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Leading for Place

The future of local authority leadership



Local Government Association

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About Ignite

Ignite is a Solace leadership programme funded by UK Government, supported by the LGA and has been delivered in partnership with Collaborate CIC since 2016. This report shares insights from alumni of the Ignite programme.

We are very grateful to a number of leaders from government, NHS, business and civil society who have contributed to the programme, and to the local government chief executives who offered their expert input, support and participation on the programme.

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Foreword

Kim Wright
Solace Policy Lead for Leadership and Learning
London Borough of Brent



There has rarely been a more important time to be talking about leadership in local government. Across the country, chief executives and senior leaders are navigating councils through one of the most challenging periods the sector has faced in a generation – significant financial pressures, rising demand, workforce challenges, and an increasingly complex political and policy landscape. At the same time, significant opportunities are emerging as places rethink how public services operate, how local economies grow and how organisations work alongside communities as part of a more devolved, rewired state. And to do that well, we need to rewire the leadership needed for it to succeed.

The future of local government will not be determined by structures, reorganisation or new powers alone. It will be determined by leadership. Our ability to create a shared sense of purpose, build trust, bring partners together, make difficult decisions, and translate ambition into meaningful change will define the success of places in the years ahead.

As Solace's Policy Lead for Leadership and Learning, I am passionate about ensuring that we continue to invest in the leaders our sector needs, not just for today, but for the future. Leadership capability is not a luxury. It is critical infrastructure for public service reform, place-based working and long-term community outcomes. At a time when demands on public services continue to grow, we need leaders who can operate across organisational boundaries, build productive relationships and navigate complexity with confidence and integrity.

This is why programmes such as Ignite, a Solace leadership programme for chief executives supported by the Local Government Association, funded by UK Government and delivered with Collaborate CIC, are so important. They create the space for leaders to step back, reflect, challenge their thinking and learn from one another. They help build the resilience, judgement and networks that enable leaders to respond effectively when the pressure is greatest. Perhaps most importantly, they reinforce the idea that leadership is not about having all the answers, but about creating the conditions in which individuals, organisations and communities can succeed together.

The conversations captured in this report come at exactly the right moment and Solace will continue to champion the role of leadership in the sector, for the sector. They explore what leadership needs to look like in a world where many of the issues that matter most to residents, from health and care to housing, skills, economic inclusion, and community resilience cut across organisational boundaries. They remind us that the most effective leaders are those who can think and act at a system level, extending far beyond the council itself, while remaining deeply connected to the places and communities they serve. Strong places draw on leadership from communities, businesses, health partners, education providers, and the voluntary sector. Local government often succeeds by convening, connecting and enabling others.

As a sector, we also need to think carefully about the leadership pipeline. The challenges facing local government will not be solved by today's leaders alone. We must create opportunities for diverse talent to emerge, support leaders at every stage of their careers and ensure that our leadership increasingly reflects the communities we serve. This is a collective responsibility for all of us across local government and public service.

The strongest places are rarely defined by individual personalities. They are places where relationships, trust and shared purpose allow collective leadership to flourish across the whole system. If we want better outcomes for residents, stronger partnerships and more resilient communities, we must continue investing in those people who make change happen.

My thanks to all of the contributors to this collection for sharing their insight, experience and learning so generously. I hope this report stimulates debate, reflection and fresh thinking about what leadership looks like in practice and inspires us all to continue building the leadership capacity our places need for the future.

Introduction

Lord Victor Adebowale CBE
Collaborate CIC
Ignite lead facilitator

Ask most people what a local authority is and they will describe a machine: inputs, processes, outputs, a chief executive with a hand on the lever. Anyone who has led one knows better. A council is a complex adaptive system – relationships, histories, competing and legitimate interests, and thousands of decisions taken every day by people the chief executive will never meet. Its current role is demanding enough. Its future role, holding communities together through scarcity and the reinvention of public service in local places, will demand more.

That is the context in which Ignite exists.

I have learned, and re-learned, that without a focus on who you are as a person it is very hard to understand who you are as a leader. Your mind and your body are the only tools you really have. Everything else – the strategy, the structure, the transformation programme – is mediated through them. The work of Ignite is to sharpen that tool.

Think about what we expect of a surgeon. Not that she qualified competently twenty years ago, but that she is continually developing her practice: reading, being observed, being challenged, revising her technique in the light of the evidence and of her own failures. And note that we do not leave this to her conscience or to her employer's training budget. We require it of her. There is a standard, a body that holds her to it, and a consequence if she does not meet it.

A chief executive holds thousands of lives in their decisions; the system as a whole holds millions. For them there is no equivalent requirement at all. Development is discretionary, funded from the margins, and the first thing cut when money is short. The only real difference between the two cases is that the harm done by an unexamined leader is diffuse, delayed and deniable, where a botched operation is none of those things. That is why we get away with it. It is not a reason to.

So let us be clear about what development is. It is not preparation for the work; it is the work. It is not a luxury to be cut when budgets tighten. It is the discipline on which every other discipline depends. I should declare the obvious interest: Collaborate runs Ignite, and we are paid to do this. The case does not rest on our saying so. It rests on what the nine chief executives in these pages describe about the job they are actually doing.

Ignite brings together the emotional, the intellectual and the practical, because leadership fails when any one of them is missing. Analysis without feeling is cold and unpersuasive. Feeling without analysis is noise. Neither survives contact with a Tuesday morning.

The hardest lesson, returned to again and again, is that total control is an illusion. In a complex adaptive system you cannot command an outcome; you can only shape the conditions in which good outcomes become more likely. Leaders who have not made peace with that spend their careers gripping tighter and achieving less. What replaces control is values – a compass, personal and organisational, that holds when the map has run out. On Ignite we treat values, strategy, and operations as alignment tools. When they point the same way, outcomes follow. When they do not, no restructuring will save you.

It is also why I have come to think about equity and inclusion differently. People argue about anti-racism and EDI as though it were a matter of moral taste. I take a simpler view: competence is an expression of values. A leader who is racist, or misogynist, or ableist, or any other 'ist', cannot be a competent leader, because they are systematically unable to see, understand and mobilise a large part of the system they are responsible for. A leader who cannot see a third of their place cannot lead it. It is not about whether you are a good person; it is about whether you can do the job. Who argues against competence?



Ignite is not a sheep dip. It is an immersion in new ways of thinking, in a safe and supportive space created by the participants themselves. In some sense we create an organisation whose task is the study of leadership, of individuals and of the systems they inhabit. Some people get it immediately and the lightbulb comes on. For others it comes to full glow slowly, and for a few it arrives days, weeks, sometimes years after the cohort has stopped meeting. All of it counts. Many go on to build their own structures of support for the rest of their careers.

But the point was never change from within for its own sake, and it was never the comfort of chief executives. It is change that produces insight, and insight that produces better services for the people at the sharp end of the inverse care law – those who need most and still, too often, get least. They are the patient on the table. There are millions of them. I would ask readers to hold them in mind through what follows, and to judge the shifts we call for at the end of this report by a single question: would any of this be noticed by them?

This report brings together conversations with nine Ignite chief executives (eight of local authorities, and one of a Mayoral Strategic Authority), each sharing their perspective on what it takes to lead for place today and what will be required of leaders tomorrow.[1]

We explored four questions: what the chief executive role needs to look like now and in future; what it takes to lead for place beyond formal authority; what authentic and sustainable leadership looks like in practice; and what systemic and cultural changes are needed to support it. The interviews follow this introduction. Each stands on its own, reflecting a different place, political context, and individual's approach to leadership. Together they offer a compelling articulation of the leadership we need to bring public services together around the priorities of people and place.

The report closes with a look to the future, drawing out the key themes running through the conversations and setting out the shifts we believe are needed if this kind of leadership is to be recruited for, valued and supported. Our hope is that it prompts both ambition and realism about the leadership required to genuinely transform public services, and the investment needed to support it.

1. Thanks also to Trudy Birtwell from Solace for her valuable contributions throughout this report, and to Helen Jenkins from the LGA for sharing her insights in an interview.

N.B. The interviews took place before the pause to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) was announced in September 2026. They have not been edited to reflect this as the capabilities chief executives described as essential to delivering LGR (e.g. collaboration, adaptability and a focus on an ambitious future for place) are central to the role whatever future decisions are made about reorganisation.

Starting with people, not boundaries

Kate Josephs
Chief Executive
Sheffield City Council



Everything everywhere all at once

Being a local authority chief exec is an incredible job, partly because of the massive variety. You have to be able to operate at a very strategic level, sometimes thinking about and influencing national policy, while at the same time being able to deeply empathise with hyperlocal issues and understand how things feel in a neighbourhood.

I often describe my role as a rough three-way split, although it never actually works out neatly like that. One part is running the organisation: close to 9,000 people, delivering good services and transforming the council to be the kind of organisation the city and its citizens need for the future. We're in the middle of a really significant transformation at the moment, including much greater use of digital and AI, and a big focus on prevention and locality working.

Another part is supporting members and navigating the politics. We're a no overall control council with a committee system, so that takes a lot of time and it's not trivial. And then there's really leaning into the big strategic conversations across the city, the region and nationally.

It's everything, which is why this job is so amazing. It's everything, everywhere, all at once.

The role needs to be about connecting and seeing across boundaries and being expansive and creative in your thinking. So trying not to be hamstrung by "that's a housing issue" or "that's a skills issue" or "that's a social care issue" and really thinking about people and how they experience services. That's a big part of the job that needs to be emphasised and valued.

Political nous, political acuity and the ability to navigate a space where you've got increasingly volatile politics and you're still able to build respect and trust is crucial. Devolution is going to require a huge amount of self-reflection from us as leaders on how we advise our politicians in this new landscape. After decades of local government having some of its agency taken away, our responsibility as senior officers is now even more critical in terms of supporting politicians to truly govern and make real choices again.

There are things that need to change in central government and the civil service, but local government needs to change too.

