-systems-kingsfund-feb15.pdf

54. Localis. Rebooting Health and Social Care, 2017 <https://www.localis.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/HASC-report-final.pdf>



Case study:

Adur and Worthing: Using a digital platform to integrate and provide person-centred care⁵⁵

Alex Bailey, Joint Chief Executive, said: **“We are interested in issues such as place based health and see a lot of potential for the benefits of scale in horizontal integration. With a population of 170,000, we are big enough to make things happen but small enough that partners respect our understanding of our places and communities.”**

A digital director has been recruited and the two councils have taken a radical approach to creating a technology platform which enables rapid ‘self-build’ of applications, enabling design and prototyping of new approaches at pace and with low risk. The aim is for other partners such as the county council, health and the community and voluntary sector to be able to build their own applications on the same platform, holding all the local data in one place.

The benefits of doing this across two councils, rather than one, include being able to target shared resources more effectively across a broader area. Alex Bailey said: “In the

medium term we will have very rich data which means we can really understand what is going on in our local areas. Whilst the driver is around the effectiveness of services and, more broadly, leadership of place, opportunities to drive new revenue streams will also be created.” As the Chief Executive explained in the MJ:

“We use low-code technology, which means development is rapid, costs are low and we can keep improving and adapting services. Financial savings flow of course, as does our confidence and capability to ‘move fast and fix things’.

We are currently well under way in the design and build of a digital housing repairs service and have created a suite of corporate apps that are making staff’s lives easier.”

55. Based on: Alex Bailey in the MJ, Digital disruption-on-sea (2017) and Alex Bailey in LGA, Stronger Together: Shared Management in Local Government (2016)
<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/stronger-together-shared-01e.pdf>



Build services around the user

Implementing a truly successful public health approach to integration – one which focuses on prevention and the wider determinants of health – is based on building a shared view of need within communities and a coordinated set of interventions to prevent them from becoming more acute. Locally, districts can lead community-based approaches by:

- 1 'focusing the system on the individual', by facilitating partners in coming together, sharing intelligence and coordinating their efforts
- 2 co-producing health and wellbeing outcomes in partnership with communities, families and individuals.



Whole-system approaches

For example, the King's Fund report on population health systems⁵⁶ draws on a number of international examples to illustrate how interventions can be framed when implementing a whole-system approach to health:

Population level

Define outcomes for all population groups you serve (not just the most vulnerable)

- 1 population-level data to understand need across populations and track health outcomes
- 2 population-based budgets (either real or virtual) to align financial incentives with improving population health
- 3 community involvement in managing their health and designing local services
- 4 involvement of a range of partners and services to deliver improvements in population health.

User group level

Group user by need and target interventions

- 1 grouping people with similar needs and tailoring services and interventions accordingly
- 2 developing 'systems within systems' with relevant organisations, services and stakeholders to focus on different aspects of population health.

Service user level

Co-produce outcomes with individuals

- 1 integrated health records to co-ordinate people's care services
- 2 close working across organisations and systems to offer a wide range of interventions to improve people's health
- 3 close working with individuals to understand the outcomes and services that matter to them, as well as supporting and empowering individuals to manage their own health.

56. The King's Fund. Population Health Systems: Going beyond Integrated Care, 2015



The case study below illustrates some of the key elements of this approach in practice:



Case study: Early Help Hub, South Norfolk and partners

The Early Help Hub at Long Stratton has been built up over three years and has 15 agencies with 27 services supporting the hub. The four main partners in the hub are South Norfolk council, Norfolk County Council, Cambridgeshire Community Services and Police, with input from a range of other statutory and voluntary sector partners.

The early help hub emerged after the local children's safeguarding board asked South Norfolk's Chief Executive for help to achieve better outcomes by 'bringing people together around early help' as they needed someone outside of the county council and the 'usual suspects'. Speaking to families, it was clear that social care was not assessing people until after it was too late.

The aim was to rethink how care was provided by changing the way multiple agencies worked. But more importantly, it was about encouraging families to become part of their own solution, and communities to be more involved and supportive.

Overcoming organisational barriers: a 'whole system' approach

The Chief Executive took a leading role and called together local partners across the "whole system", including CCGs, acute hospital, patient services, DWP (Jobcentre), health, children's and adults' workers, voluntary organisations, and police. Through a series of informal meeting, she raised consensus around key outcomes and prevention.

Lessons learnt:

- A key learning from the experience was that **"You start working in a truly collaborative way when partners are less vested in their own personal position and more vested in the outcome for the whole system and the individual"**. To get to this position and get the partnership off the ground, there is some selflessness needed on the part of the "first mover". Accepting some risk when making the first move is also part of collaboration, together with committing resource early on. For example, the decision to fund an early help hub manager encouraged other partners to put in resources
- When starting out innovative collaborations, scepticism should not discourage **"Don't worry about getting everybody on board on day one; if you wait for everybody to sign up, you never start. Some people might be ambivalent or even dissenting but be brave enough to go ahead"**

"Focus on outcomes rather than control"

The key to maintaining the partnership is not necessarily putting in place several layers of governance – in fact, strategic officers meet only twice a year with the operational group meeting more often: **"It worked because of the informality of it; the collaboration is based on a lot on trust rather than heavy reporting mechanisms"**

- Partnership infrastructure and programme management were initially informal. Senior officers meet twice a year. Key to formalising it was a dedicated post: an early help hub manager. Police and children's services both put in resource to coordinate the running of the hub. Cambridgeshire Community Services, who run the Health Child Programme, also dedicated a duty officer and a duty phone line to act as a link between health and district council functions

Pool funding and demonstrate impact

- Parallel to this it was important to be able to demonstrate the interventions work by measuring outcomes
- In the last year partners have directly supported 2,514 people, through listening, understanding their needs and ensuring the right agency provides the level of support they need
- Integrated Commissioning joint funding (Norfolk County Council, South Norfolk CCG and Public Health), has made it possible for community connectors to see over 8,500 people out in the community
- The jointly funded early help domestic abuse worker with the Police has resulted in supporting 212 victims and their families over the last 2 years, a 50% reduction to calls to the Police and a combined fiscal, social and economic impact of £773,136

Engage with the 'customer': co-production

- **The benefit of 'community connectors'** – they are deliberately not social workers or specifically trained people; they've had life experiences people can really relate to. There seems to be an entirely different level of trust as they are 'not badged as a practitioner'. Part of their role is try and get existing voluntary groups or new cohorts of volunteers to identify recurring issues within a locality and encourage the community to participate in addressing it
- **Identify the small day-to-day issues which seem basic but make a real difference** – social prescribing and handyperson service have been very helpful in this regard
- **Advertise through community channels** – "be specific about what you need help with and target your message"





Co-production with communities and individuals

Although co-production is a fashionable term, it means nothing more than ‘delivering public services with people rather than to them’.⁵⁷ Districts provide the key services that address the practical needs of users and that help build an individual’s independence and ownership of their own and their community’s health and wellbeing. This role requires

districts to act in the role of enabler and facilitator rather than as a provider of services.

When engaging with communities, districts can adopt a number of approaches which reflect the level of community engagement in prevention. Some of the more innovative programmes using a co-production approach include:



Time banking

In these schemes time and specific social support skills are used by members of the community as a currency to be exchanged with fellow timebank members.



Befriending services

These are usually used by districts in partnership with charities to tackle loneliness, social isolation and depression among the elderly. A King’s Fund⁵⁸ report estimates that a typical service might cost around £90 per older person, with a net economic value of more than £420 per person when quality of life improvements are included. Within this, the economic benefits, mostly falling to the NHS, are estimated at £38 through reduced health service use.



Community connectors

Investing in developing deep connections within communities through the use of semi-independent representatives. For an illustration of this approach, see the South Norfolk case study on the previous page.



Building capacity in the voluntary and community sector

Sevenoaks District Council is using a range of funding streams and approaches to build capacity in local organisations such as:

- Grant aid rather than procurement and commissioning to support resilience within the voluntary and community sector. Charities applying to the District Council for small grants to deliver befriending or domestic abuse schemes are asked to demonstrate their contribution to health and wellbeing in the loosest sense to be eligible for grant aid
- Using Better Care Fund money to fund dedicated Age UK ‘One You’ advisers to support elderly and frail residents in the community
- Using another BCF-funded grant scheme for VCS to encourage innovative proposals to keep people out of hospital or prevent delayed transfers of care

57. NESTA’s Co-production catalogue ‘People-powered health [2012]: https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/co-production_catalogue.pdf

58. King’s Fund. The district council contribution to public health: a time of challenge and opportunity 2015 https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/district-council-contribution-to-public-health-nov15.pdf







Collaborating for resilience and impact

District councils have always led the way in innovation with shared services, and continue to break new ground in this area, showing that significant savings and operational improvements are available whilst also achieving resilience and greater strategic influence within localities.

It is clear that even the most radical examples of shared services can still effectively support sovereign democratic bodies and offer sufficient flexibility to respond to nuances within different council areas. It is also clear that shared services can lay a path for progressive integration that may support further local reforms where leaders feel that this is the best way to continue to serve local interests.

District councils are also at the heart of discussions around fair funding within localities through, for example, active participation in business rates retention schemes.

Tools and resources in this section

The shared services journey

[First steps towards shared services](#)

[Where do we start?](#)

[How do we build resilience together?](#)

[How do we transform through sharing?](#)

Sharing between district and county councils

[Key learning points](#)



The shared services journey

Sharing of management, services and funding is a very common model within district councils. Often these arrangements are a means to an end; they save money, allow districts to increase the resilience of services and to make more rapid progress towards their strategic ambitions. As one Chief Executive described it: **“shared services have delivered savings for both councils, but more importantly it has provided a larger, more resilient base from which to transform”**.⁵⁹

To explore these issues, in this chapter we tell the story of a number of partnerships and how they have followed shared services arrangements in sometimes different directions. We also propose a framework for use by districts considering new shared service arrangements.

We also consider other ways in which districts are working with partners to increase resilience and scale, including shared posts between district and county councils.

Shared management: what does it mean and who does it involve?

Shared management typically involves the appointment of a single chief executive and/or management team across more than one council. Putting these arrangements in place can act as a catalyst for transformation, improved service delivery and increased efficiency. It also offers the potential to increase resilience and capacity within the councils involved. These arrangements are most commonly seen at district level as local authorities seek innovative ways to deal with financial pressures and increasing demand for services.

In a shared management arrangement the councils retain their individual sovereignty, identity and governance arrangements but they work towards common goals and, where effective, share resources. Therefore, shared management arrangements can emerge from existing shared services where councils have demonstrated a track record of working closely together or it can be a starting point for greater sharing of services and resources between local authorities.

Shared management can act as a stepping stone towards further collaboration between local authorities in the form of a single employer model. This is where two, or more, local authorities share a single workforce but maintain their separate political structures and decision-making processes.

Shared services: what does it mean and who does it involve?

Shared services involves joint provision of either front or back office services between local authorities. The use of shared services is most common at the district level and is often used to deliver back office services as well as others which share a number of commonalities across the different local authority areas, for example, Regulatory Services and Revenues and Benefits.

For shared service arrangements there is often little impact on the overall governance and political leadership structures of local authorities, although some can be incorporated as trading companies. For example, where a joint venture is established a new entity will be created which will have its own governance and leadership. It is important that the local authorities involved in the joint venture have appropriate governance arrangements in place to provide adequate oversight and accountability to the venture in order to manage any potential risks.

Districts have been at the forefront of sharing management and services to make resources go further and to protect the frontline. In fact, the Local Government Association shared services database reports that the local government sector has achieved £644m in savings, with districts delivering over a third of these savings. Relative to the share of expenditure across the sector, districts have therefore made a disproportionate contribution to the savings achieved through the adoption of this model.⁶⁰

59. LGA, Stronger Together: Shared Management in Local Government (2016)

60. LGA. Shared Services dataset: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/shared-services/shared-services-map>



Authority type	Partnerships	Savings
Shire County	79	£76,036,004
English Unitary	90	£199,959,451
Shire District	174	£224,110,523
London Borough	39	£30,069,500
Metropolitan District	27	£47,625,968
Fire	64	£20,470,953
Trusts	4	£68,000
Police	4	£20,500,000
Ambulance Service	3	£0
Misc	2	£25,000,000
Total	486	£643,840,399

Source: Local Government Association. Shared Services dataset: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/shared-services/shared-services-map>

During the initial wave of shared services, the process was synonymous with optimising and streamlining back office functions. The New Local Government Network estimates⁶¹ that, at best, sharing back office functions could save just 3.6 percent of local government expenditure because they account for so little of a council's overall budget. A review by the LGA in 2016 found that while back office functions such as legal, audit and human resources are the most popular services to share, they also tend to offer the smallest savings.

There are, however, further benefits to sharing management and service, both in terms of expanding arrangements to incorporate further partners, expanding into new services or widening sharing arrangements to encompass front line services. Sharing can also be a stepping stone towards more radical transformation. For example, each of the three district mergers recently approved by the former Secretary of State were for partnerships who already shared a chief executive and management team, with an advanced level of integration across structures and services.

To capture the different local approaches to sharing and the different outcomes partners sought to achieve, we have structured this as a story following the sharing experience of several districts. The shared journey across all of our three case studies below started at roughly the same time, around 2011 – but the shared partnerships have taken different trajectories, with different collaborative outcomes. Sharing management and services can thus be a means to a variety of different outcomes pursued by districts.

