

POLICY BRIEFING

June 2019

Welcome to our NLGN Policy Briefing, exclusively for our members. This briefing collates the most interesting reports that we have come across over the last month.

In our new series of briefings, we're asking NLGN members about the research and publications that they have found useful in their work. This month's issue features research recommendations from Ellen Care, Interim Service Design Manager at The London Borough of Bexley. Our Policy Briefing also features a Community Paradigm 'Read of the Month'. This report or article highlights how and where power is being transferred to communities, and how this is enabling a more preventative approach to public service delivery. If you'd like to contribute to next month's briefing, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Pawda Tjoa at ptjoa@nlgn.org.uk.

Our briefing covers reports across the following topics:

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Meet our Members

London Borough of Bexley: Ellen Care, Interim Service Design Manager, Transformation and Change

What particular challenge has your council recently faced?

We're undertaking a piece of work exploring civic participation and how we could build on our Connected Communities strategy to do more at scale, achieve better outcomes for the community, and help the Council to be more self-sufficient financially. We're interested in exploring the most recent thinking about different models for doing this and how others are putting them into practice.

What research piece have you found useful to help tackle this challenge?

A couple of documents were a key starting point for us. One has been [The Community Paradigm](#) from NLGN, which puts the issues we see today in the context of a longer history of local government. We've also been exploring the concept of the [Citizen Shift](#), which is put forward by the New Citizenship project. It's helped us to understand the wider shift that is happening in society and has particularly provoked us to think about the language we're using when we talk about our relationship with residents and how we talk to them. Exploring this, alongside the [Values Modes](#) test from the Campaign Company, has been helping us to think about what this means specifically in Bexley.

Do you have any further reading that you'd recommend on this topic?

[New Power: Why outsiders are winning, institutions are failing and how the rest of us can keep up in the age of mass participation](#) by Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms is a really interesting look at how power is shifting through a whole range of great examples.

■ COMMUNITY PARADIGM READ OF THE MONTH

Taking Ownership: Community empowerment through crowdfunding investment

Nesta

Community-led projects have the power to transform local areas socially, economically and environmentally. This report, created with support from the Greater London Authority, explores the opportunities and challenges to using investment crowdfunding models (e.g. community shares and bonds) to fund community-led projects. It also provides a how-to guide to community organisations interested in raising funds through investment crowdfunding and explains what institutions, such as local government, city authorities, and foundations, can do to help community-led initiatives make the most of these tools. Key findings from the report include:

- Investment crowdfunding has been used to fund a broad range of local assets, from saving local shops and pubs from closure to new community centres and art spaces.
- Using investment crowdfunding for community-led initiatives include helping to fund projects that would otherwise struggle to access finance elsewhere.
- Local government, city authorities, and institutional funders have a crucial role to play in supporting community organisations to make the most of opportunities and overcome challenges.

■ DEVOLUTION, GROWTH AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

The UK in the Global Economy

The Institute for Public Policy Research

The UK economy is not delivering. Employment growth since the financial crisis has been accompanied by the weakest decade for average real earnings growth in 200 years. Over the last 40 years, only 10 per cent of national income growth went to the bottom half of the income distribution. The UK is Europe's most geographically unbalanced economy, with wide disparities between nations and regions, and once-thriving communities suffering economic decline. These problems are not glitches in an otherwise healthy system; they are the result of structural flaws in our economic model.

In addition, many of today's global shifts – economic slowdown, political uncertainty, and technological change – are all occurring outside the influence of UK unilateral and domestic political institutions. While policymakers may not be able to control the changing global economy, they can choose how to prepare and how to respond. This report argues that three responses are needed:

- Strengthening the UK economy to success in the global economy of the future, by addressing longstanding weaknesses such as a low investment and poor productivity and by focusing on technological adoption in the 'everyday economy'.
- Preparing the tools and institutions to respond to instability and recession, such as fiscal stimulus through a National Investment Bank.
- Being ready with a programme for a fairer economy, offering coherent policies in responses to crisis and deep change.