I think as a sector we've accepted, perhaps because we've had years and years of being 'done to', a very passive, almost child-parent relationship with central government. That is changing. We're being asked to step into a more empowered role, and that is going to require us to act differently as well. We have to hold our space.

In the world we're in and the world we're going into, chief execs need to be valued for judgements, curiosity, relationships – not as a kind of fluffy nice to have, but as the core by which work is done. Convening capabilities are going to be really important. And comfort with ambiguity, and sensible risk taking and judgement. There's also an important steadying role in a period of intense change and uncertainty.

In all of this, it's really important we don't end up with a single cookie cutter image of what a good chief exec looks and is like. It's crucial that different people are able to see themselves in these leadership positions because that will bring more variety and experience into these really critical roles.

The advantage of proximity

You have to sit in the space of being a place leader as well as an organisational leader. Running a good organisation has to be fundamental. But you also have to be intensely interested in your place and recognise that our distinctive advantage in local government is proximity, seeing how people actually experience policy and how it lands in their lives and their communities.

I went into national government because I thought that was where I could make the biggest difference. After more than 20 years in the civil service, including in a very senior role, I realised that the extremely centralised nature of the English system was a barrier to making a real difference. That's why I feel so strongly about devolution and why I feel privileged to be much more accountable for making change happen on the ground.

When I came to Sheffield, trust in the council was really low. There was a history of the council being seen as insular, lacking in ambition, openness and connection with the people of the city. So there has been a really slow, and still ongoing, rebuilding of trust with citizens and partners. That's the nature of building and rebuilding trust: it takes time, consistency and persistence.

In that context, it was important that I was visible and present as chief exec, but also that I wasn't driving everything. It has been much more about building relationships and creating spaces where partners feel they have the backing of me and the council to do their thing.

The Sheffield city goals are a great manifestation of that. We needed to avoid this being "the council has come up with some goals for the city". The council needed to step back, create the space, fund and support the process and say: when the city tells us what those goals are, we'll adopt them, champion them and help drive them, but they'll belong to everybody.

That has required work behind the scenes with politicians, partners, senior officers and the organisation to create the conditions for it to work. We should never underestimate our role in creating the conditions for great things to happen.



Connecting to purpose

When I first took this job, another chief exec said to me: “This job is impossible. You will never be able to do everything you wish you could do.” My coach and I often come back to that. In the context of your job being impossible, the choice you make is what you spend your time doing. Your job is to try to empower the organisation to do as much as it possibly can so that it’s not all on you. It’s a constant piece of work: where are you needed, and where do you need to be yourself?

That connects back to purpose. I try to be intentional about where I spend my time, including spending time on work that will fill me up and give me the energy to go again. These jobs can become really overwhelming, and the way I keep perspective is by keeping connected to purpose. For me, it’s always been about public service, making a difference in people’s lives, being human and connecting with people. I believe really intensely in doing everything I can to ensure that people have the opportunities they deserve to thrive. Everybody deserves those opportunities.

I’ve also really benefited this last year from the Ignite programme. It’s been timely to spend time with colleagues at a similar level of experience: past the immediate, “whoa, this is massive and terrifying” to “it’s still massive and terrifying, and we’re doing it”. Having a supportive peer group you can be vulnerable with, without feeling judged, is really important.

> “You need to see across boundaries and be expansive and creative in your thinking. Trying not to be hamstrung by ‘that’s a housing issue’ or ‘that’s a skills issue’ or ‘that’s a social care issue’ and really thinking about people and how they experience services.”

What systems leadership makes possible:

Gleadless Valley

Gleadless Valley is a very large social housing estate in Sheffield. There had been a traditional housing-led masterplan which was hugely constrained from an affordability perspective, and which didn’t speak to the people of the estate. It didn’t speak to jobs and skills, aspirations and education, green space or play. And trust in the council was really low because promises had been made and not enough had happened.

So, with strong political leadership, we did a big reset. We said: “We’ve lost trust. We need to start again. We need to talk to people and we need to listen.”

Senior officers and teams across the council, elected members, partners including the mental health trust and schools, and people living in the valley came together to create a different vision. They went through meeting after meeting where people quite rightly said, “You’ve let us down.”

Over a few years, the process has built a really solid and aspirational vision for transformation, with citizens directly involved in shaping and advocating for it. The Gleadless Valley ‘Vision for the Valley’ sets a long-term direction for future work with partners to deliver around 1,100 new homes, stronger local centres, parks, community facilities, and better neighbourhood connections.

It’s a generational project and it will still take huge investment, but there is now a sense of possibility and hope, alongside practical things happening in the here and now.

What I love about this example is that it really demonstrates the changing culture and mindset of the council, with teams working together around the place; my role has increasingly been simply to champion and support the teams, helping work through disagreements and being someone people can come to and who will listen.

The shift was about stepping back and thinking about the place from the point of view of the resident. If you really want to transform a place, it can’t just be about physical regeneration. It’s about people, jobs, connectivity, education, mental health, and public transport. You stop asking, “How do we get funding to deliver some new homes?” and start asking, “What are the strengths of this place, and how do we put it in the strongest possible position to be the best place it can be?” That is a far stronger proposition to attract the investment necessary to drive generational change.



Shaping an ambitious future for place

Robin Tuddenham
Chief Executive
Calderdale Council



Leading in a changing landscape
The job of a chief exec is different from when I began it in 2017. Aspects of the role are consistent: insufficient resources, escalating demand, the rewards of leading and convening in a place you are invested in. But the operating environment in terms of politics, governance, and delivering for place, in a wider subregional context, cannot be underestimated. And this is before the release of the government's drive to 'rewire the state'.

The first key shift I've experienced is that the political environment is not just more challenging, it contains multitudes. There's the rise of insurgent parties that have limited experience of governing. And around half of all councils are in no overall control now. In the political environment you need to be an advocate, mentor and tutor, recognising leaders and senior politicians can't display in the wider world that they're anything but completely on top of everything, and know what they're doing even when they're new to the role.

The operating environment does lead to issues around behaviour and pressure on both politicians and officers. This is where work on civility and standards is needed, and where Solace has a pivotal part to play in supporting professional leaders, creating clear codes of governance, and pushing for an effective standards regime.

The second key shift is governance. Governance is absorbing our worlds and affecting our bandwidth. Local government reorganisation has been all-consuming for many, and the current pause creates a need for urgent clarity. We are being asked to rewire the state, and also to reorganise the state. In a utopian world, you could say those two things could come together and be one. But that's challenging to deliver in practice.

And then you've got devolution and all the opportunities that presents. I'm spending more time than ever with my West Yorkshire peers and members, navigating a focus on getting what you need for your place with being

> "You need to find your story for place. It's got to be ambitious and make you feel a little bit uncomfortable and determined to make a difference."

collegiate across West Yorkshire. Local authorities are constituent bodies of Mayoral Strategic Authorities, so we must harness our agency in that space. I feel I'm operating as West Yorkshire as much as I am in Calderdale, which is non-negotiable now to deliver outcomes on transport, housing, economy, public service reform, skills, and much else. Simply put, the West Yorkshire focus has gone from probably 5% to 40% of my job.

The third key shift is public service reform. How do we make prevention the operating principle of the local state? How do you do that in a coherent way and enable integrated budgets at a national government level to take preventative work further at a local level? This has to be a shared endeavour at all levels of government, with a sustained commitment to seize opportunities such as implementation of neighbourhood health, use of evidence to reduce homelessness and temporary accommodation (as we have done with Crisis), community-led models of adult social care, and harnessing AI.

Curating place now and for the future
You have to be a shaper, creator, and enabler. New unitary chief execs will be inheriting a whole set of systems, people, structures and processes. We need people who feel able to and confident enough to immerse themselves in the place, understand civil society, understand the communities within the geography, be kind to themselves, but also be energised by their potential to convene, steward and deliver in place.

The imperative to rewire the state can risk us becoming sunk by debates about who does what, and who is in charge. We will regret an opportunity, if it is missed, to use devolution to enable growth, embrace our agency, and seize this moment where there is a national commitment to take the big decisions required.

When I came to Calderdale, no one ever talked about that word, Calderdale, and I think people do now. The



pandemic, and three major flood events have sharpened our impetus to define who we are, and the kind of place we want to be. It's been a lengthy process to create our vision of place, with nearly a thousand stories from residents, enabling us to describe what we aspire Calderdale to be in 2034.

You need to find your story for place. It's got to be ambitious and make you feel a little bit uncomfortable and determined to make a difference.

As chief executive, you may be the one person in the organisation dealing with today, tomorrow, and the 'what after tomorrow'. Our vision has sought to foster and nurture that ethos for our whole place making it the leadership task for all of us.

Finding the joy

Being a chief executive of a local authority is a big part of anyone's life. Even when you're not working, you're thinking and you feel accountable 24/7. I'm quite boundaried. I started my career in mental health and in social work. I always say: remember and draw upon the skills that anchored your career – make the most of whatever it is, recognise and attend to the gaps. Surround yourself with brilliant people, do all you can, every day, to enable them to flourish. I was in an environment where I had very good supervision, development and training and a real sense of boundaries. My task in leadership is to draw from that and seek to instil what I have learned from my mistakes, as well as what went well, with others.

One of the things I talk to new chief execs about is that something can feel overwhelming in the moment and it's incredible how many times, three or four months later, you won't even remember it. You need to manage shocks with strength and fortitude.

Earlier in my time as chief exec, I just let it all happen to me. There are days when you just have to slog through. But never let it be only that. You're not going to be able to attend to everything, but notice what you notice, as others will notice, and most importantly of all, find the thing that gives you joy and find a way to manifest yourself in it.

What systems leadership makes possible:

Working with communities in Calderdale

The work we've done around community cohesion both before, during and after the pandemic has left us a legacy. We responded to the pandemic in a way that was influenced by the strength of our relationships with faith communities and voluntary groups and the sense of place.