We have selected our case study areas to reflect the different options available to districts contemplating a shared journey:

- sharing management and services with other districts as part of a two-partner arrangement
- sharing with multiple district partners. Within this we have selected two sharing models – one based on a pooled procurement arrangement among five districts with an outsourced private sector provider, and a second one reflecting an entirely public joint venture among four districts
- sharing posts and services with a county council.

For further information on governance and legal matters relating to shared services, please see accompanying guidance from Trowers & Hamlins LLP at: www.trowers.com/dcn collaborate

61. NLGN, Shared Necessities: the Next Generation of Shared Services, 2011 <http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2011/shared-necessities-the-next-generation-of-shared-services/>



Introducing our case study areas: two partners



Case study:

First steps towards shared services

Breckland & South Holland

In April 2011, South Holland District Council and Breckland District Council – separated by a distance of sixty miles – introduced a non-geographic shared management partnership.

The collaboration came into effect as a result of the two council leaders looking to venture into a shared management structure with neighbouring councils, which failed to materialise. Both councils then sought to introduce this structure in a non-geographic scope which aimed to pool resources and execute common services under a single entity, while allowing for location-specific delivery.

Most of back office is shared but not with each other. South Holland had partnered with East Lindsey to create an asset-backed vehicle called Compass Point Business Services (CPBS) to share front and back office services which provides Finance, Revenues and Benefits, HR, ICT and Customer Services to the two authorities. Breckland entered into an arrangement with Anglia Revenue partnership, a conglomeration across seven local councils that delivers efficient revenue and benefits services.

Cherwell & South Northants

The collaborative model between Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire District Council is one of very few to have bridged both a county and regional boundary. Neither had found a suitable partner within their own counties, and despite no history of joint working they took a 'leap of faith' and following a feasibility study and business case for change, chose to enter into a shared service arrangement.

The first steps, in 2011, were to join up senior management. Back office services followed and in 2013, a partnership with a third council was entered into. This partnership began with joint ICT and legal services, with the intention of extending this to other services. Following changes in the regional strategic and political context this arrangement was wound up. However, the Cherwell and South Northants partnership remained solid, and the next steps were to add frontline and community services.⁶²

The two councils have since:

- established joint planning, housing and economic growth teams, whilst retaining local policies
- invested in a director for place and growth to oversee key regeneration projects and growth
- invested in planning policy and economic development capacity.

62. Case Study Background: LGA, Stronger Together: Shared Management in Local Government (2016).



Introducing our case study areas: multiple partners

We have also selected two additional case study areas featuring a number of partners in order to explore the key considerations and drivers behind scaling shared services up, including some of the opportunities and challenges associated with this move.



Case study:

First steps towards shared services

Five-council partnership⁶³

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse are part of the 'Five councils shared service partnership', along with Hart DC and Havant DC in Hampshire (with its existing partner East Hampshire DC) and Mendip in Somerset.

Each of the partners was nearing the end of separate contracts for a range of outsourced support services such as revenues, benefits, and finance. Despite their geographical separation, the Councils decided to work in partnership to seek efficiencies through joint procurement of these services.

The five councils are located across three counties, with only two (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse) actually sharing a border. The councils sought to develop a model which could be effective for district clusters, across functional economic areas or geographically dispersed authorities. Geographical challenges were overcome through a new operating model, combining:

- centres of excellence located in one or more of the five councils
- the establishment of a single 'virtual' client team to manage the new contracts, pooling procurement expertise and capacity
- some direct service delivery from bases in each of the councils where appropriate.

Publica Group

Publica Group is a Joint Venture Teckal company limited by guarantee. Four partner councils – West Oxfordshire, Cotswold, and Forest of Dean Councils and Cheltenham Borough Council – created Publica Group to deliver more efficient and improved services. Each council contracts with the company for a variety of services.

The company has been in place since November 2017, when over 650 employees from the partner authorities transferred into Publica whilst continuing to provide services for local residents under the branding of the respective partner councils. Prior to this the Councils have had ten years of collaboration, gradually developing shared working in various services. Over time, the Councils have had the opportunity to build up a reciprocal understanding of their similarities and differences.

The joint working started with Cotswold and West Oxfordshire sharing a chief executive, along with a range of managerial and support services. In 2012, the councils scaled up the partnership by creating a human resources, finance and payroll shared service with Forest of Dean and Cheltenham.

The partnership was extended last year in 2016/17 to include ICT, public protection, building control, legal, property and customer services. A joint committee was then established to oversee the creation of Publica Group. Five non-executive directors were appointed last year to provide independent, external advice and leadership. They work with Publica's four executive Directors who formed a Board in 2017.

Publica is ground-breaking as it is believed to have the broadest range of services offered by such a company.

The vast majority of staff were transferred across on their existing terms and conditions. The exceptions are the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 officers, all of which are statutory roles which each Council is required to have in place. The Councils continue to be responsible for the services provided to their localities, which they now effectively commission from Publica.

63. Case study based on the joint APPG Inquiry submission by the 'Five Councils' and individual interviews.



The shared services journey: a framework

Drawing on the experiences of the case study areas, we have set out a framework for considering how shared services arrangements can evolve and how governance arrangements must keep step.

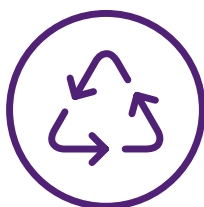


Where do we start?

- What are we trying to achieve through sharing?
- What is the end destination? Is there one?
- What services are in scope?

Future-proofing:

- Do we want to add new partners in the future?
- Do we want to retain the flexibility to enter into shared arrangements with other partners?
- Do we want to trade services in the future?
- Do we want to integrate further?

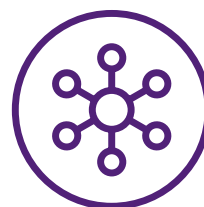


How do we build resilience together?

- What is the most suitable model for sharing? What are the delivery vehicles?
- What is the governance model to support our aspirations?
- How does the culture need to change?

Future-proofing:

- Do we have enough scope to experiment, tweak and start again?
- Do we have an exit plan?



How do we transform through sharing?

- How do we transform services?
- How do we transform the way we operate?

Future-proofing:

- What are the natural limits of sharing?



Where do we start?

Making the first step is always the most difficult part of the journey. The examples below illustrate the key drivers to sharing and illustrate clearly that achieving savings was not always the primary motivating factor. Even if savings were the primary objective for some, the most successful sharing arrangements managed to capitalise on the trust built at these initial stages of sharing back office functions to gradually transform their services and organisations.



Case study:

What are we trying to achieve through shared services?

Breckland & South Holland

Build strategic resilience & capability, while maintaining local delivery

The two councils wanted the ability to innovate in service delivery, capitalising on shared arrangements for strategic functions, whilst allowing for local differences in operational delivery but still being able to utilise knowledge transfer between both.

Cherwell & South Northants

Achieving financial resilience in a flexible way

The two councils chose this model to address financial challenges in a flexible way, whereby they could choose which services should go in while keeping sovereignty. This flexible model uses a combination of traditional shared service arrangements and alternative models of service delivery to facilitate appropriate commercial activities and for use to employ staff.

There have been three main drivers for change which have brought this about:

- **Shifting financial landscape:** “something had to change”
- **Political reality:** “when the world shifts around you the politics also shifts. Collaboration is very important in this context”
- A commitment to protecting frontline services and effectively managing regeneration and growth

Being bold and seeing ‘where relationships can take you’

‘Partnerships are about relationships’ – the councils realised that deeper sharing could work because they knew each other already and had developed a shared understanding. There were discussions with others but the fit was not as good.

Both Councils reached a political decision that they were content to share services across County boundaries.



Case study:

What are we trying to achieve through shared services?

What was the end destination? Is there one?

Breckland & South Holland

Scaling the model to include a third partner

There is no trajectory towards a merger or closer integration – retaining sovereignty is a key principle.

The two councils continue to look at shared opportunities that bring economies of scale. They will look for integration opportunities as and when they come up.

There is, however, an emphasis on scaling the model and bringing further partners to the partnership. The two councils continue to look at opportunities for greater sharing between themselves, however the common ambition is to create new opportunities by bringing further partners into the existing arrangement.

The scope of partnership is not limited to the two councils and both have demonstrated a good track record of partnering with third parties. For instance, both councils have innovative partnership arrangements for their office services.

Cherwell & South Northants

Incremental alignment

“Looking at a static end-point is not a good idea. At the heart of this is what is best for the locality”

Cherwell and South Northants recognised they should start with the big things, eg a joint CEO and Senior Leadership Team. **“It was not a grand plan from the start to join up all services”**

Both parties agreed they could work together whilst recognising they did have some different ideas. Successful collaboration has combined a pragmatic and opportunistic approach, with rigorous cost benefit analysis and business to underpin new models of service delivery. The transformation programme has focused on realising the benefits from joint staffing arrangements coupled with IT and business process improvement, recognising the job is not finished with a simple staffing merge.

**Case study:****What are we trying to achieve through shared services?****Five-council partnership****Economies of scale and market-shaping influence**

As the existing contract for business processing and professional services came to an end, South Oxfordshire and Vale wanted to move away from a traditional outsourced contract as it did not provide a bespoke model – “suppliers essentially provide you with their model”. Together with four additional councils, they made the choice to go to market together.

The key drivers for considering a joint procurement were:

- increasing bargaining power as a larger customer to encourage additional investment by providers and expand the range of outsourced services
- mitigating the disadvantages of being in direct competition with each other, if going to the market at the same time
- reducing the cost and drain on specialist capacity arising from separate procurement exercises.

There was no previous relationship across the six councils, which were also not geographical neighbours – “it was created for a purpose: to go to market for a procurement”. Collaboration was based on ‘the belief’ that costs would reduce and would make the contract more appealing to suppliers, resulting in more innovative and preferential bids.

Publica Group**Financial resilience and responsiveness to local needs**

Publica was created to assist the councils in delivering both savings and efficiencies, whilst retaining responsiveness to local needs.

The company’s vision is to grow the business further, building on the foundations already created, to maximise the benefits from shared working. The key outcomes specified by member councils were:

- realistic and sustainable savings
- retention of local influence by respecting separate identities
- maintenance or enhancement of service quality for the public
- a culture of creativity in which staff were empowered, collaborative and enquiring.



Where do we start? Key learning points from case study areas



On getting started...

Pursue a strategy of incremental alignment

“Start positioning the authority now in terms of where you want to be in 5-10 years”

“Start to incrementally reduce these barriers – start with the easy wins so that the nay-sayers can’t say it won’t work”

Sharing senior management is a good starting point

Almost all of the councils we interviewed pursued a strategy of ‘incremental alignment’ when it comes to shared services/management: ie starting small and then moving on to further integration of services and structures. In terms of services, most started with the relatively ‘uncontroversial services’ – normally back office services – before moving on to other areas. Analysis of the ‘first wave’ of shared services found that trust between partners in shared arrangements increased when tangible savings were delivered. This allowed them to move on to even more transformative sharing. The approach was summarised by one interviewee as:

- Start piloting things and testing the ground: **“Don’t build your business case on a blank sheet of paper with no history of collaboration”**
- Start small with things such as:
 - shadow joint teams
 - staffing priorities.
- Then move onto more complex areas:
 - management teams
 - shared posts
 - pay and conditions
 - housing and planning agendas and strategies
 - local plans
 - council tax harmonisation
 - joint contracting and commissioning – for example, putting a break in the contract to prepare for a potential merger.

Be experimental but also have a clear idea of what you want to achieve through collaboration

Change needs to be owned by both authorities; create strategy and policy frameworks that both organisations can align to.

Some of the case studies areas emphasised that when sharing services and structures, partners can lose sight of what they want to achieve for their organisations: **“There is likely to be cross fertilisation of ideas but you shouldn’t confuse this with what you should be doing as an authority”**



On the types of services to be shared...

Do not be distracted by 'what is in vogue'

It is important to share services that will have the greatest impact in terms of improved service delivery and quality rather than sharing being **"this tokenistic thing everyone is talking about"**.

Look beyond the financial savings

Sharing needs to be for the right reasons and should also consider non-financial benefits: **"Don't go in with just finance as the driver. It may be an attraction but ultimately there must be something else. This could be better career progression for staff or better and sustainable services for residents."**

Sharing frontline services should be based on clear understanding of local differences

"It's too easy to fall into thinking that everything is the same. A shared understandings of place is not as important as a shared understanding of the differences between the two places. Understanding where there is variation is more important than understanding where there is similarity as you need to be responsive to the wishes of members"

Sharing frontline services can unlock great benefits through service transformation and innovation. Sharing improves service delivery as it removes the need to create separate plans/strategies but instead focuses resource on delivery: **"residents and councillors see the delivery end of things: they want to see these 300 council houses and this big development not the barriers."** However frontline services are harder to share as these are "fundamental services that win and lose elections".

There is a limit to the 'non-geographical network model', and these limits depend on the nature of the service and how it is physically delivered: **"The geographical separation limits the extent to which it is desirable or practical to integrate"**. For example, the shared waste and leisure contract between South Oxfordshire and Vale works because the populations are similar and local issues are broadly (but not always) similar. Leisure and waste are similar enough to be done across both. This would not be the same between them and Havant because it is too far away. However, other services can be run across a wider geography such as revenues and benefits as customer access is done locally and processing can be done anywhere.

When selecting the range of services to be shared, many of the case study areas emphasised that it is vital to recognise geography and local differences when setting up shared structures. It is important to determine at which point integration goes against each authority's sovereign interest. For example, some areas struggle to recruit and others do not, so aligning employment terms and conditions may not be suitable to the recruitment and retention needs of partners.



On selecting the partners you want to share with...

