

# Health must be considered in all aspects of the devolving Liverpool City Region

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It has long been evidenced that health and wellbeing are part of the core of our existence, there are no parts of our lives that are unaffected by our health and equally no part of our lives that does not affect our health, from; where we live, our homes, how we travel, employment, industry, leisure, socializing, learning, culture, heritage to education.

As long ago as 70 BC during the rule of the Roman empire Publius Vergilius Maro (better known as Virgil) declared that the greatest wealth is health. This was an insightful statement which recognised the impact of poor or declining health on other aspects of life, and something we should not lose sight of in this modern era.

With the election of the new Liverpool City Region (LCR) metro mayor, the region faces many challenges in acquiring newly devolved powers, responsibilities and resources. And improving lives, and the quality of life, has to be a high priority for the new mayor and something which the new combined authority needs to consider in all aspects of future planning.

The LCR needs to take charge of its residents and its own needs and consider the power of the collective: together we can achieve more and in achieving more experience better outcomes for all. After all who knows best what the people of the region than the people themselves!

It is not simply good enough to have the generic goal of reducing health inequalities and improving quality of life when considering what we want to achieve for the new region. With an overstretched and overburdened health system that has increasingly rising costs we must find new ways of working for the betterment of everyone's health.

There needs to be an actual plan that considers the very real 'how'. Taking a regional approach to collaborative working unified as city region and not simply a local authority, an NHS trust, any one organization or a voluntary group, would be a good start.

A holistic, all sector approach to health is needed which is supported in all tenants of our life – from cradle to grave. Everyone needs to work together to think as one unified city region and not simply a local authority, an NHS trust, any one organization or a voluntary group.

Prevention is better and more cost effective than a cure. There are many assets in our communities which support improvements in life: social and community groups offering new experiences for learning and inclusion as well as enjoyment. We rely far too heavily on responding to demands and pressure and being reactive; let's be creative in being proactive, preventative and flipping from a deficit approach to an asset-based one. Work with what we have and build upon that, together.

There is a lot which can be learned from the Greater Manchester devolution deal, where health governance was included in the first round of its devolution deal. In fact, Greater Manchester states its main aim of devolution is to make the area a better place to live by improving the lives of residents by making them healthier, wealthier and happier. Three interdependent aims.

By achieving these aims, there is the acknowledgement that there will be less reliance on public services, which enables resources to stretch further. In the Liverpool City Region, there needs to be such an aim for collective governance of health: where health is considered in all areas of planning for transport, housing, business, and infrastructure etc., The impact upon health needs to be recognized in all sectors and collectively as a region: after all, health is wealth and wealth supports health. And in what is referred to as austere times, together we are wealthier and healthier.

Gayle Whelan

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