Capita

# Place:
# The focal point for efficiencies and added value

**Harnessing our interdependence to deliver the best service outcomes**

Shaping places, **together.**

# Preface

**If we stand back and look beyond our own lives and areas of work, it becomes clear just how interconnected and interdependent everything is and how the challenges we face are much the same as others within our community. This is especially true in the way we deliver and use public services.**

Although most accept there is little to be gained by operating in isolation from others, many service providers continue to try and plough their own furrow and push against the headwind of interdependence. It is clear that common challenges are not enough to really move the dial and transform deep-rooted parochial attitudes. But perpetuating the status quo is fraught with frustration and simply risks extending the uphill struggle and service shortfalls.

Working more closely together to address shared challenges and create new opportunities for service enhancement is a break from conventional service delivery models. It is dependent on a much more integrated approach to the way we provide and use public services. This requires foresight, confidence and a much more holistic mindset, to allow organisations and different teams to operate with shared purpose and a shared vision.

Concentrating our attention on place-related processes and priorities is what really matters. Where we live and work is where our responsibilities, opportunities and the practicalities of life come into the sharpest focus.

This is where shared purpose can be forged from the real and projected needs of the local area and the local community. And it is where a truly collaborative spirit can make a very real and tangible difference to service providers and users alike. This report reflects Capita's considered approach to placemaking. It highlights the steps needed to foster shared purpose and a more collaborative mindset for delivering the best possible service outcomes that go far beyond service-specific targets and metrics.

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# Introduction

## No individual and no organisation can ever be entirely independent of others or their surrounding environment.

By its very nature, human society is a complex and constantly evolving ecosystem that is shaped by interdependence and the way we connect, interact and work with others - even more so today given that we are more connected than ever before. Whether we like it or not, interdependence enwraps our lives, our aspirations and our wellbeing – both as individuals and as members of a wider community.

Our success will be determined by the way we capitalise on our respective strengths and skillsets and our relationship with others as we look to fulfil our own aspirations while supporting broader societal objectives for resilience, sustainability, economic stability, prosperity and inclusion. Despite this, our attention seems to have become more and more channelled towards narrow commercial, operational, and budgetary imperatives. Such an outlook pushes against our interdependence and prevents us from reaping the benefits of collective resolve and purpose.

This is particularly true for service providers in the public sector where challenges and goals are invariably variations along similar themes. Here there are significant operational, financial and capacity issues as well as legacy infrastructure to consider and daunting Net Zero targets to work towards.

**Within this context:**

- How can we move towards a more integrated and collaborative approach where outcomes reflect the real needs and priorities of a local community and are no longer compromised by narrow service-specific perspectives?
- What steps can we take to bridge knowledge and skills gaps and encourage behavioural change to enable us to build on our respective strengths and harness our mutual interdependence?
- How can we avoid upheaval and disruption as we look to adopt a more holistic approach to service provision?

> This report looks to answer many of these fundamental questions and sheds light on the steps that can be taken to foster a more agile and responsive model for delivering and using public services.

# Location, location, location

To make a very real and substantial difference to the way public services are delivered and used, the starting point should never be an individual service or a simple function of 'what', 'how' and 'when'. It also should not be departmental, functional or organisational. Nor sectoral or hierarchical. It is location - and the community within that location - that has to be the starting point.

Every locality has its own unique qualities, peculiarities, considerations and issues. What may be considered as an asset or critical requirement in an industrial heartland or bustling metropolis, for example, will be quite different to a coastal resort or relatively remote rural area. For any service provider, it can never be just a case of what, how and when.

It's 'where' we live, work and play that needs to shape our actions. 'Where' provides the sense of belonging and brings everything together. It puts all service parameters into much sharper focus for those delivering and receiving a public service. It's also where the power of interconnection, co-operation, partnership and smarter ways of working can make a very real difference to address shared issues and goals, unique local priorities and the needs of individuals as well as wider societal aspirations.

There is little doubt – and not before time - that the principles of integration and collaboration are moving towards centre stage. After all, these present the most effective way to unlock the full value and potential of land, assets and investments, no matter how complex they may be.

**It also helps to:**

- Bridge skills gaps.
- Drive efficiency gains.
- Open the door to new, reliable and sustainable funding sources.
- Create new revenue generation opportunities
- Develop mutually supportive and aligned programmes that reflect real local needs.

