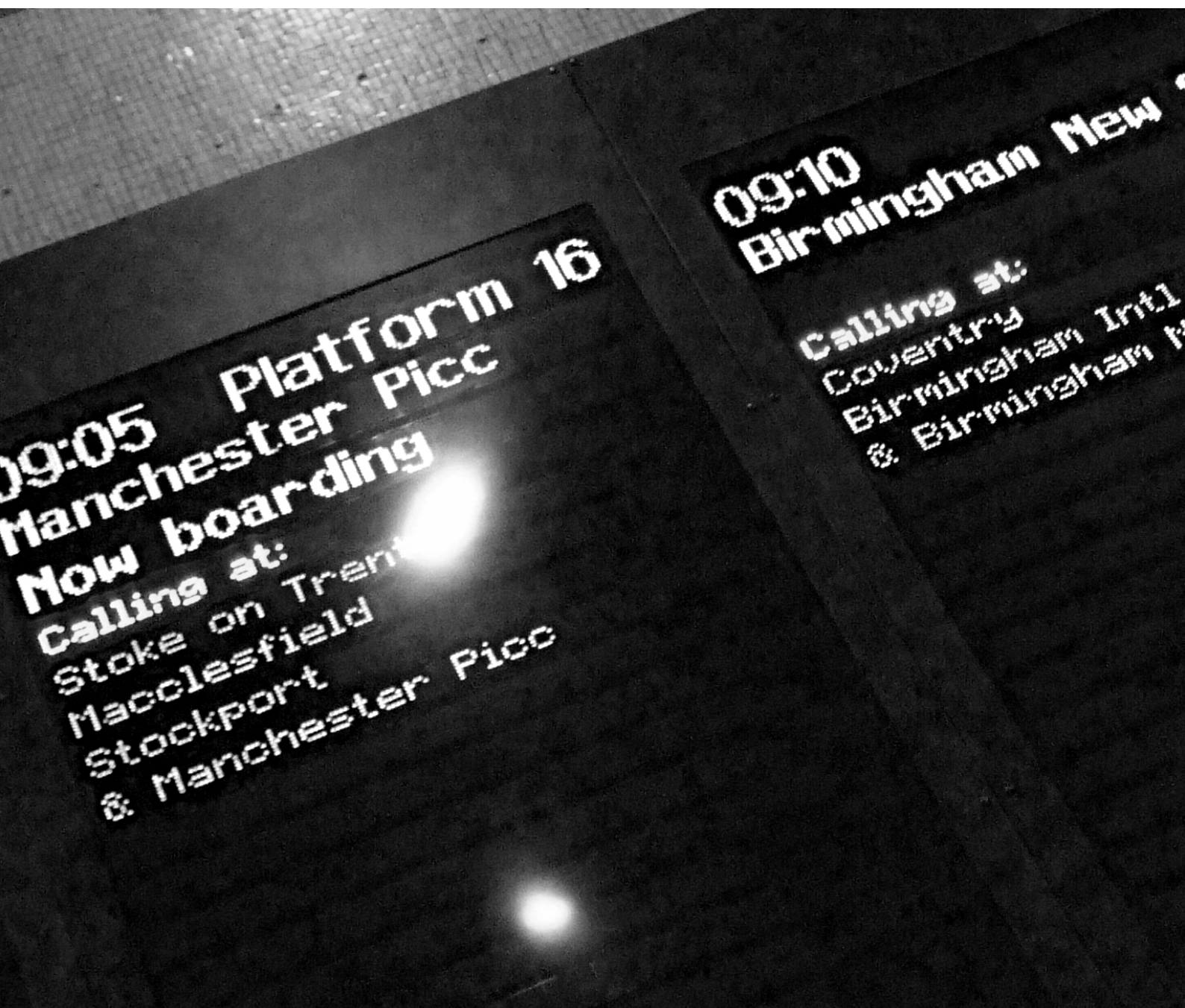


Opportunity knocks

A briefing on devolution and multiple needs in England
August 2016



The Making Every Adult Matter coalition

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) is a coalition of Clinks, Homeless Link and Mind, formed in 2009 to improve policy and services for people facing multiple needs. Together the charities represent over 1,300 frontline organisations and have an interest in the criminal justice, substance misuse, homelessness and mental health sectors.

