

Overview

1. In April a light-touch stock-take exercise took place to obtain a snapshot of learning from areas' development of their CBs to inform further thinking around next steps and future policy direction. Staff from DCLG, DfE and Local Government Leadership conducted short and informal interviews with a section of Chief Executives, Leaders and key contacts from the across the first phase areas and government departments.
2. The views taken from these interviews have been anonymised and drawn together to identify common key messages and headline learning points. A summary slide pack, agreed with DfE and LG Group officials involved in the exercise, has been provided along with papers for this meeting. This is complementary to the wider and ongoing work of the full evaluation of CBs.

Objective

3. To ensure experiences and learning are factored into future CB work.

Purpose of Discussion

4. Members are asked to note the key messages and agree that these should be taken into account in taking CBs forward. Members are also asked to agree that research and evidence about the sustainability of areas' FMP interventions and effectiveness in enabling families to stay out of crises should feed in to work exploring innovative finance models.

Considerations

5. In addition to providing feedback on the process to date and the practical benefits of CBs, interviewees were asked for their thoughts about the next steps for CBs. A wide range of points was noted, including:
 - Areas should have sufficient time and continued support to embed properly, recognising that different areas will develop at different speeds.
 - Timetable for future phases/rollout should fit in with the local budgeting cycle and allow areas enough time to fully develop their proposals. Expectations on timings should be agreed from the outset.
 - Greater localism – central government should loosen the grip and allow greater local discretion and ownership of outcomes.
 - Widen the scope of CBs to allow areas a greater choice of themes, available to all places on a self-nominating basis.
 - Better co-ordination and alignment of different FMP related mandates and activities across Whitehall to improve clarity and reduce duplication.
 - Clear long term vision for CBs and clarity on the 'offer' from central government.

- Whitehall and LG Group to create/facilitate mechanisms for bringing first and second phase areas together to develop proposals and share learning. Also a need to engage local partners, including the VCS.
 - Refine the CB process so that it is made less complex and reliant on 'asks'.
 - Consider "what added value should Whitehall bring?" including working closer with places to test approaches and possibly strengthening the Champion role – to raise levels of engagement and ambition of local partners and departments.
 - Progress on central pooling to provide a single funding stream and a clearer steer on what can be pooled into a single budget.
 - Explore and develop innovative funding opportunities and models.
6. Few of the challenges raised by respondents are new to the Group. The Group has previously recognised the efforts areas were making to develop their proposals in a short space of time, the pressures on funding and other changes affecting local partners adding to the complexity of the process etc. The learning gives some clear messages for how the work could be taken forward, in particular for national roll out of Community Budgets for Families with Multiple Problems e.g. strong narrative, clarity on the "offer", local flexibility on Community Budget themes and lead in times, sharing learning across the LG sector and with delivery partners etc.

Department for Communities and Local Government
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