Consider the quality of the relationship and history of collaboration

The quality of the relationship will determine how far shared services can be stretched.

For example, Cherwell & South Northants were able to accelerate their partnership across geographical boundaries because they could build on good political and managerial relationships. As the current chief executive advised: **“Choose a partner with the similar (not necessarily identical) values and ambitions; this may not be within counties”**.

You can afford to be more ambitious and less risk averse because “there are two of you”. Relationships, however, require constant work, investing in risk appetite and trying new things is key”

Sharing with the ‘unusual suspects’ can be liberating and emboldening

Some of the most innovative sharing arrangements are with non-neighbours or across regional boundaries.

Partners describe this as a ‘liberating’ experience as partners come to the relationship with a fresh perspective and a clarity of focus. Knowledge transfer is a particular benefit as there is a sense of ‘friendly competition’ and exchange of best practice.

Emerging issues are also addressed faster as partners provide honest feedback. As one Chief executive described it: **“it creates an inbuilt critical friend that’s quite safe because you are tied together but not so tightly that partners can’t tell you the truth”**.

Understand how partners – and places – are different as well as similar

“It’s important that each partner retains a sense of place. There was too much of a rush to assume that an understanding of place is not important. Especially when sharing services, it’s the differences in place that you need to understand.”

Deciding on the types of services and the policies and procedures should be based on careful mapping of differences and similarities.

For example, in the case of the Five-council partnership there were significant differences across partners’ revenue and benefits policies –for example, discretionary housing payments have to reflect the local housing market. Debt collection and recovery is another example– there are different economies in each area, so some councils used bailiffs while others do not. The contract with external providers had to reflect these differences.

Select sharing partners with future aims in mind

It is important to future-proof relationships, and select a sharing framework which can be easily scaled up or down depending on objectives. For example, case study areas found that some of the more contractual relationships with outsourced providers were relatively rigid and static. Contractual partnering for example was more suited to clearly defined tasks and standardised processes.

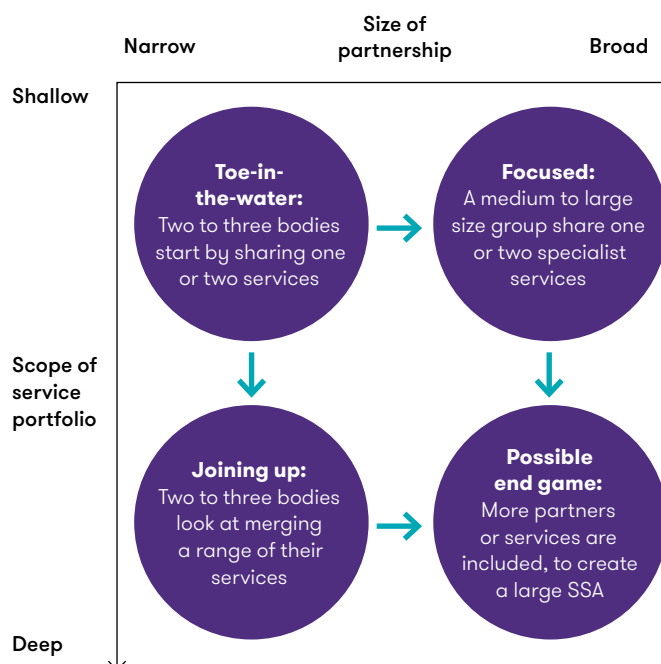


On selecting the partners you want to share with...

Adding new partners can bring about economies of scale but can also impact agility

As CIPFA advise⁶⁴, with the addition of partners and services to the partnership, the risk, uncertainties and complexities of the relationship increase.

Size and scope approaches to sharing services



One of the interviewees also emphasised that gaining economies of scale can also hamper innovation and ability to be agile and move quickly.

Publica's experience shows that adding new partners and services should consider the maturity of the relationship and each partner's experience of sharing. A key barrier to Publica's model working (ie a company jointly owned by four councils) is speed: with a multi partner/multi service model, it is slow to develop. This is even more so if partners are not as familiar with one another. Publica partners had to go through several sharing arrangements and this should not be underestimated when others are considering such a move.

Contrary to what might be assumed, it becomes more difficult, not easier, as additional partners enter. The journey was logical for them as they were already working together but they recognise this is not going to be the case elsewhere.

64. CIPFA. Shared services: sharing the gain, 2016 <http://www.cipfa.org/services/networks/alternative-service-delivery-network/best-practice/shared-services-sharing-th-gain>



How do we build resilience together?

Building resilience requires selecting the right governance and delivery models to match the intended objectives of the shared arrangements.

The literature on appraising different delivery vehicles for shared services is extensive and there are many guides to sharing management and services. We have included a selection of the literature below:



Key resources

LGA Resources

- Shared services and management: a Guide for councils: <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/shared-services-and-manag-b7d.pdf>
- Shared services map: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/shared-services/shared-services-map>
- Shared Service Expert Programme: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/productivity-experts-programme>
- Stronger together: shared management in local government: <https://www.local.gov.uk/stronger-together-shared-management-local-government>

CIPFA

CIPFA. Shared services: sharing the gain 2016: <http://www.cipfa.org/services/networks/alternative-service-delivery-network/best-practice/shared-services-sharing-th-gain>

Grant Thornton Alternative Delivery Model Series

- Better together: Building a successful joint venture company: <https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/globalassets/1.-member-firms/united-kingdom/pdf/publication/2016/building-a-successful-joint-venture-company.pdf>
- Responding to the challenge: alternative delivery models in local government: <https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/globalassets/1.-member-firms/united-kingdom/pdf/publication/2014/alternative-delivery-models-lg.pdf>

**Case study:****What were the governance and delivery models?****Breckland & South Holland****Shared strategic roles with localised operational delivery**

The shared management model has evolved over the life time of the partnership, with a significant review in 2015. Key features of the new model that emerged included a leaner and more strategic executive management team made up of a shared chief executive, three shared executive directors and five shared executive managers, with responsibility for a suite of services all connected via themes such as ‘growth’, ‘income and prosperity’. There was an increase of one executive director in the new structure, to focus entirely on the places of Breckland and South Holland and the delivery of locality based services.

Below the Executive Management tier, the senior management roles are a combination of locality specific operational roles (in departments such as Democratic Services, Housing, Communities, Planning, Building Control and Environmental Services) or shared strategic roles (such as Legal Services, ICT, Digital, Corporate Performance, Public Protection and Procurement). The structure has been carefully designed to ensure scalability to include a third partner in the future.

Where the role is purely localised and operational, managers report to a Shared Executive Director or Executive Manager who works across both Councils.

Cherwell & South Northants**Governance model that encouraged innovation and commercialism**

Having the right model in place encouraged innovative thinking, eg setting up alternative service delivery models, rather than looking at the more traditional things that made shared services more effective such as harmonisation of terms and conditions whose primary benefit is cost savings.

As the partnership became increasingly close, there was the realisation that more sharing of services would follow. Business cases for all remaining services joining up have since been developed and delivered.

To preserve their sovereignty whilst sharing further, the two councils are considering further integration through a variety of models, eg a Teckal company for Revenues and Benefits. They have also developed a shared business plan.

Being geared up to fail, learn and move on

“Think big, be brave and say on paper this is a good idea but recognise that in reality tweaks will be needed. But that is fine – go back if you need to and reflect/change”

To develop the confederation model, the two councils felt they had to find more councils to work with them, so entered discussions with Stratford DC. This was an opportunity which in the end did not progress, but the lessons learned ensured that the two-way collaboration picked up pace and reinforced the partnership.

For legal considerations when selecting delivery models, please see accompanying guidance from Trowers & Hamlin LLP at: www.trowers.com/dncollaborate



Having robust governance in place is even more important when decisions need to be made across several partners and several centres of political accountability.



Case study:

What were the delivery models? Why were they selected?

Five-council partnership

A mixture of contractual relationship and a mutual support agreement

The relationship with external providers is a contractual one: the councils contract with the private sector for business support and professional services as well as for facilities and property management. The contract covers 13 services across five locations.

Contracts with external providers ensured:

- achievement of contractually guaranteed savings
- agreement on overarching outcomes so that partners understand that simply complying with the basic specification does not meet Councils' requirements
- consolidation of service standards around the best performing services
- provision of access to leading specialist experts in the fields of business insight and analytics to better understand residents' needs and inform service development.

The councils also share expertise, knowledge and support amongst themselves through a mutual support agreement.

To ensure the resilience of the partnership in the face of challenges over the 9-year term, partners have established formal inter-authority agreements. These set out key principles and protocols, including:

- shared risk and reward
- agreement on finances
- approach to be taken should any authority wish to join or leave the partnership.

Publica Group

Accelerating the realisation of financial benefits and providing a viable alternative to local government reorganisation and the pain of restructuring⁶⁵

Selecting a company structure also enabled partner councils to achieve more extensive financial benefits than they would have under a joint committee structure.

"It has got 95% of the financial benefits without any of the pain of local government reorganisation and restructuring. It's not perfect but if you are willing to share there are a lot of benefits to be had."

This is mainly achieved through transferring all staff to the new employment vehicle, and creating a jointly owned company limited by guarantee. The model also provides a framework that could grow if other local authorities join and become partners of Publica Group.

Setting up a company can be costly: make sure it's worth it

Publica managers warned that the decision on setting up a joint company has to be based on a sound business case due to the cost of setting up the company:

- The legal work to establish the company is complex and expensive
- Transferring staff and digital transformation require significant investment of time and money
- Pensions are a particularly key area to address, taking the LGPS into account
- Detailed work was also required on the financial aspects of the business case to make sure the arrangements would be financially sustainable and capable of delivering the anticipated efficiencies

Shared structures to accommodate future growth ambitions

For the future, growing the model is currently being considered, for example who could join and on what basis? Would it be a new subsidiary of the existing company or another structure?

Publica have invested time and effort into ensuring that others can join, even if just in relation to one aspect of its offer, eg the digital commercial agenda.

65. Section contains insight from an interview with Publica in the LGC: Our new shared service avoids restructuring pain, 2017 <https://www.lgcplus.com/politics-and-policy/service-reform/lgc-interview-our-new-shared-service-avoids-restructuring-pain/7022090.article>, and a separate article by their advisers Trowers and Hamlin in the MJ, New frontiers for shared services, 2018 <https://www.themj.co.uk/New-frontiers-for-shared-services/210403>

**Case study:****What were the governance models? Why were they selected?****Five-council partnership****Changing the governance model to ‘scrutinise in a way which matters to each council’**

The Five councils initially explored a joint-committee model, yet quickly realised that this led to unnecessary duplication as decisions were scrutinised by individual council partners separately.

The five councils have decided against joint committees and especially joint scrutiny committee, retaining separate scrutiny within each council to keep the local focus instead: **“It allows each council to scrutinise in a way which matters to them”**.

Publica Group**A transparent governance model**

The company is governed by a Board comprising four executive directors and five non-executive directors bringing a range of expertise, with an independent Chair.

This approach was designed to ensure robust delivery of public services in the post-Carillion era because there is no private sector involvement. There is nothing hidden; no dividends to shareholders or executive bonuses. There has been a general trend since the last election away from outsourcing. This model could become more popular as an alternative approach and Publica can see opportunities for its own growth and for the growth of the model as it is more widely adopted by others.

Flexibility to go ‘all in’ or ‘opt out’

The members’ agreement underpins the overall governance and financing of the arrangements. Key decisions are reserved to the councils under the members’ agreement which also allows any of the participating councils to leave the arrangements and for other councils to join in the future.

Services and service standards are dealt with in individual service agreements between Publica and each participating council allowing each organisation the ability to tailor its requirements to reflect local objectives.

Cheltenham Borough Council, for example, made the decision not to transfer all services to Publica as it has different arrangements with other local authorities in the region, such as a joint core strategy with Tewkesbury Borough Council and Gloucester City Council.



How do we create resilience together? Key learning points from case study areas

Retaining local accountability is important

A key learning point across partners is how to create governance and delivery models which are flexible enough to allow local discretion when it comes to:

- **Decision-making** – any governance model should ensure that key decisions are reserved for constituent councils. Publica’s member agreement, for example, allows for key decisions around which ‘Basket of services’ to join to be made locally.
- **Scrutiny** – councils of the shared arrangement should be able to retain local scrutiny arrangements. As Publica’s Chief Executive emphasised that members **“do [still] have concerns about a perceived loss of control and loss of identity”**. Any officer working for Publica can be brought before a council’s scrutiny committee while members also have the right to review any service areas. **“We recognise this is a big step and a bit beyond where everyone else is so it’s only right and proper we go the extra mile, particularly with councillors so they understand where we are going and express their concerns so we can meet those concerns before they become a big problem”**

Change management is key

Moving on to a shared service arrangement is like any other change programme, and requires careful management. The Chief executives interviewed emphasised the following key considerations:

- 1 The senior group must provide the vision: leadership is key. Every business case for joint working needs a sponsor and engine room to drive it and maintain momentum
- 2 Ensure there is member and staff buy-in
- 3 As one Chief Executive with extensive experience of sharing, underlined: **“you cannot carry out big plans like this without putting capacity back in – take away any of the building blocks such as investment in IT or harmonisation of terms and conditions and you will be less successful”**

For a more detailed overview of considerations around change management, we recommend CIPFA’s publication ‘Sharing the Gain’⁶⁶

66. <http://www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/reports/sharing-the-gain-collaborating-for-cost-effectiveness>



How do we transform through sharing?

