



Background Note: Supporting the Place-based Regeneration Revolution

Public sector workers have long appreciated the benefits to service delivery that flexible working provides.

In the late 1970s, local authorities and public sector organisations began to experiment with new ways of working beyond the traditional office set-up. However, the practice was never universally adopted or extended.

That it took a global pandemic for smarter, flexible and home-based working to be proven more efficient and effective is at best frustrating and at worst negligent, given the many and growing demands that local, place-based public services face while squeezed by ever tightening levels of funding and resources.

Parallels can be drawn from this example of recent history with today's challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Solutions are found within the place, where its people know what's best, whether that's a local authority or in the community it serves.

Given the freedom, a place with all its constituent parts, can act quickly to do things differently and more effectively compared with a nationwide approach. The necessity of applying this practically gained wisdom to meet the challenges that people, communities and places face is nothing new. Socitm's 2,500 plus members don't need to be told that place-based recovery is the way forward. And, as data and technologies permeate everything that we do, increasingly they are at the forefront of co-designing and co-delivering place-based approaches to achieve better outcomes with local communities.

Why has there been reticence to adopt this approach if the benefits are well recognised and apparent for all to see? Localities are frustrated by centralised control that imposes a range of bureaucratic funding regimes. Typically, these seek to impose an ideological "quick fix innovation" approach that is inadequate and inappropriately matched with the diverse needs and realities of local communities.

As we have seen recently, top-down command and control approaches have time and again failed the Covid-19 'stress test'. As a result, the true value of a local authority led, place-based approach has come into sharper focus. Not only has the pandemic impacted directly on the health and wellbeing of people and places, it has also imposed unprecedented shocks on the wider civil society and social-economic life of people and their communities as a whole.

As a consequence, the pandemic has forced local authorities to change the way they work to address the pressing challenges being faced by their communities. Whether it is developing effective local test and trace systems, identifying and supporting the vulnerable, or undertaking data analysis to fill the gaps in knowledge about specific localities and communities, local public service leaders have been asked to re-think the 'art of the possible' in relation to where and how they should harness technologies and data to achieve better outcomes for their residents, businesses and communities.

As Sarah Longlands the new chief executive of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) has noted, in the face of "huge centralism, huge uncertainty and huge inertia" local authorities are taking a "just get on with it" approach in providing pragmatic and effective community leadership.



Socitm - St George's House Consultation 29-30 November 2021 :
 "Resilient People, Resilient Communities, Resilient Places"
 Championing Place-based Post-Covid Regeneration, Levelling-Up and Ethical Change

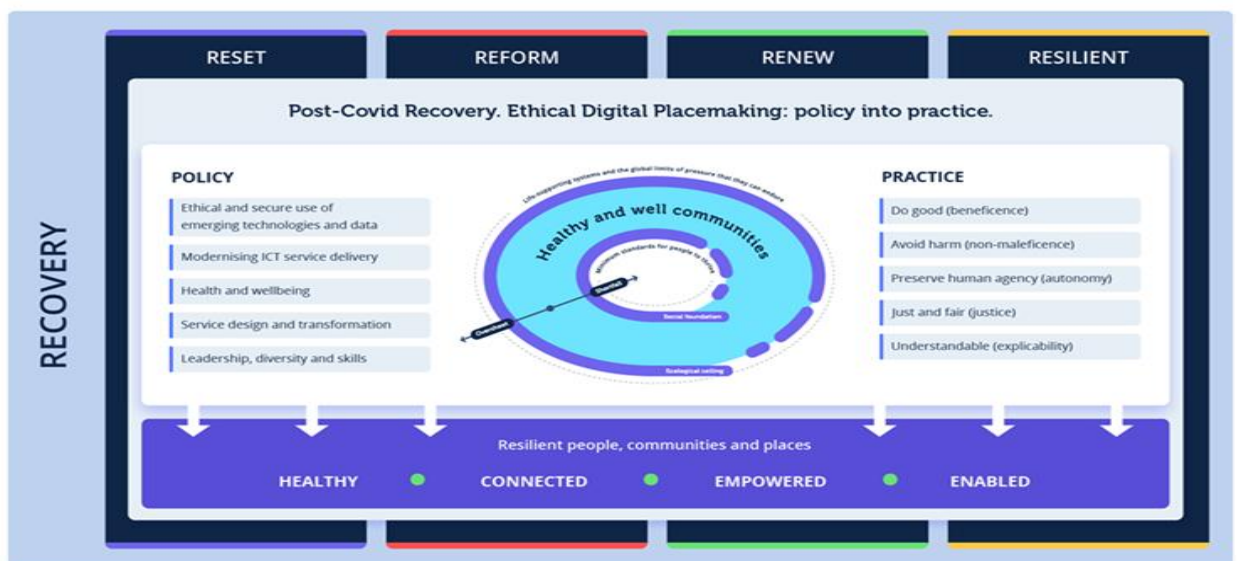
Exasperation with failures in the national Covid-19 response has helped drive local collaboration, as highlighted in Socitm's recent [place-based recovery prospectus](#), [digital equalities](#) policy briefing and an associated [Championing place-based recovery Infographic](#).