Devolution at 20

Institute for Government

Devolution at 20 is a new Institute for Government report taking a data-driven look at the devolved governments and legislatures in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It examines how these institutions have operated in their 20 years of existence, and how the constitutional and financial relationship between the United Kingdom's four nations has evolved. The report explores:

- The election and party systems, showing how different parties now dominate in each of the UK's four nations.
- How the devolved parliaments and assemblies have worked in practice, and whether they have lived up to the expectations that they would practise more consensual politics than Westminster.
- How the devolved administrations operate, including how they are organised, the size of their workforces, and how this has changed.

The Economic Impact on the United Kingdom of a Customs Union Deal with the European Union

National Institute of Economic and Social Research

In the wake of Parliament's rejection of the proposed Brexit deal, there have been discussions between the Government and the Labour Party on a customs union as the basis for the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union (EU). This option also gained substantial support in the indicative votes held in the House of Commons in late March and early April. Therefore, even if the Government and the Labour Party cannot reach an agreement, a customs union deal is unlikely to disappear from the agenda any time soon. NIESR's new report provides estimates of the economic impact to the United Kingdom of leaving the EU to form a UK-EU customs union. Its main points are:

- GDP in the longer term is estimated to be around 3 per cent lower in a customs union than it would have been had the UK stayed in the EU. This is equivalent to a loss of over 2 per cent in GDP per head, worth around £800 per person per annum to people in the UK.
- The lower level of GDP would mainly be a consequence of higher barriers to trade in services as a result of being outside of the European single market.
- A smaller economy would generate less income with which to pay for public services. The authors estimate that there would be an effective revenue shortfall of around £13 billion a year that would need to be raised either by additional borrowing, higher taxes, or reduced public spending.

Rethinking High Speed 2

The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee

The House of Lords' 2015 report 'The Economics of High Speed 2' raised a number of questions that the Government needed to answer on High Speed 2. Four years later, these have yet to be answered satisfactorily. This report addresses the unanswered questions on priorities for rail investment, the method used to appraise the High Speed 2, and the ways to reduce its cost. Conclusions and recommendations include:

- The conclusions in their 2015 report remain valid: overcrowding is a problem on commuter services rather than long-distance services.
- Evidence suggests Northern Powerhouse Rail is required more urgently than High Speed 2.

- Construction on High Speed 2 should have started in the north. The decision to build High Speed 2 from the south upwards means that London will receive the benefits of the new railway long before northern cities will.

The Future Farming and Environment Evidence Compendium

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

Agriculture contributes around 0.5 per cent to the United Kingdom's economy, but provides half of the food we eat, employs almost half a million people, and is a key part of the food and drink sector, which contributed £110bn to the economy in 2017. The Future Farming and Environment Evidence Compendium brings together existing statistics on agriculture to summarise the current state of the agricultural industry and to enable better decisions to be made on the future of farming. Some key statistics include:

- In 2017, half of all food (50 per cent) consumed in the UK was of UK origin, with the majority of the rest of food consumed (30 per cent) of EU origin.
- In the UK in 2018, agriculture employed almost half a million people in the UK, 1.5 per cent of the UK workforce, who were mainly involved in business ownership or management.
- 61 per cent of the value of the UK's agricultural production comes from livestock (£14.8bn in 2018), of which Dairy and Beef are the largest sectors.

PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM

The Generation of Poverty: Poverty over the life course for different generations

Resolution Foundation

Poverty is an age-old problem, but its prevalence has shifted greatly over time. As inequality grew rapidly throughout the 1980s, relative poverty grew with it, peaking at 25 per cent in the mid-1990s. At this time, poverty was the hot-topic issue. However, attention had since begun to decline as shifts in the economic and policy backdrop meant that circumstances were improving. But today, with expectations of rising child poverty, and a broader debate about inequality gaining traction, the issue has re-entered mainstream public discourse. This briefing note takes a step back to examine the incidence of poverty throughout the life course of different generations, and how this has changed over the past six decades. Key findings include:

- Due to a growing economy, absolute poverty has declined over time on all measures.
- On average, children and pensioners have had the highest rates of poverty over the past six decades.
- The latest generation are experiencing a resurgence of child poverty.