Although a handful of our case study areas entered into sharing arrangements to achieve efficiencies and savings through economies of scale, the most long-standing benefits were realised elsewhere, and they resulted in service innovation and organisational transformation. The two main ways were through:

- 1 Creating an entrepreneurial, commercially-focused culture
- 2 Knowledge transfer through 'communities of practice' across organisations
- 3 Building public services around the user (either through using digital practices or communities of practice)

The more successful shared services have found ways to harness the staff's creative energies as well as rethink the way they deliver services.



Case study:

How did sharing transform services and organisations?

Breckland & South Holland

Creating “communities of practice” across organisational boundaries

Success has been driven by commitment – political and managerial. There is a clear recognition of local and organisational differences, but also exchange of best practice and cross-organisational learning facilitated through shared strategic management.

The model led to the organic emergence of communities of practice across locality-based teams and natural benchmarking. There is friendly ‘competition’ and exchanges of ideas.

The model has also created space for members across councils to tackle difficult issues.

Cherwell & South Northants

Fostering a new culture

Transformation through sharing was always premised on creating a culture of commercial entrepreneurship among staff.

There needed to be an environment in which ideas could be incubated and accelerated, allowing teams to work on ideas through to development. Sufficient capacity had to be added in to achieve this.

However, both councils are aware that any model needs to respond to locality needs first. For example, it was debated whether the proposed development company by South Northants should be a joint one and concluded that it should remain just South Northants’ as this was right for the locality but not right for Cherwell, which has an established development company looking at self-build housing.



Shared Services Evaluation Tool

This tool was developed by the LGA to help local authorities to track the benefits of sharing, establish a common baseline and monitor accurately levels of savings and investment. The tool can be used by both established shared services and to produce a business case to enter into a new shared service.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/.../evaluation-tool-microsoft-d00.xls>



Case study:

How did sharing transform services and organisations?

Five-council partnership

Although the scale of the realised savings is yet to be confirmed, a tangible benefit was the development of close collaborative relationships.

The relationships have grown over time: **“the leaders and senior politicians have met. The officers get on well. The biggest benefit is the ability to share knowledge and expertise in an informal way”**.

This was not an initial aim but is the most successful bit of the process. A ‘community of practice’ has grown and evolved – **“it creates an inbuilt critical friend that’s quite safe because you are tied together but not so tightly that partners can’t tell you the truth”**.

Differences across partners are perceived as liberating, both politically and managerially – the fact that constituent partners are not near neighbours or do not all have the same ‘political colours’ makes the relationship more focused and frank.

Publica Group⁶⁷

Empowering staff to innovate

Normally service improvement is based on standardising processes and adopting a unified approach to service delivery to generate greater economies of scale.

Publica are empowering staff to think radically about how to transform services for the councils as well as the public, and adapting the way they deliver services based on locality needs.

Having the scale to think seriously about digital

Plans for the future include development of the digital transformation programme. New discussions have been opened up as a result of the company being formed and people can see the much greater benefits this scale of operation brings.

Publica engaged in a leadership development programme, which focused minds on leadership in a digital world.

They had not recognised the importance of this before and the possibilities this could achieve. This opened their eyes to a different world of working. These economies of scale make investment possible.

⁶⁷ Further information about Publica Group can be found on their website – <http://www.publicagroup.uk/>. If you require further information email enquiries@publicagroup.uk. Publica’s business plan is available on their website – <http://www.publicagroup.uk/media/1143/publica-business-plan-mar-2018-final.pdf>



Sharing between district and county councils

However, sharing management, services and customer insight between districts and counties can also improve the service experience of joint customers. This can be achieved by pooling shared knowledge about the customer journey.

The two case studies below illustrate that this “vertical integration” can support positive strategic and operational relationships between organisations, and better position districts as providers of choice for services at a locality level.

This type of arrangement can also be a stepping stone to ‘incremental alignment’ and help to more firmly embed districts within strategic partnerships and promote a greater understanding of the potential roles of local district councils within the arenas of health and economic development.

**Case study:****Better Together, Selby District Council and North Yorkshire County Council**

The 'Better Together' collaboration between Selby District Council and North Yorkshire County Council had a joint focus on shared customers and the need to respond to reducing funding.

Underpinned by an arrangement that sees the chief executive of Selby DC also acting as the assistant chief executive at the County Council, the collaboration enables the two councils to maximise how assets are used to create organisational resilience and deliver savings – up to £1.4m by 2020 – whilst designing services to achieve the best outcomes for customers.

The vision statement clearly sets the parameters for collaboration:

“The most effective use of joint resources of the two organisations in providing services to our shared client base”.

The collaboration has the customer at its heart. As Selby DC's Chief Executive put it:

“Customers don't care who provides their services, so why should we be so protective of our organisations? We need a practical focus on how to deliver the services customers need in the best and most efficient way. Personalities and politics then become secondary”

The Better Together vision is delivered through three workstreams:

Customer & Community – joining up seamless delivery at a local level, with access to services co-designed with customers and communities based on a shared understanding of needs – including:

- **Health, social care and housing integration** – including jointly developing a public health action plan for Selby district
- **Support to community initiatives** – such as Selby College Students' Youth Wellbeing Fund, which funded counselling for 10 students – and programmes to encourage self-sufficiency and social action at a local level
- **Developing community library hubs and co-locating services** – resulting in a threefold increase in volunteering and a ninety per cent rise in demand for IT training in libraries
- **Targeting 'intelligent' services to customers and empowering their use of digital channels** – underpinned by understanding who our customers are and how they want services to be delivered

Smarter Working – delivering shared back office services, eg Finance, Legal, ICT, HR and Health & Safety. Benefits include:

- **Resilience** – additional capacity enables delivery to be maintained at peak times or in the event of losing critical key resources – a major risk for smaller district councils, eg shared Finance Service
- **Skills** – greater access to available skills, knowledge and experience, eg the shared Legal Service is creating areas of excellence around dealing with Planning matters
- **Efficiency** – both partners benefit from the economies of scale created through working together, eg revenue savings for Selby DC from collaborating on ICT are projected to be £100k; capital savings almost £50k

Regeneration & Investment – supporting the ambition of both councils to facilitate economic growth – including:

- **Strategic approach to economic development & assets** – a joint approach to assets, disposal and acquisition aligned with our key housing, economic and regeneration strategies, to reduce costs and to generate income
- **Integrated planning** – a collaborative and co-ordinated approach how we jointly work on our key development sites and major planning applications
- **Business relationship management** – improving the way we engage business customers through shared intelligence, understanding local business needs and holding joint “key account management” meetings

The long-term resilience and success of the model has been proven by surviving three changes in Chief Executive and senior management within the partnership. The LGA Peer Challenge recently judged Better Together as **“working well, has achieved some good outcomes and has the potential to deliver even more”**.

**Case study:**

A shared 'director of influence' between Gloucester City and Gloucestershire County Council

Jon McGinty was appointed as Managing Director for Gloucester City Council and Commissioning Director for Gloucestershire County Council in July 2015. The County element of the shared role does not have rigidly specified commissioning responsibilities but was described as being a 'director of influence' with a clear emphasis on the relationship element of the role.

Jon was set the following objectives by the chief executive of the County Council:

- **Provide additional leadership capacity within the County Council:** add leadership capacity to the County: provide leadership of, and help the strategic progress of Gloucester City Council, making it a better partner for all public sector bodies across Gloucestershire and beyond
- **Identify further options for shared services.** The county council are currently delivering a number of shared services to the city council underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding. The shared role was also seen as a way of exploring joint delivery of front facing services, such as strategic planning, as there were a lot of transferable skills and common activities across both councils despite differing roles and duties
- **Use the strengths of district councils to help the County Council meet its challenges.** Districts can bring benefits to County Councils' demand management activity – for instance, rather than a county council commissioning a particular service, districts can use their strengths in community understanding and connections to link with voluntary organisations and community assets, to address the root causes of demand and co-design the most effective provision of this service, which may avoid the need to commission altogether

"I try to act as a constructive challenge to County commissioning decisions; in that I challenge the need to commission itself and see if districts can facilitate alternative service delivery models, for instance by using a community asset approach to reducing demand"

Influencing county commissioning decisions was described as the most challenging aspect of the role. Counties have been pushed to seek economies of scale which has led to limited opportunities for locally-based or differentiated solutions. In Gloucestershire, however, partners have started to push the boundary in some prevention services **"Both the CCG and the Public Health team get it that district councils – in their role as strategic housing/planning authority, and leisure facility providers – can have a role in the health & wellbeing agenda. Districts are starting to play a bigger role in the STP here, particularly on the preventative agenda."**

Benefits to the district

The role has allowed all six districts of Gloucestershire to have a stronger voice and seat at the county council commissioning table. **"I spend a lot of time with the Director of Public health, the CCG accountable officer and other key commissioners. This role is an opportunity to pitch ideas – you have to 'sell' your case."**

Jon emphasised that sharing does not always have to come with a big bang. Sometimes **"getting on with small scale, under-the-radar collaborative engagements can unlock further opportunities; things start to flow and you start building relationships"**. Indeed, a Local Government Association (LGA) corporate peer challenge report recently found the new post had helped build previously tense relationships, and facilitate Gloucester city council's turnaround. The latest peer review reported there was now a 'positive, open and honest' relationship with the county council and the authority was viewed as an 'effective partner'.



Key learning points

Shared posts work best when they focus on building relationships and influence rather than on core duties

The value of sharing management between district and county is about facilitating common understanding between partners and consciously working at breaking down some of the barriers that exist.

District/county collaboration can unlock meaningful strategic opportunities

In both models we examined, the district and the council collaborated for increased savings and resilience. However, both collaborations have evolved beyond the traditional provider/commissioner relationship to deliver service transformation and strategic opportunities for both partners.

Both management posts resulted in greater influence for districts, either through increased role in STP delivery or more effective representation of districts.







Collaborating for devolution and structural reform

The devolution agenda may once again be gathering pace, with a new national framework in development.

Related issues about structures and governance are very much a live debate.

In areas where local leaders have chosen to explore devolution and structural reform, districts must continue to serve the interests of local people at the heart of these discussions, and have a crucial and positive role to play as champions of their communities and localities.

By virtue of their numbers and their understanding of localities, district councils are also necessarily gatekeepers to the local consent that central government recognises must underpin any changes to local governance.

Tools and resources in this section

Devolution and Combined Authorities

[The devolution deal-making process – resources](#)

[Further resources](#)

District mergers

[Reflections on population size](#)

[The “evidential tests” and how to meet them](#)

[Key learning points](#)

Unitary reorganisation

[National guidance on unitary reorganisation](#)

[Reflections on population size](#)

[The importance of local support and consent](#)

Working with town and parish councils

[Resources](#)



Devolution and Combined Authorities

Jake Berry MP:

“We have made it absolutely clear that devolution must be locally led. We are seeking agreement between local partners, and where such agreement exists – whether it is district councils, unitaries or county councils – the Government are happy to meet local partners to discuss their ambition, through devolution, to boost growth and productivity. We hope shortly to be able to provide clarity on how best district councils and other councils can take forward their devolution ambitions. The Government are going to set out a clear framework as they develop the next stage of their industrial strategy. As I have said, district councils should be at the heart of devolution, and we will ensure that they are.”

Commons debate on district council collaboration and devolution in England, November 2017⁶⁸

New framework for devolution

In November 2015, thirty six local partnerships across England sent their devolution proposals to the then Secretary of State. Over half of these proposals were from partnerships which included district councils. Of the ten devolution deals agreed to date, only the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough deal covers an area that includes district councils, and only on the basis of accepting a combined authority and a metropolitan mayor. Slow progress with devolution discussions has been a source of frustration for many non-metropolitan areas, and many felt that devolution outside city regions was not a priority of the government.

The Conservative manifesto for 2017⁶⁹ included a commitment to provide **“clarity across England on what devolution means for different administrations so all authorities operate within a common framework ... we will support those authorities that wish to combine to serve their communities better”**. The manifesto continues to clarify that metropolitan mayors are still expected for combined authorities based around city regions, **“... but we will not support them for the rural counties”**.

The former Secretary of State said that this framework will cover **“what standards will need to be met, what outcomes will need to be delivered, what red lines there are for the whole process... [expectations] about leadership, scope and levels of support”**.⁷⁰ We understand that the framework will be published in summer of 2018. In the background, civil servants have begun what one official described as “a new type of conversation” with the Heart of the South West LEP area (which includes Devon and Somerset), with others also reported to be under discussion.

If devolution is back on the cards, then local partnerships have an opportunity to re-energise collaborative work in this area. Some areas, who may be frustrated that their original ambition was not met with the response they hoped for from central government, now have the chance to revisit proposals and build upon them with the benefit of experience and joint work to date. Other areas may wish to consider entering devolution negotiations for the first time.

Combined authorities and Metro Mayors

Combined authorities offer place-based partners a statutory vehicle for strategic decision-making within a shared area.

Historically, combined authorities and directly elected metro mayors have been a precondition for a devolution deal with central government. The only exception to this is Cornwall, which has a devolution deal but neither of the former. A wide range of shire areas have considered the mayoral combined authority model in recent years but have not always been able to reach agreement within localities and with central government due to opposing views on areas to be covered and the suitability of the governance model for non-metropolitan areas.

