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Who will lead the Manchester powerhouse?

Iain Deas

Simon Jenkins recently treated readers of *The Guardian* to an account of the rebuilding of city-regional governance in Greater Manchester. The story was one of heroic struggle by Manchester's civic leaders, guided by the enlightened leadership of Chancellor George Osborne, in overcoming bureaucratic inertia and parochial self-interest to rekindle the sense of bold, farsighted municipal leadership for which the city had once been famed.

Jenkins' otherwise forgettable paean to the wisdom of local and national political leaders was instructive in highlighting the difficulties in brokering agreement about the establishment of an elected mayor for Greater Manchester.

Announced in November 2014, the decision formed part of a wider programme of devolution to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). Increased local discretion over housing, planning, policing, skills training and transport continued a process of 'Devo Manc' that began — modestly and somewhat hesitantly — almost immediately after the abolition of Greater Manchester County in 1986. The process has since gathered momentum, to the extent that the city-region's responsibilities are now beginning to rival those enjoyed by London and cities overseas.

The advent of a city-regional mayor is surprising. Amongst the many models mooted for the city-region prior to the 2011 inception of the GMCA, the option of a powerful city-region mayor generated most disquiet. Local policy elites argued that a Greater Manchester mayoralty risked disrupting carefully honed

but fragile institutional and personal relationships carved over a period of two decades and more.

Greater Manchester has been extolled for its efforts to build city-regional institutions, the argument runs, because the focus has been on forging consensus around a narrow range of issues connected to economic development, eschewing the broadly based agenda that would accompany a city-region mayor. As a result, Greater Manchester has avoided the internecine wrangling evident in England's other major city-regions. There is merit in this reasoning — to a point. Greater Manchester's governance has been unapologetically technocratic. The operation of politics largely beyond the electorate's gaze has helped to avoid the potential chaos that could accompany ten local authorities and numerous competing parochial and sectoral interests. Greater Manchester's political scene has been characterised by an absence of rancour, with most arguments confined to political-officer interaction and largely devoid of ideologically driven debate.

Conflict has surfaced only on the few occasions the city-region has opened debate to the wider electorate.

The referendum in 2008 — which saw nearly 80 per cent of voters reject proposals for a London-style congestion charge for Greater Manchester — illustrated how carefully nurtured consensus can rapidly disintegrate when the need for local electoral sanction allows dormant intergovernmental rivalries to resurface.

The traumas associated with Greater Manchester's occasional dalliances with local democratic ►

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engagement explain the preference of the city-region's leaders for what they argue is a more streamlined mode of governance. The return of old-style metropolitan government, and the accompanying bureaucratic baggage of

committees and elections, would restrict the ability to get things done, they suggest. However, this standpoint brings costs. The previous rejection of a mayoral model means that Greater Manchester is lacking the popular visibility and buy-in evident in London. Greater Manchester is missing an individual with the clout derived from electoral legitimacy and the authority to negotiate with central government on a more equal footing. Greater Manchester lacks a Boris or a Ken.

The absence of a charismatic city-region mayor may have helped secure consensus amongst political elites. The prospect of a Mancunian figurehead drawn from outside the world of metropolitan governance has provoked alarm amongst some within the city-region's leadership. As elsewhere in England, proposals for a mayor for the city were decisively rejected by electors in 2012, but government support for a mayoral model is longstanding, predating the current administration. Pointing towards the experience of cities in North America and elsewhere in Europe, the argument has been that city (-region) mayors can help reconnect politicians to a disenchanted electorate, while imbuing urban areas with the kind of dynamic, visionary leadership felt to be lacking in the staid world of local government.

Greater Manchester's leaders have accepted the need for more strategic leadership, but until now

Voter disquiet means that the election of a populist, non-establishment figure is not implausible.

argued that existing structures — while low key and only indirectly accountable to citizens — are effective. The apparent volte face in accepting the mayoral model probably reflects the pragmatism that has long characterised the city-region's dealings with central

government. Accommodation with Whitehall reflects a desire to accede to the centre's wishes, in return for devolution of further power and responsibility in the future. In a context of austerity politics, local political leaders had little choice than to accept the mayoral model and assume additional discretionary powers and increased resources as partial compensation for wider public expenditure cuts.

It is tempting to speculate on the identity of the first city-region mayor. It may seem improbable to envisage a GMCA led by erstwhile Manchester luminary Bez, the former Happy Mondays appendage now reinvented as an anti-fracking activist. However, voter disquiet means that the election of a populist, non-establishment figure is not implausible. The prospect of an independent non-aligned mayor would certainly inject a discordant note into the harmonious world of metropolitan governance.

As it is, the good and great of Greater Manchester are probably relaxed about arrangements for an interim appointee in 2015, prior to an election for mayor two years later. The city-region's leaders will hope for an insider nominee whose appointment can be ratified by a grateful electorate. This might be an optimistic — or naive — scenario. Manchester's metropolitan politics might be about to get interesting. **OD**

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The making of the Greater Manchester mayor - what next?

Francesca Gains

Much has been made of backroom deals between the Chancellor, George Osborne, and Manchester City Council's chief executive Sir Howard Bernstein to deliver the most significant devolutionary settlement of Whitehall budgets in England.