We have managed to be resilient to disturbances, protests, and serious incidents and manage challenging issues in a way that I'm proud of. There's shared systems leadership across the place. There's leadership from community groups. We've got Pride in Place funding, but we've been doing this kind of work for ten years. We've already got a town board. We've had this community infrastructure for a long time.

A colleague who's just joined us from another council is absolutely amazed by the community and voluntary sector infrastructure. And the willingness of all our politicians, regardless of their party politics, to enable communities to lead and run services and to deliver with us. I think it's an ethos and culture across the place. It's not me or any other individuals. It's a context that enables things to flourish.

This is supported by a well-established place leaders group that brings the private sector, public sector and voluntary sector together. We also have vision leadership seminars where we bring together a cohort of future and emerging leaders across all of the system.

Translating across place

Alison McKenzie-Folan
Chief Executive
Wigan Borough Council



Leading through networks
The chief exec role is now much less about transactional organisational working and, for me, because we're a mission-based organisation, much more about helping places and communities thrive. We still need to manage resources, performance and risk. But we also need to bring people together around shared goals and build trust. It's about relationships with our residents.

Living in such a complex and uncertain world, getting that sense of purpose, hope and direction becomes more important.

We have to be comfortable with uncertainty, but at the same time, help our communities work through that uncertainty and listen to a wide range of voices, sharing that responsibility with other organisations working in our places. The system leadership piece is really important.

Chief execs need to concentrate on being less managerial and more on building the conditions in an organisation for others to lead, as well as modelling the behaviours the whole organisation needs.

I think it's really important that new chief execs know when to step in and when to step back. It's about trying to lead through networks, through listening, and through a sense of purpose and influence rather than a position of authority. Just because you've got the chief exec title, that's not what's going to make the organisation work or achieve what you need to achieve for your particular place. It's much more nuanced than that.

Chief execs need to be out there, they need to be leading from communities in their communities, and bring the public and place partners together. That's what we're uniquely placed to do.

Acting as translator
In the context of devolution, leading in place is exciting but at the same time challenging because you get split into five different pieces. My job is to translate what that means for place into those combined authority conversations. You're an advocate, you're an ambassador for the place, but at the same time, you've got to understand the wider strategic aim of what we're trying to do across the city region and the combined authority.

It's about bringing conversations from a local level into the combined authority level and vice versa. So, essentially, it's about partnership working and collaboration. You've got to learn to compromise, collaborate, advocate, and evidence.

People come to the council for so many different things. Beyond the 700+ services we provide, we're seen as an anchor for the place. That gives us a unique ability to bring in partners, whether it's the NHS, local businesses, the community sector or whoever it is. We're at the intersection of politics, public services, businesses, communities, and partners.

I've got the privilege and unique perspective to hear all of those voices and bring them together. That doesn't mean I have to lead it all. You can quietly influence in the background, and bring partners together.

One of the big things we're doing at the moment through the combined authority is the prevention demonstrator work. We're trying to be advocates for policy change, taking the learning from what's happening in our places and using that intelligence to say, "Actually, there's a better way of doing this."

That means having conversations with the Treasury and government departments to say, "We've got to shift some of that investment into prevention." Being at the forefront of trying to influence policy is really important from a place perspective.

You operate across all those different layers and parts of the system, but I think the core compass is what we're trying to do for place: community-led prevention, tackling inequalities, and thinking about what it means for society.

You can be head down, running the organisation, but actually, what do we need to do in the next five to ten years? It's incumbent on us as leaders to try and influence the policy changes that need to happen. You can only do that by being in conversation. If I stay in Wigan and don't get involved in the combined authority or wider conversations, it's not great for Wigan. Some of the parameters we're working within can only be changed by lobbying, by providing the data, evidence, and intelligence and advocating strongly for our communities.

> "My job is to translate conversations from a local level into the combined authority level and vice versa. You're an advocate, you're an ambassador for the place, and you've got to understand the wider strategic aim of what we're trying to do across the region."

Leading with openness, honesty and curiosity
It's really important to me that we're a learning organisation. It's about keeping the good stuff while being a really humble and adaptive organisation. We can be honest about mistakes that we've made and still carry on trying to do our mission-based work.

That links to compassionate, kind leadership, which I feel really strongly about. I want to create an organisation where people can come as they are, where they feel psychologically safe to have difficult and courageous conversations, to challenge each other constructively and to be honest when things haven't gone well. For me, kindness and compassion aren't about avoiding challenge or accountability. They're about creating the conditions where people can be open, vulnerable and honest, and still feel respected and valued.

Personally it can be a bit hard sometimes because as a chief exec, you think your role is to protect the organisation. You're head of PR in some respects, because reputation management is really important. But you don't have to be defensive to do that. You can be open and humble and honest and say to residents: "I'm sorry it's been that way for you."

Sometimes we go into conversations and your brain's trained as a bureaucrat, so it can be "Just a minute, is there a legal angle here? Is there some sort of compensation angle, or a procedural issue, or an inspectorate issue?" But we've got to be open and honest. There's no point hiding things.

The need to have courageous conversations applies beyond the council too. You've got to name tensions and difficult truths directly, rather than allowing ambiguity to persist. There have been some really difficult areas where we've not agreed in GM work: clashes of cultures, ways of working, different styles, and different approaches. We've been doing work on our mission leadership, and one of our commitments is about choosing courage over comfort.

I've been in situations where I've had to say the things that perhaps the room's thinking but we're not saying. You can get lost in the system of NHS hierarchy or bureaucracy for example, but you've got to have the relationships to name the tensions, understand each other's positions and listen, rather than avoid it. Small acts of avoidance make the next one even harder, so it compounds. Sometimes you've got to choose discomfort. And actually, it's a powerful signal to the people around you that you're prepared to go there.

Doing the right thing

Ultimately the role of chief exec for me is about: 'do the right thing'. Things come up in your inbox or in conversation where you just think, "That doesn't feel quite how it should feel." So it's important to have the sense of, "Okay, let's follow the string and do the right thing." It can be pretty relentless, but it's so important. We have to stay curious as leaders. We've got to empower new ideas and different thinking and I also need to demonstrate that myself.

In these positions, you need to look at things through the lens of lived experience, neighbourhood intelligence, stories, and insight. It's simple, really, back to relationships: not losing contact with human reality.

As chief execs we need to focus on the human reality too. For me, the Ignite stuff has been absolutely amazing. It's created a space for listening, opening up, and genuinely hearing other people's perspectives, which I've found invaluable.

If I look at the work we do at a regional level, we get together as chief execs a lot, but 95% of it is just business and feeding the machine. We don't spend enough time on the human reality, asking, "How are you feeling? Are you having a tough week? Are you struggling?" We need to recognise that looking after yourself and your peers is just as important as working through meeting agendas.



What systems leadership makes possible:

Connecting community voice into regional policy

The work that we're doing in Greater Manchester with the NHS, although we are still on a journey together, shows the importance of joining up the system. Our commitment to holding on to place through all of the NHS reforms has been a real positive.

The fact that nine of the chief execs in Greater Manchester are also the place-based leads for health and care integration, shows that we are able to influence and have a voice at the table in what would traditionally be seen as a very national, top-down, bureaucratic system.

Being able to embed neighbourhood health and neighbourhood work in place-based decisions has been really important. We've kept a sense of purpose around place partnerships, and I think we could have only done that by bringing the local authority perspective into the NHS. The NHS at the GM level has been really open to those conversations.

Portfolio working has been a really good way to have those enabling conversations. Most of it actually comes down to having conversations with the people that matter, building relationships and being courageous when you need to tackle difficult issues.

The Live Well work we've done in Greater Manchester (GM) has also seen a lot of our community leaders step into systems leadership in a really powerful way. They've been promoting Live Well beyond their own sector, getting involved in significant conversations with system partners, and bringing the voice of the community sector into those conversations while also supporting the wider movement we're trying to build across Greater Manchester.

It's been really positive to see them influence these conversations and to see the way the momentum at the GM level and in Wigan is enabling and reinforcing this direction.

Leading through ambiguity

Donna Nolan
Chief Executive
Watford Borough Council



Chief exec as convenor
Traditionally, chief execs have been hierarchical, holding the performance of the organisation to account and focusing on finance and governance, rather than thinking about the broader system. Taking part in Ignite pushed me to ask: "What is the place that I'm leading? What is the system that wraps around it? And how is that system connected?" It was uncomfortable at first, because it meant letting go of the idea that the council was at the centre of everything. But it changed how I lead.

Today, against a backdrop of political uncertainty and increasingly complex challenges, the chief exec role is much more about convening. It's not just about overseeing the organisation; it's about actively bringing in ideas from other people to shape the future.

In systems leadership, psychological safety is essential. To get the best from people, even amid uncertainty, I need to nurture talent and enable staff and partners to raise issues without fear of judgement. But I've learned that openness isn't the same as consensus. Ultimately, I have to be willing to take the final decision and hold the risk that comes with it.

You need to be willing to lean in and look for creative solutions. If I don't like something, I have to ask what I can do to change it and how I can influence others to help bring that change about. That means being honest when something isn't working, but also curious about what might work better.

With LGR and the financial pressures facing the sector, I'm looking beyond organisational boundaries, building strong relationships, bringing people together and using our collective influence to shape the way forward.

Leading through ambiguity
The ability to lead through ambiguity is absolutely critical. Chief execs and senior officers in new unitary authorities won't inherit finished organisations. They'll have the chance to build them. That calls for a different kind of leadership: holding uncertainty, giving people confidence and keeping people moving forwards with a clear sense of purpose, without pretending we have all the answers. If you're someone who thrives on assurance and clarity, it could be testing. But ambiguity isn't a barrier to leadership. In many ways, it's where leadership matters most.

> "There's no doubt that we're in the waves at the moment. We can't control them, but we can choose how we navigate through them… Accepting that we don't know all the answers, while giving other people confidence that we still have a clear sense of direction, is the foundation for leading through change."