At present, only the Cambridgeshire districts have adopted this model through membership of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, the newest of the nine combined authorities in England. The Combined Authority is still in its early days, but each of the Cambridgeshire District leaders is a member on the Combined Authority Board and therefore working closely with the mayor in ensuring that the area benefits from the opportunities and new funding promised by the devolution deal with central government.⁷¹

68. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-11-15/debates/5B849B80-0C8D-4B03-B7A8-84835A25DCB9/DistrictCouncils>

69. https://issuu.com/conservativeparty/docs/ge2017_manifesto_a5_digital?ff=true&se=16696947/48955343

70. <https://www.lgcplus.com/politics-and-policy/devolution-and-economic-growth/javid-devo-framework-to-provide-clarity-and-consistency/7022166.article>

71. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/608527/Plain_English_Guides_to_Devolution_Cam_and_Peter.PDF



It is not yet clear whether future devolution deals will continue to require a combined authority and metro mayor. Under any circumstances, it will be for local leaders to determine whether a combined authority or any alternative governance model will best serve the interests of their communities in the context of their local economic geography.



The devolution deal-making process

A wide range of resources are available to district councils in considering how to approach the devolution deal-making process. We have not explored these in detail as their findings may be superseded by the forthcoming devolution framework, but the underlying principles are likely to remain relevant to future work that districts may choose to pursue. We recommend:

- Making Devolution Work – a practical guide for local leaders (Grant Thornton and Localis 2015)⁷²
- Making Devolution Deals Work (the Institute for Government 2016)⁷³
- Devo Why, Devo How? (the Centre for Public Scrutiny 2016)⁷⁴

Many of the ingredients for a successful devolution deal are of course the same as for any other type of local collaboration. Building on Grant Thornton's previous research, we believe there are several key areas to consider as we await further clarity on the new devolution framework:

- **Demonstrable trust and a 'unity of purpose' across participating organisations is key in giving the Government confidence to devolve.** Places need to show how they will deliver growth and public sector reform through a clear, shared and local vision and economic evidence base. This is particularly important where there is limited track record of joint working between local partners.
- **Much of the discussion surrounding devolution proposals has concerned governance structures rather than outcomes.** In particular, the challenges of establishing a combined authority/mayor have sometimes dominated local discussions to the detriment of their progress. Proposed improvements to residents' lives and local economies should come first; governance second.

- **The importance of having non-local authority stakeholders outside cannot be overstated.** Especially given the strong connection with the development of local industrial strategies, LEPs must be on-side with devolution proposals. Other local institutions such as CCGs, universities, housing associations, the voluntary sector and the wider business community are no less important. The support of local members of parliament has also been crucial to many existing deals.
- **The devolution deals agenda will probably continue to be iterative.** Many areas have not fully resolved the economic geography with which they would intend to approach the Government. Areas with limited track record have the opportunity to start small, demonstrate success and scale up over time.
- **Existing deals suggest that skills, transport, housing and economic development are the areas where a devolutionary case can be most effectively made.** It is no secret that the appetite for devolution varies across government departments and the new devolution framework may well continue to focus on these thematic areas. Many areas also continue to make the case for fiscal devolution such as the ability to set additional bands of council tax rates. Other than retention of business rates, no such new fiscal powers have been agreed as part of existing devolution deals.
- **Ultimately devolution proposals will be judged by the Treasury against their ability to further local and national growth and productivity agendas.** Alongside the need to reflect the national fiscal context, areas should prioritise meeting these in their proposals.

72. <https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/globalassets/1-member-firms/united-kingdom/pdf/publication/2015/making-devolution-work.pdf>

73. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications/making-devolution-deals-work>

74. <https://www.cfps.org.uk/devo-why-devo-how/>



Case study:

South Cambridgeshire on membership of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

“Economic geography is really important in this. Shoehorning geographies together is unlikely to make sense or get buy-in.”

Devolution in the East of England took a number of proposed forms before settling on the footprint of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Previous proposals had included a Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, although concerns were expressed locally that this large region did not form a functional economic area and local agreement to the proposal could not be reached.

Ultimately, following a sustained investment of time and effort by local leaders, a devolution deal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was struck in March 2017 and a mayor elected in May 2017. This makes Cambridgeshire and Peterborough the youngest of the nine combined authorities in England.

South Cambridgeshire emphasised the importance of securing buy-in from ministers and members of parliament to unlock progress in devolution discussions and open doors within the civil service.

From the perspective of South Cambridgeshire, the opportunities attached to being part of a devolution deal and a combined authority are likely to be significant, although the Mayor and the Combined Authority are still becoming established. All district leaders within Cambridgeshire are members of the Combined Authority board, and are therefore integral to the process of implementing the devolution deal and steering the new investment it provides. Local leaders recognise it would have been difficult to achieve the same scale of investment in infrastructure without a devolution deal and combined authority in place.

South Cambridgeshire is also part of the Greater Cambridgeshire City Deal, part of the County of Cambridgeshire and part of the Combined Authority area, as well as managing the usual range of place-based partnerships. This adds complexity to an already multi-layered range of footprints and geographies over which the district must act. It also poses challenges from the perspective of public understanding of accountability and responsibility for services.

Given that these are still early days for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, it is too soon to look for evidence of impact. However, a clear programme is emerging including work to develop a single housing strategy for the region, undertake strategic reviews of transport and develop a shared approach to infrastructure investment. The Mayor has also put in place an independent Economic Review Commission to “consider the case for greater fiscal devolution and powers to unlock the delivery of major infrastructure, including showing how the area delivers benefits to the rest of UK”. Partners in the combined authority area are also underway with exploratory discussions around public sector reform.



Combined authorities: signs of success

Grant Thornton have undertaken separate research on mayoral combined authorities, including identifying early signs of innovation and success. The report is available at: <https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/insights/combined-authorities-signs-of-success/>. From the perspective of districts, key findings were that:

- The formation of combined authorities has inevitably caused institutional blurring with pre-existing local government structures. Greater clarity is needed over the roles, functions, and profiles of individual mayors. As recognised and trusted local institutions, districts have a key role alongside mayors in helping residents to make sense of this picture, providing clarity on the purpose, roles and responsibilities of combined authorities and their relationship to pre-existing local authorities.
- Combined authorities will stand or fall on their ability to add value through targeted investment, strategic co-ordination, joined-up policy and the leveraging in of additional resources (particularly additional private sector funds). Districts have a central and positive role to play in achieving this by active participation within combined authorities to shape the implementation of devolution deals and ensure that opportunities and investment have the appropriate impact on their localities.
- There is no single checklist or set of criteria for measuring the success of mayors and combined authorities. Each region must articulate its own challenges and show progress in tackling them. Districts have a role to play in scrutinising the progress and performance of combined authorities and mayors both through their own arrangements and those of the combined authority.



Setting up a combined authority

The Local Government Association has provided a range of online resources in relation to combined authorities including a plain English guide to combined authorities.⁷⁵ This useful document summarises the process of creating a combined authority as follows:

Stage 1: Review

A group of councils proposing to establish a CA must carry out a governance review, including consultation, in order to decide whether or not to proceed

Stage 2: Scheme preparation

Having decided to proceed, the councils must prepare and publish a scheme for the CA

Stage 3: Orders

Order making process: the Secretary of State introduces in Parliament a statutory instrument establishing the CA

Success factors for creating a combined authority

The National Audit Office undertook a review of the progress in setting up combined authorities⁷⁶ in July 2017 and identified three fundamental success factors for the successful creation of combined authorities:

- a common sense of purpose between the local authorities
- a history of joint working between partners leading to sound working relationships
- clear and aligned geographical areas.

For further information on the legal steps required to set up a combined authority, see accompanying guide by Trowers & Hamlin LLP at: www.trowers.com/dncollaborate

75. <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/combined-authorities-plai-fb6.pdf>

76. <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Progress-in-setting-up-combined-authorities.pdf>



District mergers

The former Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has recently approved three separate mergers of adjoining districts in Suffolk Coastal & Waveney, Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury (also in Suffolk) and Taunton Deane and West Somerset. In his speech to the 2018 DCN conference, where he announced approval of the first two, he was “delighted to announce these locally-supported mergers that are the culmination of years of collaboration. They mark the first time these powers have been used in this way and herald an exciting new era for district councils – where they decide for themselves how best to deliver high quality, cost-effective services, now and in years to come.”

Not all districts would wish to consider merging with a neighbour, and in some cases local partnerships and geography would not be a good fit for this model. As with all forms of local collaboration, it is for leaders to determine how best to continue to meet the needs of local residents and businesses. The purpose of this section is to share learning and insight from areas in which mergers have been approved, for others who may be considering the same approach.

- **Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils** have been working operationally in partnership since 2008. A joint chief executive was appointed in 2008 to oversee development of shared services between the districts, and the separate Councils have achieved over £22m in savings over that period by transitioning to a single officer structure. The Councils put forward an options appraisal to members in early 2016, considering options for further efficiencies and increasing strategic impact within the area in the specific context of East Suffolk. A district merger was the recommended option and Councillors agreed to this. Public consultation was undertaken between October and December 2016 feeding into the development of detailed proposals. Proposals were endorsed by both authorities in January 2017 and formally submitted to the then Secretary of State in February 2017.

- **Forest Heath District Council and St. Edmundsbury Borough Council** began working in partnership in 2007, with a shared waste service, and have had a joint chief executive since 2011. The Councils have developed extensive shared services and are currently operating with a fully shared officer structure, saving around £4 million a year in staffing and related costs. In June 2017 the Councils considered draft proposals to form a single Council for West Suffolk. The principal aims set out at this point were to achieve further operational and financial resilience, and also increase strategic scale and local influence. Both Councils were already subject to review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) meaning that electoral wards were already subject to change. These proposals were approved in principle leading to a further period of public consultation during the summer of 2017 and submission of the full business case to the former Secretary of State in September 2017.
- **Taunton Deane and West Somerset District Councils** have shared a management team and officer structure since 2013, saving approximately £1.8m a year. In July 2016 the two Councils considered a business case for further transformation work to integrate services and systems across the two councils, which additionally explored options around a district merger. Whilst recognising other benefits, this business case is explicit that the financial resilience of both authorities would be the primary driver for the merger, in particular given that West Somerset was heavily impacted by a successful business rates appeal relating to the Hinkley Point B power station. Following approval by members, a proposal was submitted to the former Secretary of State in March 2017.

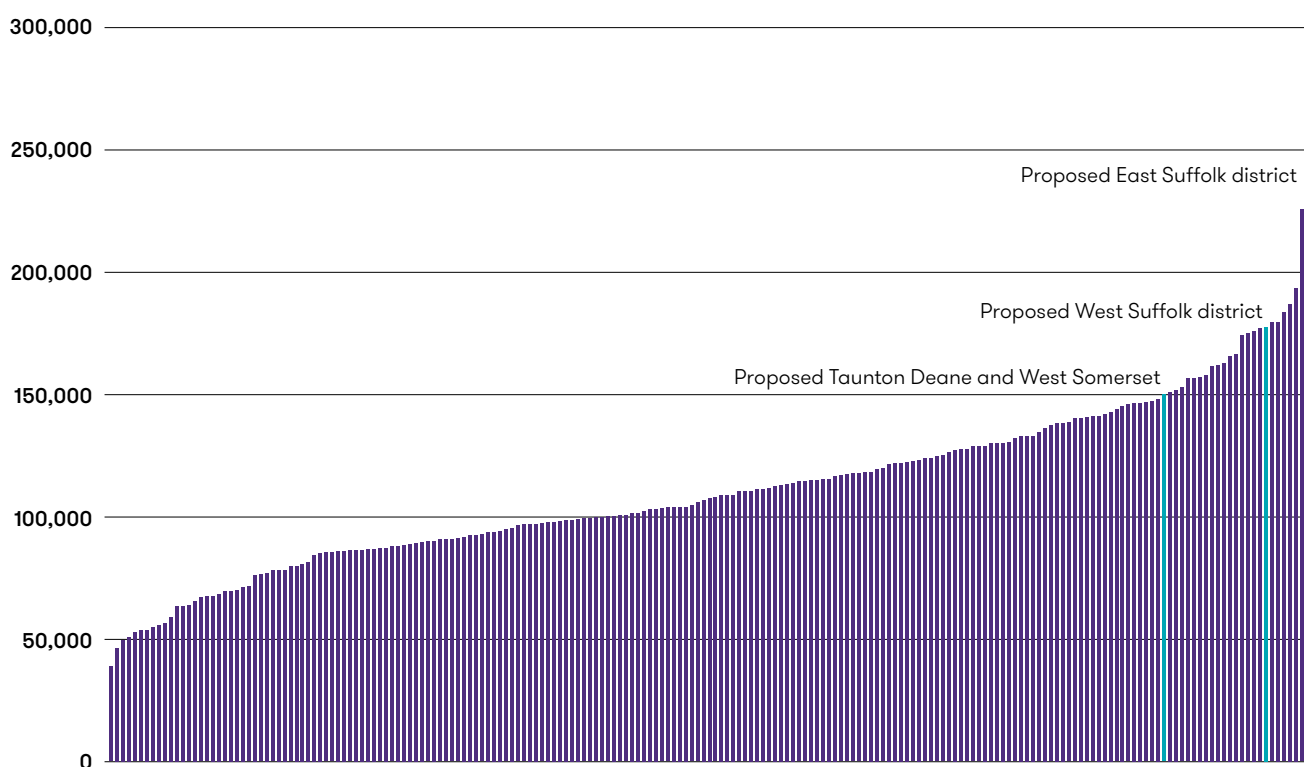
Merger proposals have also recently reached advanced stages in both East Kent and South Hams and West Devon before ultimately being rejected by members.



Reflections on population size

The three new district councils to be created by the proposed mergers will be amongst the largest in the country and similar in population size to some of the smaller unitary authorities elsewhere in the country. There is no statutory guidance on the optimal size for district councils.

