

# UNLOCKING THE POWER OF LOCAL

REFLECTIONS ON THE  
NEW PLACE LEADERSHIP

*In partnership with:*

**CAPITA  
VEREDUS**

An NLGN essay collection



New Local Government Network (NLGN) is an independent think tank that seeks to transform public services, revitalise local political leadership and empower local communities. NLGN is publishing this report as part of its programme of research and innovative policy projects, which we hope will be of use to policy makers and practitioners. The views expressed are however those of the authors and not necessarily those of NLGN.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION: THE POWER OF PLACE LEADERSHIP

## Jessica Studdert

**As our economy becomes increasingly globalised, our public policy response needs to become more localised. Global phenomena and national decisions have local consequences. To ensure places are not buffeted by outside forces and are able to create relevant solutions, strong place-leadership must forge adaptation and resilience for the future.**

Reductions in public expenditure after the financial crash have had a dramatic impact on the resources available for local services. Before that, the long-term shift from an industrial to a service-based economy had already created different challenges and opportunities in different parts of the country. The Brexit vote laid bare the fault lines that exist between those communities who feel empowered by the opportunities of a globalised world, and those who feel left behind.

And yet the national policy framework has largely constrained the ability of localities themselves to shape their future. Different services and programmes work to the priorities of their accountable Whitehall departments rather than those of the places in which they are located. Opportunities to work creatively with other local actors and institutions can be missed altogether, or only pursued despite, rather than because of, systemic incentives to do so.

The early promise of devolution was to create new local levers and pooled resources across functional economic geographies. These would drive economic development, allocate infrastructure investment and integrate employment support to be relevant to local circumstances, in order to have more impact. But the devolution model pursued by government set out rigid governance requirements for a combined authority and an elected mayor, in return for new powers. Some areas have accepted this, and many areas

haven't, but in general the agenda has become subsumed by an internal focus on structures. Principle has been swallowed up by process, and as a result devolution is currently falling short of its potential.

Our essay collection is published at this critical juncture. We draw together a range of voices representing different institutions and stakeholders in places, to show how place-leadership is already emerging. In doing so, we hope to intervene in a debate preoccupied with structural form, by providing a renewed focus on function and the binding power of place.

All contributors share a recognition that no institution is an island and collaboration beyond organisational boundaries is essential. Local government has both 'hard' statutory responsibility and more nuanced but impactful convening power with partners in their communities. As the health service grapples with demand pressures, it is shifting towards a deeper understanding of its role within the wider economy. Universities increasingly recognise their status as anchor institutions which create new opportunities and linkages between the civic space and the knowledge economy. The conditions for a vibrant local economy require the private sector to be active collaborators over the longer term and not just market players in the short term. Supporting community capacity to grow and foster resilience is linked to a dynamic local voluntary and community sector which works to fill identified gaps and shape solutions to particular problems.

Place leadership recognises the interconnectedness of services, institutions and organisations. It seeks social and economic outcomes but is firmly linked to the unique identity and culture of the locality. At a time of increasing complexity, fragmentation and economic insecurity, it provides a route to clarity: a shared vision which binds the local to the global, and navigates a clear route through.



## 2 GOOD GROWTH AND THE ROLE OF PLACE LEADERSHIP

### Jo Miller

**With the Elected Mayor, I'm one half of the all-female duo responsible for the leadership of a borough of 305,000 people, bigger in size and population than the city of Newcastle, though slightly smaller than Iceland's 330,000 population.**

Doncaster is a city in all but name. We account for 22 per cent of the Sheffield City Region economy though we share no boundary with Sheffield. Our economy looks to the rest of South Yorkshire, to Leeds, Wakefield and York, to Scunthorpe, Selby and Goole, and to North Nottinghamshire at the southern end.