The price of the deal is an elected mayor who, from 2017, will oversee significant sums of devolved spending and will be answerable to a cabinet of the ten council leaders of the Greater Manchester authorities.

For some attending a recent cities@manchester debate, the imposition of an elected mayor is seen as an unwelcome and undemocratic step. However, this view underplays the way in which this deal represents the culmination of more than ten years of hard work and commitment by all of the region's elected leaders (and their officers) to collaborate and innovate to deliver economic and social goals in the region. Greater Manchester led the way in establishing the first combined authority and making it work, despite the political and organisational frictions that this entailed.

In the wake of the Scottish referendum, as all parties face up to the reality that the devolutionary genie is well and truly out of the bottle, and with a powerful economic case being made by the City Growth Commission and others, the 'Devo Manc' deal is an idea whose time has come.

Research at The University of Manchester examining the first city mayors suggests that there are reasons why an elected mayor is

the right model for the new settlement. The visibility of a mayor means the public knows who to hold to account for the spending decisions now to be made in and across the region. Being directly elected will keep the mayor responsive to all communities.

As the mayor of New York Bill de Blasio says, "every neighbourhood gets a fair shot". Being directly elected offers incentives for mayors to find ways of engaging with the public, which can encourage innovation and extend policy consultation between elections. Their mandate frees up mayors from party management, enabling time to devote to advocacy and lobbying for the area.

All systems have strengths and weaknesses, and whilst the executive arrangements proposed for the Greater Manchester mayoral model are strong in that veto powers are given to the ten leaders, there are other parts of the design which now need to be developed to ensure the correct checks and balances.

It will be essential that the Mayor learns from the good practices of (some) police and crime commissioners and avoids some weaknesses in opening up transparency of decision making, allowing public questions, and providing information about the timing and outcomes of decisions.

It will be important to deliver effective scrutiny of the increasingly complex commissioning environment of public services. Some have advocated the establishment of local public accounts committees of non-executive councillors in localities, perhaps supported by co-opted expertise and informed ►

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by citizen panels.

There are other opportunities to draw on the expertise and knowledge of local non-executive councillors across all authorities, to work with their populace in community planning, which would feed into the development of the mayor's spatial plan.

It will also be key to consider equality and diversity; there is a single female council leader in Greater Manchester. The mayoral cabinet might look very 'male and pale' compared to Westminster and Holyrood. The composition of the leadership of the ten authorities is unlikely to change quickly, so how can the new mayor ensure the inclusion of women and BME voices around the cabinet table?

A commitment to conducting full equality impact

The visibility of a mayor means the public knows who to hold to account for the spending decisions now to be made in and across the region.

assessments of spending policies will be essential to ensure that policies are responsive, not just to the geography of the region, but to the diversity of the communities served.

In the creation of the Greater Manchester mayor attention must be paid to making the democratic case alongside the economic and social case, and

it is essential to engage the public in this devolutionary experiment. There are tremendous opportunities to have conversations with communities, local councillors and stakeholders in how to be creative and bold in designing the checks and balances. The next stages will require a spirit of co-operation and innovation that the region has long demonstrated. **OD**

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A mayor for all seasons?

Colin Talbot

To many in the political elite, mayors seem to have become the default answer to the problems of local government and governance in the UK, or more specifically England.

Linked to the idea of English devolution as an answer to Scottish ‘home rule’ this has become a heady brew. Perhaps now it’s time to ask some sober questions about this project of ‘Devo Manc’, at least in terms of the proposed system of government for Manchester.

My argument is, simply put: elected mayors are based on assumptions about what Archie Brown has called ‘the myth of the strong leader’; they are a ‘presidential’ style of government that is ill-suited to our ‘parliamentary’ political tradition, especially at local government level; in Manchester specifically it risks undermining the delicate balance that has been so successful with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority; its imposition without a referendum is a fundamental error by the political elite, that may well backfire.

The myth of the strong leader

The first and most important idea underpinning the whole movement towards mayors, commissioners and the like is what Archie Brown memorably calls ‘the myth of the strong leader’. Brown’s main argument is that such concentration of power in a democracy is antithetical to democratic norms of dispersal of power, and checks and balances. He points out that even in autocratic systems, collective leaderships tend to fare better than single person dictatorships.

Brown also argues that the idea that a single leader can have the ability, or time, to properly consider a wide range of policy issues is obviously false and impractical. In reality, what tends to happen in such leader-centred systems is that she/he has to delegate to unelected deputies who speak on her/his behalf, with all sorts of problematic consequences.