Nothing Left in the Cupboards: Austerity, Welfare Cuts, and the Right to Food in the UK

Human Rights Watch

With reductions in welfare support year on year, the number of people, including families with children, going hungry is rising at an alarming rate and represents a troubling development in the world's fifth largest economy. This report documents the lives of families living on the breadline, the work of voluntary organisations stepping in to help, and identifies areas where the UK government is falling short in ensuring people's right to food. Urgent key recommendations include:

- The government should announce publicly that it accepts the right to food as a basic human right, and part of the human rights to an adequate standard of living, and accept its duty to ensure that no one in the United Kingdom goes hungry.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should take immediate steps to abolish the discriminatory two-child limit policy.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should consider revising the current system in which Universal Credit payments are made in arrears.

Who Are They? Where Are They? Children locked up

Children's Commissioner

At any given time, almost fifteen hundred children in England are 'locked up' in secure children's homes, Young Offender Institutions, secure training centres, and mental health wards, either for their own safety or the safety of others. These are some of the most vulnerable children in the country who, for whatever reason, have not been able to live freely in their own homes or communities.

This report shines a light on all these children behind closed doors, asking who they are and where they are living. It looks at what we know and, crucially, what we don't know about them, so that they can be assessed on whether or not they are getting the most appropriate support.

Manifesto for Justice

The FDA Union

The Manifesto for Justice sets out the challenges that the Criminal Justice System currently faces, and it identifies the decisions that must be taken if it is to be pulled back from its state of crisis. In 2016, the Public Accounts Committee described the Criminal Justice System as "close to breaking point". Three years later, due to a massively reduced justice budget, an increase in complex cases, and poor CPS lawyer retention rates, it is broken. The Manifesto for Justice makes a number of key demands to Government so that it can get the investment it needs, including:

- A properly resourced CPS, to protect the public with a robust and effective prosecution service.
- No more cuts to legal aid, to ensure that justice is available to all.
- Competitive pay and fees, to recruit and retain lawyers for a sustainable Criminal Justice System.

The Soaring Costs of Government Pensions

The Intergenerational Foundation

How much society pays for pensions is increasingly an intergenerational fairness issue, and this report updates The Intergenerational Foundation's 2011 public sector pension report. It uses Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to quantify the number of pension recipients receiving public sector pensions of more than £100,000 a year, over £50,000 a year, and pensions of more than average annual wage in three big government pensions schemes – the National Health Service, the Civil Service, and teachers.

This paper explains that younger workers will not receive such generous pensions, yet they are expected to keep paying for these pensions while also having to contribute far more for their own old age.

16-19 Education Funding: Trends and implications

Education Policy Institute

Funding levels and the quality of provision in sixth forms and colleges can have a huge impact on life chances. At present, there are a total of 1.4 million students enrolled in sixth forms and colleges in England. This new report provides the most up to date assessment of funding in these institutions, revealing the latest figures for 2018/19. The research explores the impact on different types of institutions and groups of students across the country. It also considers how funding has affected qualifications, teacher wages and the quality of education on offer. Policy recommendations include:

- The government should urgently review the adequacy of 16-19 funding, to understand whether current funding rates are jeopardising the sector's financial sustainability.
- The government should assess the impact of 16-19 funding changes on curriculum breadth, ensuring that young people have a good choice of high quality post-16 qualifications.
- The government should review the impact of funding changes on disadvantaged students and consider whether funding is supporting the government's aim of narrowing the attainment gap.

Post-18 Education and Funding: Options for the government review

Education Policy Institute

Last year, the UK Government established a review to consider the future funding options for post-18 education in England. The policy and political concerns which seemed to lead to the establishment of the review touched on a variety of issues: student and parental concern over relatively high English tuition fees; the failure of the 2010/11 higher education funding reforms to create the expected 'market' of varying tuition fee levels; associated concerns about the efficiency of the higher education sector; and interest in considering whether education routes below Level 6 HE should be better funded, including in terms of student maintenance.

This EPI report looks at the options for post-18 funding reform, and considers the likely impact, cost, and distributional consequences of the major funding choices being considered.

Designing a Dementia Fund

The Social Market Foundation

Over 850,000 people in the UK are living with dementia. The current health and social care system treats dementia very differently to other health conditions. There is no cure or long-term treatment for dementia and those with dementia are treated as part of the social care system. Therefore, unlike individuals with cancer or other long-term illnesses, people living with dementia must cover the (often very high) costs of care unless they qualify for means-tested support.

