

POLICY BRIEFING

December 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 Andrew Donaldson, Assistant Director of Strategy, Public Health and Prevention at Staffordshire County Council. 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

Staffordshire County Council: Andrew Donaldson, Assistant Director of Strategy, Public Health and Prevention

What particular challenge has your council recently faced?

A key question that our Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet have been discussing in 2019 is 'how do we raise aspirations in Staffordshire?'. Outcomes for families and communities are generally 'good' in Staffordshire, however we want to go from 'good' to 'great' – raising our own aspirations for Staffordshire as a place, as well as the aspirations of all our families and communities.

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

Working with [Shared Intelligence](#), we have undertaken our own research to help us tackle this challenge. This includes two deep-dive visits to other parts of the country to understand how they have tackled the theme of 'aspirations', to spark ideas and thinking. Members of the Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet and senior partner colleagues, were involved in the visits to enable us not only to ensure we had well-rounded visits, but also to help us share the learning across the organisation and partnership. Alongside this work, we have also been collating local best practice examples of initiatives that are helping to raise aspirations. This work has really helped to bring into focus the important role of the County Council as a place-shaper and convener.

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

An independent evaluation of [the implementation of Opportunity Areas](#), and its accompanying [selection of case studies](#) provide a great starting point. Additionally, Joseph Rowntree Foundation's round-up on [the role of aspirations, attitudes and behaviour in closing the educational attainment gap](#) provides important insights into the relationship between poverty and educational attainment.

■ COMMUNITY PARADIGM READ OF THE MONTH

Our Futures: By the people, for the people

Nesta

Moving beyond citizen assemblies and traditional public engagement, participatory futures techniques help people to develop a collective image of the future they want, so that we can make better, more informed decisions.

Governments, city leaders, public institutions, funders, and civil society must be at the forefront of this approach, supporting it through funding, strategy and practice. This guide contains practical suggestions for how to do this, including:

- Carrying out publicly-funded, mission-orientated research that is informed by participatory futures exercises.
- Creating new legislation that requires UK Government departments to use these approaches to inform decision-making and strategies.
- Embedding these approaches in the Civil Service Competency Framework and equivalent frameworks for local government and charities.

■ DEVOLUTION, GROWTH AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Divided and Connected: Regional inequalities in the north of the UK and the developed world

Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) North

This report is part of IPPR North's "State of the North" series. At a time of great upheaval, uncertainty and division, instead of looking inward this year's State of the North looks outward – to the country and across the developed world to show how the North fits into a bigger picture. This report investigates how divided but interdependent we are as a country, comparing the UK to countries overseas.

The report argues that centralised governance has been an especially acute problem for the UK and discusses how it has exacerbated our regional divides. Finally, the report argues that devolution could be a source of hope and real change. The report highlights the pioneering northern mayors who have already shown what devolution can do, even with their limited powers. The report concludes by setting out the ambition for the North in 2020.

Inclusive Growth in Greater Manchester 2020 and Beyond

Joseph Rowntree Foundation and University of Manchester

This report takes stock of the progress that has been made in Greater Manchester (GM) towards inclusive growth, in the period since 2016 when inclusive growth started to become a prominent objective for UK cities. It includes a review of developments in policy and practice, principally those of the Mayor and GM Combined Authority (GMCA), but also of local authorities, businesses and organisations in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. The report asks whether what has been done is sufficient and if not, what else could be done. It includes case studies from around the UK and abroad, with recommendations including:

- In the next Mayoral Term (2020 -2024) the Mayor of Greater Manchester should signal a commitment to inclusive growth as the central motif of his/her Mayoral term. His/her central

objective should be to set GM on a long-term path towards a fairer and more sustainable economy and society.

- Between 2020 and 2024, the Mayor, Combined Authority (GMCA) and other GM leaders should take specific action to embed and develop inclusive growth strategies for the economy, places and people.
- The Mayor should also take steps in the next mayoral term to set a more ambitious long term economic, social and environmental vision for GM.