A more integrated approach to service delivery does not need to entail full-scale restructuring or creation of new governance and legal entities. There are more and more examples of organisations - and departments within organisations - simply working more closely together by focusing on place-related processes and priorities and the real and projected needs of the local area and the local community. Significantly, greater collaboration is also helping to leverage more data-driven insight across different sectors. This supports more informed decision-making in all service areas and increases confidence for adopting proven new technologies to drive smarter outcomes.

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# Recommendations

Let's look at some of the **key steps we can take** to feed off our interdependence and drive a more collaborative approach to enhance service provision within our local places and our local communities.

1

## Know where you are

Truly understanding the place and the community you serve - and of which you are a part - is vital. What are the qualities, characteristics and assets of the area that are unique and defining? What are the real priorities of individuals in different areas of the community? What outcomes will address the needs and make a real difference?

This requires a shift away from the traditional delivery of services for individuals towards a service model that focusses much more on the place and the community. It is important to discard supposition and assumption. Invest time in engaging with local residents, businesses and other stakeholders to establish a complete picture of opinions and needs, so that decision-making can be founded on current and substantiated evidence.

### Examples

- **During the pandemic, full use was made of under-used or vacant premises to provide vaccination hubs for local communities. Once again, this entailed real cooperation involving all areas of the public sector as well as the world of commerce and industry. This spirit of togetherness within local communities has continued with local authorities, other public bodies and the emergency services now sharing resources and facilities more readily than ever before.**

- **The introduction of Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) is a demonstration of a more united approach for improving community-centred service provision – in this case for the care, health and wellbeing of local populations. Although such comprehensive service integrations haven't always been plain sailing, they help to minimise service fragmentation and dilution. Indeed, for ICBs, they are helping to overcome many of the fundamental problems arising from the different metrics, target outcomes and budgets of different organisations.** [1]

- **Co-location and shared workspace will often help organisations improve the effectiveness and quality of their service delivery and act as an enabler for wider and more positive social outcomes. It can maximise the use and efficiencies of buildings and release surplus properties for selling or repurposing. And it enables occupiers to share operational and maintenance costs to offset ownership costs.**

  **In the North-West Midlands for example, South Staffordshire's Codsall Community Hub provides a modern and energy-efficient building for no less than 28 partner organisations across public, private and NHS sectors. This has become a true community space and a hive of activity with a café, library, nursery, GP surgery and a plethora of voluntary organisations and businesses. The project has transformed the council's head office and promoted more effective integration of local services.** [2]

2

## Make the most of devolution

There is little doubt that devolution will continue to gather momentum under a Labour Government, leading to more and more decentralised decision-making and regional autonomy. The additional powers and funding from central Government will drive the devolution agenda at a local/regional level by unlocking new strategic partnership opportunities. It will also provide renewed impetus for collaborative initiatives previously delivered under the One Public Estate programme.

It is important to understand and be prepared for such a clear direction of travel. After all, service provision at a sub-regional level requires new thinking, new outlooks and new buying behaviours as well as effective collaboration across different public sector organisations. True local engagement with all stakeholders and a full understanding of place and community will support the principles and target outcomes of a more devolved public sector.

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### Examples

- **A collaborative spirit among local councils and deep understanding of the local community has enabled the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to capitalise on the benefits of devolution and deliver enhanced accountability as well as significant and positive outcomes for residents. As a result, funding has been secured and targeted much more effectively - such as the development of brownfield sites to help address housing and regeneration priorities. Policies and services have also been designed to address specific needs and priorities - such as a more cohesive and efficient approach to health and social care services and a much more integrated public transport system (the Bee Network).** [3]

- **Accountability and consistent communication are vital, especially when balancing collective interests and the work of constituent authorities and other strategic partners. The West Midlands Combined Authority has demonstrated the value of involvement and empowerment by showcasing the projects it is developing and delivering in different local areas. The 'In My area' programme ensures all local stakeholders are kept fully informed of progress against target outcomes and is not only helping to improve local understanding but is also maintaining a high level of accountability in all areas.** [4]

- **Economic prosperity in any part of the country is dependent on development of new skills and talent and the ability to drive innovation and attract inward investment. Centres of Higher Education have a particularly important role to play in this context, and most combined authorities are committed to working closely with different universities in their catchment area. The North-East Combined Authority, for example, is helping to connect four universities in a way that will align academic portfolios with industry growth areas and forge new partnerships to improve access to the arts and enhanced healthcare provision. Such a visionary approach is likely to become deeper and more ambitious as devolutionary processes continue to evolve, expand and mature.** [5]

3

## Broaden horizons

Progressing towards a more collaborative way of working means looking beyond commercial, operational, budgetary or personal imperatives. That doesn't mean dismissing specific performance priorities and service commitments. Far from it. Rather, it means viewing assigned responsibilities from a wider standpoint. This will reveal new opportunities for harnessing the respective strengths and capabilities of others to help fulfil one's own goals while also reinforcing wider objectives for resilience, sustainability, economic stability, prosperity and inclusion.