Population of English District Councils (mid-2016, ONS)





Case study: Suffolk Coastal and Waveney district merger

“A merger will turn us from an operational and partly strategic partnership to an operational, strategic and political body.”

Suffolk Coastal and Waveney have been working together in partnership since 2008 when they first began sharing a Chief Executive, with a joint management team appointed in 2010.

The Councils now share a fully integrated officer structure and the large majority of services are delivered on a shared basis on behalf of both councils. This joint working has delivered direct financial savings of over £22 million to date, which has been achieved largely by reduction in staffing costs. Since 2008, the number of staff employed by the councils has fallen from 1,353 to 733, although these figures include some TUPE to private firms that provide leisure and refuse services.

A merger has not been a long-term goal for the Councils. In early 2016 they undertook an options appraisal to assess how further efficiencies could be delivered whilst also achieving strategic benefits around resilience, scale and a stronger voice for East Suffolk. Through this process, members concluded that a district merger would be likely to achieve the best balance of outcomes. Other options considered but discounted included recruitment of a third district to the partnership, and the creation of a combined authority for East Suffolk.

Despite the high level of integration, the Councils estimate that a further £2.5m per annum can be saved through a full merger. These savings will be achieved through removal of the duplication required by running two councils – for example support service costs, contract efficiencies, internal and external audit and aspects of corporate finance. The new authority, for which elections will take place in May 2019 is expected to have 55 elected members compared with 90 for the two existing districts. The Councils also anticipate significant non-cashable benefits in terms of officer productivity – a single council will be easier to manage than two – whilst also offering greater job flexibility as officers will be able to work across a wider area.

The Councils’ track record on integration and shared services has stood them in good stead to deliver the merger, with the technical infrastructure already in place to support agile and remote working, and a “place agnostic” approach encouraged within the workforce.

There remains a challenging road ahead to deliver the merger, including addressing local concerns around the loss of democratic representation, but having secured approval from the former Secretary of State, work is now underway in earnest to deliver a new Council for East Suffolk.



The MHCLG “evidential tests”

The former Secretary of state was explicit about the evaluation criteria to be used by civil servants in considering future district mergers:

- The proposal is likely to improve local government in the area by:
 - improving service delivery
 - giving greater value for money and yielding cost savings
 - providing stronger strategic and local leadership
 - delivering more sustainable structures.
- The proposal commands local support, in particular that the merger is proposed by all councils which are to be merged and there is evidence of a good deal of local support.

- The proposed area is a credible geography, consisting of two or more local government areas that are adjacent and which, if established, would not pose an obstacle to locally-led proposals for authorities to combine to serve their communities better and would facilitate joint working between local authorities.

It should be noted that these criteria are not statutory tests nor do they form statutory guidance, so the Secretary of State is free to exercise total discretion in making a decision about any proposals put to him.

The rest of this section of the toolkit looks in detail at these three areas. We examine how these partnerships met the key evidential tests set out by MHCLG and consider the lessons that may be learned by other areas in considering whether a merger may be the right approach for them.



MHCLG evidential test How was this test met by the three case study areas?

What can other districts learn from this?

Improving service delivery

Each of the districts put forward arguments to describe how a larger district will be able to deliver improved service outcomes through, for example:

- Setting out a unified strategic vision for the whole area enabling officers to be even more proactive and able to capitalise on commercial opportunities
- Operating at a greater scale to make strategic investments in infrastructure, supported by greater ability to borrow. Also, greater strength and weight of influence in regional discussions around economic growth
- Alignment of local plans to support coordinated and accelerated delivery of housing
- Rationalisation of grant funding and support for community development
- The potential to unlock considerable officer capacity by avoiding duplication which naturally arises when serving two sovereign authorities

The Taunton Deane and West Somerset business case proposed a series of Transformation Action Groups to explore options for service rationalisation and design in the future, with both officer and member representation.

The most compelling proposals will rest on a positive track record of achieving service improvements through previous collaboration through, for example, shared services (explored in more detail in the previous chapter)

It is important to make coherent arguments for how a district merger will improve on the pre-existing baseline of service performance.

It may be difficult to provide quantitative evidence to support these arguments due to a lack of recent comparators. A merged district will also be a new organisation with new elected members and may therefore decide not to implement anything proposed by its predecessor councils.

Giving greater value for money and yielding cost savings

We have analysed published merger business cases from six local authority partnerships, including East Kent and South Hams and West Devon where proposals were ultimately rejected by members. Projected net savings over five years range from approximately £1m to £4m per participating district, with significant but unquantified further savings potential through transformation post-merger.

Each of the three approved mergers will require only minimal equalisation of Council tax – this has proven to be a problematic issue in other areas where levels of local taxation vary more widely.

Some savings are likely to be available over the first five years of a merged district, although these are likely to be offset by the one-off costs associated with delivering the merger.

Most of these savings arise from the removal of duplication and separation across the councils. There are likely to be opportunities for more substantial savings through transformation once districts are merged into a single new organisation but these are hard to predict with certainty.

There may also be productivity gains for senior officers as a result of a single organisation being simpler to run and manage than two.



MHCLG evidential test How was this test met by the three case study areas?

What can other districts learn from this?

Providing stronger strategic and local leadership

The partnerships set similar arguments around clarified leadership of place, a single point of accountability from the perspective of the public, and simplified relationships from the perspectives of local partners. It is claimed that these will collectively lead to greater strategic influence in the wider area and with local partners such as LEPs, CCGs and County Councils on issues such as investing infrastructure and growth, addressing housing demand, managing funding reductions and engaging in devolution discussions with central government.

Each of the business cases asserts that new organisations will continue to be the right size to represent towns, villages and rural communities, whilst being large enough to offer a stronger unified voice to central government, local businesses and potential investors.

Questions around the achieving the “right size” for organisations, thereby enabling strong strategic leadership whilst maintaining a close connection with communities, go to the heart of most debates about local government reorganisation. National and international comparisons of the size of municipalities show that there is no single answer to this question. It will be for each partnership to set out proposals for what they consider to be optimum scale, and to provide evidence to support these based on local needs, characteristics and geography.

Delivering more sustainable structures

The districts all see the mergers as increasing financial resilience, better enabling prioritisation of resources to need, increasing ability to borrow and better equipping councils to cope with unexpected shocks.

West Somerset in particular faces threats to financial sustainability in its current form following an unfavourable outcome to a business rates appeal in relation to Hinkley Point B power station – the merger will have a direct impact in stabilising the financial position of both authorities and safeguarding the quality of services to the public.

It is important to recognise that when two organisations merge they share not only assets and opportunities, but also liabilities and risks. Ensuring a clear and shared understanding of these is key.

In some cases a merger may also offer a “win-win” situation, where the strengths of one organisation, financial or otherwise, counterbalance the weaknesses in another.



MHCLG evidential test How was this test met by the three case study areas?

What can other districts learn from this?

The proposal commands local support, in particular that the merger is proposed by all councils which are to be merged and there is evidence of a good deal of local support

The districts have all invested in providing clear and accessible summary information to the public through, for example, dedicated websites and booklets.

The Suffolk districts have both demonstrated high degrees of local support through telephone surveys of 1,000 local households.

None of the six participating districts has undertaken an advisory referendum of residents, as this is not required under the statutory route followed (see below). Referenda have been undertaken in other areas and have in some cases had an unpredictable political effect – for example in Babergh and Mid Suffolk – where the outcome of the referendum was different in each district area.

Substantial effort and some investment is required to engage local residents and stakeholders in proposals for a merger. This will include using all of partners' existing engagement and communication channels, and also the commissioning of independent research work by a third party. Other possible approaches include workshops with a range of stakeholders, a call for written submissions and public consultation on final proposals.

The proposed merged area is a credible geography, consisting of two or more existing local government areas that are adjacent, and which, if established, would not pose an obstacle to locally-led proposals for authorities to combine to serve their communities better and would facilitate joint working between local authorities

Each of the three proposed mergers covers a continuous geographical area, with some variations in size and population but broadly similar local characteristics in terms of rurality, industrial specialisms and infrastructure.

Published proposals do consider the risks of conflict with wider discussions around devolution deals and – a function of the time – the national referendum on EU independence, but ultimately set out a clear position that merger discussions are self-contained to the two districts and need not impact on strategic conversations across a wider area.

The councils also make the key argument that merged districts would have a beneficial impact on joint working between local authorities (elected and unelected partners such as health, police, fire) through simplification of relationships and clarified strategic and political accountability for the affected areas.

Each partnership must make its own proposals for the size and scale of new organisations based on local needs and geography. Each of the three new districts created by these partnerships will be amongst the largest in the country.



Key learning points

We have reviewed published proposals and spoken in detail to Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District councils about their experiences, and we believe that there are some key lessons to share with other areas that may be considering similar options.

A comprehensive programme of communications and engagement is critical

Proposals for local government reorganisation will inevitably be controversial and will cause local and even national debate. Comprehensive communication and local engagement is required to address this head-on. Each of the three partnerships invested heavily in a separate website and publicity materials to provide information about proposals, as well as independent research to meet the evidential test on public support.

It is clear that wide political support is fundamental to successful proposals. This is equally true amongst leaders, backbenchers and local members of parliament, who may be able to expedite discussions within the civil service if required. From speaking to a wide range of organisations, it is clear that engagement and negotiation behind the scenes can require sustained hard work over a long period.

Track record matters

All three of the mergers that have received approval had a joint chief executive and management team in place several years before merger proposals began to be considered.

The mergers are the results of incremental alignment and integration over a long period, building on a track record of shared services and shared management. It would be possible for two districts to merge without having a pre-existing level of integration in place, as was proposed for the East Kent Districts. However, this would be more challenging to agree and implement than where a degree of integration already exists.

It is important to recognise that a merger is not a necessary, or even logical, next step from existing shared service arrangements. It will be for local leaders to weigh considerations of sovereignty against the benefits that may be available through a merger.

Ensure that all members own the vision and have a chance to engage across organisations

The unsuccessful proposals in East Kent and South Hams and West Devon show that securing and maintaining buy-in from back-bench councillors can be critical. In both cases local proposals had reached an advanced stage based on consensus between Leaders with the support of senior officers. Both sets of proposals were ultimately rejected by a vote at full council on the basis of concerns around loss of sovereignty.

For other areas that are considering mergers, it will be important to ensure that councillors from both organisations have the opportunity to engage fully with their counterparts in the consultation process and in building the vision for a new organisation. If possible, opportunities should be created for informal collaboration between members during the consultation process. Ultimately this will ensure that members are able to make a decision on whether to merge based on the best possible information.



Selecting the appropriate statutory route

There are currently two statutory routes that district mergers can follow:

- Procedures under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 – which specifically covers a ‘Merger Review’ through a ‘Principal Area Boundary Review’
- Under Section 15 of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 by regulations of the Secretary of State

The latter route may offer a slightly expedited timescale and allows local partnerships to negotiate directly with the Secretary of State, rather than undergoing a formal boundary review which is outside the immediate influence of local authorities. It is also worth noting that the former requires a local advisory referendum to be undertaken, whereas the latter does not. Each of the three recently approved mergers followed the statutory route set out within section 15 of the Cities and Devolution Act 2016. However, it is important to note that according to current legislation this route is only available for a pilot period up to 31st March 2019, meaning that any authorities intending to use this route have very limited time available.

Consider whether an advisory referendum is required

If mergers are undertaken according to the statutory route set out under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 then an advisory referendum is a required part of the process. Referenda are not required under the “fast track” legislative route offered by the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016. Districts are of course free to undertake a referendum under any circumstances.

Referenda were not undertaken for the three recently approved mergers on the basis that elected representatives acted as decision-makers on behalf of the local electorate. Other areas considering mergers may wish to consider whether or not a referendum is required in their areas.

For further information on the legal steps required to instigate a merger, see accompanying guide by Trowers & Hamlin LLP at: www.trowers.com/dncollaborate



Key questions – is a merger appropriate for your local partnership?

- Are you satisfied that your proposals would meet the key evidential tests of improving services, value for money, resilience and leadership of place?
- Do you feel that the public would support a change of structures locally, and are wider local partnerships and politicians, including members of parliament, supportive of the issue?
- Do you have a well-established local partnership with an adjoining district?
- Do you have shared management and extensive shared services that prepare the ground for a merger?
- Do you feel that there is limited scope to derive further operational and strategic benefits from non-structural collaboration with your partners?



Unitary reorganisation

Jake Berry MP:

“I want to make it absolutely clear that the Government do not want to get in to a top-down reorganisation of local government. We want proposals from district councils—in fact, from any councils—for mergers to be locally led and to have local support.”

Commons debate on district council collaboration and devolution in England, November 2017⁷⁷

Changes to local governance structures, such as mergers between districts or unitary reorganisation, are for local leaders to propose, based on the needs and preferences of communities, and for the Secretary of State to approve. Although the devolution framework may provide further clarity on process and opportunities, central government has been clear that this will remain a “bottom-up” process based on proposals put forward by local partnerships, albeit with a “top-down” decision from the Secretary of State as part of the process.

Equally, whilst unitary reorganisation may be an option to be considered in certain localities, this will not be the case in all areas as no two places have the same local context, geography, strengths and challenges. Central government has been clear and consistent that proposals for reorganisation must be backed by a high degree of consensus across the organisations affected, as well as supported by other local institutions and the public. By virtue of their numbers in any given area and the democratic mandate they exercise on behalf of local residents, district councils are necessarily the gatekeepers to achieving this local consensus.

Leaders in three Shire areas have chosen to put forward unitary proposals for consideration by the Secretary of State, and recent events in Northamptonshire have also led to a debate about unitary reorganisation.