The Mayor and I have a relentless focus on growing the economy and the ability of our population to participate in it. We say to businesses we want you to come here and be successful, but we want you to share your success with your workers as progressive employers. We know that as a place we compete with many others for inward investment and growth, so we have to make sure our offer and delivery are pin sharp. The educational attainment and skills base in Yorkshire and the Humber is below the UK average, and in Doncaster it is below even that. Improving education and skills is critical to achieving the inclusive growth we desire.

All of this is about place. You have to understand the place, its psyche, characteristics, strengths, assets, threats and weaknesses to formulate your response as an organisation to the operating conditions we face. Knowing your place doesn't just impact on what you do and say, but how you say and do it and with/to whom. So, because Doncaster isn't a city, despite its size and characteristics, we know from work with business and local communities that it feels like a somewhat chippy underdog. We've tried to harness that psyche as we pitch for opportunities, like the National High Speed Rail College, currently being built here.

Like many other metropolitan areas, Doncaster has seen a massive reduction in budget in recent times and is set for the same over the next few years, as revenue support grant goes from making up 60 per cent of our income to zero. Alongside efficiency and protecting vital services, our priorities for investment have focussed on growing the economy, and the ability of Doncaster people to participate in it. Place impacts on what we do and how we do it.

It's a strategy that's proving successful. Housebuilding has tripled since 2010 and is at a 12 year high. The number of businesses is growing and we've experienced the second highest growth in business stock in the UK last year. The employment rate is at an 11 year high, with triple the growth rate in Yorkshire and the UK, and NEET levels are reducing – there are more and better jobs. Apprenticeship starts are more than the regional and national average. We are reducing the skills gap and closing the GCSE attainment gap. A great story, but still 75 per cent of businesses employ four people or less, and productivity and wages are low. In the EU referendum, seven out of 10 voters opted to leave the EU.

So though growth is here, and local people are benefitting, in the current 'post-fact' society, those metrics don't necessarily cut it – which is why our partnership, Team Doncaster, is focussing on telling the human stories that residents and businesses can connect to, to raise their ambition, aspiration and participation.

Team Doncaster – the borough's partnership across all sectors with a unifying purpose of ensuring that this place and its people thrive, is at the heart of Doncaster's renaissance. It's rightly, a large call on civic leadership, both political and managerial, as we act as first amongst equals bringing together the whole resources of our place to achieve progress. It's an energising relationship where we focus on what we can do together to achieve progress, rather than what we can't do. At its core, this civic leadership of place is about distributed leadership, collaboration and networks, as we know that we achieve more by loosening power and control whilst maintaining accountability.

It's the way we do things round here.

# 3 PLACE LEADERSHIP IN TWO TIER AREAS

## Cllr Daniel Humphreys

**There are three essential ingredients for place leadership in two-tier areas: collaboration, collaboration and collaboration.**

In practice, collaborative leadership means a lot of work around making decisions collectively and coming together to develop a shared vision for your area. Here in Worthing we are starting to see the fruits of successful collaboration with our partners at West Sussex County Council, the Coast to Capital LEP, and the Greater Brighton Economic Board. We have seen a large and ambitious school place expansion programme that has recently led to a brand new secondary school opening in the borough. There has been a rejuvenation of the street scene in the town centre, which has replaced a run-down public space with a newly repaved and reconstructed open space that lends itself to hosting markets and events. Agreement has been reached to build a multiplex cinema, restaurants and homes on a brownfield site and we are now well on the way to delivering ultra-fast broadband in Worthing - a project that will be critical in giving our businesses and residents a platform to engage with the 21st century economy.

There is considerable evidence that these activities are having a real and positive effect on the local area. Educational standards are high, more people are going into apprenticeships and our JSA count is below 1 per cent. These are remarkable statistics for a coastal town with the constraints to growth that come with our location (blessed in many ways), hemmed in between the sea and the South Downs.