Working in collaboration with experienced private sector service providers, for example, not only presents benefits derived from deep operational insight and new perspectives. It also creates the opportunity to take advantage of significant additional resources and specialist expertise to address service challenges more effectively and more efficiently.

It's important to take proactive steps to explore the potential and the appetite among other organisations (public and private) for establishing a more collaborative way of working.

Is there scope, for example, to formalise place-based partnerships and develop common objectives and performance indicators that all participants can work towards? Is there an opportunity to develop new property development partnerships to increase the value of assets and create new revenue streams for future reinvestment? Could closer engagement with other local public sector organisations help create consistent design codes that not only embody the area's character and identity but also provide a functional and supportive framework to address a wide range of community needs such as safety, accessibility and wellbeing.

In a similar way, it's important not to be afraid of innovation. While there will never be an appetite in the public sector to risk unproven technologies, the constantly evolving digital and AI landscape offers a great deal of potential to drive greater service flexibility and more operational agility. Significantly, such advances will also help to bridge many of the legacy obstacles to cooperation, such as incompatible computer and software systems as well as different performance metrics, data gathering and data analytics.

Innovation is not just a case of technology, though. Looking at the service challenges with a more place-based mindset will highlight the scope and opportunities for new ways of working and the development of new service models. This will help to encourage more supportive behaviours (e.g. decarbonisation) and the deployment of new skills.

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## Examples

- **Schools have always played a central role within any local community. Multi-faceted collaboration with a range of different public service organisations is helping to reinforce this status. The increasing use of specialist expertise from healthcare, social care and the emergency services is adding to life skills education for pupils. And there are more and more examples of educational facilities being used to support the frontline work of other service providers due to their location at the very heart of a local community.**

  **Focussing initially on knowledge sharing in areas such as strategy, financial sustainability and governance, the collaborative approach of the Windsor Academy Trust and four local NHS Trusts is a good case in point. Here, significant areas of overlap were identified, and partnership working has helped to drive preventive health programmes for young people, establish new community health provision on school sites and promoted NHS career awareness.** [6]

- **In recognition that no single agency can be expected to address all drivers of crime and antisocial behaviour, more than 300 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) are now in place in England and Wales. These partnerships bring together local partners in the police, fire and rescue authorities, local authorities, health partners and the probation service. They provide a much more collaborative approach for formulating and implementing effective strategies to tackle crime disorder and antisocial behaviour in their communities. And the findings of the CSP review concluded in January 2024 is now helping to enhance the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of these partnerships.** [7]

- **The increasing adoption of 'Mobility as a Service' principles has seen planning departments, transport operators, parking businesses, landowners, retailers, leisure operators and community groups working much more closely together. Here, the use of new digital platforms has been a game-changer, with increasingly ambitious frontline initiatives to improve mobility and accessibility within and around local areas.** [8]

  **The creation of vibrant community hubs at key interchanges - comprising commercial and public service interests as well as different transport options – is, in turn, helping to boost economic vitality. The typically high footfall within such hubs is an attractive proposition for other potential investors, thereby creating opportunities for cascade regeneration in surrounding areas.**

- **A place-making community partnership led by Brent Council has brought together four landowning public sector organisations with different aims and governance structures to unite around common regeneration themes and transform community services and facilities at Northwick Park. Significantly, this ambitious and visionary project has also involved other stakeholders such as Transport for London, Network Rail, Harrow Borough Council and the Greater London Authority. The first phase of the development is now underway and will provide 654 new homes with more than half of them affordable. In total the scheme will provide 1,600 new homes, new commercial units, improved hospital facilities, new public amenity spaces, a replacement nursery and a significant expansion of the University of Westminster's Harrow Campus. It is also expected to act as a catalyst for future private sector investment in the area.** [9]

4

## Collaborate for common goals such as Net Zero

Having a good understanding of the goals and aspirations of partner organisations will help to establish alignment, trust and accountability – key factors for effective collaboration and partnership. In many cases, the goals of one organisation will be very similar to another.