This report sets out how a Dementia Fund, as suggested by Alzheimer's Society, could be set up to cover the additional social care costs faced by people living with dementia. This would create a level playing field so that such individuals do not pay more for their care than social care users without dementia in similar settings. The report draws on an analysis of how social care and dementia services are commissioned as well as of similar Funds to make recommendations for how the Dementia Fund should be commissioned. It proposes that:

- The Dementia Fund would be jointly commissioned by health and social care. This would help align incentives for local authorities and NHS.

- Individuals with a dementia diagnosis would have the right to access this funding through a Personal Budget. The NHS is looking to expand Personal Health Budgets and individuals living with dementia are on the priority groups.
- Funding would be drawn down from the Dementia Fund into the Personal Budget and available to be spent on the individual's care plan.

Preventing Youth Homelessness: An assessment of local approaches Reform

This report examines the approaches taken by local authorities to prevent homelessness for 16-24-year-olds. It assesses how far the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) has led to a coordinated response from across public services and considers ways local and national government can build upon the legislation to establish a more holistic and preventative approach to youth homelessness. Key recommendations include:

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government should require local authorities to record certain information about the referrals they receive under the duty to refer. At a minimum, this should include the referral body and the age range of the individual referred. This would help local authorities monitor what public bodies encounter young people at risk of homelessness, which could help local authorities to strengthen relationships with these services.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government should require and resource local housing authorities to train public authorities with a duty to refer, to ensure these services can recognise and respond to early warning signs of young people at risk of becoming homeless. Public authorities with a duty to refer should be required to participate in this training.
- Short-term grants for homelessness prevention should be replaced with longer, ring-fenced funding cycles to give local authorities more security to develop effective prevention practices.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Tech in the Town: How the Fourth Industrial Revolution could transform local government Social Market Foundation

The Fourth Industrial Revolution can address a number of the challenges facing local government. Benefits outlined in the report include: saving money and reducing light pollution with smart street lighting; smart bins that automatically sort recyclable and unrecyclable waste; improved road quality via the use of road-repairing drones; smarter road pricing and parking charges; and autonomous public transport. Recommendations to local government to realise these benefits are:

- Create a local government "4IR innovation fund" to incentivise the rollout of 4IR technologies.
- Explore the role that outcome-based contracts could play in encouraging private sector providers of outsourced services to roll out new technologies.
- Dynamic road and parking charges, and new smart bin collection charges, should either operate on a largely revenue-neutral basis, or in a way that generates clear, tangible benefits to households and businesses.

National Health Servers: Delivering health for all

Social Market Foundation

There are currently shortcomings in adopting technologies that can improve healthcare and the patient experience. Where you live, which commissioner serves you, which GP practice you live near and which hospital you use will dictate whether you receive a digitally-enabled or an outdated service. Levelling out this unwarranted variation without suffocating innovation should be a priority.

The report sets out proposals for future development of technology in the NHS, such as:

- Enshrining digital rights in the NHS Constitution.
- Promoting digital access among individuals with long-term conditions, including through social prescribing of digital skills where necessary.
- Opening a public debate on Electronic Patient Records and selling the benefits of patient data to the health of the UK population, as a first step towards winning consent for sharing and using data.

EdTech Testbeds: Models for improving evidence

Nesta

Educational technology (EdTech) has the potential to transform education but too often it fails to live up to expectations. Evidence is a key part of this problem. Reliable, relevant evidence can enable good decision-making around EdTech. But evidence is often missing, irrelevant, or hard to understand. EdTech testbeds are a way to improve this situation by generating and sharing evidence of what works in practice for those who need it.

This report explores how testbeds can be designed so that the most appropriate EdTech is created and schools are able to use it in the most effective way. It sets out four testbed models developed by Nesta that could help educators and policy-makers tackle different parts of the evidence problem.