There's no doubt that we're in the waves at the moment. We can't control them, but we can choose how we navigate through them. Sometimes that can be quite scary and sometimes it can even be exhilarating. Accepting that we don't know all the answers, while giving other people confidence that we still have a clear sense of direction, is the foundation for leading through change. It might feel very bumpy, but we know the end game. We just don't quite know how we're going to get there yet.

Leading through ambiguity isn't something a chief exec does alone. It depends on a strong, trusting relationship with your political leader because your successes are interlinked. That starts with understanding my leader's priorities, aspirations and democratic mandate. There are times when I need to say no, but it shouldn't be the default. I always try to find a way to work with the democratic mandate that politicians have. By respecting that legitimacy, being transparent about what's possible and staying focused on shared ambitions, you build the trust and confidence to lead through uncertainty together.

Taking a systems approach to reform
To bring the wider system together, you need to unite everyone behind common goals. This is why creating a place narrative, which partners, stakeholders and communities identify with, matters. With LGR, new chief execs will need to get a grasp of their place quickly, so they can authentically shape the place vision and bring a new organisation together around it.

You're also creating new organisations with a new political mandate and no history or legacy. Thinking flexibly about that mandate and shaping the organisation around what's needed at the time is an important starting point.

Being safe and legal, meeting our statutory duties from day one, is the basic foundation. But that isn't the destination. We've got three buckets: the safe and legal bucket, everything we must do; the quick-wins bucket, things we can do quickly that will make an immediate difference; and the transformation bucket, the bold, long-term opportunities that need to shape the agenda for the new unitary. Many new councils will face real challenges from the outset, and you won't get ahead of those by focusing only on safe and legal. Safe and legal will get us through day one. Transformation is what will make these councils fit for the future.

For me, LGR is an opportunity to take a long-term view and embed systems-based thinking, particularly around redesigning services. I've been having positive conversations across the system about how we can put prevention at the centre, break down silos and focus on what we could do across a broader geography. Rather than taking the easier option, we want to test what's really possible.

Leading authentically and sustainably
None of this works if you run yourself into the ground. For me, sustainable leadership means managing my energy, knowing when to pause and being honest about the pressures I'm carrying, not pretending everything is fine. That authenticity builds the relationships that unlock systems and helps you lead through significant change.

Being consistent, fair and a good listener, even when outcomes are difficult, is fundamental. You carry a lot of weight on your shoulders, so you need to know yourself. I



know myself well enough to recognise when I need to take a step back and go: “Right, Donna, now is not the time.”

I get a lot of my resilience and energy from other people, as well as from interesting work. If I’ve had a bad day, I know who to call: someone who will re-energise me, help me regain perspective and work out what to do next. I am motivated by the culture within the organisation too. People invigorate me through the questions they’re asking, the curiosity they’re showing, and their willingness to move quickly and get stuck in. It’s public service at its best.

One of the things I value most about Ignite is the network of people who aren’t from my patch. You can talk about how it really is in your place without worrying about what someone else might think, and hear different, objective perspectives. We’ve kept that going through a WhatsApp group and we still meet. We have dinner and an “offloading meeting” in the evening, then meet again the next morning and reset, asking: “Right, what have we learned? What can we share? What is useful for us all to know?” That’s invaluable.

It’s so helpful having an environment where people can be genuinely honest with each other. It’s not about saying, “Look at me, aren’t I brilliant?” It’s about saying, “Actually, this didn’t work for me. You might want to learn from this.” That honesty helps all of us learn from each other, and that’s how we achieve more for the places and people we serve.

The Ignite network has reinforced for me that systems leadership is not about having all the answers yourself. It is about creating the trust, relationships and shared purpose that allow people to learn from one another and act together. That is exactly what LGR will demand. Whatever is decided in Westminster, the responsibility for making it work will be carried locally by us, our partners and our communities. Structures will change, but the responsibility does not. Whatever comes next, Watford deserves our best.

What systems leadership makes possible:

One Watford Place Board

Through our One Watford Place Board, bringing together key public and private sector organisations in the borough, we’ve delivered a Watford 2040 vision. It’s our shared compass for the area’s priorities. No member of the board has formal authority over the others, so progress depends on shared purpose, trust and collective ownership. That’s one of the reasons I’m so passionate about it. It demonstrates that some of the biggest challenges facing our communities can only be addressed when organisations choose to work together towards common outcomes.

Getting everyone to commit to it, including health, police, further education, delivery partners, and central and local government, wasn’t easy. It was hard work, but ultimately everyone recognised that the problems we face are bigger than any one organisation. For me, that was Ignite in action.

This has given the place ownership of outcomes and the confidence to say, “Actually, I can’t do this alone. Can someone come and help me with this?”

There’s a risk the board could get lost during LGR, so we’re looking to pilot it as a new governance structure under the unitary. The ambition is to use it as our local engagement board and potentially widen it across the area. The move to new organisations shouldn’t come at the expense of proven local strengths.

One of the key priorities we’ve been focusing on through the Place Board is prevention. We said: “Let’s stop doing lots of small prevention pilots and projects, and think systematically about the conditions that make prevention core to what we do. Let’s build prevention into LGR and NHS reform now, rather than trying to retrofit it later.”

There’s a good appetite to do it. The challenge is capacity to lift it up a level and move from isolated fixes to structural change across the whole system.

Unlocking hidden influence through relationships

Jonathan Stephenson
Chief Executive
Brentwood Borough Council and Rochford District Council



Looking in, looking ahead, looking out
I have three focuses in my role. I have the 'in the business' focus, which is an oversight role. It's ensuring the chief exec knows where the engine room is, can go in there and check to make sure things are going right, knows where the oil dipstick is, but not being the mechanic.

Then we've got the 'on the business' piece, where we're looking at the future and planning for the next three or four years. I think most of us as chief execs need to be in that space, working with other partners. And there's the 'outside of the business' focus, creating those relationships outside to be able to do more of the 'on the business' work.

I should be spending a relatively small amount of time on the 'in the business' bit. Once you've planned the work for the council for the year, you monitor it and you support. Someone needs to be playing in the future. If you're in the business 90%, you're not going to get on to the future business of system working, which is how we deliver real collaborative outcomes.

As Chief executives, we need to move into that space. But we also need to recognise that with LGR we're setting new organisations up, and there are huge risks. So it's probably going to push us more into the 'in the business' space for a period of time. The challenge is that we might lose the opportunity to really seek and explore further collaboration and system working.

Relationships are the hidden work
People talk about collaboration, but they don't spend time on the human side and the relationship piece. If you've got a good relationship with someone in an emergency, there's probably a good chance they'll help you. If you haven't, it doesn't mean they won't help you, but they probably won't go out of their way.

It's a difficult role, keeping all your partners, your employees, your stakeholders engaged, and making sure that you're giving time to everybody. It's about planning ahead and making sure I am checking in with people regularly. It's being in that proactive space where I plan my diary a year in advance to make sure I give time to the people who need the most time and support.

Another reason relationships are so important is helping people work through difference and get to a shared vision. If you speak to most councils, most political parties, actually most of the things we do, probably 80 or 90% are in line. If you read anybody's corporate plan or corporate strategy, they're very similar.

Most of the time politics at the moment is about personal things rather than policy. People can use personal politics to divide themselves and each other, but if you haven't got the relationships to work through that, you're not going to be able to deliver.

When you look back on how we've achieved something, people often forget the hard work they put into building the relationships that actually helped start the journey.

I always say in my role, there's a lot of work I call 'hidden influence', work that no one knows I do. That can be with members, that can be with partners. A phone call to a partner, knowing that they're probably not getting on very well with another partner, talking about it indirectly, and then hearing that the partners have started to engage and work together – that's my hidden influence.

Because of the confidentiality in most of those conversations, you can't share it with anyone. As a chief exec you don't directly achieve those things, so it's more about understanding and recognising that your hidden influence is your power.

> "There's a lot of relationship building work that no one knows I do. As a chief exec you need to recognise this hidden influence is your power."

From talking system to working system
The power of place leadership needs to be valued more. As we create five unitaries in Essex, how do we ensure by default that the system is the focus first, before we think individual and organisation? It has to be the first line of the chief executive job description. People talk about safe and legal, but if we don't think beyond safe and legal on day one, we won't be safe and legal by day two, as we won't have the financial resources to meet demand.

We talk system quite a bit as leaders, and that's probably the challenge. We talk system rather than work system. You have to put aside ego, whether it's personal ego or organisational ego, and actually look at how we deliver together. It doesn't really matter if each of our funding comes from the NHS, local government, police, fire etc. It all comes from the same source, it's just been distributed. So we should be asking: how do we put our funding and resources together to enable better outcomes?

We can do the firefighting. What we need to be doing is getting public services from an A&E state to an R&D proactive and innovative state. We need to be going from a space where we're metaphorically fighting fires and trying to resuscitate people, to a place where we're actually trying to proactively support people in a place, locally and regionally, to get better outcomes for people's lives.

At the moment we use, and we always probably will, the largest amount of resource to deliver services for the smallest amount of the most vulnerable people. With the new unitary authorities, there is more opportunity to take a wider, more holistic approach, to step back and think about the root cause and the wider solution rather than just chucking funding at it, because that isn't working and we can't sustain that.

Finding common ground

I've got 11 political groups across the two councils I'm chief exec of at present. I meet with all the group leaders monthly. I've been trying to find as much opportunity to align them in the right things to bring them together, which isn't simple.

For example, Reform has got a view on climate change reform, but also wants to be more efficient. So bringing them a proposal around energy efficiency is probably something they'll buy into over something that's very focused on reducing carbon to save the world, even if not my view.

So it's thinking about different strategies and different approaches. For me, it's about understanding what makes people tick, what drives them, what's personal for them. I put that down to building relationships with each of them. Most people want to do the right thing locally.