In pursuing further growth, Worthing Borough and West Sussex County Councils have agreed that the priorities include further public realm improvements in the town centre, brownfield site regeneration and action to tackle transport issues, not to mention further work on devolution to fix a

fundamentally broken public sector. We have worked together to develop an Investment Prospectus for Worthing which, now published, is being driven forward by the 'Growth Board' - a body consisting of Borough and County Council officers and members. Funding for the Investment Prospectus was provided by West Sussex County Council who were also responsible for the formation of the Growth Board (one of seven across West Sussex). This approach is a practical demonstration about how different tiers can and should take a strategic approach to growth.

Anyone who has served as a councillor in a two tier area knows that the public do not distinguish between the different tiers and that when people refer to 'the Council' they invariably mean the District or Borough Council as opposed to the County Council. This is supported by LGA research. Because of this dynamic, District and Borough Councils tend to be closer to the areas they serve and the issues that need to be overcome. In relation to brownfield sites, I've never seen a letter in a newspaper or a social media comment damning the County Council for not having delivered a regeneration project. If I had a pound for every time I'd seen such a comment about the Borough Council I could afford to develop the sites myself.

The County Council has a different, though equally important, role. As the strategic body for the whole county they bring funding, a strategic overview, and links to schools and highways. We couldn't deliver any of our growth projects without the support of the County Council.

There will always be a slight tension between different tiers of government and while that can reach counterproductive levels in some areas it can also help to drive partners forward. Here in Worthing we are working to prove that by working hard from the very beginning to bring about a shared vision we can, with some willingness to 'let go' where necessary, drive forward economic growth for our community. That's the essence of place-based leadership in two tier areas.

# 4 HOW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS HELP TO DELIVER PLACE TRANSFORMATION

## Harry Catherall

**Blackburn with Darwen is a vibrant place with strong communities, leadership, vision and ambition. For us, the concept of place shaping is nothing new, and we have always worked in partnership with the public and private sectors. Collaborating, communicating and innovating are business as usual.**

Our place-based partnerships for health and social care date back to 2010. July 2016 saw the launch of a new-style partnership with Capita – the first of its kind in the north of the UK – to deliver a blend of highways- and property-related technical services and business cases that will deliver savings, income and growth.

The partnership will ultimately create new opportunities around the development of land, local assets, and skills that generate income and transform Blackburn and Darwen. The renewed partnership has a new focus – with flexibility to meet our changing needs now and in the future. Supporting this work is a new place brand and place marketing strategy, launched by the Local Strategic Partnership. This aims to raise the profile and reputation of Blackburn with Darwen as an innovative, well-connected and forward-looking place to do business.

During these challenging financial times, we have continued to invest in our place. Over the past six years, the Council and partners have invested more than £400 million in transforming Blackburn town centre and retail offer, improving highways and transport connections, building new leisure centres in both towns and developing Blackburn's FE and HE college campus.

Last year, we completed the first phase of our innovative, £30m Cathedral Quarter project with new Grade A offices providing 35,000 square feet of floor space, the opening of a Premier Inn in the heart of Blackburn and new public realm around Lancashire's cathedral. This also features the first cathedral cloisters to be built in this country in more than 600 years.

The opening of a flagship bus station in Blackburn was the climax of our £40million Pennine Reach programme, creating a rapid bus transit system along the Accrington-Blackburn-Darwen corridor, and this year, we'll open the Making Rooms, which will host Lancashire's first FabLab featuring 3D printers and micro manufacturing machinery. This state of the art manufacturing and technology hub – one of only two projects of its type in the UK – will put Blackburn on the map as a place for start-up businesses and manufacturing innovation.

Our Local Strategic Partnership has committed to delivering a series of targets around business and housing growth by 2020 through its Plan for Prosperity, including 3,250 new homes, 100,000 sq m of new commercial floor space, and as many as 2,700 new jobs.

This growth will generate £13.5m of additional, recurrent income for the Council by 2026, helping us to become financially sustainable and protect essential local services.

Recognising the new focus upon place, our strategic partnership with Capita is getting us ready to compete regionally and nationally, showcase place-based innovation, take a key role in the Northern Powerhouse, and bring growth and prosperity to Blackburn and Darwen, and the wider region.