The effectiveness of local collaboration has been visibly demonstrated by the outstanding success of place-based inter-agency cooperation underpinning the vaccination rollout, with local authorities and the wider local public and voluntary sectors working together both at the front-line and coordinating the wider logistical operation behind the scenes.

Socitm's insights from working with local leaders, policy makers, partners and practitioners has enabled us to capture the emerging picture drawn from over 200 local authority recovery and regeneration strategies as to how local authorities are developing the means by which they move from a front-line response, via local post-Covid recovery initiatives, towards community focused regeneration. We have identified the following four common 'pillars' that broadly characterise place-based recovery and regeneration approaches across the various tiers of local government as follows:

- Reset - ethical principles, respecting social, economic and ecological foundations
- Reform - public services by embracing innovation and modernisation
- Renew - communities by collaborating across place and encouraging self-sufficiency
- Resilient - to disruptive changes, to thrive and to achieve better, sustainable and inclusive outcomes for everyone

However, as the diagram below shows for civil society to flourish going forward, places need to increasingly focus on supporting wider community regeneration through the lens of ethical change. The requirement for ethical design and use of emerging technologies and data has assumed even greater relevance in preparation for the societal and environmental challenges and implications that lie ahead.



Research and resources: [Digital trends](#) | [Covid-19 Digital and ICT impact](#) | [Planting the flag #2](#) | [Resource hub collections](#)



Socitm - St George's House Consultation 29-30 November 2021 :
 "Resilient People, Resilient Communities, Resilient Places"
 Championing Place-based Post-Covid Regeneration, Levelling-Up and Ethical Change

Taking this further and using the Doughnut Economics¹ [City Portraits model](#) piloted by [Amsterdam](#) Socitm has identified the following key aspects of ethical change and their respective areas of focus that set out a baseline model (see below) as to how to support healthy and well communities and create resilient, sustainable, socially just and ecologically safe places in which people and communities can thrive.



Building on this our recent [Regeneration through Ethical Change infographic](#) illustrates, that we are seeing an emerging regeneration-focused ethical change “*Velvet Revolution*” underway across local authorities. This aligns with what Chris Naylor, Chief Executive of London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, has described as the place-based building regenerative capacity that is shifting from a needs-led approach to public services, to one that works with people before they get into crisis; a prevention rather than cure philosophy. It focuses on building trust through local public services design and delivery and through community participation and engagement.

Our leadership development activities are helping to create an innovative, authentic and confident talent pipeline, which will be conversant with these evolving community-focused requirements and be equipped to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by ‘working across place’.

But more needs to be done, both centrally and locally. The significance of place-based approaches is reflected in DLUHC’s work in support of local digital collaboration and its new £5m ‘partnerships for people and place’ programme. It’s also alluded to in the Prime Minister’s wider levelling-up and build back better campaigns.

¹ See What on earth is the doughnut? (Kate Raworth): <http://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/>



Socitm - St George's House Consultation 29-30 November 2021 :
 "Resilient People, Resilient Communities, Resilient Places"
 Championing Place-based Post-Covid Regeneration, Levelling-Up and Ethical Change

However, we need to look beyond the Government's rhetoric and develop truly collaborative place-based approaches that local authorities and local anchor institutions such as health authorities, universities, together with community and third sector bodies that can provide viable local models of the sort of structural and operational regeneration that will allow us to identify what works in terms of place-based regeneration that can be readily implemented and scaled-up without the need to go through time wasting competitive bidding or "beauty contest" style negotiations.