The Making Every Adult Matter coalition currently supports 27 local areas across England to improve the support they provide to people experiencing multiple needs. This includes fifteen areas that are using the MEAM Approach, a non-prescriptive framework for developing a coordinated approach to multiple needs, and 12 local partnerships involved in the Fulfilling Lives programme, supported by a £112 million investment from the Big Lottery Fund. In all the areas we support, voluntary sector and statutory agencies work together to ensure that flexible, co-ordinated services prevent people falling between the gaps.

About this paper

This briefing is for people who want to know more about devolution and what it means for individuals experiencing multiple needs, and the voluntary and statutory services that work with them. It is relevant to the work of local authority and combined authority commissioners, voluntary sector providers, and national policymakers.

It explores some of the opportunities that devolution may bring for local areas to better support people with multiple needs, who experience overlapping issues with homelessness, substance misuse, mental ill health and contact with the Criminal Justice System. In the briefing we will:

- introduce the idea of devolution and how it is developing in England,
- explain why it is relevant to people experiencing multiple needs,
- explore experiences of devolution in local areas so far, and
- suggest how devolution can be useful tool (although not a prerequisite) for joining up local services to better support people with multiple needs.

Acknowledgements

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Lankelly Chase

What is devolution?

Devolution is the transfer of power from one authority to another. In September 2015, in a speech entitled 'My vision for a smarter state', David Cameron said:

“This government will sign a new set of devolution deals, giving the opportunity for every part of our country – and everyone in it – to drive a better future for themselves and their neighbours.”¹

This marked the beginning of a new phase in a long campaign – led by some of England’s most influential cities – to devolve greater power from Westminster to local areas. During late 2015 and early 2016, a range of deals were announced, with central government departments granting various spending and decision-making powers to local areas. England’s largest cities have sought devolution for many years, but constraints on spending have provided a catalyst: as local authorities have been asked to deliver more for less, they have argued in return for a greater say in deciding local priorities.

The devolution agenda in England was driven to a great extent by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, and his departure from office in July 2016 leaves its future less certain. However, the issue of greater power for local areas has risen to such prominence that it is likely to remain on the agenda. Theresa May has appointed Andrew Percy MP as Minister for the Northern Powerhouse and kept Lord Jim O’Neill (a prominent advocate of devolution) in place as Commercial Secretary to the Treasury, signalling continuity with the previous administration.



Manchester Town Hall. Greater Manchester has led the devolution agenda in England, and has recently secured new powers over the health, care and criminal justice systems.

Where is devolution happening?

In the current round of devolution agreements, twelve deals have been announced, following an open application process. The negotiations have been described as a ‘menu with specials’²: there are a number of options that have been made available to all areas, such as having a greater role in designing future back-to-work support, but each deal can also include unique elements.

Most of the deals cover urban and suburban areas, and many involve the creation of ‘combined authorities’ which bring together existing councils in a locality, usually with the requirement that a new Mayor is elected to provide democratic representation.

Devolved authority	Date of deal	New powers that could have an impact on people with multiple needs
Cornwall Council and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership	July 2015	Integration of health and social care services
East Anglia Combined Authority	March 2016	Co-designing future employment support with the Department of Work and Pensions, for instance successors to the Work Programme and Work Choice
Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority	March 2016	Co-designing future employment support
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	November 2014, expanded July 2015	£6bn devolved health and social care budget; some criminal justice powers
Liverpool City Region	November 2015, expanded March 2016	Co-designing future employment support
London Clinical Commissioning Groups, Local Authorities and the Greater London Authority	December 2015	Integration of health and care budgets
North East Combined Authority	October 2015	Service transformation fund to support individuals and families with complex needs
Sheffield City Region	December 2014, expanded October 2015	Co-designing future employment support
Tees Valley Combined Authority	October 2015	Co-designing future employment support
West of England Combined Authority	March 2016	Co-designing future employment support
West Midlands Combined Authority	November 2015	Co-design and implement approaches to improving the life chances of troubled individuals
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	March 2015	Not published in full

