

English Devolution White Paper

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Let's talk about

- White Paper context and level of ambition
- The headlines
- Issues WP raises for the sector
- What the LGA will be doing
- Your council's journey
- What happens next?

Context and ambition

- Growth, growth, growth
- Shift power away from Whitehall
- “This government will drive change at every level”
- Quid pro quo: Get councils back on their feet
- Blair government – devolution and regional reform 1997-2007
- There isn't a lot of variation in the devolution message since 1997 – direction of travel is the same

The Headlines

- Goal – universal coverage in England of strategic authorities
- Shift power out of Westminster to **Strategic Authorities** (ministerial directive and language change)
- Mayoral Strategic Authorities are the way forward
- Enhanced devolution framework – available by default rather than deal
- New powers and budgets for Mayors (areas of competence)
- Parameters for future devolution deals
- Local Government Reorganisation
- Other issues: Audit, standards, SofS consent – tidy up

Issues for the sector

- Clarity on timelines: Devolution and LGR, for MSAs to achieve Established status, publication of the English Devolution Bill
- Communication: clearer and timely (rumours)
- Capacity: demand on resources and impact on BAU
- Evidence base: cost saving and 500k
- Devo framework: regionalisation, influence right to request power
- LGR: rural and coastal areas worry jobs move to larger centre new unitaries, inconsistent messaging on approach to smaller unitaries, delay to elections in 2025
- Representation of councillors: fewer councillors is the best way to go
- Governance: accountability for mayors? Mayor's decision-making powers
- Public service reform: clarity, oversight health? democratic oversight all public services, geographical footprint
- Funding: cost shunting

Position

- We want every council in England to have the ability to secure devolution that works for them and their local population (welcome it)
- Devolution and local government reorganisation should be a matter for councils and local areas to decide

Our work

- Engaging with members across the country (and other key partners)
- Review support offer for councils (Improvement Support)
- Embed learning from sector and share
- Lobby for funding for sector to support at pace and scale
- Cross party Task and Finish Group
- Member led direct government lobbying
- Lobbying and monitoring of the Bill
- Devo hub

Your journey

- Which multi verse are you in? Know your timeline
- What additional stress is this going to put on your council?
- Can you deliver BAU in challenging times (contracts, jobs)
- Know the perspectives of your neighbours, partners – how good is your joint working?
- What does place mean for your communities?
- Engaging with the public
- What will happen to the local politics of your area?
- Separate out devolution from LGR
- There are other elements of the WP
- Remember you have a limited window if you want to lobby
- What does the post devo/LGR world look like..

What happens next?

Date	Action
March 2025	All areas provide interim LGR plans
May 2025	Delayed election reorganisation plans finalised
Summer 2025	English Devolution Bill published
Autumn 2025	Devo/reorg plans from everyone else
May 2026	Devo PP mayoral elections
April 2027	Possible vesting day Surrey
April 2028	Vesting day for all other new unitary councils