# 5 THE CIVIC UNIVERSITY

## Barbara Colledge

Universities have “*acquired an unprecedented role in present-day society*”<sup>1</sup> which goes beyond higher education and skills. They connect local places to national and international actors, promote inward investment and support social as well as economic development, from health and wellbeing to tolerance and civic responsibility. Their diverse role of educator, employer, investor, purchaser and as a promoter of enterprise, research, innovation and business growth suggests a “re-invention” of universities as Civic Universities through their engagement in the shaping of place.<sup>2</sup> As Ransom puts it, “*Universities can act as ‘connective anchors’ – coordinating economic and social developments at local, regional and international level, and connecting these levels.*”<sup>3</sup>

Universities as “anchor institutions” of and for a place have grown in significance over the last decade, emerging from experience in the United States and more recently in the UK as contributors, coordinators and collaborators of place-based development.<sup>4</sup> In the US this has fostered the renewal of de-industrialised cities, creating new ways to generate economies and new opportunities to share prosperity and value.<sup>5</sup> However, the role of universities extends further as vital contributors to UK economic, social

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1 UNESCO (1998) Volume 1: Final Report. World Conference on Higher Education Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century Vision and Action. UNESCO, 5-9 October 1998, Paris, ED-98/CONF.202/CLD.49.

2 Goddard, J. (2009) *Reinventing the Civic University*. NESTA, London.

3 Ransom, J. (2015) *FUTURE OF CITIES: Universities and Cities*. Government Office for Science. 17 November 2015. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-cities-universities-and-cities> Accessed 3 October 2016.

4 Centre for Local Economic Strategies [CLES] (2015) *Creating a Good Local Economy: The Role of Anchor Institutions*. CLES.

5 Murrasse, D. (2007) *City Anchors: Leveraging Anchor Institutions for Urban Success*. CEOs for Cities, Chicago, IL; Porter, Michael, E. and Kramer, Mark R., (2011) *Creating Shared Value*. Harvard Business Review, 89/1-2, January–February, pp 62-77, Sage; Centre for Local Economic Strategies [CLES] (2015) *Building a new Local Economy: Lessons from the United States*. CLES.

and sustainable development,<sup>6</sup> accounting for 757,268FTE jobs, £73 billion economic output and £39.9 billion GDP in the UK economy in 2011/12.<sup>7</sup>

Universities are unique in their leadership role as objective place makers, creating and promoting knowledge and connecting this with a full spectrum of industry and professional sectors, education and skills, health and community actors and international agendas. Like local authorities as pivotal actors and facilitators of place based services, universities offer a complementary and pivotal set of services for society within a locality or region, alongside their impact through national and international connectivity. This contribution is a force for good that needs to be harnessed and supported, and where relevant incentivised through regional growth, devolved and place-based funding streams.

If we are to rebalance our national economy and develop a more shared prosperity, increased productivity and inclusive growth within local economies, the role of universities is fundamental.<sup>8</sup> As significant local actors with a longevity in place, universities could and should be leaders and catalysts for transformation with an enhanced strategic role as equal partners in the leadership and development of places, cities and regions. For example, Leeds Beckett University has established strategic partnerships with three local authorities and other organisations in the region to work together on projects to support enterprise, research and innovation for local economic and social development. And in Preston, the City Council works strategically with local anchor organisations, including the University of Lancashire, Preston College and Cardinal Newman College, to increase local procurement spend.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lambert, R. (2003) Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration. Final Report. December, HM Treasury, HMSO; Wilson, T. (2012) A Review of Business-University Collaboration. URN 12/610, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, February; Witty, A. (2013) Encouraging a British Invention Revolution: Sir Andrew Witty's Review of Universities and Growth. Final Report and Recommendations, BIS/13/1241, October, Business Innovation and Skills.

<sup>7</sup> Universities UK (2015) The Economic Role of Universities. The Funding Environment for Universities 2015. Universities UK, London.