Three Missions to Transform our Failing Economy

New Economics Foundation (NEF)

This report argues that the UK is in the grip of three intense, interlinked crises: an economic crisis, an ecological crisis and a democratic crisis. The report argues that Brexit, the word on everyone's lips, is tearing the nation apart and yet, while an issue of pivotal importance in its own right, it is mainly a symptom of deeper malaise. It provides solutions that go to the heart of our economic, ecological and democratic problems.

NEF proposes three missions to transform our failing economy: a new social settlement; a Green New Deal; and the democratic economy.

The Devolution of Parliament

Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) North

This briefing argues that the next parliament will find itself once again dominated by Brexit – whatever the result of the General Election. The briefing identifies the main risk is that, in doing so, Westminster will yet again be incapable of addressing the over-centralisation and regional inequalities that have created such a divided country. The briefing sets out that devolution can provide a solution to these major issues. The briefing argues that now is the time for central government to let the regions, towns and cities of England step forward. The briefing argues that that's why England needs a "Devolution Parliament" now more than ever.

The briefing sets out five priorities for delivering a "Devolution Parliament", including:

- Reverse austerity, redistribute funding fairly and devolve fiscal powers.
- Introduce an 'inclusive devolution' process, available to all sub-national levels.
- Devolve economic powers to city regions and counties.

Principles for Purposeful Business

The British Academy

The Future of the Corporation is one of the most important and pressing topics of our time. This report is not just for business leaders, shareholders and policymakers. It is also for people who work for businesses, buy their products, benefit from a pension or feel an impact from business activities. And facing a climate crisis, this report is crucial for the world at large.

This report builds on the November 2018 report, "Reforming business for the 21st century", which set out the case for urgent reform of business to address the social, political and environmental challenges it faces and to take advantage of the remarkable technological and scientific advances in progress. It revisits the case for change and highlights that climate change, the urgency of delivering on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), technological developments, the increasing dominance of companies without significant tangible assets, and negative perceptions of business make this agenda particularly urgent. It identifies how change can and should be achieved. It sets out a series of principles to guide lawmakers and business leaders in any jurisdiction towards the policies

and practices that can release the potential of business to profitably solve the problems of people and planet, and to prevent business from profiting from harm.

Delivering Change: Improving urban bus services

Centre for Cities

Buses are critical urban infrastructure. They not only provide access to jobs for workers without a car, but they offer the mass-transit capacity that make jobs-dense, high-wage city centre economies possible. In so doing they take cars off of the road, and reduce greenhouse gases, nitrogen dioxides and fine particulate matter from tyres and brakes. Bus services link people to friends and family, young people to education, shoppers to high streets and communities to the public services — from GPs' surgeries to libraries – that they need. And buses allow higher-density housing development to increase the supply of homes in cities without adding to sprawl or congestion, and reduce the amount of land required for car parking.

With a self-declared 'bus fanatic' as Prime Minister, and support across all major parties, mayors have the chance to take advantage of the Bus Services Act. To support the growth in jobs and wages outside London, improve air quality and protect the planet, government and metro mayors should set the ambition to increase bus journeys in major cities from 1 billion to 2 billion journeys per year.

■ PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM

Investigation into Starter Homes

National Audit Office

This investigation sets out the status of Starter Homes policy and legislation, and the impact of government's investment. It was prompted by comments in the media on the progress made in building Starter Homes. Key findings include:

- No Starter Homes have been built to date. The funding originally intended for Starter Homes has instead been spent on acquiring and preparing brownfield sites for housing more generally, some of which is affordable housing.
- The Starter Homes legislative provisions are not yet in force. The statutory framework for Starter Homes, the Housing and Planning Act (2016), received Royal Assent on 12 May 2016, although the relevant sections of the Act have not yet come into force.
- The Department no longer has a budget dedicated to the delivery of Starter Homes. The concept of Starter Homes was first introduced at the Conservative Party conference in September 2014.