There is also a tendency towards hubristic behaviour in any system that is built on the assumption that one person has all of the answers. In their recent book *The Blunders of Our Governments* Anthony King and Ivor Crewe analyse 12 major ‘cock-ups’. Going through their conclusions there are three near universal factors that apply to all the cases:

- A lack of ‘deliberation’ in decision-making, meaning those usually made in haste by a single person or small group (all 12 cases) – this is also often linked to the development of ‘group-think’ in the decision-making coterie (eight cases)
- The absence of any serious Ministerial accountability for their decisions (12 cases), meaning that few Ministers ever stay around long enough to be held accountable for policies that they enacted
 - The weakness of Parliament in pre-scrutiny of policies - although legislation is now subject to pre-scrutiny, policies as such are not subjected to thorough examination usually until well after they have been implemented (and disaster has struck). Even when Parliament does try to scrutinise things in advance, it has few resources and almost zero power to prevent ‘blunders’ happening. ▶

The success of Greater Manchester isn’t just down to political geography, but also to the way in which the leaderships of the ten local councils have managed to work together.

Of these three reasons, the first and third especially apply to ‘presidentialist’ systems of mayors or police and crime commissioners.

‘Presidentialism’ in local government

Britain is a parliamentary democracy. However, ‘parliament’ does not just apply to the Palace of Westminster; the devolved governments and local government too are ‘parliamentary’ in form: that is they are made up of elected representatives who appoint an executive of some sort.

Indeed, I would argue that local government was, until quite recently, more ‘parliamentary’ than central government. In the old, pre-cabinet form of local government ‘the Council’ was the executive. Decisions were taken through committees representing all political sides in the Council, so it would be rather like the select committees in Parliament actually running their respective departments of state.

This system has been drifting in a more autonomous executive direction for some time. First, in the 1970s and 80s the role of committee chairs was strengthened and the powers of council leaders and council chief executives grew.

Through the Local Government Act 2000 the idea of a leader and cabinet system was introduced, with committees reduced to the role ‘scrutiny’. The final step in this evolution towards executive presidentialism is the attempt to create directly elected mayors (police and crime commissioners is a parallel change in the same direction).

What is fascinating about this evolution, and especially most of the academic analysis (and in some cases advocacy) of it, has been the degree to which it has ignored wider debates about

presidential versus parliamentary forms of government. The predominant view amongst political scientists studying national forms of government has long been that parliamentary forms of government are inherently more stable and produce better results than presidential ones. With the major exception of the United States, presidential forms have a much greater tendency to degenerate into autocracies or dictatorships.

There are then two objections to ‘mayoral’ forms from this perspective: first, that such a ‘presidential’ form is inherently weaker and less preferable than the old ‘parliamentary’ forms of local government; and secondly that grafting such a ‘presidential’ model onto the root stock of parliamentarism in the UK is bound to cause all sorts of problems.

Why a mayor for Greater Manchester?

Since the abolition, by Margaret Thatcher, of the metropolitan councils in the 1980s, Manchester has been hailed as having managed to create the necessary conurbation-wide forms of governance and collaboration. This culminated in the formation of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, on a voluntary basis, bringing together in collaboration the ten local authorities that make up Greater Manchester.

One of the reasons this worked so well is a simple matter of political geography – Manchester City Council is roughly the same size as the other nine

councils and this equality of size makes for easier relationships. Compare this to Birmingham, where the city council is much bigger than its neighbours, and conurbation-wide collaboration has been markedly more difficult.

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political geography, but also to the way in which the leaderships of the ten local councils have managed, despite major political differences (and the usual rivalries) to work together.

The imposition of a directly elected Greater Manchester mayor risks unsettling this delicate balance. A Greater Manchester mayor will almost certainly always be a Labour mayor, unless something spectacular happens. (In the only parallel, the PCC elections of 2012, the Labour candidate received 51%, Conservatives 16% and Liberal Democrats 15%).

This obviously risks alienating non-Labour voters and politicians in the long run. Given how successful current arrangements are claimed to have been, it is unclear why the risk of upsetting them through the imposition of a mayor will be of any benefit whatsoever.

Who decides how we are governed?

The final, and in some ways most damning, objection to the proposed new Government arrangement for Greater Manchester is that it is being imposed by central government dictat, and accepted by a local political elite who have chosen to compromise on this in order to be granted the devolution of powers and resources that they crave.

As is well known, but frequently misunderstood, in 2012 Manchester City Council (not Greater Manchester)

There is a tendency towards hubristic behaviour in any system that is built on the assumption that one person has all of the answers.

held a referendum on an elected mayor and rejected it. This is part of an, admittedly recent, practice in the UK that major governance changes should be subject to referenda. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, abetted by the Manchester local authorities, has chosen to up-end this new tradition and impose an elected mayor.

Given the problems Britain is experiencing with alienation from political elites, the rise of 'anti-politics' parties like UKIP, and the widespread perception amongst the public that the governing classes are 'out of touch', is imposing a new form of government on Greater Manchester without popular consent really a good idea?

We have three examples of the likely consequences:

- The rejection of the mayor for Manchester City Council in a referendum in 2012
- The rejection of the proposed road charging scheme for Greater Manchester in a referendum in 2008
- The appallingly low turnout for the police and crime commissioner election in 2012 (14%)

At the very least the proposed changes in Greater Manchester, which obviously go a lot wider than the system of government, have all the hallmarks of a policy being made on-the-hoof, behind closed doors, by small groups of like-minded people – just the sort of ingredients that lead to monumental blunders, as identified by King and Crewe. OD

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Why devolution is good for the economy

Diane Coyle

The context for the devolutionary tide in politics — to the nations and within England to the north and especially Greater Manchester — is that the United Kingdom has long been one of the most centralised developed economies in the world. If you envision economic activity to be measured by height of the landscape, this country has a huge peak over London and pimples over the other cities. Even France, also historically politically centralised, has some provincial heights competing with Paris.