FINANCE

Better Regulators, Fairer Markets

The Social Market Foundation

This report explores questions surrounding the interaction between the state and actors in a market. Principally, questions of how and when should the state take a hand in the interactions between market participants are explored? This was a key question discussed at a roundtable event, convened by the Social Market Foundation, that forms the basis of this report. Recommendations include:

- Maintain the principle of independent economic regulators discharging a duty set out in legislation – but expand and clarify those duties.
- New duties should include an objective of delivering ‘trust and confidence’ in markets.
- Government should consider the case for regulators offering Ofsted-style ratings for suppliers or kitemark ‘good business’ badges.

Response to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee's Local Government Finance and the 2019 Spending Review inquiry

Institute for Fiscal Studies

This submission to the 2019 Spending Review inquiry makes the point that the current system of council funding is not a well-functioning system for determining the scale of funding that a local authority should receive. Going forward, the fundamental question facing the Fair Funding Review is how to balance redistribution of funding according to need versus the desire to provide councils with financial incentives to tackle needs and boost growth.

The report also makes the point that the current system, in which councils rely on council tax and business rates for the bulk of their funding is unlikely to provide sufficient resource. To improve on this system, the paper outlines the merits and drawbacks of central government providing greater grant and devolving additional revenue-raising power to councils, which revolve around judgements about the importance of redistribution and consistency in tax and spending.

Submission to Treasury Committee Inquiry: The impact of business rates on business

Institute for Fiscal Studies

The Institute for Fiscal Studies assesses business rates in terms of: fairness, economic efficiency and certainty. It argues that business rates are not impacting as severely on the high street as has been reported, or at least for the reasons put forward. In terms of fairness, the paper makes the point that if introduced now, business rates would seem to be a tax unfairly levied against owners of one asset class rather than others. But the reality is that business rates have been in place for many years, and that to abolish the tax now would in itself be unfair - as it would represent a windfall gain to current owners of business properties.

Looking at efficiency, the paper makes the case that the aspect of business rates levied on land is efficient, but this is not the case when considering how the tax is levied on buildings. Indeed, the principal effect of business rates is that economic activity in the UK is artificially skewed away from property development and property-intensive production.

English Council Funding: what's happened and what's next?

Institute for Fiscal Studies

This note brings together some of the key findings of the IFS's research on the topic of local government funding, updating some of them where possible. A number of findings are outlined, of which, some of the more salient are included below.

- On average, local government spending on services has fallen by 21 per cent in real terms since 2009–10. However, those cuts have not been equally distributed across the country, and have been larger in more deprived than more affluent areas.
- Cuts have also varied significantly across services, with councils prioritising services like adult social care (down 5 per cent) and children's social care services (up 10 per cent). In contrast spending on children's and youth centres is down more than 60 per cent, planning & development and housing down more than 50 per cent, and highways & transport and cultural and leisure services down more 40 per cent.
- Cuts to overall budgets seem to be ending. But revenues from council tax and business rates – the two sources councils are set to rely on for the vast bulk of their funding in future – are highly unlikely to keep pace with rising demands and costs for public services. For example,

even if council tax were to be increased by 4.7 per cent a year (which is the average increase this year) every year, adult social care could account for more than half of revenues from these taxes by the mid 2030s, even without increasing service provision.

A Poor Tax: Reforming council tax in London

Institute of Public Policy Research

This paper sets out the case for change of the council tax system in London. It outlines some of the views of those who live in the capital and pay council tax in the system as it is, and how they would like to see it change. It also sets out some key lessons from abroad on how our system compares.

A major reform of the system is proposed, in three stages. First, the devolution of council tax to the capital. Second, some immediate reforms to the system to protect the poorest Londoners, who are being hit by a tax that increasingly resembles the poll tax are argued for. Third, in the longer term, the replacement of the existing banding system with a proportional property tax is argued for, with one rate, to be applied across London, which should be calculated on up-to-date property values. Finally, some key strategies are set out to help overcome some of the difficult issues and barriers to reform. Such a system would be fairer, more efficient, and in addition could be used to raise revenues in a way that is fairer and more politically acceptable than the current system.

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Decent Work: Harnessing the power of local government

Institute of Public Policy Research

Local authorities are major employers, they commission services from local businesses and charities, and they have considerable 'soft power' to influence a broader range of local organisations. Many local authorities in the North of England have used this power to implement 'decent work' policies that improve employment conditions. The report aims to help other local authorities in the North and across the country by showing how this innovation can boost employment conditions in their areas.