The pursuit of Net Zero is just such an example. This a common goal of most, if not all, organisations. Such a shared core mission can be used to instigate discussion, learn from each other's experiences and fuel a more collective resolve. It will also help to unlock doors to other areas of common ground. Here, the adoption of standardised metrics across different organisations is an important consideration. This will provide the clarity and consistency for continuous and meaningful monitoring of progress across a diverse range of operations. It will also enable successes and lessons learned to be shared more readily with other communities and organisations.

It is a similar story when it comes to identifying alternative sources of funding and revenue – especially where there is a risk of missing out on an exciting and significant estate development project due to budget constraints. This is where public/private sector partnerships can really come into their own as a way of leveraging additional funding and specialist expertise.

Working with others rather than pushing against prevailing interdependence is very much in the spirit of continuous learning. There is much to be gained from the experiences of other service providers in the public and private sectors, so it is important to foster a culture where learning and sharing of knowledge become second nature. This could even extend to the development of shared training initiatives on net zero, strategic estates management or climate action planning.

Likewise, many public sector organisations are grappling with a similar but complex array of contractual commitments and service obligations. Openly sharing experiences, challenges and best practices will help to build a collective knowledge base and develop more insightful contract management skills across the sector. Such an approach is proving to be extremely beneficial for organisations faced with new responsibilities as PFI contracts approach their expiry dates – even more so when working with a like-minded partner that knows how to negotiate the PFI minefield and has the insight and expertise to support the forward planning process.

### Examples

- **The United for net zero initiative led by the World Economic Forum highlights the importance of public-private collaboration for accelerating industry decarbonisation and driving the transition to net zero. It showcases how different public sector organisations are working together with private entities to drive innovation and promote sustainable economic growth. Significantly, it also provides a practical roadmap for establishing effective dialogue and collaboration between public and private stakeholders.** [10]

- **In the Midlands, the Birmingham Energy Institute (BEI) has brought together interdisciplinary research from across the University of Birmingham and is working closely with partners across the West Midlands as well as government, industry and international partners. By stimulating and demonstrating new technologies and turning them into commercially viable energy solutions, the Institute is making a significant contribution to Birmingham's carbon reduction commitments.** [11]

  **A deep commitment to close community engagement is a key feature of BEI's work, so residents are kept fully informed of the benefits from innovative energy solutions and the decarbonisation of domestic heating and transport. It is also driving collaborative research and development projects to promote innovation in waste, energy and low carbon vehicle systems.**

5

## Ensure every asset delivers gain

Get to know the qualities, limitations and true potential of your assets and the role they play within the local community as this will add substance to any asset management plan. Are there high maintenance buildings within the estate that are draining funds which could be used more effectively elsewhere? What are the opportunities and scope for a more sustainable use or disposal of existing structures? Are there assets that are underperforming or underutilised that could be repurposed to deliver more impactful community initiatives? Are there areas of land and obsolete spaces that could be used more productively to benefit the local community?

Consider how you can deploy smart technologies and data analytics to pinpoint the performance potential of each asset – not just in terms of service-specific efficiency gains, but also wider community outcomes. And think about how you can take advantage of the link between your estate assets and your health and wellbeing, inclusivity, diversity and recruitment targets.

### Examples

- **The use of smart buildings technology and data driven insights has delivered a much healthier and more sustainable living environment for residents of a boutique care home operator. A building management system has delivered significant savings on electricity costs and additional savings have resulted from new system controls and an upgraded heating system. Lighting levels have also been optimised, CO2 emissions have been reduced, the potential for overheating in hot weather has been minimised and new heating and much more effective heating and ventilation procedures are now in place.** [12]

- **Faster, transparent and more informed decision-making is the primary objective of the London Estates Board (LEB) for improving the way NHS buildings and land are used in the capital. With membership including the Greater London Authority and local government, the LEB is encouraging and supporting a much more collaborative way of working across the NHS estate. It is helping to increase the potential for more joined-up service delivery across different service providers. It is also ensuring the best use of public money, with the sell or repurposing of under-used or high maintenance buildings and land to release money for reinvestment into better GP surgeries, community services and hospitals within London's health and care system.** [13]

- **A comprehensive redevelopment and remodelling of Telford Central Fire Station has benefitted from extensive stakeholder consultation involving all fire service teams, the police and ambulance services. The outdated structure originally built in the 1970s has been completely transformed by a phased redevelopment that has provided a modern, efficient and resilient hub for emergency services. A high level of flexibility and environmental sustainability combines optimum response deployment and greatly improved workflow efficiencies with energy savings and additional communal facilities.** [14]