Leading for Integrated Care

The King's Fund

There is no greater challenge for system leadership within the conjoined worlds of health and local government than the move to integrated care systems (ICSs). Yet these are non-statutory arrangements; they have no direct powers. The coming together of local government and often myriad health organisations from the public, private and third sectors is essentially a voluntary exercise driven by what is perceived to be best for patients and the wider population – but with remarkably little ability to compel anyone to do anything. Ask the chairs and leads of these organisations what authority they have and the typical response is that they do not have informal authority of one sort or another.

This report explores what is involved in leading the drive to better integrated care around these key questions: What are the skills needed? How is it being done? What are the challenges and barriers to getting there? What helps, and what stands in the way?

Further Education Pathways: Securing a successful and healthy life after education

Education Policy Institute

Most people's view of the typical education pathway after secondary school involves A levels followed by a bachelor's degree. However, whilst this may be the most recognised pathway, it is not the one taken by the majority of young people. An equal and ever-increasing proportion of young people go on to vocational equivalents to A levels, continued GCSE study, GCSE level vocational qualifications, lower-level qualifications and apprenticeships. These qualifications are largely taken in the further education sector. Young people following these further education pathways tend to have lower educational and employment outcomes, and worse health outcomes than their peers following academic routes. This report considers the role that these further education pathways can play in closing this gap and preparing young people for a successful and healthy life after education.

Cities in Action 2: Rough sleeping

The Key Cities Group and New Local Government Network

Governments at all levels, alongside their cross-sector partners, have stepped up efforts to eradicate rough sleeping in recent years, but it will take time, sustained commitment and long-term investment for initiatives to have their desired impact. Complex policy challenges have no easy solutions, and there are few challenges more complex and wide-ranging than those comprised in the issue of rough sleeping.

This report focuses its study of international responses to prevent and eradicate rough sleeping on three themes: support for people who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough; enabling rough sleepers to shape their own support; and supply of affordable homes. Key recommendations include:

- A new Housing Deal for mid-sized cities and places, working with Key Cities as pilot areas to ensure that housing policy and funding mechanisms are sufficiently robust and flexible to allow local authorities and partners to address the specific housing challenges of their area.
- Housing First pilots in the UK's mid-sized cities and places, and trials of other forms of one stop-shop centres and escalator accommodation that provide holistic support to help keep rough sleepers and people at risk of rough sleeping away from the streets permanently.
- Technology-centred pilots to match the needs of rough sleepers with the generosity of members of the public, which would include working with mid-sized cities' councils, universities, partners and people with lived experience of or at risk of rough sleeping to develop ideas for new technology and funding to develop and test prototypes.

State of Hunger: A study of poverty and food insecurity in the UK

The Trussell Trust

Over the last decade there has been growing public and media concern about more extreme signs of material poverty. Public attention has been particularly captured by the rapid growth in the number of charitable food banks and the numbers of food parcels distributed.

The State of Hunger is a three-year research project designed to provide the Trussell Trust, and the wider sector of stakeholders, with the evidence base required to make recommendations on how to address hunger in the UK. The results presented in this report will serve as a benchmark for the subsequent two years of the project. Policy implications include:

- The general level of working age benefits and their erosion through the benefits freeze and cuts to entitlements.
- The benefit sanctions regime and assessments for health, disability, and work capability.
- The availability of key worker support for adults with complex needs at high risk of destitution.

Performance Tracker 2019

Institute for Government

Performance Tracker brings together more than 200 data series to provide a comprehensive picture of the performance of key public services. This fourth edition expands the 2018 analysis to project how demand for nine key public services – including hospitals, schools and the police – will change over the next five years. Key findings include:

- The government's main strategy to increase efficiency was to encourage public services to deliver more for less by cutting budgets. The public sector pay cap, by keeping wage growth below the rate of inflation in the wider economy, was the key contributor to efficiency gains in most services.
- The government and local authorities have continued to ask individuals to contribute more to public services. They have asked citizens to pay directly for services, and increased charges.
- The government has also asked individuals to take more responsibility for services that were formerly delivered by the state. Local authorities are using more volunteers and community groups to run services such as libraries.