They probably rebrand it in different ways, call it different things, but most of the time they want to do the same thing. Most of the time they might disagree in public, but actually when you sit them down, often they're in agreement.

That approach also applies to our relationship with central government. We need to work hard on relationships: create them, build trust, and break down boundaries. As local authorities, we blame central government, they blame us. We brought 40 civil servants down to Brentwood recently and did a session with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on understanding local government. It was open space, no silly questions, to give people an opportunity to develop a better understanding of local government, which in turn can help support us locally.

We need to work together to challenge ourselves on wicked issues. Why are so many children still in temporary accommodation? Why is special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) costing the government and local government too much money, but still not delivering for young people and their families? Why are people living in poverty?

How are we allowing this to happen? How do we all get beyond organisational ego to tackle these wicked issues and improve outcomes?





What systems leadership makes possible:

Good homes in Brentwood

I'm a big believer that the foundation of most people's lives is a good home. What matters is having somewhere to call home that is safe and secure. From there, people need good community support, good family and job opportunities, something to help them sustain that home.

So we created a strategy around building new homes, repairing the homes we had to ensure a higher level of quality for our residents, and having a disposal strategy. By doing that, we created a pipeline of 300 to 400 homes.

But it's not just about the homes themselves. We were ambitious around carbon zero and worked with the Health Authority and other partners to understand the benefits, not just for climate change, but for people living in healthier homes. We worked with Citizens Advice and local voluntary organisations around fuel poverty, because one of the rationales for going carbon zero was to bring people's energy costs down.

For me, this demonstrates what system working makes possible. We've worked across multiple partners to deliver homes that will be affordable, healthy and safe, and we're going to monitor the outcomes. Those families will also have more disposable income, which can hopefully help them support their children and families.

We've had austerity, wars, challenges around viability and different pressures, but we stayed firm and delivered. Homes England have also invested further into the programme because they are learning from the outcomes we are delivering. We've carried on because we really believe in the outcomes that are going to help that community and those families.

In the future, we need to look at pushing systems working further including through pooled budgets. How can the NHS invest, for example, given people living in the homes will probably have a reduction in health issues?

Delivering shared outcomes

Mark Davies
Chief Executive
Lancaster City Council



> “Partnerships aren’t ultimately about MOUs or about process. They’re about relationships, and the buzz that you get from delivering on shared outcomes.”

Leading across boundaries
The key aptitude of local authority chief executives is the ability to lead within a system: to look at the whole piece, lead people and help to deliver key outcomes. You need to be curious and challenge where the big risk areas are. You need to be seen as credible, authentic and as having integrity. You’ve got to be able to articulate a vision that people can get behind, that is clear and understandable to a broad spectrum of people, and then demonstrate that you can deliver it. It’s about being able to lead across boundaries, rather than having specialised skills in specific service areas.

Leading through LGR is a good example of that, because you’re having to lead across many relationships and multiple scales of geography simultaneously. Across Lancashire, we’ve got a programme to make sure the new unitaries have all the information they need to get set up and be sustainable. We’re working really well together and with our politicians, even though there are lots of differences.

At the same time, you’ve got to look after what’s happening inside your own organisation. Staff need to understand what’s happening and feel reassured through the process. And also for elected members it’s very unsettling. Some will be thinking about whether they want to stand in a new unitary and the different services, like social care, that a new council would be responsible for. At the same time we also have to continue delivering business as usual.

I’m working to help us navigate that as an organisation, while also working with partners across our district. The voluntary and cultural sectors, for example, receive significant funding from us and are understandably wondering whether a new unitary might have different priorities. You’re holding all those relationships at the same time. There are a lot of plates we’re trying to spin.

Advocating for place
For me, as a chief exec you’re there to advocate for and lead in place, working with other chief executives around key priorities. Each organisation has its own specific responsibilities, but the question is: what are the key outcomes that we want to deliver on and how do we work as a system to deliver for our people?

You can easily spend 100% of your time focused inwardly on your own organisation. But to be effective, I think you’ve got to be spending perhaps 70% of your time looking outwards. I’d tell new chief execs to not be shy about spending time looking outside the organisation, rather than chained to the desk. You need to start as you mean to go on.

Local authorities are uniquely positioned to be the convenor and pull partnerships together. It’s very rare that other organisations do that, and we’ve also got a unique political mandate. So that is naturally where the convening role sits.

Partnerships aren’t ultimately about MOUs or about process. They’re about relationships, and the buzz that you get from delivering on shared outcomes. Leaders need to invest time not just in partnership meetings, but outside them, talking to each other informally. There are chief execs in other organisations who you probably speak to more than some of your immediate work colleagues.

That time matters. It’s about spending time with people and investing in those relationships. All of the chief execs in our system recognise that the biggest problems we’re facing can’t be solved by any one organisation and that we can have more impact working together in partnership than we can separately.

Lancaster University is a good example. It’s a big employer in the district and students make up a big chunk of our population, but ten years ago, the council and the university felt quite separated. There wasn’t strong partnership working. The university decided to appoint a Pro Vice Chancellor whose role, alongside their other responsibilities, was to lead on partnership working. That completely transformed the relationship.

Now we work really well together. We’ve got staff who are seconded, and Lancaster University carries out research projects for us and is the key partner in a number of projects we’re doing. Lancaster and Morecambe College (the further education college) is very integrated with us too. We offer work placements, talk to our education partners about our future employment needs and are building a pipeline of apprentices and tradespeople for the future.

Navigating personal values
At Lancaster City Council we spent a lot of time developing a set of values that define who we are and how we are going to work. It’s not just delivering services that matters, it’s also about the way we deliver those services. The organisation I’m in, the values are very aligned to the ones I hold dear. Leadership is not about bending your values and your culture to whoever’s paying you. You’re there because you fit into that organisation. If you feel you can’t get alignment with the values of those who are paying you, then you probably shouldn’t be in that organisation. I can’t do my job if I don’t feel that I’m acting with integrity or in accord with my values.

A new relationship with central government
As a starting point, MHCLG needs to spend more time talking to chief executives. I’m on the Cabinet Office’s public leadership programme at the moment and it’s brilliant spending time with chief executives from across the public sector. But we should make more use of that collective experience. The Cabinet Office could use people who’ve been through the programme to help develop policy and best practice, or help coach new chief executives in the public sector. Make use of us in some shape or form.



Use us to develop policy and responses to some of the big thorny issues around climate change, population health and housing for example. We're here. We want to help. We've got the experience, we've got the skills. Government shouldn't be shy about asking us, because the same old way of doing things doesn't suffice these days.

We also need more spaces that bring together local authority chief executives with other public sector leaders across the country – with chief constables or vice chancellors, for example. We need to get out of our silos and talk to each other and advocate for the people who have been left behind. Focusing on tackling inequalities together is what we should be doing.

It's so important to connect reform efforts across silos. Local government is being reorganised. The NHS is being reorganised. The police are being reorganised. There's a social care review underway. There's a massive opportunity there. If we put that all together and spent more time thinking about it collectively, we'll get far better outcomes.

What systems leadership makes possible:

Lancaster District Strategic Partnership

In Lancaster we've got a local district strategic partnership (LDSP) which started life as a fairly informal get together with key partners: Lancaster University, the University of Cumbria, Lancaster and Morecambe College, the NHS Foundation Trust, Integrated Care Board, Lancaster District CVS and Lancaster Arts Partnership, and the Chamber of Commerce.

We brought together key partners and started by mapping our priorities as organisations: where there was common ground, where there were gaps, and what the things were that we all wanted to deliver on. We've now formalised the partnership and got MOUs signed, agreed how we work together and used funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund to progress some key projects, particularly around addressing climate change.

We've developed a local area energy plan covering the whole 225 square miles of the district, and we've now got a strategic plan to deliver from. This is based on the power of starting off informally. It was built on relationships that were already there, and now we've pulled it together into a formal structure.

That becomes particularly important through LGR. There's going to be a lot of change in the run-up to vesting day, and probably a few years of things settling down after that. We can't let that mean we lose momentum on the big issues. The LDSP gives us a vehicle to keep those things moving.

There's energy in it, and it's scalable. Once we know what the new unitaries look like, we could expand that strategic partnership across the whole unitary area.

Leading with integrity and authenticity

Dawn Carter-McDonald
Chief Executive
Hackney Council



Being superhuman
Looking ahead, the chief executive of the future almost needs to be superhuman, serving as all things to all people – though one might question whether that is truly achievable.

Serving as the public face of the council, chief executives are the head of paid service. In this role, they are expected to offer steady leadership, reassurance, and continuity, while seamlessly bridging the gap between elected members and council officers. Navigating today's political environment requires balancing a complex array of competing demands. Leaders must delicately handle the anxieties of existing staff alongside the energy and ambitions of newly elected political leaders who are still finding their footing in local government.

Success demands a deep commitment to the council and a genuine drive to see the area thrive. It requires cultivating strong, trust-filled relationships across every level of the organisation, exercising firm authority when necessary, and fostering a collaborative, psychologically safe environment.

A chief executive role requires significant agility and flexibility to be truly rewarding. Because chief executives cannot have all the answers, it is essential to ask for support from peers and trusted colleagues who understand the pressures and challenges of the role. Success hinges on building trust with individuals who can offer guidance and assistance when challenges arise.

Concentrating minds on place
Increasingly chief executives must navigate global and national shifts while keeping their focus centred on the place they serve. Although local government operates on a local level, broader international events and central government policy changes inevitably reach local communities. As leaders of place, chief executives must remain attentive to these wide-reaching influences while continuously uniting and directing attention towards local needs.

Within the officer domain, chief executives and their corporate leadership teams need to champion their area while faithfully delivering on the political priorities of the administration. For the London Borough of Hackney, this requires honest self-reflection – examining specific local challenges and partnering collaboratively to solve them for the benefit of residents.