Source: Local Government Association

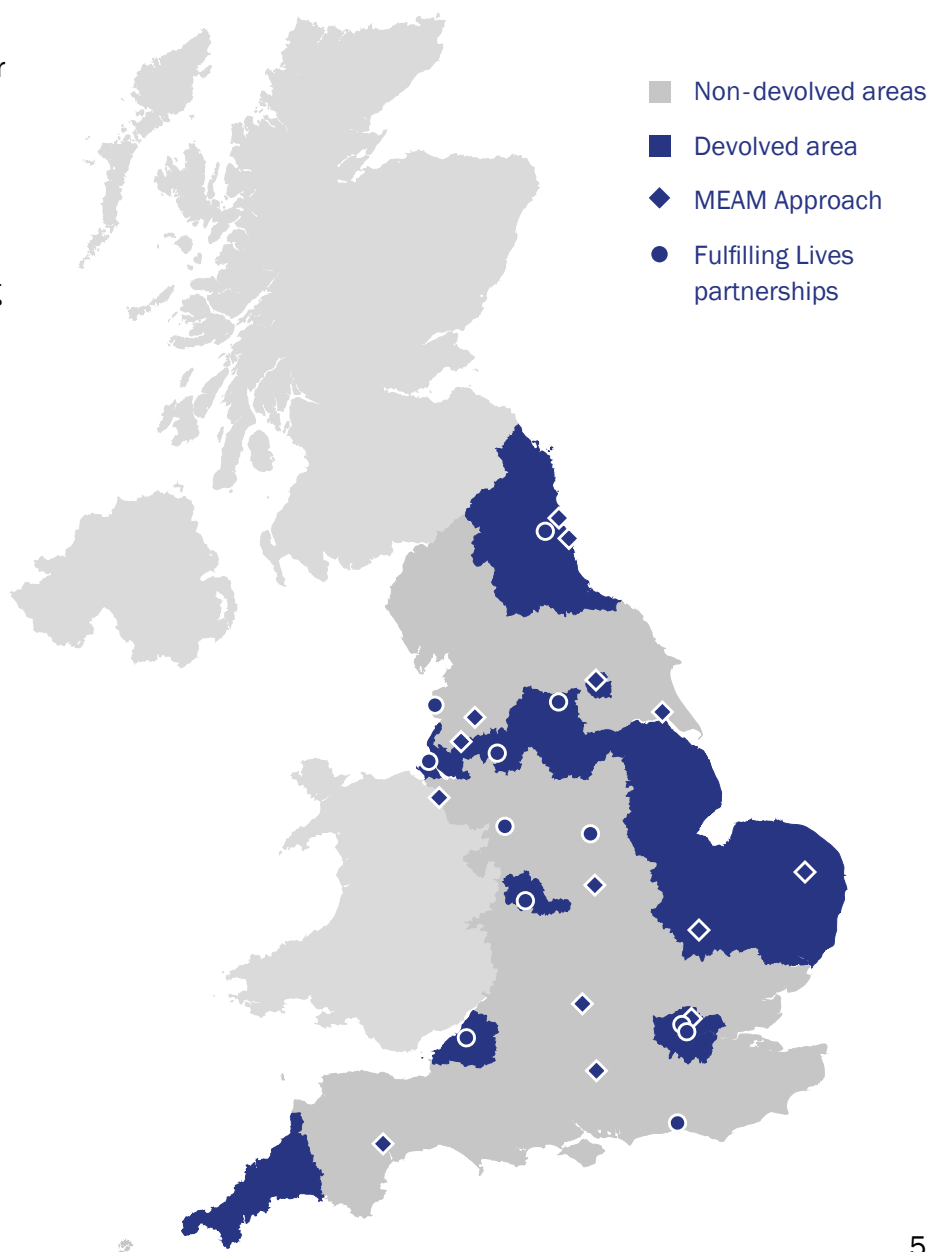
Connected to this are future plans for local authorities to keep more money raised through local taxation (for example retaining receipts from business rates, by 2020). The planned devolution of business rates will provide all local areas – not just those that have agreed a deal – greater scope to make decisions about spending on public services. Alongside this, there are other developments that encourage more local decision-making. For instance, every health and care system in the country is now required to develop a Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) to demonstrate how it will achieve the objectives set out in the NHS Five Year Forward View.