This centralisation has limited the performance of the UK economy compared with what could have been achieved in a more geographically balanced economy. There are large economic benefits that come from businesses and people concentrating in busy urban areas — in the jargon, agglomeration externalities. People will be able to switch jobs more easily, and will be able to exchange ideas with others in their line of business. Organisations will be able to draw on a larger pool of suitable workers, and will be closer to their suppliers, customers or transport links.

Hence economic growth and urbanisation go hand in hand — and last year the world passed the mile-stone of half of humanity living in cities. There are diseconomies of cities too, including the noise, congestion and higher costs of living, but these are outweighed by the advantages.

So why does it matter whether a country has ten large, dynamic cities or just one? It is clear that London is thriving; and nobody wants to see it disadvantaged in any way just for some abstract principle of regional balance.

However, the diseconomies of agglomeration in London are becoming very large indeed, especially housing and transportation costs. It is difficult not to sense that the capital is approaching the limit of being able to create more jobs for people on normal kinds of wages.

Centralisation has had many other drawbacks relating to the inability of people in departmental offices in London — no matter how clever and dedicated they are — to know enough detail about local economic issues to be able to deliver policies accordingly. Whether it is the skills needs of local employers, or the specific challenges facing estates whose inhabitants are struggling with all sorts of problems and deprivations, the information required to address the problems is only available on the ground.

However, the most significant point from the perspective of the overall UK economic growth rate is that putting all the economic eggs in one basket limits the range of industries and services in which the country can excel. Not even the mightiest city can do everything.

It is reasonable to believe the national growth rate would be higher if other cities were able to grow faster in their areas of specialism: Bristol in aerospace, Edinburgh in finance and professional services, Manchester in the creative industries and graphene, and

so on. Growth in other cities around the country, attracting highly skilled or experienced workforces, would also help to reduce the diseconomies of agglomeration for London. The UK economy would do better if policy took explicit account of our cities as a system, not as ▶

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solo players. People often talk of unbalanced growth in the UK, referring to the dominance of finance and the weakness of manufacturing. This sectoral imbalance, and the dismal export performance that goes along with it, is a reflection of geographic imbalance.

Growth in other cities does not happen spontaneously, as the physical and political infrastructure has not been in place for more geographically balanced growth. Market forces draw people and activity towards London, apparently inexorably, because they operate within structures channelling them in that direction. Our national transport system and our broadband and communications infrastructure are built around that single hub.

The devolution of powers to Greater Manchester over some key investment decisions is very welcome – I have been involved in this policy debate since my contribution to the 2009 Manchester Independent Economic Review, and the arguments for political and economic devolution of course date back long

The long and complete dominance of London over national life has stamped a deep imprint on the structure of the economy.

before that. There is still much to debate about the political choices that have been made. However, in terms of the once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape the economy, Greater Manchester's leadership deserves great credit for having played such a long game.

This isn't the end of the effort. The long and complete dominance of London over national life has stamped a deep imprint on the structure of the economy. As a starting point, perhaps every pound invested by the Treasury in London's infrastructure from now on should be more than matched by investment in infrastructure serving the other cities. This is not simply a matter of delegating local infrastructure decisions to local politicians; the entire infrastructure map of the country needs to be redrawn, thinking about the UK's cities as a whole. It will take another generation to reshape the economy, and it will be important for the leaders of Manchester, and other cities around the UK, to stick with the vision of running the economy on more than a single engine. **CD**

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Reorganising the NHS: never again?

Kieran Walshe

The new government needs to focus on changes which make a difference to patients, and which are founded on good evidence about what works.

The ability to hold two conflicting positions in your mind at the same time has its uses. George Orwell termed it ‘doublethink’ in 1984; academics call it ‘cognitive dissonance’, and it comes in handy when trying to make sense of the new government’s radical plans for health devolution in Manchester.

On the one hand, there is a broad consensus that the Lansley health reforms of the last government were an unmitigated disaster, costing around £3 billion and untold political capital for little discernible benefit, and leaving the NHS with a complex and fragmented organisational structure that few people understand. Sources close to Downing Street called the policy the worst mistake of the coalition government, and the opposition was unrelentingly critical of the reorganisation from the outset. Everyone agrees that the last thing the NHS now needs is any further reorganisation.

And yet, the Government is now proposing a radical reform to devolve powers, and more than £6 billion of NHS spending, to a Greater Manchester combined authority dealing with both health and social care, and bringing together the ten local authorities in the area with their Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS trusts and so on. That looks like a pretty big reorganisation to me.

There is currently an understandable wave of optimism and positivity about the proposed devolution. The London-centric way that the Department of Health and the NHS nationally are run has


been resented for decades. The integration of health, social care and other public services around ‘place’ and ‘person’ on the face of it offers great opportunities to reduce fragmentation, duplication and waste. But the allure of localism and integration is fine in theory – in practice it throws up many questions about how this will work in practice, and what changes to organisational arrangements and governance systems are implied. Greater Manchester could spend a lot of time and effort in the next two or three years on organisational change rather than service improvement. That could even make services worse.