Effective leadership cannot be done in isolation. Chief executives rely on executive team members who carry vital responsibilities across key areas like climate change, waste, environment, and housing. Crucially, roles such as the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and Director of Children's Services (DCS) must be positioned at decision-making tables where conversations impact the health and wellbeing of children, families, and older residents. Ensuring every voice is in the right space strengthens the council's internal leadership and gives the organisation a powerful presence at the forefront of driving progress for Hackney.

> "Authentic leadership is about ensuring that you're true to who you are and you're able to speak your truth in a way that doesn't offend other people, but allows them to know what you stand for."

Place-based leadership requires a deep awareness of equity and equality. During Ignite 10, I actively pushed race to the forefront of our discussions. As chief executives, we must confront the realities of racism, sexism, misogyny, misogynoir, homophobia, transphobia, and religious discrimination, as our local authorities directly mirror broader societal issues across the UK. Leaders cannot bury their heads in the sand simply because their specific area lacks diversity.

Representation matters at every tier of council management. I want to see increased representation of Black and global majority leaders in senior positions – beyond just the chief executive role – so our communities can see themselves reflected in town hall leadership.

The value of Ignite lies in introducing this challenge, prompting meaningful reflection, fostering open discussion, and encouraging every leader to evaluate their own leadership teams and organisational structures.

Leading with authenticity and integrity
Authentic leadership is rooted in staying true to your core values and voicing your truth thoughtfully, ensuring others understand what you stand for without causing unnecessary offence. True authenticity requires a balance of active listening – genuinely considering the perspectives and concerns of others – and clear self-expression.

Establishing clear boundaries and red lines early on is essential to defining what you will and will not tolerate. While navigating spaces alongside chief executives, the relative lack of diversity has posed the greatest personal challenge. Nevertheless, having a platform to speak out and challenge issues directly has allowed me to preserve my values without feeling overwhelmed.

Maintaining appropriate standards for member conduct is another critical issue that directly affects chief executives. The ability to build those relationships is key and is so important for the organisation as a whole. There has been a lot of discussion over the years around member behaviour and the impact it has on organisations, including leading to low morale. Strengthening enforcement powers in this area could significantly aid in establishing a healthy balance in member-officer relationships.

To address these challenges across local government, there need to be dedicated spaces where chief executives and elected members nationwide can engage. A previous initiative by the LGA brought together members, monitoring officers, and chief executives to review the members' code of conduct and potential regime updates. That forum proved highly beneficial, enabling senior officers and members from across the country to participate in open, candid dialogue and reinforcing the vital importance of civility and respect in local government.

What systems leadership makes possible:

A partnership approach to reablement

Hackney serves as an exemplary model for effective collaborative partnerships. Key examples include our strong ties with the City, our engagement with the voluntary and community sector (VCS), and our joint work with the NHS to establish a local neighbourhood model.

Our collaboration with Homerton Hospital – our local hospital – further demonstrates this successful approach. We take immense pride in their dedicated service to the community and work closely alongside them across multiple joint initiatives. A primary focus is our integrated reablement effort, which ensures individuals leaving the hospital are supported in transitioning smoothly back home or into appropriate long-term care facilities.

To enhance this service, we recently reshaped the delivery model by embedding these team members directly within the council instead of stationing them at the hospital. This structural shift strengthens the adult social care component of our work, creating a more interactive front door that brings the council, residents, and the hospital together in a collaborative triangle.



Championing democracy

Becky Shaw
Chief Executive
East Sussex County Council



Navigating system working after political change
Whatever the political makeup of the council, working with elected members is the core of a chief executive's role. The day-to-day realities of this often surprise new chief executives and it's an area we talk about a lot in the New Chief Executives' sessions and the Chief Executives' Development courses. Political management skills are difficult to practise until you are actually in the job and hard to learn except through experience. Done well it should be hard to spot but it is always a privilege to have the responsibility.

A new administration or a change to no overall control brings new demands and challenges which require preparation, thought, reflection, learning, and great teamwork.

Perhaps one of the hardest issues is recognising that "the way we do things" isn't a given in the new world and in the space of 24 hours foundations that were established over many years can be completely wiped out. It can be hard for officers who have had well-established working relationships to adapt to an environment where there are new political outlooks and levels of trust are radically different.

It's natural that newly elected members don't start from a basis of trusting officers and this can have a significant impact when new members make up a substantial proportion of the council especially in the administration. Understanding and trust are not inherited but have to be created through determined work to build good relationships. That work may not be immediately successful but we need to persevere and remain respectful of the democratic mandate as we get on with the newly reshaped job.

The chief executive and management team have a key role to play in advocating for democracy, finding ways to work well with the people who have been elected, and helping new members and new postholders navigate their way around structures, governance and information. Building trusted relationships while keeping a clear focus on the required outcomes can be both challenging and rewarding.

This is one of many areas where it is really helpful to have a strong tribe of peers who you can learn from, explore options with and get critical support from. It's worth thinking about who those peers might be as early as possible. They may be in an existing group or you may need to create one to reflect the new circumstances and it is important to find time to do this especially when things are tough and busy. It will provide you and others with vital support, ideas, shared solutions, early warnings of possible issues and the solidarity of laughter. Being a chief executive can feel solitary, but no one needs to be lonely.

The world of partnerships and changing civic structures (including in the context of devolution) makes the transition more complex. Knowledge, relationships and realistic ambition are key ingredients for effective working both within councils and as part of a wider system. It is a tough challenge for new leaders and cabinets to get to grips with complex landscapes and issues and build relationships as quickly as they expect.

Effective navigation through that is a core test of success for chief executives and new members, and also for partners who may not be used to working with elected members as part of their organisations. Advocating and creating the best possible entrance into the system is a complex undertaking, from the small insights into how meetings work and previous decisions have been made, to the explanations of complex strategic issues and others' governance processes.

Making it work for place
Of all the skills and attributes that an effective chief executive needs there are some key considerations which help manage challenging situations both within councils and across the system.

Your map: You need to build and endlessly update your personal map of your place and its people. Get to know your local landscape, the key players and their plans, keep a weather eye on the "non-player characters" and consider what might be round the corner. It can help you think about scenarios, anticipate and understand what may seem like strange behaviour, and help identify whether doing something or leaving be is the right thing.

This will involve putting effort into understanding the changes in partners' worlds and supporting new partners. It means in practice I go to far fewer formal partnership meetings and instead have far more conversations with partners than I did ten years ago. We've got better at using the structures we have rather than setting up new structures to try and deliver things. That's been really significant for the strength of joint working.

Patience: Most people become chief executives because they want to change things, so having to go back

round the loop with new people can be really testing. That's where the democracy touchstone alongside a deep breath is important. Be realistic about your own capacity and motivation as well as your team's. One thing we discussed in Ignite that really stayed with me is the distinction between what is in my direct control, what I can influence, and what I can only observe. That framework has been endlessly useful to explore the context I'm operating in, my role and where to spend my time, energy and attention. Ensure your team is well connected, talking about the important issues, aware of each other's issues and the changing landscape, collectively problem solving and most importantly laughing together.

Central government: It is critical that we find ways to work effectively with Whitehall colleagues and understand that they face their own challenges and constructs. At its very best, the government role is as part of the system and can enable innovation and deliver fundamental change. At the other end of the scale, assumptions about the government being the boss of the system at local level deliver only fury, frustration and wasted opportunity. Recent events have brought relations between local and central government to a low ebb and it's important to say that out loud. *Rewiring the State* provides a crucial opportunity so we need to gather ourselves again, be confident about our delivery expertise and use all our partnership skills to work well in every direction in the system.

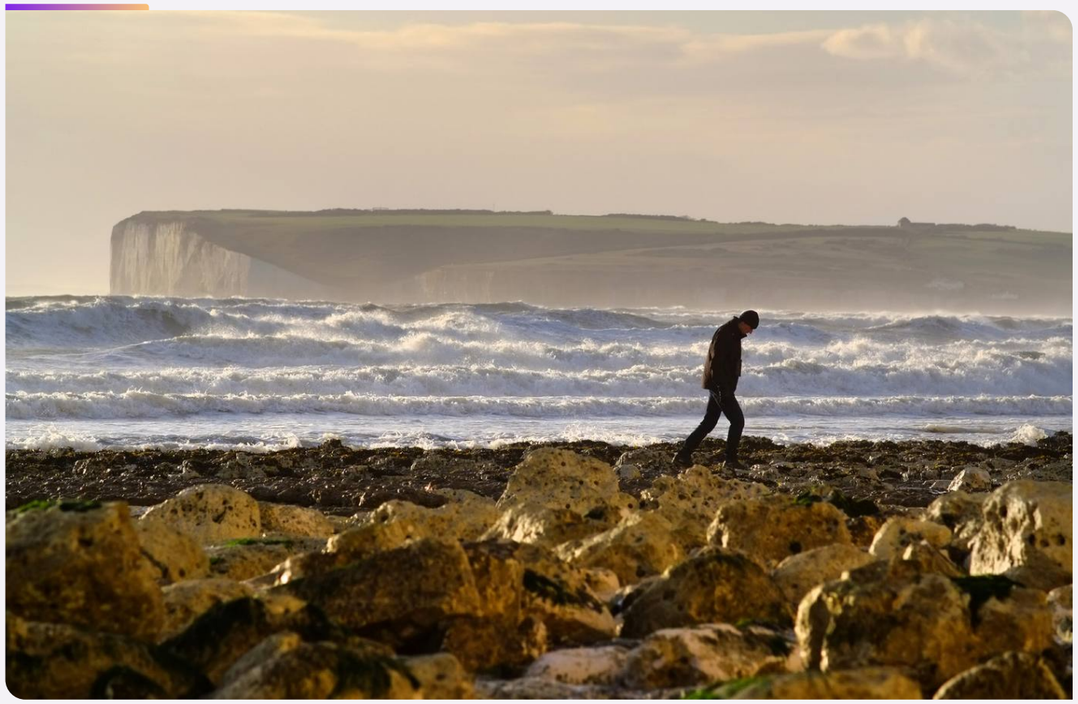
Transparent bravery and local democracy

At the core of all of this is a belief in local democracy. In practice that means ensuring local governance processes work in a way to deliver and protect it through robust, evidence-based decision making in which all voices are heard and the consequences of decisions are explored. It also means a willingness to endlessly champion democracy, especially when it leads to decisions that are controversial.

