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# The Future of Frontline Delivery Under LGR: Councils That Still Deliver for Communities

- Protecting frontline services during transition.
- Balancing financial sustainability with service resilience and public trust.
- Building future councils around prevention, place and community wellbeing.

Speaker: Mo Baines, Chief Executive, APSE, Visiting Professor, University of Staffordshire

# How do we fare compared to Europe on municipality size?

- The average number of inhabitants per municipality on an EU average is 22,455
- Outliers with hyperlocal fragmented systems Czechia (1,710 inhabitants on average), France (1,928) and Slovakia (1,865)

# Intermediate layer of government (and governance)

- Most organise within a multi-layered system. What works where and at what size?
- Where we see 'highly consolidated municipal systems' (by which in EU terms this is circa 60,000 residents) the sub-regional or regional tier will provide specialist functions.
- Eg Netherlands average under 60,000 but regions of around 1.2 million.



# UK ... distance from the people.....



# Protecting frontline services? Does distance matter?

## ***Remote services and loss of institutional knowledge? What are the lessons from outsourcing?***

When services are outsourced explicit knowledge is the driver and a core component in the contracting arrangements. In reality the loss of tacit or less explicit knowledge is often devastating to delivery. Think outsourced call centres? Loss of 'post code' knowledge etc

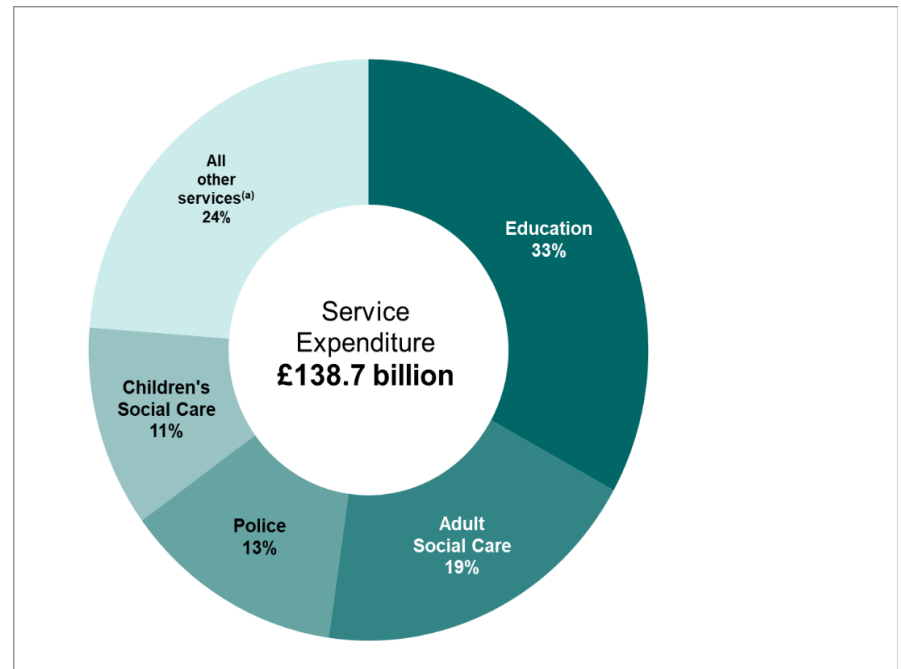
Services often thrive on tacit knowledge. *'Do X or Y because Mr Miggins has a specific need'*. How will this be maintained in bigger more remote councils?

What are the mechanisms in reorganised councils for tacit knowledge or services to be maintained, shared and built upon?

What type or arrangements do managers wish to see thrive under new service delivery arrangements?

# Balancing financial sustainability with service resilience and public trust.

- According to the Kings Fund around **1.4%** of the adult population in England (about 683,000 people) rely on publicly funded, long-term adult social care.
- For people aged over 65 this is around **5.2%**
- Working age adults that figure is just **0.9%**



# The Unitary Problem....

- Balance of social care spend compared to 'all other services'
- Other pressures on SEND, homelessness provision and housing need
- Level of indebtedness on local councils  
£120 Billion – up 7% in 2025
- Legacy debt transfers

# Protecting frontline (neighbourhood) service spend?

- Knowing the data; what is the current cumulative spend?
- What service levels are in place? What do different residents expect?
- What are the harmonisation issues on the frontline workforce?
- How do you assess delivery model efficacy and harmonise future delivery?

# Pre-merger champions!

- A real role for councillors to ensure that there are upfront commitments on frontline services
- Don't allow neighbourhood level services to be at the 'back of the queue' on AI and digital transformation!
- Stability will matter to residents. Day 1 delivery will have to continue

# Opportunities?

- Reform to public procurement. The Public Interest Test and Insourcing. New Guidance (June 2026).
- Social Value and weightings
- Local supply chains
- Service integration



# A shift to prevention, efficiency and AI

- Retiring legacy systems and data integration
- AI to work smarter and release resources where needed
- Using data to understand what drives demand
- Doing things differently should mean doing things better!



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