Ethical Care: A bold reform agenda for adult social care

Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)

With the possibility of a long-term funding settlement for social care, there is an urgent need for a bold reform agenda. For two decades, politicians have promised a long-term funding settlement for social care but failed to deliver on this. As a result, the policy conversation has been unable to move beyond the need for more funding. But we are now moving closer towards a solution, with a growing cross-party consensus behind the idea of introducing free personal care as recommended by IPPR's Lord Darzi Review. If this happens, social care will need a bold vision and reform plan to ensure this investment fundamentally transforms the care. The IPPR calls for a package of interventions including:

- A long-term funding settlement for social care to ensure the system is well-funded.
- A 'new deal' for the social care workforce to ensure social care staff are well-trained, well-paid and well-respected.
- A new ethical commissioning charter to drive low quality and unethical providers out of the market.

Patchy, Piecemeal and Precarious: Support for children affected by domestic abuse

Action for Children

For hundreds of thousands of children, childhood hurts. This new report shines a light on children's experiences of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse can have a devastating impact on children and young people. We see this for ourselves in the services we deliver to children and families every day. This research wanted to look in more depth at how children are affected by domestic abuse, and establish the scale of the issue. Crucially, we also wanted to gain a better understanding of exactly what support is available to the children who have been through these experiences and whether more needs to be done. Key findings include:

- Overall, children faced barriers to accessing support in at least two-thirds of the local authorities that took part in the in-depth interviews.
- In four of the 30 local authorities, there were no support services available at all for children affected by domestic abuse.
- In 11 of the 30 local areas, children's access to services was restricted by their postcode.

State of a Generation: Preventing mental health problems in children and young people

Mental Health Foundation

Mental health problems, such as anxiety or depression, can happen at any age. However, childhood and young adulthood represents a particularly important time for development and mental health. By understanding the things that can challenge good mental health, as well as the things that can protect and promote it, we can introduce policies and services that support children and young people to reach their full potential, preventing mental health difficulties from progressing to the point where it becomes difficult to cope. Based on the research and suggestions of the Youth Advisory Panel, the report recommends that:

- Children are equipped with the skills they need to understand, talk about and manage challenging feelings.
- Community leaders bridge the gap between communities and local government and make sure people have a choice and voice in deciding what there are needs to support good mental health.
- Effective early support is made available for young people's mental health and this must consider young people's views on what makes that support acceptable and accessible.

The Shifting Shape of Social Security

Resolution Foundation

Voters face a stark choice at the upcoming election about the social security system they want. The turning of the tide on austerity means that the battle is no longer over whose benefits are being cut. But, instead, it's the legacy of those cuts – some of which are still in the process of being rolled out – that unavoidably forms the backdrop to what comes next. To make sense of what's going on, this report examines how the provision of social security in Britain has changed over time; the big trends and developments that current social security policy needs to take account of; and the policy offer from our three main Great Britain-wide political parties. Key findings include:

- The Conservative manifesto offers no changes to the status quo, meaning a Conservative government would preside over £3.8 billion of further cuts to working-age benefits set to roll out after the 2019 election.
- Labour's plan for social security is comparatively far-reaching, with £9 billion of planned spending on cash benefits in 2023-24, and a further £8 billion of spending on free TV licences, broadband, school meals and childcare. However, while large families, renters and disabled people would gain from Labour's plans, many working-age families that fall outside these groups could still find themselves worse off than under the pre-2015 system.
- The Liberal Democrats' plan is similar to Labour's, both in volume-of-spending terms and in many of the specific policies proposed. However, the Liberal Democrat offer is slightly more progressive than Labour's, avoids further pensioner spending, and includes welcome improvements to Universal Credit for second earners and the self-employed.