My apprehension about the devolution proposals is borne from experience. Over the last two decades, the NHS has suffered (and that is the right word for it) some form of organisational structural change or reform about once every two years, all of which have been visited upon it by the government of the day. Each time we learn the same three things: it costs a lot of money; it takes a lot of time and effort; and it adversely affects performance during the reorganisation and for at least two years afterwards. Of course you don’t need to be very clever to spot that NHS performance barely recovers from one reorganisation before it is hit by another. There is a deadly serious point here – that reorganising the NHS can cost lives.

Of course, we should not lock down the structure of the NHS and rule out any future changes. Apart from anything else, the Lansley reforms have left us with an organisational structure that is simply not fit for purpose. However, those leading health devolution in Manchester need ▶

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to engage in service improvement, not organisational change. Changes should be demonstrably and plausibly linked to improvements in patient services and outcomes; they should be planned and enacted with NHS and social care service leaders; and they should be independently evaluated to see if the intended benefits are realised in practice.

So far, the Government's wham-bam speedy devolution plans for Manchester are long on rhetoric and high aspiration, but short on specifics and the practical details of how these changes will really work. Fine ideas don't necessarily produce improvements for patients, and that is the key benchmark against which the health devolution proposals must be tested and evaluated. 

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This piece is based on an article published in The House magazine.



What health and social care can learn from UK devolution

Joy Furnival

The devolution arrangements announced for health and social care in Greater Manchester are consistent with the goals outlined in the *Five Year Forward View* from NHS England, which aim to support the transformation of care across the city region, reduce health inequalities, and improve health outcomes and wellbeing for all residents. Initially, it was suggested that Greater Manchester would develop its own oversight and regulatory system to support these plans, liberating it from national requirements. However, the finalised devolution agreement indicated that Greater Manchester oversight will be in addition to existing national regulation.

Whilst these plans are described as ‘breathtakingly’ radical in England, it is less so elsewhere in the UK. Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland have been using integrated health boards since their devolution, with Northern Ireland having health and social care trusts. Across the three devolved nations there are a variety of approaches for regulation, oversight and scrutiny to ensure patient and public safety, and the delivery of health and wellbeing.

In England there are three main regulators, each with its own purpose. Monitor, the sector regulator of NHS foundation trusts, covers two thirds of all healthcare trusts. It is responsible for protecting and advancing the interests of healthcare users by promoting provision of efficient and effective healthcare services, whilst maintaining or improving their quality. It also authorises and regulates foundation trusts. For non-foundation trusts, the Trust

Development Authority (TDA) takes on a similar role for promoting efficient and effective services, and ensures that organisations are developing to become foundation trusts. The third national body is the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which regulates the quality and safety of care delivered by NHS trusts and foundation trusts, primary care and adult social care.

Across the devolved nations the oversight arrangements are, superficially, surprisingly similar. There are still many complex scrutiny and oversight bodies, and devolution does not seem to have simplified this very much.

In Wales, care quality in health boards is scrutinised by Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate, with performance and delivery reviewed by the Welsh Assembly Delivery Unit. Similar functions are undertaken in Northern Ireland by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), covering health and social care, and in Scotland by Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) and the [social] Care Inspectorate, both with respective performance and delivery bodies.

Despite integrated health boards in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, there remain separate bodies for scrutiny of health and social care quality, performance

and finances, with some joint working. They face familiar challenges linked to resourcing, consistency of approaches and partnership working, however, new approaches to oversight and scrutiny are emerging.

In Scotland, for example, there is recognition that ►

There are still many complex scrutiny and oversight bodies, and devolution does not seem to have simplified this very much.

integration between health and social care is changing the way services are delivered and how they need to be reviewed. Consequently, new and lengthy — each takes 24 weeks — joint inspections for older people are now being completed in tandem with the Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland. Whilst it is early days for this approach, it demonstrates the commitment to, and the complexity of, scrutinising health and social care services, and offers insight as to ways that integrated services could be examined in Greater Manchester across care pathways.

What of this transformation and improvement? Will all of these new powers and bodies and oversight in Greater Manchester be new structures on top of old structures? There is a risk that it will create more complexity and increase duplication of oversight, whilst fragmenting scrutiny expertise and reducing the consistency of approach needed to ensure patient safety. The Memorandum of Understanding between Greater Manchester, NHS England and the Treasury — whilst revealing much of the why change — reveals little of how the new working arrangements will ensure programmes

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are implemented and evidence-based, new ways of working will be adopted to ensure the best health and wellbeing outcomes and consistently safe care.

Greater Manchester could look to Scottish devolution. Health Improvement Scotland has multiple roles; scrutinising through review and inspection against standards, providing evidence for best practice, and ensuring improvements. It

does this through traditional scrutiny activities such as inspections and reviews but also, more radically, alongside the Scottish Quality Strategy. The Scottish healthcare regulator leads the Scottish Patient Safety Programme and is a key partner in the Scottish Quality Improvement hub, building skills, capability and support for staff and patients. This approach ensures that staff and institutions know how to deliver improvements, as well as the what and why. This blends improvement science, evidence, and scrutiny approaches for care oversight. **OD**

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Devo Manc: does the future of health and social care start here?

