

## **City Regions Board – report from Cllr Sir Richard Leese CBE (Chair)**

### **Health Devolution**

1. In November, the City Regions Board held a joint meeting on health devolution with lead members of the People and Places Board and the Community Wellbeing Board. This meeting heard from speakers from Cornwall Council and Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership on their experiences of health devolution, before discussing and agreeing the LGA lines on health devolution. Following this meeting, lead members also fed into the LGA's response to the NHS England and NHS Improvement consultation on integrated care systems.

### **Urban Recovery**

2. The City Regions board has commissioned Cambridge Econometrics to carry out work on "A Vision for Urban Growth and Recovery", looking at the ways in which urban areas have been uniquely affected by Covid-19, and identifying the key interventions needed for a successful, sustainable recovery for urban areas. Work has commenced on this project, which will use data analysis, case studies and interviews with key stakeholders to map out a vision for what recovery could look like for urban areas. Cambridge Econometrics have presented their plans to the City Regions board, and the work is due to be completed by March.

### **Devolution APPG**

3. In December Lead Members of the People and Places and City Regions Boards signed off the LGA's written submission to the Devolution All Party Parliamentary Group's Inquiry into the role that central government has in making a success of devolution in England. Over the course of the autumn an inquiry panel, including Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe (Vice Chair of the City Regions Board), have been holding a series of oral evidence sessions with experts from across government, academia and the private sector. The final report is expected to be published in March. More details can be found on the [APPG Website](#).

### **Adult skills and lifelong learning**

4. In December, the Education Select Committee released its [recommendations](#) from its adult skills and lifelong learning inquiry. It recommends that there should be a community learning centre in every town, and singles out providers of adult and community learning – which includes local authorities - as "the jewel in the crown of the nation's adult education landscape". This is good news for councils. We already set out the good work on the sector in our LGA councillor handbook on making the best of adult learning service we published last Autumn [Learning for Life: the role of adult community education in developing thriving local communities - A handbook for councillors | Local Government Association](#). In addition, I represented the LGA at the Festival of Learning last November to present the award for best adult learning project.

### **Restart employment support for long term unemployed people**

5. Councils face growing concerns about the impact of unemployment on residents, communities and wider local economy as the Covid-19 crisis continues to unfold. People & Places and City Regions Board Members worked together to put forward practical suggestions on how DWP's three-year, £2.9 billion, national [Restart programme](#) to support long-term unemployed (LTU) people back to work could be delivered to best effect. While it remains a national programme, DWP has since issued a letter to the LGA and other local government representatives seeking input on the national procurement exercise. We have relayed this offer to our member authorities.

### **Improving the relationship with DWP**

6. In late December, the LGA initiated a roundtable session with Mims Davies MP, the Minister for Employment, and Lead Members of the City Regions and People and Places Boards. At that meeting, members reinforced the need for DWP to work with us on existing and upcoming initiatives under the Government's Plan for Jobs, and to localise by default.

### **Youth employment and skills**

7. We continue to maintain our focus on improving youth participation work, considering that young people's training and employment prospects are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19 restrictions and the economic fallout of the crisis. Engagement with member authorities and stakeholders have continued to shape our views and emerging policy on what should be an appropriate offer for young people and employers to support economic recovery.
8. We continue to work closely with the LGA Workforce team, as many of the employment and skills measures, for example, Apprenticeships, Traineeships, T Levels, Kickstart Scheme, involve the sector workforce.
9. The youth participation report, culminating our engagement work with the sector and stakeholders, including the impact of COVID-19 crisis on young people was published. The report [Re-thinking youth participation for the present and next generation: education to employment](#) was launched early October 2020 with a [press release](#) calling for COBRA-style action to save the 'lost generation' of young people. The publication received good traction and has reached a broad range of stakeholders.
10. To sustain the momentum on our youth campaign and shine a light on the work more widely, we are publishing a series of First articles from Autumn 2020 to Spring 2021. The introductory feature appeared with a by-line from the Chairs of the three boards (CYP, P&P and CRB), demonstrating the importance of a joined-up education and employment and skills policy. The [feature](#) (p11) highlighted the plight of young people and the job crisis. It set out the reports recommendation, including LGA's calls for a youth, employment and skills taskforce and a youth minister.

11. The LGA Chairman wrote to several Ministers about the report, including Mims Davies, Minister of State for Employment, DWP; Gillian Keegan, Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills, DfE; Luke Hall, Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government, MHCLG.
12. Separately, the LGA along with council/combined authority representatives have continued to maintain a dialogue with DfE on young people and those not in education, employment or training (NEET) through regular meetings with officials. Discussions have focussed on raising concerns about appropriate careers advice and guidance, relevance and sufficiency of provision and funding.

### **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

13. The UKSPF was one of the key priorities of the LGA's response to the Spending Review, which included the announcement of the Heads of Terms. This includes a £220 million pilot for 2021/22 before the fund will be introduced fully. We are expecting in the coming weeks a prospectus for the fund to be launched. The LGA has offered to help speed the development of the detail of the new fund by offering to set up task groups with Government departments to help codesign the fund. We understand the Government has agreed in principle to this and we are working to determine how this will operate.

### **EU Exit**

14. On Christmas Eve, the Prime Minister and the President of the European Commission announced the outcome of the negotiations between the UK and the European Union and a deal on future trade arrangements, which has since been agreed by the UK Parliament. We have sent out communications on the key issues for local government in the agreement and members of the EU Exit Taskforce have met with ministers to raise these issues.

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