- **Dorset** – in February 2018 the former Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government formally approved “Future Dorset” proposals, which have been endorsed by all Dorset authorities with the exception of Christchurch Borough Council. It is proposed to replace nine existing councils (one county, six districts and two unitary authorities) in Dorset with two new unitary authorities. A new “Conurbation Dorset” unitary authority will replace the existing unitary authorities of Bournemouth and Poole as well as the area of Christchurch Borough Council. A new “Dorset Area” unitary authority will cover the area of the remaining five district councils. The new unitary authorities will be created on 1 April 2019 with new councillors elected on 2 May 2019.
- **Buckinghamshire** – in March 2018 the former Secretary of State confirmed that he was “minded to” approve proposals put forward by Buckinghamshire county council for a single unitary authority to cover the County footprint. The minister’s statement emphasised the need for local consent before his final decision.
- **Northamptonshire** – MHCLG commissioned a Best Value Inspection of Northamptonshire County Council following the decision to issue a Section 114 notice in February 2018. The inspection report⁷⁸, published in March 2018 recommends that “a new start” should be “achieved by the creation of two new Unitary Councils” which would be coterminous with the existing County Council boundary. Following a more “top-down” approach than in other areas, the former Secretary of State subsequently wrote to Councils within Northamptonshire to ask for proposals for reorganisation (see next section) but precluded the creation of a single unitary authority covering the area of Northamptonshire.

77. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-11-15/debates/5B849B80-0C8D-4B03-B7A8-84835A25DCB9/DistrictCouncils>

78. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/690731/Best_Value_Inspection_NCC.pdf



The Secretary of State has made no further decisions at the time of writing, however, a number of other areas are reported to be considering the local case for unitary reorganisation. DCN's "collaboration spectrum" research – undertaken in 2017 – found that just over half of the districts polled expected to be working in a unitary structure within a decade. As explored in previous chapters, the size and agility of district councils means that they are able to cluster and collaborate around functional economic areas, and can therefore form natural building blocks for unitary reorganisation in areas where it is under discussion.

Under some circumstances, where there is a clear evidence-based case for reorganisation, sensible geography and strong alignment of local stakeholders, then unitary reorganisation may offer service improvements and savings. However – as exemplified by Dorset – this set of conditions can be difficult to attain, and only comes about as a result of hard work by local leaders over a sustained period of time.

In other areas, local leaders have invested very significant amounts of time and energy in discussions around devolution and governance without ultimately achieving local consensus or successful proposals.

It is important that local leaders should think carefully around whether unitary models are the answer to local challenges, or whether in the first instance, effort should be invested in building local trust and relationships and strengthening collaboration across existing organisations.



National guidance on unitary reorganisation

The former Secretary of State was clear about the criteria that MHCLG use for evaluation of local proposals for unitary reorganisation. These are as follows:

MHCLG general criteria for assessing unitary proposals

Proposals will:

- improve local government and service delivery
- generate savings
- increase financial resilience
- facilitate a more strategic and holistic approach to planning and housing challenges
- sustain good local services.

Be based on a credible geography.

Command a good deal of local support.





It is important to note that these criteria do not form statutory tests and that the Secretary of State therefore has discretion in how these criteria are used to reach a decision. Local partnerships who are considering unitary proposals should seek clarity on the precise criteria to be used in their case.

In the letter to the chief executives of Northamptonshire⁷⁹ inviting unitary proposals, civil servants provided more detailed guidance to councils in the area. This guidance requires that:

- any new proposed unitary authorities should cover a “credible geography consisting of one or more existing local government areas and having a substantial population that at a minimum is substantially in excess of 300,000”
- proposals should “command a good deal of local support as assessed in the round overall across the whole area of the proposal”. The letter goes on to state that “there should be extensive local consultation about any proposal before it is made, seeking the views by appropriate means of residents, stakeholders and partners including local enterprise partnerships, health bodies, businesses, and other organisations including voluntary organisations ... the means of seeking views may include professionally led

open consultation questionnaires, representative household surveys, surveys of parish and town councils, workshops, telephone interviews with other major stakeholders, and inviting written submissions”.

The guidance for Northamptonshire also emphasises the “need for evidence and analysis to support a proposal and any explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve” and makes specific reference to the “wider context ... around plans for growth ... and the potential for agreement between authorities and the Government to unlock ambitious housing delivery”.

Whilst other areas considering unitary proposals may wish to reflect on the guidance given to Northamptonshire, they should treat it with caution. The intervention by the former Secretary of State in Northamptonshire has been shaped by the financial difficulties experienced by the County Council and the guidance issued by civil servants may reflect this unique context.

79. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/690731/Best_Value_Inspection_NCC.pdf



Case study: Future Dorset proposals

“At a time of fiscal constraint, and as the demand for services such as adult care increases, the best of local government is showing how it can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services as well as driving the economic growth on which the prosperity of places depends, and that is what Dorset councils are doing.”

Marcus Jones MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government as at 1 Dec 2016

The Secretary of State has approved the “Future Dorset” proposals for two new unitary authorities to replace the nine Dorset authorities, along with Bournemouth and Poole. These proposals are currently unique in that they are strongly supported by the majority of organisations affected.

The area covered by the nine Councils consists of two contrasting geographies, with the relatively dense conurbations of Bournemouth and Poole to the East and the remainder consisting predominantly of rural land with a number of market towns, villages and smaller communities. The new proposed unitary authorities align closely to these two geographies, and the population size and area of each of the resulting organisations is consistent with existing metropolitan and non-metropolitan unitary authorities respectively (see graph opposite).

The primary driver for change in Dorset is financial, with reorganisation and transformation as a radical solution to the pressure created by reducing funding and escalating demand for services. The proposals set out estimated reductions in cost to the public purse of £28-66 million per annum to be achieved through reorganisation and one-off costs of £25 to £54 million, depending upon the scale of transformation that is to be delivered.

The approved Future Dorset proposals are the culmination of several years of collaborative work by Dorset authorities, with external support from the Local Government Association and regular meetings between Council leaders and chief executives. A series of proposals for new governance models – including a combined authority and various unitary models – came forward from different parts of the County in late 2015 and early 2016, before a shifting consensus began to emerge around a two-unitary model.

Extensive public consultation covering a range of structural options was undertaken in September and October 2016. This included a public questionnaire with over 12,000 responses, interviews with a range of local businesses,

over 4,000 interviews with randomly selected households, questionnaires completed by 120 parish and town councils and a number of workshops involving place-based stakeholders and partner organisations. The findings from this consultation demonstrated consistent support for the model of reorganisation that was subsequently proposed to the secretary of state by Bournemouth, Poole, Dorset County Council, Weymouth and Portland Borough Councils and North Dorset District Council and West Dorset District Councils in February 2017.

In November 2017 the Secretary of State announced that he was minded to approve these proposals subject to “further steps to secure local consent”. This led to a further process of decision-making by Dorset authorities, leading ultimately to proposals being endorsed by eight of the nine affected councils, Christchurch Borough Council continuing to object on the basis of concerns around harmonisation of council tax, loss of sovereignty and loss of control over key services. Significantly, despite this ongoing objection, proposals were formally approved by the secretary of state in February 2018 and the parliamentary process is well underway. Christchurch Borough Council has made public its intention to continue to challenge the proposals.

Two Joint Committees have now been set up, based around the two new council areas. Every Council in Dorset is represented on the Joint Committees, which will take all the key decisions needed locally to create the new councils until shadow councils and shadow executive boards are created this Summer. Joint Committee meetings are held in public, and minutes and agendas are published online.

If proposals are implemented as agreed then the new councils, when created following elections in May 2019, will be the first new English unitary authorities in a decade. A commitment to explore the creation of a combined authority was included in the Future Dorset proposals, and the Secretary of State has invited local leaders to begin discussions on this topic.



Reflections on population size

MHCLG have not issued formal guidance on population size, but the guidance provided specifically to authorities within Northamptonshire sets out a requirement for any new unitary authorities to have a population “substantially in excess of 300,000”.

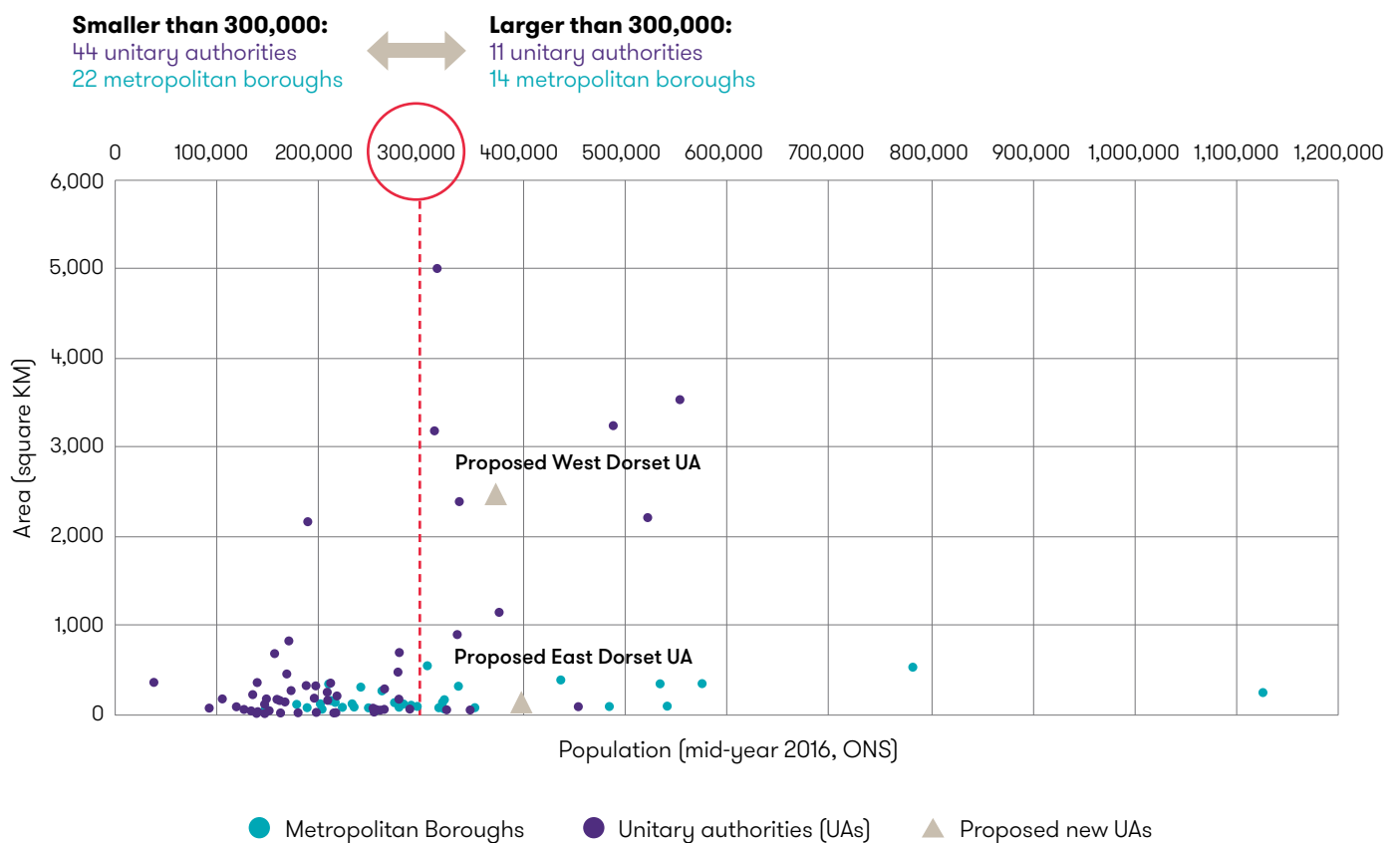
There are 55 unitary authorities in England today excluding metropolitan boroughs and London boroughs. Based on the latest population figures available from the ONS, they range in size from under 40,000 (Rutland) to over 550,000 people with an average population density of 1,700 people per square kilometre. Eighty percent of these authorities currently have a population size under the 300,000 set out in recent guidance.

Metropolitan boroughs, by contrast, range in population size from just under 150,000 to over 1.1 million in Birmingham. They naturally tend to serve smaller and more densely-populated areas, with an average population density of

2,100 people per square kilometre. Just under two thirds of metropolitan unitary authorities currently have a population size under 300,000 people.

Taking an international perspective, a report published in 2016 by the OECD⁸⁰ analysed the structure of municipalities within its 85 member countries including the UK, and found that the average unweighted population size for municipalities in all countries was approximately 56,000 people. Great Britain, with an average population size of approximately 160,000, is the eighth-highest in the group.

The institutions of local government vary greatly between countries, especially in terms of their structures and the levels of legal and fiscal autonomy exercised by municipalities. Due to this wide variation, international comparisons must be treated with caution, but it is notable that the UK already has some of the largest municipalities in the world.



80. <https://www.oecd.org/regional/regional-policy/Subnational-Governments-Around-the-World-%20Part-I.pdf>



Support, consent and unitary proposals

Local context and support will shape the footprint of successful unitary proposals

Central government officials have continued to emphasise that proposals for unitary reorganisation must be locally led, and will not be imposed top-down. The decisions and interventions made by the previous Secretary of State indicate that population size aside, there is no fixed view within the civil service on the shape that new unitary authorities should take in relation to existing district and county council boundaries.

For proposals to be taken seriously by civil servants, a robust evidence base that responds directly to all of the given evaluation criteria is clearly essential.