Kath Checkland, Julia Segar and Anna Coleman

The announcement that the £6bn health and social care budget for Greater Manchester is to be included as part of the devolution settlement has galvanised interest across NHS organisations, the social care sector and the academic community.

So what is coming? The Memorandum of Understanding signed on 27 February sets out the principles for Greater Manchester health and social care devolution, but the details remain to be finalised. There will be an over-arching Strategic Health and Care Strategy Partnership, consisting of the ten Greater Manchester local authorities and the 12 local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs).

There will be an elected mayor, whose powers will be carefully designed to ensure a close fit with the rest of the system. A Joint Commissioning Board will sit beneath the Strategy Partnership, bringing together CCGs, local authority commissioners and NHS England.

There will be a Providers Forum, bringing together the significant local primary, secondary, community and mental health providers with their social care provider colleagues. The whole will be underpinned by a set of principles which include the encouragement of innovation and the development of new service models, paid for through new payment systems that are yet to be fully developed.

Against this background, the Health Policy, Politics and Organisation group (HiPPO) within the Centre for Primary Care hosted a seminar with speaker Ged Devereux, Health Improvement Manager with Greater Manchester Public Health England. Ged has years of experience in Manchester local government and a deep knowledge of the local health and care system.

Ged addressed a diverse audience from across

the University and ably summarised the history of joint Greater Manchester working, the local health and care challenges, and the strategic aims of the devolution settlement.

First, the context: inhabitants of other cities in other regions must be asking why them and why now? Greater Manchester has a long history of collaboration across the ten local authorities. Beginning with the creation of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) in the 1980s, significant successes include the development of Metrolink, the establishment of Greater Manchester Transport and collaborations around housing, employment, economic development and troubled families.

Subsequently, the Healthier Together programme has brought together health commissioners and providers across Greater Manchester to work on rationalising services. This deep history of collaboration forms the platform upon which the devolution settlement is based.

The challenges facing Greater Manchester are as deep as the collaborative history. These include poor health outcomes, short life expectancy, how to treat long term conditions and marked inequalities within the region; Manchester sits at the bottom of an embarrassingly large number of league tables. Healthcare cannot take all of the blame for this, as many of the causes are deeply rooted in a history of deprivation, worklessness and entrenched behaviours. It is the very multi-factoral nature of the problems that points the way towards the proposed solution: healthcare alone cannot tackle the consequences of deprivation, and investment in housing and support for employment are necessary parts of the equation. ►

The final spur to do something different comes from the finances.

In common with all local authorities and all local health economies, Greater Manchester can see a crunch coming. NHS trust deficits are worsening and health costs continue to rise. In this context, the architects of the devolution agreement argue that focusing upon the antecedents of poor health is not just the right thing to do, it is the only thing which holds out the hope of balancing the books.

None of this will be easy. Our experience of more than a decade of research focusing upon NHS reorganisation and wider system development leads us to focus on three challenges:

The speed of change is breathtaking

All of the new organisations will be up and running by April 2017, with commissioners and providers expected to begin developing new ways of collaborative working.

'Buy in' is required from grass-roots providers of health and social care, and from the public

The agreement has, by necessity, been made at a high level between those accustomed to working together. However, the delivery will depend upon the actions of multiple local providers of care, including

Greater Manchester can see a crunch coming. NHS trust deficits are worsening and health costs continue to rise.

independent contractors through a national contract. Ensuring that those delivering care can work together effectively across boundaries points to an urgent need for a comprehensive programme of communication and consultation. Local people have previously shown little appetite for the concept of an elected mayor; engaging them in the choice of local leader will be a crucial test of the settlement.

Paying for services will be challenging

It is generally agreed that the current NHS tariff system embeds perverse incentives. Hospitals have an incentive to maximise their activity and commissioners have few levers with which to redistribute resources in other parts of the system. Investing additional resources to prevent disease and care for people in their own homes will only be an effective solution to the current financial issues if it is accompanied by disinvestment in expensive hospital services.

Devising a payment system that supports care at home without destabilising hospitals is an urgent priority; getting local people to support radical change in hospital provision may be equally challenging.

In politics, good ideas are often undone by practical challenges. And Devo Manc's responsibilities for health and social care will be faced with severe challenges. **OD**

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Against ad hocery: UK devolution and the need for consultation, consensus and consideration

Martin Smith and Dave Richards

The *Future of Devolution after the Scottish Referendum* is a worthy attempt to bring some order to an often confusing and conflicting debate about where devolution goes post-election. Strikingly, the House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee notes in its report that since the September 2014 Scottish independence referendum, rapid developments have been made in bilateral ways which pay little attention to the overall nature of the Union.