That requires transparent bravery – as we've been exploring locally with the voluntary sector. This phrase captures a determination to work in ways which openly name and face up to risks and disagreements early. It's potent, if uncomfortable, stuff and is underpinned by a belief that the best next steps are usually reached through collective judgement. Done well across the council and the system, it creates a sense of a joint mission, clarity of role and a strong sense of belonging, even if there is disagreement over some decisions.

> "We need to champion democracy in complex and evolving systems. That requires transparent bravery."

We need to be ambitious for our places and honest about the reality of our options and what can be delivered. This is a challenge to local government as well as other parts of the system. Realism will bring a healthy sense of jeopardy which will help focus minds. Local government is the secret ingredient, our superpowers are talking to each other, our resilience and relentless delivery. Add a strong sense of collective endeavour, transparent bravery when needed and placing value on local democracy and we will prevail.



What systems leadership makes possible:

Transforming relationships with the VCSE

Developing strong foundations for partnership working with the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector has been an important focus for us. In 2019 we established Partnership Plus as a cross-sector forum between the public sector and the VCSE and refreshed our compact with the sector in 2025. This sets out shared principles of trust, integrity, generous leadership, and collaboration.

Commissioning was one of the long-standing barriers to us working effectively with the VCSE to enable the best outcomes for residents. In response, we worked with the VCSE Alliance to co-design the East Sussex VCSE Commissioning Excellence Programme which launched in 2023. This brought together leaders and practitioners from the VCSE sector, East Sussex County Council, and NHS Sussex to learn, reflect, and work differently. The aim is to move commissioning away from relationships that could feel transactional and towards an approach based on trust, transparency and shared purpose.

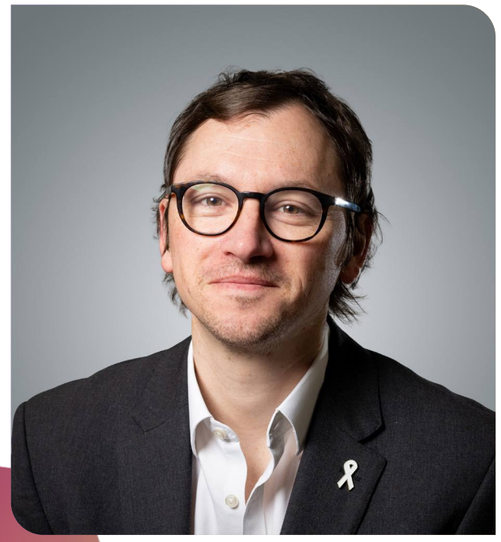
The first phase created space for open conversations about the pressures, risks and constraints experienced by commissioners and providers. Participants challenged assumptions, strengthened relationships and explored more collaborative approaches to commissioning. A defining idea was "transparent bravery": being honest about uncertainty and risk while working together to find better solutions. This concept has really stuck with me and shaped how we're working with partners.

As the programme enters its second phase applying learning across the commissioning cycle, it has already influenced better commissioning practice across a range of areas including mental health, financial wellbeing and inclusion services, and supporting children and families.

The programme demonstrates that partnership working and collaboration is not a one-off initiative, but a long-term journey. It requires sustained investment in relationships and structures that enable partners to listen, learn and act together, with the shared aim of improving outcomes for local communities.

Influencing in the context of devolution

Henry Kippin
Chief Executive
North East Mayoral Strategic Authority



Leading through constant change
I've been in this role for about six years now, but the nature of the job changes constantly. It hasn't felt like six years of steady state, because the organisational form has changed, and I don't think that steady state exists yet for devolved authorities. That's part of the substantive leadership challenge. You need to be comfortable leading through processes of change almost constantly, because that is just the way things are. And we have to want that, don't we? Because we always want more and better for the public.

We have many of the same elements of the job as council chief execs, but the nature of the Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) role is different: more horizontal; a different balance between strategy and delivery; and a greater focus on working in that Bermuda triangle between local, regional and national contexts.

Chief executives need to be adept at operating in a policy world that is constantly changing, but also influencing it as it does. We have to be proactive rather than reactive. We have to try to make the weather and take seriously our job, which is strategic leadership of the region or place, and not just an institution or programme of work.

You need to combine thoughtful system change and collaborative, relational work with a degree of snap – being able to show that you are moving things along and delivering, and point to things that build trust for the longer-term work. This is critical with a cross-party board of political leaders and a directly elected Mayor. I have a postcard saying 'get sh*t done' in my office which is my daily reminder of this!

MSAs are not here to do everything, but we are absolutely here to help make the system work. In the early days of the Ignite programme we talked about 'excuse removing' – getting rid of the barriers to doing things. Asking the questions: "Why not?" and "Could you do this differently if you brought a different set of people and resources together?"



Whether you're chief exec of a council or strategic authority, it's a multifaceted job. You need the ability to shape outcomes in a place as well as in your own organisation. You need to be curious, too. Your organisation needs to feel like you're learning with it, rather than sitting at the top of a big triangle making decisions that everyone else then has to respond to. As the devolution agenda expands, it is vital that we do this as a system and a partnership.

I'm always interested in people who've got a sense of where they want to take the place that they're in. I often talk about it as having a bit of a fox's nose. Good leadership is about helping your organisation to work out what's next and getting ready for it. Building teams that can get you there without everything having to be about you.

It's such an important risk and load-bearing role, and it creates permission for other people to do things and take risks. That's pretty fundamental to the local government chief exec role.

Bringing people together for the benefit of place
Being the head of paid service for a large organisation is a job in and of itself, but really you are there to create positive change for the benefit of the place that you're in. The people doing the job well are adept at working with cultural institutions, the private sector and beyond. They get the right balance between visible, confident leadership where it is needed; and shrinking back into the hedge like Homer Simpson where others need to lead.

The job for local authorities has always been to help people to lead good lives in their places, in the round. Councils are critical parts of our social and economic infrastructure, and need to remain so. But the world has massively changed in terms of how they do it and whether they're resourced well enough to do it themselves. Devolution is an opportunity to reform the model to make it sustainable – which is a task that councils and MSAs need to take on together.

As a strategic authority, we're a cross-sector collaboration. We convene to help us support this amazing region, spanning businesses, the social sector, education, public services, politicians, and communities. Building enough credibility so that enough people across different sectors think, "this person can represent us well", is important.

You also need to create the right space and operating environment for your elected leaders. For me, that means a directly elected Mayor and a Cabinet of Council Leaders from different parties. There is also an important national dimension – working with Ministers, departments and arm's-length bodies. Ultimately this is all in service of the place, its people and the democracy that we need to work well and create a positive narrative about the future.

I think we're on an inevitable journey to more and deeper devolution, and it's up to us to make that work in ways that are progressive and work for the whole system. I don't see how you could be a chief executive of any public sector organisation now without thinking about your role within a wider place and region.

The best chief executives around me will be thinking: "What do I want to do and be responsible for at an MSA level?", "How do I make this devolution deal work best for my place?" and "How do I make sure that regional colleagues understand the top five things I need to get done?"

Leading with integrity

Some of the team here were worried during a recent period of change we have been through. My role was to say: "Guys, keep doing your work. The quality bar is high. It's got a sound evidence base underneath it. The outcomes are good. Do not worry. Carry on. I will stand in front of you. I've got your back." Some version of that, that is my job.

Sometimes my job is to give people a good listening to in the organisation and say, "I hear you." And then sometimes it's being prepared to walk towards conflict. And other times it's saying, "I'm proud of you. I love this. It's brilliant. Isn't this organisation and place fantastic?"

Personal integrity and a sense of self is important. That means different things to different people, of course. That can't be applied in a rigid or dogmatic way in a democratic system, but you absolutely need to find ways to express the values you care about, and try to be yourself and lead with integrity as much as you can. Nobody wants David Brent!

National enablers for place-based change

I don't think good relationships and local collaboration can solve every problem. They are the right way to deliver and lead, and the right way to approach solving problems. 'Devolution by default' is right. But you also need clear policy and good government at a national level. If you want to make place-based health work, for example, it will require national government policy that says the base unit of analysis needs to be democratically led mayors and local leadership.

If you don't do that, you're always going to have incentives pulling in different directions. We could have the best relationships in the world, but not enough incentives to care about each other's business enough.

Take delayed discharge, continuing healthcare, or any issue about who pays for what between councils and NHS partners. It is absolutely possible to resolve those things through collaborative working, but it also needs a policy solution. Costs being shunted to local authorities when their systems can't cope with it is not a good idea.

We also need central government to keep the faith with devolution. There needs to be proper, long-term devolved settlements for MSAs, within which local authorities can do what is needed to help achieve those outcomes.

We've got to decide as a country whether we feel that we're just doing enough to keep going, or whether we're actually building the state and collective capacity to address the challenges of the future.

> "We're on an inevitable journey to more and deeper devolution, and it's up to us to make that work in ways that are progressive… I don't see how you could be a chief executive of any public sector organisation now without thinking about your role within a wider place and region."



What systems leadership makes possible:

Tackling child poverty in the North East

The North East's child poverty programme demonstrates what devolution can enable when regional institutions convene partners around a shared mission. Rather than creating a new standalone service or intervention, as an MSA, we established the UK's first regional Child Poverty Reduction Unit. This brings together local authorities, NHS partners, schools, trusts, community organisations, employers, and government around a common goal: reducing child poverty and improving life chances.