Social (In)security: Reforming the UK's social safety net

Institute for Public Policy Research

The concept behind universal credit (UC) – that integrating working-age benefits would lead to a simpler, less bureaucratic system – was once supported by broad political consensus. However, the resulting policy and its implementation has alienated many, with universal credit's misplaced attempt to mimic the workplace through a monthly assessment and payment that bears no relation to the way those on low incomes are paid, and an array of design features that seem designed to punish rather than support. For too many, it is a tightrope over poverty, not a social safety net. This report argues for greater investment in our social security system and for social security payments to be based, in future, on the amount needed for a basic minimum standard of living.

A False Economy: How to reduce the Housing Benefit bill

Reform

Government spending on Housing Benefit has swelled in recent years. In 2018-19, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) spent £20.8 billion on Housing Benefit – more than the total police budget for the same year. Housing Benefit now accounts for 77 per cent of public expenditure on housing, while less than a fifth is spent on building new homes. The UK spends three times more than any other European country on Housing Benefit.

With spending increasing but support dwindling, the Government needs to change the way it supports low-income renters. This report explains why the Housing Benefit bill has ballooned. It examines how recent reforms have impacted individual households and local authorities, and calls for government to reject short-termism and transform the way it spends money on housing.

■ DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Decision-making in the Age of the Algorithm

Nesta

Frontline practitioners in the public sector – from social workers to police to custody officers – make important decisions every day about people's lives. Operating in the context of a sector grappling with how to manage rising demand, coupled with diminishing resources, frontline practitioners are being asked to make very important decisions quickly and with limited information. To do this, public sector organisations are turning to new technologies to support decision-making, in particular, predictive analytics tools, which use machine learning algorithms to discover patterns in data and make predictions.

While many guides exist around ethical AI design, there is little guidance on how to support a productive human-machine interaction in relation to AI. This report aims to fill this gap by focusing on the issue of human-machine interaction. How people are working with tools is significant because, simply put, for predictive analytics tools to be effective, frontline practitioners need to use them well. It encourages public sector organisations to think about how people feel about predictive analytics tools – what they're fearful of, what they're excited about, what they don't understand.

Smarter Transport: A digital revolution for electric vehicles and mobility services

Green Alliance

Global trends are changing how businesses compete in the mobility sector. Efforts to cut emissions are forcing industry to develop innovative clean technologies and reliance on critical raw materials is making resource efficiency a strategic priority. The rise in new mobility services is also challenging business models based on private vehicle ownership. Digital technologies could play a fundamental role in making businesses more competitive and resilient in this new landscape. Connectivity, information and optimisation opportunities could help UK manufacturers make better use of resources, adding to their bottom line. Smart fleets can complement public transport, while digitally enabled integration of electric vehicle (EV) batteries in the energy system can offer much needed low cost flexibility to the grid. Key recommendations include:

- Accelerate uptake of EVs and realising their value to a smart energy system.
- Position the UK at the forefront of new mobility services.

A Semantic Analysis of the Recent Evolution of AI Research

Nesta

Fast-improving Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems stand to transform productivity and help us tackle big societal challenges around health, the environment and scientific discovery. However, AI technologies also come with risks for privacy, safety, competition, sustainability and societal stability. This is why policymakers all over the world are putting in place strategies to realise the benefits of AI, while managing its downsides.

This report presents the findings of o Nesta's most in-depth analysis of AI research and development to date, using arXive (an open science site used by the AI research community). It argues that policies need to be informed by smarter data about smarter machines: relevant, inclusive, timely and open information that makes the most of novel data sources and analytics techniques.

Online Disinformation and Political Discourse: Applying a human rights framework

Chatham House

Although some digital platforms now have an impact on more people's lives than does any one state authority, the international community has been slow to hold to account these platforms' activities by reference to human rights law. This report examines how human rights frameworks should guide digital technology. Key recommendations include:

- At a minimum, there should be much more transparency as to the aims and activities of all digital platforms and their use of algorithms.
- Where states give effect to the right to privacy through data protection laws, those laws should facilitate compliance with the right to privacy.
- States should not leave it to digital platforms to determine what freedom of expression requires of them, nor avoid difficult or unpalatable decisions by delegating them to businesses.