There are also many areas that are making creative use of powers they already have over budgets and policy decisions. This includes the use of ‘informal’ devolution that involves transferring responsibilities or pooling budgets within an area. Existing structures such as Police and Crime Commissioners and Health and Wellbeing Boards can play a key role in this, and MEAM has developed two policy influencing guides that provide advice on how voluntary sector services can engage with local influencers.³

Devolved areas where MEAM is supporting local work

Nearly all of the devolution deals announced so far cover at least one geographical area where we are supporting partnership work to improve local services for people experiencing multiple needs. Some areas are using the MEAM Approach, while others are part of the Big Lottery Fund’s Fulfilling Lives programme.

In the rest of the paper, we explore what devolution means for these partnerships, and other areas doing similar work.



Why is devolution relevant to people experiencing multiple needs?

People experiencing multiple needs live in every local authority in England, and it is estimated that 58,000 people face problems of homelessness, substance misuse and contact with the Criminal Justice System in any one year. Within this group, a majority will have experienced mental health problems. These individuals are often in contact with many local services but do not receive the help they need, at significant cost to themselves, local communities and the public purse.

Our work with local partnerships has demonstrated that this can change if organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors work effectively together, including housing and homelessness agencies, substance misuse treatment providers, mental and physical health services, and criminal justice agencies. Devolution could provide an opportunity for areas to take greater responsibility in designing their approach to multiple needs, and provide new powers that give them greater control over how services are commissioned and funded.

So far, devolution in England has focused largely on issues such as economic development, skills and employment and transport. Of the twelve devolution deals agreed, it is striking that just two – the West Midlands Combined Authority and the North East Combined Authority – explicitly mention multiple needs. The former has committed to “co-design and implement approaches to improving the life chances of troubled individuals”, while the latter will introduce “a service transformation fund to support individuals and families with complex needs”.⁴

Nearly all the deals, though, include some powers that would affect people with multiple needs and the services that work with them. For instance, all of the deals agreed so far include provisions on employment support, committing local areas to work with the Department of Work and Pensions to design better services for the ‘hardest-to-help’. In many cases, this will mean people who are unemployed as a result of their multiple needs.

In May 2017, a range of areas will elect new Mayors – who in some cases will also take on the responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner – making the next year a crucial period to influence the devolution process. As local areas look to implement devolution deals and redesign their approach to public service delivery, there is an opportunity to ensure that more people with multiple needs get the flexible and coordinated support they require. As research by MEAM and others has shown, this has the potential to improve outcomes for individuals and communities, and also to reduce costs.

There is also a risk – as has happened with previous reforms to employment support, housing and healthcare services – that the voices of people experiencing multiple needs will not be heard and their interests not taken into account. It is vital that this doesn’t happen: not just because of the opportunity to improve support for individuals with multiple needs, and the cost savings this can achieve, but because addressing the challenges faced by this group could provide lessons for broader service reform as budgets continue to tighten.



In his contribution to this paper Dr Henry Kippin, executive director of Collaborate, provides a perspective on how multiple needs and devolution fit into the wider landscape of public service reform.

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The opportunity to unlock collaboration through devolution

Too often, the estimated 58,000 people experiencing multiple needs in England receive support that feels fragmented, un-coordinated and, at times, distant from their needs. There is no doubt that some of the solutions to this – pooling budgets, sharing service sovereignty and integrating front line services – could all be accelerated by devolved government. A focus on multiple needs is not only important in its own right, but in creating growth and reform possibilities that treat individuals like ‘whole people’, with assets, agency and something to contribute.

For me, the question therefore is not whether shifting to a more devolved model of public services is a good thing (it is), whether the agenda has risks (it definitely does), or even whether it offers opportunities for this group (it absolutely can). Instead, we need to be looking at areas that have made commitments around multiple needs in their devolution deals (the West Midlands and the North East are great examples) and asking what it will take to turn these commitments into reality and spread them more widely. Three things will be important to keep in mind if devolution is to work for people experiencing multiple needs.