- **Securing nearly £2.5m Condition Improvement Funding from the Government and working with specialist architects and project managers, Bursley Academy in Staffordshire has increased the school's capacity and improved the quality of educational facilities for pupils and staff. The programme created over 685m² of additional accommodation, with a new extension housing six new classrooms, a library, toilets and general resource areas. Internal alteration to existing buildings has also improved circulation and optimised the use of space providing a new staff room, special needs facilities and toilets, a new storeroom and office enhancements. Additional staff parking and new hard-surface play areas have also been provided. This investment has enabled this popular school to provide 105 extra places across all year groups and maintain its position as the local school of choice.** [15]

6

## Be prepared

It's not just a case of making the most of your estate assets. It's just as important to ensure compliance with constantly evolving safety regulations and to identify potentially hazardous features within the estate. Regular safety audits and inspections are vital and close collaboration between government agencies, building owners and maintenance contractors can help streamline processes, maximise efficiencies and eliminate oversights. And the use of technologies such as facility management software and IoT sensors can improve maintenance planning, asset tracking and resource allocation.

In practical terms, the key task is to ensure that all service improvements are incremental and aligned fully with wider strategic objectives. Here, the importance and benefits of a five-year strategic asset management plan cannot be over-stated.

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A clear understanding of target outcomes is of even greater significance for collaborative ventures. That is why it is so important to prioritise longer term sustainable outcomes that directly and indirectly support service-specific goals in the short and medium term. Such a considered approach helps to bolster local capacity and resilience. With organisations pulling in the same direction, it will also foster a spirit of consistent and positive change founded on the principles of continuous improvement.

Such a forward-looking model that involves all relevant stakeholders should be applied to all areas of estate management. This is especially important when it comes to ensuring effective management for any emergency situations and unforeseen eventualities. The development of a comprehensive emergency preparedness and response plan, however, is not an end in itself. The management composition and reporting channels of different stakeholders, the regulatory landscape, the condition of different assets, political imperatives and the responsibilities of personnel are all subject to change. Consequently, even the most extensive emergency planning arrangements requires constant revision and updating so that there is never a risk of relevance, accuracy and practicality being compromised.

### Examples

- **Effective collaboration between the Industry Safety Steering Group and various public sector organisations has demonstrated the value of working together to address critical safety issues and drive meaningful change in the construction industry. New building safety regulations and guidance in the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy has also promoted the benefits of collaborative procurement practices in both design and construction. This has led to a much more considered approach with organisations and specialists working together to ensure all safety standards are met and maintained throughout a building's lifecycle.** [16]

- **Effective collaboration and innovation have underpinned Trafford Council's ambitious journey to regenerate key areas of the borough. Featuring a cutting-edge digital design code and a masterplan for regeneration of the 87 hectare Trafford Wharfside, the programme has integrated residential, commercial and public spaces. A collaborative and flexible mindset has helped the authority to take full account of the fragmented industrial landscape and intricate land ownership of this strategically important site. The groundbreaking and forward-looking approach is also promoting connectivity and sustainability at all levels while also addressing broader goals for the local community such as new home provision, employment space, public amenities and health equality.** [17]

# Summary

A clear forward-looking strategy that has enthusiastic buy-in from local stakeholders will create new opportunities, open new doors and deliver substantial benefits that reflect the precise needs and priorities of a local community. It will also help organisations to feed off their interdependence and drive a more collaborative and progressive mindset to enhance service delivery and efficiency. But where do you start and how can you ensure that place and collaboration lie at the heart of your forward plan?

- Move away from the delivery of services for individuals towards a service model that focusses much more on the place and the community.
- Explore the potential and enthusiasm for a more collaborative way of working, creating a shared vision for the local area and fostering place-based and/or property development partnerships.
- Give priority to longer term sustainable outcomes that directly and indirectly support service-specific goals in the short and medium term.
- Look beyond service imperatives and get to know the qualities, limitations and true potential of your estate assets and the role they play (and could play) within your local community.
- Accept and embrace the process of change and the scope for innovative solutions to enhance service standards and accessibility.
- Harness the benefits of devolution and regional autonomy for a more integrated approach to enhance service delivery and operational efficiencies.

A level of interdependence is a common thread throughout human society and within any ecosystem – but it's even more pronounced in the digital age. To dismiss or push against interdependence in the delivery of public services is nonsensical and counterproductive. It's a feature that should be embraced and harnessed. Doing so multiplies the scope for bringing the very best outcomes within reach for service providers and service users alike.

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## Shaping places, **together**

To find out more about how Capita's place-based solutions are helping the public sector to create sustainable, future-ready places that deliver long term value, please get in touch with us.

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