As the new [Levelling-up network](#) of Cross-party MPs, Councils, businesses, NHS Trusts, and universities has highlighted the challenge then is to move the conversation and practice to what works, what needs to change and how can we respond at pace, both nationally and locally. It's supporting [Levelling Up Goals architecture](#) (see below) seeks to identify and measure performance across 14 key areas for action - an approach recognising, as do Socitm members, that those working in local government are committed and stretched to the limit on the front line of delivering and responding to a moving target, innovating whilst running the core business, together with exploring and exploiting what is possible.

LEVELLING UP GOALS

<div style="background-color: #e91e63; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>1. Strong foundations in Early Years Close the early years development gap by delivering the best possible start for every child.</p>	<div style="background-color: #e91e63; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>8. Good health and well-being Improving mental and physical health at all ages to boost overall well-being to allow people to fulfil their potential.</p>
<div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>2. Successful school years Every child successfully achieving their potential in attainment and development.</p>	<div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>9. Extending enterprise Extending private enterprise and entrepreneurship to all people and communities</p>
<div style="background-color: #27ae60; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>3. Positive destinations Post 16+ Every young person and adult to have the choice of a high quality route in education, employment or training.</p>	<div style="background-color: #5d5d9d; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>10. Closing the digital divide Closing the divide in technology access, skills, opportunities and infrastructure.</p>
<div style="background-color: #26a69a; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>4. Right advice and experiences Access to the right advice and experiences at the right time to unlock opportunity throughout a person's life.</p>	<div style="background-color: #26a69a; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>11. Infrastructure for opportunity Developing the physical infrastructure that connects people and places to opportunity.</p>
<div style="background-color: #f1c40f; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>5. Open recruitment Careers and professions open to people of all backgrounds through transparent, accessible and open recruitment practices</p>	<div style="background-color: #e91e63; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>12. Building homes & sustainable communities Creating affordable quality homes so people can live in safe and sustainable communities.</p>
<div style="background-color: #2980b9; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>6. Fair career progression Opportunities for career advancement for all based on ability and potential, not connections.</p>	<div style="background-color: #2980b9; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>13. Harness the energy transition Ensure that the energy transition is fair and creates opportunities across the UK.</p>
<div style="background-color: #8e9e9e; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>7. Widening access to savings & credit Widening access to responsible credit and closing the savings gap.</p>	<div style="background-color: #f1c40f; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">  </div> <p>14. Achieve equality, through diversity & inclusion Creating a level playing field on opportunity for all, to fully unleash Britain's potential for the first time.</p>



**Socitm - St George's House Consultation 29-30 November 2021 :
"Resilient People, Resilient Communities, Resilient Places"
Championing Place-based Post-Covid Regeneration, Levelling-Up and Ethical Change**

In support of all this, our ongoing research activity is focused on capturing the emerging lessons from ethical, digital place-making, based on the adoption of the doughnut economics model and the 200+ plus local recovery, resilience and regeneration strategies and plans. This is complemented by our wider work with research partners such as Bradford University's Senior Leaders Apprenticeship Programme, the Institute of Government and Public Policy (IGPP) established by the University of East London and St George's House (SGH), Windsor.

Our key next step is to form a President's Commission that will comprise the Socitm Presidential Team, partners and leadership programme alumni working together to help steer our Post-Covid Recovery and Regeneration programme. It is anticipated the programme will provide a valuable collection of resources to connect people and places, who can benefit from each other's knowledge and experience. Our ultimate goal is to support the regeneration of healthy and well communities through the creation of resilient, sustainable, socially just and ecologically safe places in which people and communities can thrive.

We aim to be instrumental in the movement to shift local government from command and control 'quick fix' innovations to supporting and enabling the emerging place-based regeneration focused *Velvet Revolution*, which like its earlier namesakes, is seeking to address the wider needs of civil society. Fulfilling our ambition will enable our public services both central and local to be agile, operationally sustainable, and to have the necessary leadership skills to successfully navigate the challenges of the post-Covid world.

Adapted from Local Government Chronicle – Digital Innovation Supplement article September 2021



Socitm - St George's House Consultation 29-30 November 2021 :
"Resilient People, Resilient Communities, Resilient Places"

Championing Place-based Post-Covid Regeneration, Levelling-Up and Ethical Change



Background Reading

[Reset, Reform, Renew, Resilient: Socitm prospectus for placed-based post-Covid recover](#)

[Championing Place-Based Recovery: Socitm Infographic](#)

[Creating City Portraits: Doughnut Economics Methodology](#)

[Regeneration through ethical change: Socitm Infographic](#)

[Post-Covid recovery digital equality: Socitm report](#)

[Levelling-up goals: Network Infographic](#)