We've co-produced a five-year Child Poverty Action Plan and mobilised £28.6m of investment to test, learn and scale approaches that can improve outcomes for families. It's already having an impact. Through income maximisation activity delivered in trusted community settings, thousands of families are being supported to access benefits, grants and financial support they're entitled to, putting millions of pounds back into household budgets. We're also working with schools and local authorities to bring down the cost of the school day and tackle uniform costs, alongside childcare and employment initiatives to help more parents access training and work, and campaigns to unlock unclaimed assets for young people across the region.

We're using our regional perspective to connect parts of the system that don't always work together. Investment in the critical first 1,001 days is strengthening relationships between health visitors, family services and vulnerable first-time parents, while building evidence about what support has the greatest impact. Evaluation and learning are built into delivery, so partners can iterate, adapt and scale what works across the region. Earlier programmes have already shown reductions in financial stress, improved wellbeing and stronger parental confidence.

This is devolution at its best: creating the space to convene, innovate and align investment around shared outcomes, helping an entire system improve the lives of children and families.

Looking to the future

Dawn Plimmer
Chief Executive
Collaborate CIC



The 2018 Ignite essay collection described local authority chief executives operating in a context of perpetual and rapid change.[2] Eight years on, this has intensified beyond what most of us could have imagined. Devolution, political polarisation, social division, demographic change and the climate emergency are just some of the dynamics impacting local government and changing the nature of the chief executive role as a result.

Despite the challenges, the chief executives featured in this report spoke with passion, hope and ambition for their people and places. They described a unique moment of opportunity, where years of local investment in partnership working and a genuine shift in the relationship with national government are starting to align.

However, realising the ambitions set out in *Rewiring the State*, for services that work as "a single coherent system built around the priorities of people and places", will demand deep shifts at every level of the system. We believe many of the answers lie in the practices and insights shared by the chief executives in this report, who are already demonstrating what it means to lead for shared outcomes across place.

The core statutory responsibilities of chief executives remain the foundational requirements of the role. But the message from chief executives who've participated in Ignite is clear: fulfilling the organisation management aspects of the job is necessary, but no longer sufficient. Leading across systems in the interests of local people and place is an essential part of the role, and increasingly where the greatest potential for impact lies.

What leadership looks like necessarily varies by place and by person. The themes that follow are not exhaustive, but set out the priorities and capabilities that we and the chief executives we've worked with believe are frequently overlooked, yet often matter most – not just for local government chief executives, but for public service leaders more widely. They complement and should be considered alongside the LGA and Solace's Chief Executive Development Framework, and will inform its review and update in early 2027.

Acting as strategic bridge and translator
This is the theme that has grown in prominence the most since 2018, and we think is one of the most important considerations.

Chief executives described a job that not only requires building relationships, but specifically bridging and translating across difference and conflict. Finding common ground to enable progress in a way that works with difference rather than avoiding it – generative, rather than defensive.

This includes translating across scales of place: taking what matters locally into conversations at combined authority, regional and national level, staying grounded in how decisions land for residents. This requires deep skill in understanding the priorities of, and speaking the language of, different actors at every level. These skills are likely to matter even more as opportunities open up to work with and influence national government – something chief executives haven't experienced in this way for many years.

Mediating across different views was a strong theme in working with officers and members. Chief executives spoke of helping people see things from others' perspectives, identifying common ground, and finding narratives that speak to what different people care about. This takes a willingness to choose discomfort over comfort: challenging assumptions, and contracting up front how disagreement will be worked through rather than leaving it to chance. These skills matter more widely too, including when working with communities who feel unheard.

Chief executives were clear that acting as a bridge requires political neutrality, alongside integrity, authenticity and advocacy for equity and inclusion. The ability to see and mobilise the whole of a place – including the parts of it that look least like you – is essential.

Leading for place
Ignite chief executives see the role now and into the future as helping people and places thrive. The opportunity for impact lies in seizing the unique potential of local authorities to shape place, as advocate and convenor for the areas they serve. Prioritising time looking "up and out" beyond their own organisation was described repeatedly as a responsibility, not an optional extra.

This demands a systems-first approach: looking beyond services and organisational boundaries to focus on shared outcomes, rather than viewing issues through a narrow service lens. Making services work for people's lives, and tackling complex issues like health inequalities, housing, poverty, and climate change, requires more creative and joined-up solutions.

To achieve this, chief executives need to lead beyond the formal authority they hold. Chief executives spoke of how trusting relationships are the source of "hidden influence", allowing them, and councils more widely, to spark collective action across their place. Working across organisational boundaries also takes a willingness to lead in ambiguity: asking questions, being brave enough not to have all the answers, and demonstrating agency in the face of uncertainty. All of this needs to be underpinned by delivering early results to build credibility and trust for longer-term system working.

Championing democracy was described as a unique part of local government's place leadership role. Chief executives have a key responsibility for nurturing local democracy, managing complex political environments and supporting politicians to govern effectively. This is becoming more time-consuming as many councils manage volatile politics, an influx of new members and new administrations finding their feet. Alongside this, chief executives have a role in helping their organisation rebuild trust with residents: repositioning councils so communities can directly shape place priorities, elevating unheard voices, and embedding local insight into regional and national policy.

Building long-term ambition and readiness
Chief executives cannot help their organisations and places thrive if they are permanently stuck in the immediate. Many spoke about the need to carve out time for future thinking, looking five to ten years ahead, to anticipate shocks and opportunities, and helping their organisation shape an ambitious future for place underpinned by realism and credible plans for implementation.

This long-term view was described as a distinctive chief executive responsibility: most politicians, and service directors, are focused closer to the ground, on the pressures of today. Someone has to be thinking about today, tomorrow, and what comes after tomorrow.

Chief executives cannot do this alone. They have a crucial role in helping leadership teams and the wider workforce navigate constant change and develop a sense of agency through it – investing in staff capabilities to build confidence in more collaborative and adaptive ways of working. At the same time, chief executives need to play a steadying role: helping people navigate uncertainty, ensuring psychological safety and holding risk.

Whether it's embracing digital and AI, developing a genuine learning culture, working across organisational boundaries, or building a more honest and co-produced relationship with residents, chief executives need to create the conditions for teams to do what the future demands.

2. Collaborate CIC with Solace (2018) *Systems Leadership in Local Government: An Ignite essay collection*

Call to action

The chief executives interviewed for this report are already demonstrating what effective leadership looks like, often in spite of the conditions and incentives around them rather than because of them. If we want more of this, the system around them has to change.

Below we set out five shifts that are needed. The ultimate test for these shifts is not whether they make the job of a chief executive easier. It is whether they would eventually be noticed by the people at the sharp end of the inverse care law – those who need public services most and too often get least.

1. Appoint for the job as it actually is.
Managerial competence alone will not produce the leadership this report describes, yet it remains what most recruitment processes test for. The ability to convene, translate and lead through ambiguity is fundamental, not a "nice to have", and should be assessed as rigorously as financial and risk management. This asks something of political leadership and of the executive search industry: to stop appointing the most traditionally reassuring candidate and start appointing the one who can lead for better outcomes across a place. It requires selection panels to confront the fact that leadership teams which look and think alike are not neutral – they have blind spots that limit their ability to lead effectively.

2. Make development a requirement.
For many professions there is mandatory ongoing development, a standard, a body that holds them to it, and a consequence for falling short. Local government chief executives make decisions that impact the day-to-day lives of hundreds of thousands of people and face no equivalent requirement at all: development is discretionary, funded from the margins, and first to be cut.

We think that should change, and that the sector should change it rather than wait to have it imposed. The LGA and Solace should establish an expectation of continuing leadership practice for chief executives and their senior teams – observed, challenged, and regularly revisited – and say publicly what good looks like.

For chief executives this means prioritising development as a fundamental part of their role and accepting scrutiny of their own practice. For government this means that a mandate to reform services must be accompanied by a mandate to develop the people leading that reform. For political leaders, this means taking their own development seriously, so that their approach to leading the organisation and place works with rather than against that of senior officers.

3. Make member standards a shared national responsibility.
Many chief executives are spending a disproportionate amount of time managing member behaviour. To some extent this comes with the role. But it is not sustainable for chief executives to mediate the levels of volatility seen in some places, particularly when it consistently pulls focus away from the work that could help deliver better outcomes for people and place.

There needs to be external support around standards, meaningful sanction where conduct falls below them, and proper induction for new members. Solace's Commission on Standards and Ethics highlights the continuing decline in ethical standards and behaviour that chief executives and senior officers are attempting to manage. It sets out several recommendations that the sector needs to take seriously and respond to.[3]

4. Trust local government's expertise.
Local government holds a depth of understanding, rooted in proximity to people and place, that is invaluable to national and regional government. Valuing that as an asset means giving local government more autonomy as part of a more equal, adult-to-adult relationship. This includes structured, ongoing use of chief executives' experience in shaping policy, not only in delivering it – and it means Whitehall departments accepting local evidence even when it cuts against policies they have already drafted.

5. Move power closer to people.
Everything above concerns how the system treats its leaders. None of it will be noticed by a resident unless something also changes in where power lies. The chief executives in this report describe wanting communities to shape place priorities directly. Doing so means devolving real decisions and real budgets. This requires national and regional government to create joined-up policy and budgetary solutions, and to put in place incentives and accountability for local government and other public services to work in genuine partnership around shared outcomes. It also requires local government to hold itself to the same standard, by passing greater autonomy down to communities in turn.

The chief executives featured in this report have shown what is possible, often in spite of a system that works against them. If we make these shifts, we believe they can bring about a generational change in outcomes for people and place, particularly for those who rely on public services the most. That is the test that matters. Chief executives should feel better supported and the sector should feel better understood. But ultimately, we should be judged on whether, in five years, a family being failed by public services today notices any difference at all.

3. Solace Commission on Standards and Ethics (October 2026) Enough Is Enough: *A Blueprint for Rebuilding Standards in Local Government.* Available at: solace.org.uk/civility-hub

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