The Committee identified the extent to which devolution is happening in the UK in an ostensibly ad hoc way. The sizeable body of evidence underpinning the report highlights the extent to which the process so far has been piecemeal, rushed and segmented, rather than offering a reflexive and joined-up approach. Its recommendations include calling for a commission to review proposals for further devolution: a Convention for England to ensure representation of the public view and greater oversight of the intergovernmental machinery.

For historians of constitutional reform, such an ad hoc approach comes as no surprise, bearing the hallmarks of the British way of doing things. The absence of strategic thinking is explained away as a manifestation of the flexible British constitution – of Whiggish-like adaption to new circumstances seeking out pragmatic ways that take account of the different requirements of the four parts of the Union. We suggest that this approach to devolution is highly problematic for three reasons:

**There is considerable
lack of clarity
concerning the process
or the powers that have
been devolved to cities.**

Elite nature of the process

The process of devolution since the Scottish referendum has generally been a top-down exercise, based on political calculation. It should be remembered that in the September referendum, the majority voted against Scottish independence and there was no devo-max option.

In the days prior to the vote, leaders of the three main Westminster parties promised devo-max as a panicked attempt to shore-up the 'No' vote. It was tactical, was not based on any democratic process, and without proper debate, further compounded by the lack of widespread, grass-roots consultation of the subsequent and brief Smith Commission. In many ways it could be argued that the process was highly unconstitutional, with none of the pro-Union party leaders having any mandate or legitimacy for making the promises they made.

Since September, the devolution process in England has been even more elite-driven. Essentially, devolution packages have been agreed with cities on a case by case basis with the minimum of public discussion. A process that, since the May 2015 election, looks set to continue under the new Conservative administration. Beyond

those involved in negotiating devolution, there is considerable lack of clarity concerning the process or the powers that have been devolved to cities. It is essentially Whitehall devolving powers, where it believes cities have earned the rights to exercise ►

certain responsibilities. Further complexity is added to the mix by the level of devolution agreed upon, dependent on whether cities/regions agree to directly elected mayors with full accountability. It has the potential to create a patchwork system of devolution based on Whitehall concessions and not democratic rights.

However, the process, and indeed the wider debate it has triggered, pays little heed to considering the rights of the citizen. The fundamental assumption is that power, in zero-sum terms, belongs to Whitehall and it may release some to a local elite if they are deemed to be responsible, and can demonstrate that they will behave well (i.e. not make too much fuss about the scale of cuts in local government spending). The elite-driven nature of the process speaks directly to the second problem:

Lack of consideration of the goals and objectives of devolution

What is the aim of devolution? Is it about accountability or efficiency? Is it to maintain the Union? Is it to increase democracy and the control over central government? Is it to improve economic efficiency? Is it about giving people control over their own lives and a response to political enchantment? As this Select Committee report reveals, these issues have not been properly debated. Again, the process has been tactical, not strategic, and no one knows what the end point might be.

How many powers are to be devolved from Whitehall? Is asymmetric devolution to be translated into infinite models in England of variable, localised scales of civic participation and engagement?

In the case of devolution to UK cities, the key

The exigencies of the first-past-the-post electoral system mean that more than five million voters have been left without any representation in Parliament.

focus seems to be on devolution as a mechanism of economic regeneration. Yet this raises many questions that have not been discussed. What happens to cities outside of the hub of a city or region? What happens if devolution does not produce economic growth? In other words, we are on the way to some form of devolution, but none of the fundamental questions about what it is meant to achieve have been properly debated.

Lack of clear goals is indicative of a much wider and fundamental issue

How do processes of devolution fit into the wider constitutional and political framework of the UK? What the debate has yet to really grapple with is that we have witnessed a recent election that illustrated some major problems with the British political system. Turnout at 66% revealed a small increase on recent elections, but disengagement remains a pressing issue. Hansard's most recent Audit of Political Engagement reveals that only 30 per cent of the population feels a strong attachment to a political party, and only 20 per cent feels that they have any influence over local decisions. One of the ironies of the election is that many people voted for the anti-Westminster parties UKIP, Greens and SNP, but the exigencies of the first-past-the-post electoral system mean that more than five million voters have been left without any representation in Parliament. The election reinforced the view of those cynical about Westminster that voting does not change anything.

The outcome illustrated the inability of the electoral system to reflect the desires of the voters or produce a clear electoral outcome (in other words the main argument for FPTP seems to be going out of the window). ▶



All of which creates the possibility of a further delegitimation of the system and more alienation of the voters. Hence, in the context of political disillusionment and the emergence of an age of anti-politics, it is hard to abstract the discussion of devolution from wider constitutional questions.

The fundamental issue is how are people to be re-engaged in politics and what role do constitutional changes play in re-energising the political process. Yet, this has not formed the centre piece for the current discussions on devolution.

We have both been staunch critics of what Brian Barry used to call Britain's 'power-hoarding' model of governance, often euphemistically referred to as 'the man in Whitehall knows best'. We advocate a more bottom-up, devolved and participatory democratic settlement. However, any lasting settlement can only be secured through what can be referred to as the '3Cs' — consultation, consensus and consideration — of the whole political framework. Discussion of the devolution

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process should come with a debate around the electoral systems, the role of the civil service, the power of Whitehall and Westminster and fundamentally what sort of democracy does Britain want to have in the twenty-first Century.

