



Meeting #11

London | 7 October 2026

**“If you do what you’ve
always done, you’ll get
what you’ve always got.”**

Henry Ford

**Welcome to the session
exploring the opportunities for
the sector in the recent policy
paper - Rewiring the State**

Rewiring the state...

- Published on 31st July by the Cabinet Office
- Lays out some of the initial thinking around devolution
 - All parts of England to have MSA by 2028
 - ‘devolve by default’ principle
 - Public service devolution – transport/housing/economic development and innovation
 - Fiscal devolution- including shared local income tax/business rates/ visitor levies
 - Civil service and administration interchange- including seconding civil servants to combined authorities
 - Democratic and strategic accountability for local leaders and Mayors
 - Arms length bodies

Background to the thinking of the paper...

- Comes from thinking by Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham in their work '[Head North](#)' (2024)
- Part of a much larger plan for a revised politics that may well include:
 - **A new constitution** - protect local government's role and codify Whitehall's duty to ensure every council has enough funding for its statutory functions.
 - **Full devolution** – local leaders have full power over core domestic policy
 - **Basic law on fair funding** – critique of the Green Book
 - **Parliamentary reform**- including abolishment of the Lords and revised second chamber/ PR/ removal of the Whip
- Informed by a German style approach to federal government...

What might that mean for the sector?

Rewiring the State –

Challenges and opportunities for our world

The following slides articulate the comments and discussions (grouped under themes, not the order they were discussed)

Rewiring the State?

- Are we at a new starting point?
- Time to stop and see what's working and not working and back what's working.
- Will it mean we can avoid some of the short terminism generated by the politics?
- Long term change through short term steppingstones.
- Where would the sector sit in the new strategic structures?
- If it's all about devolution, why are we centralising social care?

Rewiring the sector

- Need to focus on better collaboration to improve services.
- Need to start bottom up with communities' not top down.
- The health system doesn't work but the NHS have all the money.
- In terms of inactivity the dial has not turned enough despite the huge investment. We need a different funding model.
- People's lives have become harder so holding the current position on activity is a good result.
- We don't need permission to do good things.
- Focus on what we can influence not what we can't.
- Need to be more practical.
- Lead better.

Data and evidence...

- We have the data but we are not influencing the right people.
- Strategic influencing and local delivery both underpinned by good data and evidence.
- Is all our data helpful?
- Different data needed for different purposes.
- Often a waste of time and money collecting all the data.
- Data collection can itself become a barrier. Governance has become an impossible straight-jacket.
- The case (for being active) has been made.
- In Wales the politicians are investing in sport and activity without data.
- Changes in behavior needs to be more measurable.

Funding & Leadership

- Need to be more honest with ourselves.
- Are we truly engaging communities & transferring power?
- Where is the power now - can we make a start now to change it?
- Where does the money currently land? We are diluting the available pound? Funding needs rewiring.
- Enough money in the system but is it getting to the right place? Disproportionate allocation between the scaffold and direct delivery to people who need it.
- What are we buying with our pound? Need to be clearer between funding activity and reducing inactivity. (New jobs V job transfer example).
- What's the proportion in funds between maintain activity and expansion of activity?
- What can we influence then what should we fund?
- Change happens when political and professional leadership align. It should now be the alignment of the political, professional & community leadership.
- We need to get better at influencing local political leaders.
- Need better leadership development.
- Language can be a barrier.
- Combined budgets + political leadership = positive change.
- We are the system -so we need to take responsibility to change. Lead with humility.
- We need to hold the sector together through the changes.

Final Reflections

- We are dealing with complexity.
- It's hard when there are divergent views. Diversity of experience helps create the complexity.
- We are in a good place - and not going to hide away from the change.
- The centralising model of government is broken. The solution lies in local places.
- We have made it too complicated; we need to simplify it.
- If we do nothing it will get worse. We need to get on with it.

Discussions

- **Strategy and delivery-** we are halfway through the 10 year delivery of uniting the movement strategy; how might it be re-energised and refocused for the second half in the context of the plans for rewiring the state
- **System and leadership-** what are the issues for local system development and building leadership capacity if we are to make the most of a rewired state, linked to place and devolution
- **Connection and integration-** what are the challenges and opportunities for partnership connection and system integration for the wider sector in the context of rewiring the state?

In light of our discussions this morning, **what** are some of the things we want the sector to **do differently** and **how** should we **start?**

Strategy and delivery...

Feedback-

- Rowdy and rich; passionate
- Wide ranging conversations. Started talking about the need for agility if we are going to change. Keep principles of UTM; discussion about connection and the importance of that
- What does it mean to be a good system partner- having honesty and clarity and doing fewer things well- being clear about who to work with; listening, learning and adapting; importance of insight, codesign, what's already known, clarity and building resilience into the good stuff
- Focus on 'what works to reduce inactivity and what is our role in being the change we want to see... are we clear what that change is?
- How will we know when we have achieved what we want to?

System and Leadership...

Feedback

■ Cracked it

- Challenges within LA and being too busy to think about the work. Means that impacts on training etc; all working in slightly different contexts and that doesn't help learning; too much happening in isolation and the impact of that silo approach on leadership; risk around sector and organisational knowledge leaving
- Rooting things in community voice and involving the political perspectives; real in person voices and the challenge of AI. Rewiring the state is an opportunity for tackling this.
- NGBs and a curve ball around money to the end user; devolution won't necessarily do it either- we know we have a system we want to change though. Resource constraints etc lead to a culture of risk avoidance- need to factor in the risk of inaction too... easier to be quiet
- Actions:
 - critical review of who is and isn't accessing services;
 - strengthen leadership around who isn't accessing them and better co design;
 - strengthen roles and responsibilities;
 - focus on action and inaction;
 - learn from other places;
 - Bridging the gap from inactivity to activity
 - Work together better and be clear what we each focusing on to optimise outcomes

Connection and integration...

Feedback

- **Opportunity**
- Talked about recognising it is a wide system we need to connect with across a range of human experience. How do we align to those- focus on outcomes already in place and how we can add to the delivery of those; cross pollination supporting the wider systems; moved into systems change- structurally/ relationally/ challenges and opportunities around that- loss of knowledge but also opportunity for regeneration; anchor organisations within a system plus main players- need to welcome community voice- react and interact with it.
- Do we need to develop to support the change in the national narrative around an outcomes framework- connections around a community centered model for interacting with the system. Relationships/ systems – trust is key to connections - allow the system to flex for the organisations that can deliver to do that.
- Discussion around workforce- need the right personnel to work in these different ways. Truly embedding a place-based approach- workforce needs to do active listening and relating differently. Talked about exit pathways for programmes and embedding behavioural change. Exit points- ensuring that the system enables more flexibility.

Permission to act...

What will we do?

What can you do?

Who else do we need to involve?



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