



Leading the place beyond 2015

Councils are working hard to be leaders of place for their communities and, as **Adam Fineberg** explains, recalibrating their existing practices in a bid to achieve both better efficiencies and greater public engagement

Local authorities have each commissioned several transformation programmes over the last few years addressing a range of their activities and those of their public service-providing partners in the place.

Key over-riding issues are to achieve 'efficiency savings', by promoting culture and behaviour change in those providing and using services.

There is, in some cases, a new corporate plan, which has emanated from mapping activities based on a zero-based budgeting exercise.

There is probably, a new corporate structure in place to drive changes through the organisation.

There is also a different approach to delivering services – on a geographically tiered basis, with variations also considering a strengthened power balance for 'community capital' as opposed to traditional public service provision. Then there is an attempt to build resilience in local people and communities, addressing the prevention and early intervention agendas. Finally, there is the ongoing recognition of the role of elected members in leading their particular place.

Among authorities there is a wish to ensure that there is a good concept, policy, structures, governance and outcomes/impact-based efficient practice and terminology to suit such local work.

Furthermore, there is a sense that councils wish to become the leader of place, not a process or organisation, and this requires the development of the relationship that they have with citizens and those citizens' appreciation of their experience of the council's role and its provision of services.

A perception is that that there is a need to 'recalibrate' things. It is about reviewing existing practice around localised engagement and service provision and, in some cases, building local leadership to promote and lead on the design and provision of 'people-powered' locally integrated services.

It is envisaged that this will change the nature and role of the council as a whole to be in a better shape, more effective and with greater impact, making it a better fit for the purpose in the future.

In a recent speech on public sector reform, Labour leader Ed Miliband spoke about creating a new public service culture based on individuals working together with practitioners.

He talked about residents solving their own crises, improving public services, and the power of linking people with peers in similar situations through social networks. He argued that decisions should be made by users and providers together.

Many councils wish to embark on the process of creating a new relationship between users and providers based on a 'resilience' model of public services. Often the council is not maximising its relationships with its partners to this end.

Within the council, authorities are often still too inhibited by a silo-based approach to service delivery and do not make the links across services in ways that would engage local people to promote their resilience and lead to more integrated, cost-effective service delivery with enhanced outcomes.

In order to continue to achieve further efficiencies and drive public sector reform beyond 2015, councils need to build on the successes many of them have achieved.

They need to build upon the collective work of the many individual and often silo-ed reviews and transformation programmes.

Local authorities can establish a corporate identity with citizens, enabling them to see their council as a leader of place and facilitator of citizen resilience and service provision, where there remains a need.

The creation of a five-year corporate development programme will ensure that the council is 'fit for purpose' in driving through these changes and taking on its new function and role. ▶

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How do authorities go about cutting costs and improving services for troubled families? **Judith Armitt** describes how Manchester City Council is achieving its goals

The issue of so-called 'troubled families', who place an ever-growing and disproportionate pressure on public services, is never far from the news these days.

With continual strain placed on budgets, there is a vital need for service providers to transform how their services are delivered. Ultimately, it falls to local authorities to provide the community leadership to navigate this complex issue and to come up with real solutions.

Manchester City Council provides an outstanding example of how to address the issue head-on. It has identified and gained support for potential reconfigured and integrated services for troubled families, forecasting savings of approximately £45m to the public sector over the next 10 years.

With around 8,090 troubled families across the city costing an estimated £75,000 a year each, these families have multiple needs and will be involved with a range of the city's public services at any one time.

To address the issue, the council recognised that it first needed to understand the cost as well as the

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value of the services and then identify how demand and dependency could be reduced.

This is a simple notion on paper but the reality is complex, and this is where Local Partnerships stepped in to provide support.

We worked with key partners across the city, including the Police, the National Probation Service, the Department for Work and Pensions, Manchester College, registered housing providers and schools to develop a uniform approach to help the council evaluate and quantify new service delivery models.

This comprised a suite of tools to deliver a consistent approach to commercial appraisal, negotiation and investment, when considering new ways of working with these families.

Local Partnerships supported the development of resource agreements for how key partners will benefit from the new delivery models in terms of financial, resource or in-kind contributions.

The agreements set key metrics that will reflect each partner's priorities and budgets and monitor impact through cost-benefit analysis and evaluation.

A range of alternative funding options were proposed for development and investment finance to support new forms of risk and return across the spectrum of providers, including the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.