<sup>8</sup> Colledge, B. and Conkar, T. (2016) Joining the Dots - Universities' roles in integrating local, regional, national and international geographies. In "Until we have built Jerusalem", The role of Universities in the changing Northern Political and Spatial Geography. Leeds Beckett University, pp 31-52.

<sup>9</sup> URBACT EU (2016) Procure – creating a good local economy. Website. 19 April 2016. [Online]. Available from: <http://urbact.eu/procure---creating-good-local-economy> [Accessed 10 October 2016].



Nationally and locally, universities create, develop and harness knowledge for the further development of our society and the long-term success of our people and nation. Working strategically, alongside and together with local and national governments, businesses and communities, a new commitment of and for universities could deliver real transformation of places, people and prosperity across the UK in a post-Brexit global economy.

# 6 HOW PLACES ARE VITAL TO A VIBRANT ECONOMY

## Sacha Romanovitch

In a post-Brexit world, the question of how we'll ensure that Britain has a vibrant economy where no one is left behind is more critical than ever to address. We know that the global trends on inequality between the haves and have nots is mirrored in the UK. Out of the G7 economies we have the largest divide between our capital city and the regions of any other. Indeed, research conducted for Grant Thornton by CEBR put a price on the impact of this on our economy. If the regions in the UK were performing at the average of the G7 economies excluding London (which outperforms) then that would result in an additional £479bn to the economy by 2025.

Unlocking the potential in places is critical to this. Without an environment where people and business can flourish we know that discontent, poverty and disenfranchisement fester. It is no surprise that many of those areas registering the highest Leave vote in the recent EU referendum aligned closely to areas of economic and social deprivation with a shared sense of loss of cultural identity.

So how do we do this? We know that we are in an era where we are starting to feel the impact of the world reaching the limits of its sustainable resources, where our ageing population and health of the nation are placing strains on public resources and where our infrastructure from the industrial revolution needs transforming for tomorrow's world. At a local and central government level the paradox presents itself each day – society demanding more for less.

It has become clear that the only way to face these challenges and find innovative solutions to them is to create a clear vision for the future of places and then convene local people from the public, private and third sectors to

share ideas and resources. Inspired by work done in Cleveland, US, where through such collaboration people from across the community created a new vision for a green city on a blue lake, we're leading inquiries in twelve cities in the UK to bring together people from all parts of society to discover the strengths they share, dream of what the future of their city could be and to design the actions to make it happen. Early signs from our first inquiry in Sheffield are good – through connecting all the great ideas and sharing resources it is possible to make change happen, not just talk about it.

But, I hear you say, you've been to loads of things like this and nothing ever happens. So what has to be different if things are to change? It's all about the mind-set of leaders – being prepared to let go of their way of doing things, and being open to new possibilities to work towards a shared outcome. It can be scary to feel like you're losing control, when you know **your** answer is right, until you realise that there really are multiple ways in which one can capitalise on opportunities and deal with challenges: moving forward is the most important thing.

Of course when one looks at the history of places in the UK this is one of our strengths – when we have a mind-set of inquiry, collaboration and action we can make amazing things happen – like the 2012 Olympics, the Manchester and Glasgow Commonwealth Games and the Tour de France starting in Yorkshire. Just imagine if we could unleash that mind-set across the whole of the UK.

# 7 THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN CREATING BETTER PLACES

## Duncan Shrubsole

**The implications of Brexit will play out for years to come on the national and international stage. Yet, despite its global impact, research suggests that how people voted in the EU referendum was very much driven by local experiences. Whether that was feeling marginalised in the North or misunderstood in the market towns of middle England, it is what was happening on people's high streets that were big determinants of why they voted primarily to leave. Place matters.**

It makes sense. Whatever the headline GDP figures, it is the strength or weakness of the local economy which shape our prospects and perspective, and our sense of identity and wellbeing. So how do we create places that thrive? Places which generate and sustain economic growth and social opportunity, and which crucially do not fall or leave anyone behind?