Since 1832 political reform in the UK has developed as a consequence of tactical concessions from the ruling elite. The British political tradition has produced an incoherent political system that is able both to fragment but retain power within a small political class. Fundamental fissures are appearing in the relationship between voters and the political class because traditional mechanisms of legitimation such as the electoral system and parties are no longer working. The scale of the potential political crisis looming is such that it is going to need more than a Westminster-led process of devolution to sort it out.  

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What role might cities play in UK asylum policy?

Jonathan Darling

Disagreements between local authorities and the Home Office over asylum seeker dispersal numbers and arrangements have a long-standing history in Britain. Yet recently they have garnered greater media attention due to claims of an ‘asylum apartheid’, along the lines of a North-South divide in provision.

Liverpool City Council publicly criticised Home Office allocations and claimed the North of England is being unfairly treated. Yet — as both Professor Alice Bloch and I have explained on regional television — dispersal numbers in different regions have historically varied considerably.

Liverpool is one of several cities that have accommodated varying levels of dispersal over the last decade. The determining factor for dispersal has not been a desire to ‘burden’ certain cities, but to utilise low cost housing markets wherever these are available. Both Professor Bloch and I have been keen to move discussion of dispersal away from a dominant narrative of the ‘burden’ to be distributed, to think instead of more creative ways that asylum seekers may offer opportunities to establish new communities in the cities in which they are accommodated.

A BBC Radio 4 *File on 4* documentary recently picked up on this theme. The programme investigated the changing nature of dispersal under the COMPASS model of asylum dispersal, and the related move to private provision of accommodation.

The programme featured interviews with local authority representatives in the North West, support services and MPs to gauge the challenges faced by the current model. In particular, the programme examined increasing pressure on housing providers such as Serco and G4S to improve the standard of their properties, and to procure new properties at a time of housing shortage.

Shortly after this, the first joint conference between local authorities, refugee organisations and third sector organisations on the issue of asylum destitution was held in Bristol. The conference brought together stakeholders from 29 cities in the UK to discuss how urban authorities and support groups could work together to end the production of destitution among asylum seekers as a result of government policy. Part of the aim of the conference was to examine how cities could meaningfully assert opposition to government policy on asylum support, the right to work, and the removal of support at the end of the asylum process.

These recent debates, along with an All-Party Parliamentary committees’ criticism of asylum detention

Recent debates raise fundamental questions about the model of asylum support, accommodation, and rights that is at the heart of government policy.

policy, raise fundamental questions about the model of asylum support, accommodation, and rights that is at the heart of government policy. These events have implicitly raised two challenges to public policy:

Firstly, to what extent should the asylum support, accommodation, detention and removal system be viewed through the lens of an ethos that is happy to outsource ►

responsibilities for vulnerable individuals to providers offering services at the lowest cost?

Whilst the abuses of immigration detention publicised in recent weeks are not new, neither are the challenges that private providers have faced in sourcing appropriate, good quality housing for asylum seekers. Quite aside from the moral question of whether asylum should be positioned as just

another subject of the market, there is the issue of whether providers of detention centres and sub-standard housing are being held to account for their failures. Also, crucially, whether such failures will be remembered when contracts are up for renewal.

The second, wider, question is what do these events tell us about how cities are understood within the current asylum system? The anger felt by some local authorities over dispersal numbers and perceived pressure on resources is indicative of a sense of political frustration at not being listened to by the Home Office. Yet this impasse presents opportunities, too.

For those authorities attempting to oppose government policy around destitution, and seeking to gain greater powers through devolution, the frustrations of the dispersal system may produce allies in authorities that are similarly disenfranchised by the perceived imposition of private providers.

As the General Election highlighted — with parties having made positive noises about the devolution of selected powers to urban authorities — the question arises of whether cities might be able to use this situation to

The question of who should run the asylum accommodation and support system, how it should be run, and where its boundaries and limits are set, will be important concerns for the new Government.

take progressive steps to support asylum seekers and refugees. For example, in Scotland the recent report of The Smith Commission outlines a desire to look again at the balance of authority between the devolved Scottish Government and Westminster over asylum support services, housing and legal provision. In effect, this is a call to transfer authority over asylum accommodation and dispersal in Scotland to Scotland.

If cities in England and Wales were to demand the same, this might challenge the assumption of asylum as a market commodity.

These are debates in the making. The rights of asylum seekers remained a relatively minor concern during the General Election campaign. Where discussed, they were conflated into a broader discussion over migration. Yet the question of who should run the asylum accommodation and support system, how it should be run, and where its boundaries and limits are set, will be important concerns for the new government. Not least because many of the contracts on which current provision is based are up for renewal in 2017. At a time of shifting authority between Westminster, devolved authorities, cities and regions, the relationship between cities and the asylum system is itself likely to be changeable and fractured.

Whilst these fractures are deeply troubling, they also offer glimpses of more progressive relationships if cities are not afraid to advocate for the rights of their residents – whether citizens or asylum seekers. **OD**

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Analysis and ideas on devolution from The University of Manchester

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