The report's recommendations include:

- To Northern political leaders: Develop a Northern Employment Charter and set out a vision and plan to become a 'living wage region' by 2025 at the latest.
- To local authorities: Explore and implement the practical steps and recommendations outlined in this report to overcome barriers to decent work policies, and to promote and embed them.
- To the UK Government: Increase funding to local government, as part of a package including fiscal autonomy, a fair system of redistribution that reflects need and deprivation, and long-term financial settlements.

More Than a Job's Worth: Making work experience fit for purpose

LMKco and Workfinder

Work experience encompasses young people's experience of work tasks in work environments on time-limited placements, alongside their education. However, work experience's potential to achieve these benefits remains untapped. The quality of work experience is hugely variable, and often very poor, and access to work experience is currently hugely variable.

The report makes a series of recommendations to schools, employers, and other organisations including government to ensure that the work experience system works for everyone.

Recommendations to government are:

- Ensure a wider range of sectors provide work experience, possibly by making sure organisations applying for government contracts offer work experience placements.
- Broker relationships, such as by improving digital brokerage platforms so that they provide administrative and background checks, removing this burden from schools and employers and, in turn, increasing engagement (particularly among employers).

The Apprenticeships Programme: Progress review

House of Commons Public Accounts Committee

The number of apprenticeship starts fell by 26 per cent after the apprenticeship levy was introduced and, although the level is now recovering, the government will not meet its target of 3 million starts by March 2020. Because of the drop in apprenticeship starts, the Department for Education (DfE) underspent the programme's budget by 20 per cent in 2017–18. However, employers' preference for higher-cost apprenticeships means that the programme is expected to come under growing financial pressure in the coming years. The Committee's conclusions and recommendations include:

- The programme is now more heavily weighted towards higher-level apprenticeships, which risks leaving behind people with lower skills and those from disadvantaged communities.
- In 2017/18, just under 23 per cent of new apprentices were from the most deprived local authority areas, compared with the DfE's target of 25 per cent.
- DfE should assess whether there are enough lower-level apprenticeships to allow school leavers or those with fewer skills to easily access apprenticeships, and report back to the Committee within six months on its assessment and any action it proposes to take to redress the balance.

Head Office: London's rise and future as a corporate centre

Centre for London

Headquarters (HQs) and related functions have been a fast-expanding source of employment and economic output in London (and the UK) for the last decade. The biggest multinationals have overwhelmingly chosen London as their European HQ: London and the Wider South East host 55 per cent of the world's largest 500 companies' European HQs, and attract a fifth of all foreign direct investment into HQ projects in Western Europe.

Recommendations to various tiers of government to enhance London's attractiveness to HQs include:

- Local government and the Mayor of London should continue to lobby national government for investment in public transport and housing.
- National government should set an objective of increasing investment in the rest of the country by businesses that have HQs in London.
- London government should also continue to lobby for an immigration policy that supports London's HQ economy alongside other sectors, and should seek more regional control of immigration policy if this cannot be achieved across the country.

Hitting Reset: A case for local leadership

Localis

This report lays out a roadmap to a decentralised UK, where democratically-elected local leaders have the power to govern, and the capacity of councils to bring together private and public actors to achieve local development is maximised. Localis argues that if trust in politics is to be restored, citizens must be able to see the impact of democracy (or ‘take back control’) in their communities and local economies. Key points include:

- Combat underdevelopment through investment. To move forward, a British Investment Bank should be established with Local Enterprise Partnerships able to formulate applications for major infrastructure loans alongside local government.
- Create conditions for local leadership. To achieve the kind of development and diversification needed for national renewal and local economic rebalancing, places need leadership. Central to the ability to govern effectively is the ability to tax and spend. Democratically elected local leaders need the power to tax and spend, as well as the security to strategise long-term.
- Extend local civic capacity. Local government has the potential to be a vital convener of civil society – bringing together public and private actors to coordinate action and promote local goals. This report shows that new bureaucracy is not needed, but better alignment of what is already there.