Firstly, an underlying principle of devolution is that economic ‘deal-making’ can lay the groundwork for radically different ways of organising public services. The long term goal is that economic growth and public service reform become mutually reinforcing. More holistic public services provide the ‘social spine’ for future growth, and increased economic activity enables social investment. All of this depends on a changed relationship between Whitehall and localities, and a more co-productive relationship between citizens and state.

Secondly, those monitoring the language of devolution will have noticed the interest in ‘inclusive growth’: the RSA has launched a commission on the topic, and commentators like Neil McInroy and Simon Duffy rightly argue that inclusion should be central to our thinking about how growth and social change happen. This is particularly important in the context of multiple needs, which disproportionately affect deprived communities in the north and on the coast of England.

Collaborative ways of addressing multiple needs can provide a route in to working with those furthest from the labour market, and least likely to gain from the proceeds of growth. It may be true that the best way to reduce welfare spending is for people to be in work, but the way to get them there is surely through holistic support that is sustainable and meaningful, not the centralised, binary and sometimes farcical processes that the government has favoured.

Finally, successful devolution depends on a better relationship between and across the voluntary, statutory and private sectors. It must both be more collaborative (between providers and across the commissioner-provider divide) and more self-critical, asking whether behaviours are really being driven by the need for a different relationship with the citizen.

Our focus at Collaborate is on building what we call 'collaboration readiness': the desire, capability and support mechanisms that help people work together for better public outcomes. Addressing multiple and complex needs requires people to work across silos, blur professional functions and (as Julia Unwin from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation puts it) be ready to 'betray' organisations on behalf of citizens.

It's legitimate to ask what devolution gives local partners that they didn't have before. Whatever the answer (and I suspect culture and behaviour has a lot to do with it!), devolution raises the possibility of making marginal reforms irreversible, and of setting better financial and structural preconditions for change. But this is only the beginning.

What does devolution feel like on the ground?

Local areas that are improving their approach to multiple needs are keen to take advantage of the opportunities that devolution presents, and voluntary sector providers welcome the opportunities provided by a different approach to designing and delivering services. As they seek to do this, their current experiences suggest there are also challenges that must be overcome.

In researching this paper we spoke to delivery organisations in some of the areas where there has been most activity around devolution, and asked about their experiences so far. Five main themes emerged.

Decisions are taken quickly and often without sufficient consultation

The devolution process has taken place at speed, with deals developed and agreed to a demanding timeline driven by central government. This was echoed in a recent report from the Communities and Local Government Committee.⁵ In areas where combined authorities and councils have begun to consult more widely on the implementation of their deals, some voluntary sector organisations have been left with the impression that there is not 'space around the table' for their views to be heard. In cases where there was little feedback on consultation responses, organisations were left unsure if their needs were taken on board.

Frontline services are finding it challenging to engage

Where there are opportunities for agencies providing frontline services to participate, some have struggled to do so. In particular, there was concern that voluntary sector organisations providing ‘crisis’ support do not have the time or the capacity to respond to consultations or attend meetings, and that smaller organisations lack the resources or connections to influence effectively. Unless there is a clear and accessible route for these organisations to engage in the devolution process, there is a concern that their views and contributions will be missed.

The devolution process is not seen as transparent

One provider of services for people with multiple needs in an area with a devolution deal described the decision-making process around how new powers would be designed and used as ‘undemocratic’, reflecting findings from Communities and Local Government Committee.⁶ While elected Mayors will provide a way for people to directly influence devolved authorities, the process of agreeing the deals has not been transparent; one person commented that “no-one really knows what is happening.”

More could be done to link multiple needs to the wider agenda around reducing demand on services

The development of devolution in England has focused primarily on economic issues, and national policy stakeholders we spoke to agreed that this is still the case.⁷ Much of the case for devolution has rested on the idea that making decisions about how to distribute resources locally can reduce demand (and therefore spending) on key public services. There is compelling evidence – including from areas using the MEAM Approach – that improving support for people with multiple needs can reduce demand on criminal justice, police and health budgets. Getting things right for people with multiple needs could therefore be an important litmus test for wider public service reform principles.