The RF Earnings Outlooks

Resolution Foundation

This report begins with “2019 has been a good year for pay so far”. With earnings growth of some 3.8 per cent in the three months leading up to August this year, wages are now “within sight” of pre-recession levels. Combine this with healthy numbers in terms of employment and inflation, and a rosy picture of the UK economy is painted. In terms of future prospects, this report sees Britain as at a plateau. However, there are some things that should cause trepidation about how long this condition will last. These include things like the number of vacancies employers are advertising declining.

The Outlook for Councils’ Funding: Is austerity over?

Institute for Fiscal Studies

Government forecasts suggest that councils’ real terms spending power could increase by 4.3 per cent by 2020-21 compared to current levels. This is in large part due to a £1.1bn increase in grant funding, largely reserved for social care, and as a result to increases in business rates.

However, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) note a number of caveats. Even if these increases are realised, spending per person in 2020-21 will remain 20 per cent lower than it was in 2009-10. Furthermore, some councils will actually see funding decrease next year, due to government not renewing ‘business rates retention’ pilots. The IFS also note that if we look further ahead that council spending power is unlikely to keep pace with demand from 2021-22 onwards.

English Local Government Funding: Trends and challenges in 2019 and beyond

Institute for Fiscal Studies

The last decade has been a tumultuous one for local government funding. Cuts by central government have caused a 17 per cent reduction in council spending on public services, which averages out to nearly £300 per person. As a result, councils have become increasingly reliant on local taxes to meet their demand for funding, and the prioritisation of money has led to a situation where social care services are swallowing 57 per cent of all services budgets.

This report is the first in what the IFS intend to be an annual audit of local government funding. As well as providing a summary of the current state of affairs, these reports will also look ahead. In this report they find that a four per cent boost to spending, whilst welcome, would still leave per person spending 20 per cent lower than at the start of the decade.

Ain’t No Minimum High Enough: Minimum wage policy in the 2019 General Election

Resolution Foundation

There is, at present, a broad political consensus in favour of raising the level of the minimum wage. Indeed, increases since 2015 have delivered a very welcome pay-boost for the lowest paid workers.

However, in this report, the Resolution Foundation argues that policy makers need to “proceed carefully”. The potential benefits of increasing salaries for workers, and the virtuous cycle this can cause in the economy, need to be balanced against the potential for wage increases to put pressure on employment. Risks and rewards also need to be balanced when considering things like equalising the minimum wage for workers of all ages. Whilst there is an obvious case for simplification, this risks making the minimum wage “a blunter tool”. Furthermore, increasing the wages of young workers may lead to a reduction in youth employment.

Further Education Pathways: Securing a successful and healthy life after education

Education Policy Institute and the Health Foundation

An ever-increasing proportion of young people take vocational equivalents to A levels, continued GCSE study, GCSE level vocational qualifications, lower-level qualifications and apprenticeships. These qualifications are largely taken in the further education sector. Young people following these further education pathways tend to have lower educational and employment outcomes, and worse health outcomes than their peers following academic routes. This report considers the role that further education pathways can play in closing this gap and preparing young people for a successful and healthy life after education. It also makes recommendations to the UK Government on further education policy.

Feel Poor, Work More: Explaining the UK's record employment

Resolution Foundation

Rising employment has been a common feature across advanced economies in the aftermath of the financial crisis – reflecting the common income shock it led to. This employment increase may well not simply reverse, and policy should be targeted to ensure that it does not. It is not yet clear if we can maintain our recent stronger pay growth – a necessary condition for households being able to ‘spend’ some of the increase on working less. But higher labour supply may well also gain a degree of path dependence and push up equilibrium participation rates. Among some groups and places, ensuring it does should be an explicit goal of policy, given the wider societal benefits of high labour market participation.

Flexibility Works: Why people choose flexible work

Recruitment and Employment Confederation

Focusing on temporary agency workers, contractors and freelancers working through employment businesses, the report sets out who these workers are and why individuals choose flexible work at different stages of their career. The study finds that flexible work is the new normal – two in five people in Great Britain (39 per cent) have worked as a temporary worker – and one in three people (32 per cent) would consider flexible work in the future.

