

DEVOLUTION DEALS: THE ROLE OF NEIGHBOURHOODS

What is a Devolution Deal?

Devolution Deals are agreements to devolve powers and spending on public services away from Whitehall departments to local areas. These areas are represented by consortiums of local authorities, coming together on a county-wide or sub-regional basis. Devolution deals are a bottom up process to allow areas to drive their own economic growth and the transformation of public services. Initial proposals have been put forward by 37 areas in England and these are now in detailed negotiations with Government. Cornwall's Deal has already been announced and it is expected that there will be several more before the end of the calendar year.

For some years the Government has been working with key partner organisations to empower local people to play a role in influencing and scrutinising decisions about their area, including taking control of some services. DCLG programmes like Neighbourhood Planning, Our Place and Delivering Differently are making a real difference, as is our support for parishes and town councils. The Government wants to see Deals including proposals for further devolution of services to neighbourhoods – broadening and deepening the work that is already happening.

How are Deals relevant to local neighbourhoods?

- Ministers have said that where feasible, devolution of decision-making and service delivery should be extended to community level: town councils, civil parishes, voluntary organisations, residents' associations, faith groups etc. They are always pleased to hear about good examples of this.
- The Deals should help accelerate devolution to neighbourhoods: delivering improved outcomes through better coordination of activity and better tailoring of services to suit local needs; reducing demand on services by allowing problems to be tackled early; and building community resilience.
- Evidence also shows that devolution to neighbourhoods delivers better value for money. Localities supported under Our Place produced cost benefit analyses that showed for every pound spent implementing local service models, the financial return to the state was just under £3. Exemplars in worklessness and health and social care show even higher average returns.

How can my parish/town council take advantage of this opportunity? Some suggestions...

- Approach those working up Devolution Deals in your area and offer to help with designing and delivering their proposals. Your local Council can provide contact details.
- If you are already delivering services effectively at a neighbourhood level, make sure your local Deal partnership knows about this and builds it into their programme.
- Make links with other parish and town councils, VCS organisations, residents' associations, faith groups etc. in your county or region, so as to present a joined-up approach.
- Pull together good examples of where the involvement of neighbourhoods/community groups in decision making and/or service delivery has worked well in your area, and back these up with facts and figures. A good example is below.
- Get advice from expert organisations such as Locality, NALC, SLCC and NAVCA.
- Visit the Just Act Forum webpage (www.justact.org.uk/forums) and tell other areas about what you are doing. And we in Government are always keen to hear people's experience.

Martock Parish Council is leading an Our Place partnership which is working to improve the health, wellbeing, skills, financial security and quality of life of local people and to reduce dependency on health and welfare services. The partnership is developing more integrated ways of working with partners, using local commissioning and involving the third sector. A paid community worker is developing a volunteer support network, and coordinating activities such as life skills training, joint care planning, intergenerational projects, a befriending service, a job club and employability training. The programme is projected to deliver a financial return ratio of 1.84 (from increased employment and decreased health care costs, evictions and homelessness) and an economic return ratio of 5.15.

DEVOLUTION IS RELEVANT TO ALL OF US AND IS HAPPENING NOW.