Business, local government and the wider public sector are obviously key. But the voluntary and community sector also has a vital role to play. It needs to be central both to the debate about priorities and to the actual practice of local leadership.

Ninety-seven per cent of the VCS is intimately connected to a particular place, with a turnover of less than £1m. These small and medium sized charities have been developed by communities, with communities and for communities: people of goodwill coming together to right a wrong, meet a need or argue for better. From picking communities up after floods and riots, to providing lifelines for those suffering domestic abuse, to tackling loneliness amongst the elderly, engaging disaffected young people or integrating refugees, the VCS creates and provides the solutions, picking up the pieces where others fail.

And it's not just what they do that matters but how they do it. They come from the community, employing local people, growing local leaders and spending money locally. They regenerate local spaces, and provide focal points, catalysing action, development, resources and volunteering. Through their local entrepreneurship, collaborative leadership and positive action, they are past masters at doing more with less. The best of them are constantly identifying new ways to ensure not just that no one is left behind, but that people get ahead in the first place.

But too often their solutions are taken for granted or ignored. Too few see the VCS as partners, not just for providing vital services but for engaging communities and building a sense of place and purpose. Too few recognise and indeed cherish their ability to bring together citizens, communities, businesses, civic groups and statutory services to build bridges and galvanise action.

Sadly, too often the VCS are being actively marginalised. They aren't included in strategic decisions. And the switch from grants to contracts has seen a catastrophic fall in income of up to 44 per cent for small and medium sized charities.<sup>1</sup> Procurement processes that might work for bulk services like rubbish collection and an all-consuming focus on apparent economies of scale has resulted in unit cost being the only thing that matters, despite the complex human-centred nature of what charities are doing and the long-term value to communities of their broader role.

Yes, charities can be helped around tendering, and certainly commissioning and procurement should be improved. But we need to frame the discussion more broadly than that: not just treating the VCS as part of a centrally-commissioned delivery chain, but encouraging and sustaining the role of the VCS in changing systems and places for the better.

We know some councils are actively thinking about this. For example, Camden is developing longer-term strategic relationships with local charities. Businesses too are building new partnerships, such as Lloyds

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/assets/uploads/LBF\\_Smallest%20Charities%20Hardest%20Hit\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_final.pdf](https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/assets/uploads/LBF_Smallest%20Charities%20Hardest%20Hit_Executive_Summary_final.pdf)

Banking Group staff mentoring local charities supported by the Foundation and helping build their capacity.

Local charities are front and centre to building and sustaining thriving communities. But they need to be front and centre in decision making too if we are going to help local communities take back control of their social and economic prospects.

# 8 HOW NHS SPENDING POWER CAN HELP TO DEVELOP LOCAL ECONOMIES

## Michael Wood

**In a system where success measures are either clinical or institutional, understanding how the NHS brings prosperity across a place is not only hard to quantify, it's also hard to incentivise. This mind-set is now being challenged by local leaders who understand that the determinants of a healthy and productive population are everybody's business.**

Two areas in particular where the NHS has an important voice in local economic discussions are employment and its spending power.

The NHS is the largest employer in every Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area in England. Less well known is that only 6 per cent of its workforce is below 25 – half the national average. This is indicative of the modern challenge in adapting to a place-based approach – national command and control has taken precedence over developing local workforce supply in partnership with other services. The entry points to the NHS, and social care, are numerous, varied and potentially career defining, yet have largely been disregarded. I expect the Apprenticeship Levy will stimulate new and innovative thinking in terms of future recruitment.

While the NHS has always seen itself as a local employer, it is now taking more seriously its role as a local job creator. Well-being enables employment, which in turn reduces dependency on public services and increases local tax receipts - it is in many ways the best possible form of healthcare. Despite this, our prevention and promotion services, spread across primary, community, public and mental health, routinely receive far less investment than the dominant acute sector. Health and Wellbeing Boards might be at different stages in their development but they offer the collective approach necessary to bring some balance to the debate within their localities.