Recommendations for government policy-makers include:

- Broaden the apprenticeship levy to boost progression for flexible workers – evolving the apprenticeship levy into a broader skills levy would boost training opportunities for hundreds of thousands of workers on flexible and temporary contracts.
- Prepare future generations for the changing world of work – education policy must help the next generation of workers to prepare for increasingly non-linear career options and raise awareness of different ways of working.
- Enforce existing regulations to protect workers and compliant businesses – effective enforcement of existing regulations is key to protecting the interests of flexible workers and to ensuring a level playing field for compliant businesses. This must include clarity on the legal status and obligations of umbrella companies and online recruitment apps.

Falling Short: The NHS workforce challenge

The Health Foundation

This report analyses the changes in the size and composition of the NHS workforce in England in the context of long-term trends, policy priorities and future projected need. It also examines workforce trends in social care: highlighting that, while the NHS is experiencing significant staffing pressures, the issues in social care are even greater and the outlook is concerning. Registered nurse jobs in adult social care have decreased by 10,400, or 20 per cent, since 2012, and by two per cent between 2017/18 and 2018/19.

The report concludes that there is a deeply embedded challenge of skills shortages in key areas of the NHS – nursing, GP services, and community and mental health services. The effect of these shortages is increasingly felt through problems with access and quality, and this is rippling out to other sectors – notably social care and the nursing home sector.

The Liquidity Trap: Financial experience and inclusion in the liquid workforce

Demos

The liquid workforce encompasses the self-employed, now making up more than 15 per cent of the labour market; temporary workers, the second fastest growing employment category after self-employment; zero-hours workers, freelancers and those with multiple flexible forms of employment. The report finds that the liquid workforce is less likely to be able to access financial services and products. This lack of financial accessibility, coupled with a lack of traditional employee rights and benefits, means that the liquid workforce is less financially secure than typical workers.

Recommendations include:

- The Government should work with organisations beyond the public sector - trade unions or financial institutions seem viable candidates - to help them establish universal portable benefit schemes for liquid workers, modelled on the Ghent System. These schemes should offer liquid workers those benefits typically reserved for employees, including sick pay and holiday pay.
- Employees leaving their place of work for self-employment should continue to participate in their previous employer's pension scheme on an 'opt out' basis.
- The Low Pay Commission should estimate the financial cost to self-employed people of not receiving important employee benefits, such as sick pay and maternity cover. This calculation should inform the creation of a 'Self-Employed National Living Wage' and a 'Self-Employed National Minimum Wage'.

■ ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Creating and Dismantling Government Departments

Institute for Government

The report looks at why government departmental restructures are made, the challenges they present and how they can be done well. It recommends that ministers should bear the following in mind when making the decision to rearrange departments:

- Ensure the new or changed department has clear objectives.

- Support staff morale, such as by creating a culture and identity for the organisation so that staff have a clear sense of what they are responsible for within it.
- Take time to consider the changes and whether alternatives exist (such as setting up a joint office between two or more departments).

The Halfway Point: Reflections on Big Local

Local Trust

Big Local is a National Lottery Community Fund-funded programme which commits £1m each to 150 neighbourhoods across England. The £217m originally provided by The National Lottery Community Fund to support this programme is the largest single-purpose Lottery-funded endowment ever made, and the biggest ever investment by a non-state funder in place-based, resident-led change.

In terms of scale, time horizon and ethos, nothing like Big Local has ever existed. Designed from the outset to be radically different from other funding programmes, at the heart of Big Local is a vision of empowered, resilient, dynamic, asset-rich communities making their own decisions on what is best for their area.

This publication marks several milestones. In 2019, the National Lottery celebrates its 25th birthday – 25 years of giving to good causes across the UK. In Big Local, the 150 areas have now crossed the halfway point in their 10–15-year spending plans, with many lessons learned along the way. This report shares some of the valuable knowledge gained from these communities.