There is a lack of input from people with lived experience

Many of the areas we work with are developing a strong role for people with lived experience of multiple needs, drawing on their knowledge and insight to inform better support for others. A service working in an area with a devolution deal told us that at present there are few opportunities for people with lived experience to contribute to the devolution process, both as citizens and through voluntary organisations.

People we spoke to felt that the debate around devolution has raised public awareness of issues around public services and how they are commissioned. There is an opportunity to build on this interest, and make the case for how better support for people with multiple needs can reduce demand on frontline services.

What needs to happen now

The process of devolution in England is still at an early stage, and the coming year will be particularly crucial as we approach the May 2017 elections for Mayors across the country.

Recommendations for areas with existing deals

Based on MEAM's work with local areas, we believe that devolved authorities should ensure people experiencing multiple needs are involved throughout in the design and development of devolution plans. As part of this, a number of steps can be taken:

Recommendation 1

Combined authorities and others involved in negotiating deals need to ensure there is a clear, transparent route for the voluntary sector and the people it supports to engage in the devolution process. Without this, there is a danger that devolution will fail to benefit people experiencing multiple needs.

Recommendation 2

Voluntary sector organisations should take pro-active steps to engage with councils and combined authorities that have secured devolution deals. There is a role for local infrastructure organisations such as councils for voluntary services, as well as the local partnerships MEAM works with, to ensure that staff and experts by experience are able to build effective relationships with statutory partners. MEAM and its national partners will continue to support local areas to develop their influencing skills and capacity.

Recommendations for areas without deals

Many areas that MEAM is working with have achieved significant progress to date without any new powers. Often this has been achieved by pooling money from different statutory and voluntary sector budgets – such as in Basingstoke, where funds were transferred from an upper to a lower-tier authority in order to design a more effective local response.

This 'informal devolution' can take place outside the process that is being led by government – however, practitioners highlighted the importance of having the right people involved, including a range of parties such as police and health services, and cross-party support from councillors. For instance, the experience of areas using the MEAM Approach has been that support at strategic level has been crucial to securing lasting change. Therefore, we suggest that:

Recommendation 3

In areas that do not have a devolution deal, all stakeholders must consider what new powers from central government could help address multiple needs locally and make a strong case for them. Local authorities should carry out consultation with people with lived experience and the voluntary sector to identify opportunities to improve services, and prepare an evidence base for any future negotiations.

Recommendations for all areas

It's unlikely that devolution can succeed in supporting widespread change for people with multiple needs without national leadership. This should rest both on an economic case for the better coordinated support that reduces pressure on public services, and the moral argument that people experiencing multiple needs have for too long been neglected and poorly served by social policy. Therefore:

Recommendation 4

MEAM will continue to call for a national strategy on multiple needs that creates a policy environment where local areas are best able to adopt a coordinated, flexible approach to providing services. This should include but not be limited to new powers through devolution deals, in recognition that the pace of reform will be different across the country.

Next steps

Areas where devolution is well-developed are now taking ambitious steps, such as the devolution of health and care powers in Greater Manchester and London (on a pilot basis in a number of boroughs). There are also new developments with particular relevance to people with multiple needs, such as Greater Manchester gaining new powers over the criminal justice system.

As the devolution agenda develops and changes, it is important that similar opportunities are extended to other areas based on their own needs. Over the coming months MEAM and its partners will be exploring these issues more fully, and working with both the new government and local areas to explore how devolution can improve local responses to multiple needs.

Notes

¹ [My vision for a smarter state](#), speech by David Cameron MP, 11 September 2015

² House of Commons Library (2016), [Devolution to local government in England](#), p. 13

³ MEAM (2016), [Influencing local policy](#) and [Involving experts by experience](#)

⁴ HM Treasury and West Midlands Combined Authority (2015), [West Midlands Combined Authority Devolution Agreement](#), p. 14; HM Treasury and North East Combined Authority (2015), [North East Devolution Agreement](#), p. 8

⁵ See, for instance, House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee (2016), [Devolution: the next five years and beyond](#), pp. 26-28

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 24-26

⁷ See also New Economic Foundation (2015), [Democracy: the missing link in the devolution debate](#), pp. 2-3

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