To understand how healthcare expenditure can develop the local economy, one first has to understand how much the NHS does, and does not, spend locally. A routine challenge of mine is to ask NHS leaders whether they can track their local pound. If they can, they are taking a significant step towards understanding how influential they can be with local partners.

The national financial picture for the NHS is, as with many other sectors, not good. As public service reform moves up the agenda for combined authorities, it is in everyone's interests to better align financial planning locally. The NHS, through both its commissioning and procurement, can play a significant role in attracting businesses to a local area and enabling them to grow, driving new low carbon and green developments, influencing infrastructure provision including housing and world-class research sites, and facilitating a range of innovative university spin-outs. Hospitals can and should act like anchor institutions, working in partnership to provide a basis for local economic development and to bring in the external support the NHS needs to embed the new care models necessary for a modern health service.

At the heart of this issue though is whether the NHS locally is considered a cost or an investment. The answer largely depends on how the service acts – if it cannot incentivise, record and promote how it brings prosperity to the communities it serves then not only will the NHS remain isolated within its place, but the place will be poorer too.



# CONCLUSION: HOW DO WE BRING THE NEW PLACE LEADERS TOGETHER?

## Nick Cole

Those who know me well will tell you that I rarely travel for business without my somewhat battered fourth edition of John Betjeman's Collected Poems. Betjeman, like me, was fascinated with place; the people, architecture, landscape and culture of the British Isles. From my reading of this collection of essays, getting under the skin of the place in which a public service provider operates is a common theme. As Jo Miller writes:

*"You have to understand the place; its psyche, characteristics, strengths, assets, threats and weaknesses to formulate your response as an organisation to the operating conditions you face."*

Indeed, from my experience the most successful local public services are delivered by organisations, or groups of organisations, who know who they are, what they are there to do and who they serve. They also recognise that there are times to step aside and let someone else take over.

I am filled with confidence that the contributors from all parts of public service to this collection clearly demonstrate that the willing is there to develop truly integrated services that transcend traditional institutional or geographic boundaries. I am also thrilled to see real and practical examples of collaborative place based leadership in action.

In both this collection and in [Leaders Who Collaborate, Collaborators Who Lead](#) it's clear that successful place-based leadership will only work if the right leaders are in the right place at the right time and that all contributing organisations have leadership teams with the right skills, experience, style and values in place.

As a recruiter, identifying, attracting and retaining place-based collaborative leaders is a major challenge. Recent experience in appointing to joint local government, health and social care roles in a devolved setting has highlighted the shortage of leaders with the emotional intelligence and sectoral cross-cutting experience required to navigate complex political organisations each with very different languages and cultures.

The way we select is not always helpful either. There is often a lack of consensus amongst hiring organisations and their partners as to who will ‘fit’ the place and this view is often tinged by who is perceived as the ‘lead’ collaborator. It is not uncommon to hear local authority Members say that NHS candidates don’t have political experience or for NHS NEDs to say local government officers don’t understand clinicians.

In order to bring the new place leaders together, hiring authorities and their advisors need to look beyond the usual suspects and demonstrate real bravery in their leadership appointments. There are too few examples of local authority chief executives coming from outside the sector or of hospital chiefs moving into leadership roles in education, or the Third Sector.

The government’s likely preoccupation with Brexit makes for a window of opportunity for places to re-shape and re-invent themselves largely unnoticed or unfettered. By implication there is also therefore the opportunity to recruit a new generation of devolved public servants with the wherewithal to deliver services shaped by local demand and the unique needs of the place.



**As our economy becomes increasingly globalised, our public policy response needs to become more localised. Global phenomena and national decisions have local consequences. To ensure places are not buffeted by outside forces and are able to create relevant solutions, strong place-leadership must forge resilience in the future.**

Our essay collection is published at this critical juncture. We draw together a range of voices representing different institutions and stakeholders in places, to show how place-leadership is already emerging. In doing so, we hope to intervene in a debate preoccupied with structural form, by providing a renewed focus on function and the binding power of place.

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