However, many of our interviewees felt that the demonstrable support of the public, other local institutions and in particular members of parliament was the decisive factor in shaping the footprint of proposed new unitary authorities and gaining traction within the civil service.

Civil servants have recently given Northamptonshire councils clear advice on the types of evidence that should be used to demonstrate public support for unitary proposals, as listed earlier in this chapter. This evidence base will take time and effort to accrue and must be collected with care.

Other areas that may be considering unitary proposals must take this process seriously and begin to engage the public and other local stakeholders to gauge their views and support at the outset.

Consensus across the organisations affected is crucial and Districts have a pivotal role in achieving it

It is clearly the case that there are more district councils than county councils in a given non-metropolitan area. District councils therefore have a pivotal role both in developing proposals and achieving the consensus that central government recognises must underpin them.

In public and in private, civil servants have been very clear that they will not act as referees in local disputes about structures. This is borne out in current discussions:

- After two years of intensive negotiation and consultation, the Future Dorset proposals were ultimately endorsed by eight of the nine authorities affected
- Although the former Secretary of State said he was “minded to” approve proposals for a county-wide unitary authority in Buckinghamshire, his statement was clear that local consent must be achieved before full approval will be provided
- Councils in Northamptonshire have been invited to submit proposals for unitary reorganisation that “take into account” the findings of the Best Value Review of Northamptonshire County Council. The accompanying guidance is clear that proposals must be locally-led and command a “good deal of local support”
- Unitary proposals from other areas, which do not have the full support of the organisations affected, have not progressed

From these examples, it is clear that consensus amongst the local authorities affected is central to the success of unitary proposals.

The Cities and Devolution Act 2016 gives the Secretary of State the power to make “fast track” decisions around local government reorganisation. Unless the legislation is amended, this power ceases at the end of March 2019, after which point the legislative route for local government reorganisation will revert to the pre-existing procedures under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

During this period, the Secretary of State may continue to exercise discretion over what he considers to be sufficient local consensus in support of reorganisation proposals. As illustrated by events in Dorset, local consent did not need to be total in the eyes of the previous secretary of state. Other areas considering unitary models should reflect on what level of consent will be seen as sufficient in their area by the new Secretary of State, and how best to achieve it through positive collaboration at the outset.



As a final perspective on the issue of local government reorganisation, we offer a case study from elsewhere in Europe.



Case study:

Local government reorganisation in Denmark

In 2007 the Danes completed their second Local Government restructure in 40 years. The 2007 Local Government reform in Denmark saw the country move from 271 municipalities and 14 counties, to 98 municipalities and five new regions. The most visible outcome of the reform was the complete re-drawing of the local government map; however, both the responsibilities and funding frameworks for local government were also completely redesigned.

The reform was driven by the desire to create a simple and efficient public sector with clear lines of responsibility, delivering better public services. Additionally there was an intention to achieve professional sustainability and stronger local democracy.

The change in the municipalities was achieved through a controlled voluntary process. This meant forcing municipalities to merge until they reached a minimum size of 20,000 inhabitants, but left them freedom to negotiate with their neighbours to create the new boundaries. This created 65 new merged municipalities and left 33 original municipalities and resulted in a decrease of directly elected politicians with the numbers moving from 4597 to 2520.

The 14 counties were completely abolished and replaced with five new regions. The population of these regions was an average of 1.6 million, a significant change from an average population of 0.6m across the old counties. The number of directly elected politicians decreased from 357 to 205 for each area.

This reform left the regions primarily responsible for hospital services and the family doctor system, regional development plans and tasks related to specialised education and social institutions. This was the most dramatic change from the previous arrangement where counties carried out all education and health services, labour market policy, local economic policy, and physical and environmental planning.

The municipalities are now responsible for social care, primary schools, preventative health care, physical planning, environmental protection, public transport and roads, and employment. This meant that the municipalities became citizens' main access point to the public sector and only left taxation and education (except primary schools) as direct responsibilities of the State.

The main changes that resulted from the reform of local government funding were a new equalization system and block grant distribution scheme between local authorities, and a move from 3 layers of tax collectors to 2.

Logistically, revenue and staff were redistributed between tiers of government according to changes in task distribution. Most jobs remained unchanged, even though for 455,000 employees their employer changed. 30,000 employees relocated physically.

The reform project faced initial obstacles and difficulties including resistance from mayors and politicians in small municipalities, political disagreements on tax collection arrangements and task distribution, and reluctance from experts in social and environmental protection fields to decentralise more competence to the municipalities.

Despite these challenges, the reform was made possible due to support from the majority of citizens, dynamic public debate, and the constant speed of the project creating its own momentum.

Denmark had a change in Government in 2011 and an evaluation of the Local Government Reform was undertaken during 2012-13. The aim of the evaluation was to establish whether the public sector was up to date, efficient and delivering quality services and whether the distribution of tasks was clear-cut and appropriate. The evaluation committee consisted of civil servants from various Ministries and there were four sector specific sub-committees created (health care, social services, environmental protection and regional development).

The conclusion of the evaluation was that the allocation of tasks was functioning well and that professional sustainability of the municipalities and regions had increased as a result of the reform. There was an increase in administration costs in unchanged municipalities and a decrease in merged municipalities, and an increase in productivity in hospitals.

As a result of the evaluation the government agreed to more regulation around patient movement in the healthcare sector, more national coordination of the specialised social services and specialised educational services, small adjustments in the allocation of tasks in the environments sector, adjustment of regional development strategies and more competencies allocated to regional councils.

The key learning from the project was that despite the reform, democracy is still alive, with local election voter turnout in the high 60-70%, and that structural reform can open the door to new potential and opportunities. However, structural reform is not sufficient in itself to implement goals regarding quality and efficiency and strong political and executive leadership remain key.



Working with town and parish councils

There are around 10,000 Town, Parish, Neighbourhood and Community Councils in England served with over 80,000 local councillors. These local councils are statutory bodies with collective expenditure of over £1 billion, the ability to raise local precepts and a range of statutory and discretionary responsibilities. They are a widely diverse group of organisations, serving an average population size of 2,700 people although Shrewsbury Town Council serves a population of 72,000. Their annual expenditure ranges from under £1,000 to £4 million.

Local councils can provide a range of services such as maintenance of public spaces, traffic management, community safety, street lighting, management of allotments and rights of way and neighbourhood planning. They also have an

important role in representing their local communities and are required to produce a community strategy identifying a vision and priorities for their area.

Local councils are useful collaborative partners for district councils in exercising their shared place-shaping role, and also in sharing knowledge about issues and priorities within individual communities. Where appropriate, they should also be a stakeholder in conversations around devolution and public sector reform. Changes in the law under the Localism Act of 2009 enable local councils to exercise a broader range of powers and responsibilities in representing their communities, and devolution from county and district councils to local councils can therefore form a part of discussions around transformation within localities.



Guidance from the Local Government Association

The Local Government Association has recently published a comprehensive guide to ward councillors on working with Town and Parish Councils⁸¹ including a range of practical tips and case studies on improving local collaboration. They have also published a more detailed guide to councillors on Neighbourhood Planning with town and parish councils⁸².



National Association of Local Councils

The National Association of Local Councils⁸³ has published a wide range of policy documents and resources to support their members and make the case for empowerment of local councils through devolution and collaboration with principal authorities and national government.



Key learning points

Local councils are key partners for place-shaping and community resilience

Local councils are useful collaborative partners for district councils in exercising their shared place-shaping role, and also in sharing knowledge about issues and priorities within individual communities.

Local councils are important stakeholders within transformation proposals

As well as being one of many important stakeholders to be consulted on transformation proposals, local councils can also be part of the transformation themselves.

Changes in the law under the Localism Act of 2009 enable local councils to exercise a broader range of powers and responsibilities in representing their communities. Districts should engage their local councils early in the process of developing proposals for devolution or reform in their localities.

Local councils can also work together in clusters where geography permits

As the guidance from the LGA and NALC recognises, local councils often work together in specific areas or clusters to share resources and increase their strategic influence within localities. Districts should recognise and work with these clusters, or else support local councils to form them.

81. https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/11.108%20A%20Councillor%27s%20Workbook%20on%20Working%20with%20town%20and%20parish%20councils_v03WEB.pdf

82. <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/neighbourhood-planning-si-6bc.pdf>

83. <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/>



Case study:

Devolution to parish and town councils: Wyre Forest District Council

For many years, Wyre Forest District Council has sought to sustain local assets and service by working with parish and town councils.

In 2014, the District Council transferred the Civic Centre and Civic Hall in Stourport-on-Severn to the Town Council with a dowry of £450,000 to enable refurbishment works. The Civic Centre has been transformed into a new location for the town's library and the Worcestershire Coroner's service, as well as improved offices for the Town Council and business units. "The Civic" is now run as a successful events venue by an enthusiastic local group of volunteers.

The District Council set up Kidderminster Town Council in 2015 following a Community Governance Review. Four out of every five people voted in favour of the new local council in a local advisory poll. The Town Council is one of England's largest local councils, serving a population of about 55,000.

Prior to Kidderminster Town Council's creation, there was consultation about what assets the Town Council would take on as part of the reorganisation order, with local civic statues and toilets among those chosen. The biggest asset transferred was the freehold of the Victorian Town Hall. Wyre Forest leased back the "events and entertainment" side of the facility and space for its customer services team, ensuring that services would run seamlessly. The Town Council contributes approximately 30%

of the costs and the District Council continues to be responsible for the management and maintenance of the Town Hall under a financial formula agreed between the two councils. Subsequently, the Town Council has negotiated transfer of responsibility for a paddling pool which would otherwise have been closed.

The Town Council now has ambitions to run the Town Hall independently and promote its commercial and community uses. The Town Council has directly employed a project officer who is responsible for looking into commercial ways in which the Town Hall can be further developed as a vibrant community asset.

The District Council has entered agreements with several parish and town councils under which it funds them to deliver local services such as litter bin emptying, litter picking and grass cutting. This enables the work to be done effectively but at lower cost to the District Council, and with more responsiveness to local people. Parish councils can enhance service levels if they wish from their own resources. The District Council helps promote further local initiatives by operating a localism fund worth £50,000 in 2018-19: applications for grants can be made by parish councils and other community groups.

Interviewee list

Stephen Baker, Chief Executive –
Suffolk Coastal and Waveney
District Councils

David McIntosh, Chief Executive –
Christchurch Borough Council and East
Dorset District Council (Partnership)

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive –
Cherwell and South Northamptonshire
District Councils

David Hughes, Chief Executive –
Gravesham Borough Council

Sandra Dinneen, Chief Executive –
South Norfolk District Council

Mark Stone, Chief Executive –
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White
Horse District Councils

Sophie Hosking, Chief Executive –
South Hams District Council and West
Devon Borough Council

Adrian Pritchard, Chief Executive –
Colchester Borough Council

Paul Shevlin, Chief Executive –
Craven District Council

Janet Waggott, Chief Executive –
Selby District Council and Assistant
Chief Executive – North Yorkshire
County Council

John Taylor, Assistant Director
(Transformation) – Huntingdonshire
District Council

Greg Pearson, Corporate Improvement
and Performance Manager – Breckland
and South Holland District Councils

Jonathan Stephenson, Strategic
Director – Babergh and Mid Suffolk
District Councils

Simon Christian, Policy team leader –
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

Cllr Clive Sanders, Leader of the
Council – Basingstoke and Deane
Borough Council

Jon McGinty, Managing director
(MD) for Gloucester City Council
and Commissioning Director for
Gloucestershire County Council

Lesley Bowles, Chief Officer
Communities & Business –
Sevenoaks District Council

Cllr Michelle Lowe, Deputy Leader
and Portfolio Holder for Housing and
Health – Sevenoaks District Council

Warren Ralls, Director – LEP Network

Ian Fytche, Chief Executive –
North Kesteven District Council

Stuart Davy, Chief Executive –
East Lindsey District Council

Ian Miller, Chief Executive – Wyre Forest
District Council

Quin Quinney, Community Services
Group Manager – Blaby District Council

Teresa Neal, Service Manager Lightbulb
– Blaby District Council

Sharon Stacey, Director (Community
Services) – Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

Professor Colin Copus, Professor of
Local Politics – De Montford University

Majeed Neky, Policy lead: devolution
strategy – Ministry of Housing,
Communities and Local Government

Reference Group of District Council Chief Executives:

Louise Round, Chief Executive –
Tandridge District Council

Allen Graham, Chief Executive –
Rushcliffe Borough Council

Stuart Brown, Chief Executive –
Mendip District Council

Andy O'Brien, Chief Executive –
East Staffordshire Borough Council

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive –
Cherwell and South Northamptonshire
District Councils

Lawrence Conway, Chief Executive –
South Lakeland District Council

Daryl Phillips, Chief Executive –
Hart District Council

Sandra Dinneen, Chief Executive –
South Norfolk District Council

Paul Shevlin, Chief Executive –
Craven District Council

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[districtcouncils.info](https://www.districtcouncils.info)

The District Councils' Network (DCN) is a cross-party member led network of 200 district councils. We are a Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association (LGA), and provide a single voice for district councils within the Local Government Association.

District councils in England deliver 86 out of 137 essential local government services to over 22 million people – 40% of the population – and cover 68% of the country by area.

District councils have a proven track record of building better lives and stronger economies in the areas that they serve. Districts protect and enhance quality of life by safeguarding our environment, promoting public health and leisure, whilst creating attractive places to live, raise families and build a stronger economy. By tackling homelessness and promoting wellbeing, district councils ensure no one gets left behind by addressing the complex needs of today whilst attempting to prevent the social problems of tomorrow