



DEVO MANC POSITION STATEMENT

[Regional Council 19.5.15]

UNISON and 'Devo Manc'

North West UNISON recognises the probability of devolution in public service governance arrangements across the region and nationally. The form of devolution is likely to vary, reflecting sub regional demographics and political characteristics and there will not be a standard model in place.

'Devo Manc' is the first and most comprehensive proposal and is simply the forerunner of future developments.

The Devo Manc announcements are of great interest to UNISON members in Greater Manchester (and beyond) as they have the potential to impact on our public services in terms of employment, service quality and democratic accountability.

UNISON represents over 75,000 members working in Health and Local Government in Greater Manchester. We also represent members in Transport, the Police Service and Further and Higher Education, Fire and Probation which are all areas that are part of the devolution initiative.

Our members and their families are public service users and all have an interest in the quality and accessibility of services. As citizens of Greater Manchester we also want the area to be economically prosperous and democratically-engaged.

In short, Devo Manc is of great importance to UNISON members, and devolution will best achieve its aims with the engagement and support of UNISON members.

Our Principles for Public Services

UNISON believes that public services should be:

- Properly funded
- Provided in-house
- Provided by employees who are treated well
- Available on the basis of need
- Of consistently high quality
- Democratically accountable, with open and transparent decision-making

Devolution holds the potential to either contribute towards, or work against the pursuit of these principles. UNISON will support devolution insofar as it furthers the principles listed above, and oppose proposals that work against them.

Our Position on Devo Manc

Proper Funding:

Public Services in Greater Manchester have been subjected to eye-watering funding cuts over recent years. Our councils have taken the brunt of Central Government's attacks on Local Government finances since 2010. Health services too have come under increasing financial pressure as Government funding has not kept up with increasing public demand.

The result of the General Election means that even this slashed level of funding is in even greater danger regardless of any devolution arrangements.

Our members and service users are desperate for investment in public services in Greater Manchester.

UNISON's view is that:

- 1. There is an urgent need for the mobilisation of extra resources to be invested in public services in Greater Manchester. Devo Manc has to play a part in enabling that investment.**
- 2. Greater Manchester is currently a long way short of being fiscally self-sustaining. Therefore, cuts in national funding would only further add to pressures on Greater Manchester's public services.**
- 3. Greater Manchester should receive its share of any additional funding agreed nationally and we welcome the assurance in the Memorandum of Understanding that: "GM will be able to access any new or additional health and/or social care funding streams that become available during the CSR period" (p. 5).**

In-house provision:

Devo Manc holds the promise of public service organisations working more closely together to realise efficiency savings and improved outcomes for service users. However, in recent years, public service provision in Greater Manchester has become increasingly fragmented and the private sector is carving out a larger role.

UNISON's view is that:

- 4. The potential for functional (cross-service) and spatial (cross-locality) service integration could potentially be impeded by**

commissioning/contractual relationships that act as a barrier to better co-operation between service providers.

- 5. There should be a clear commitment to public sector organisations being the preferred providers of public services. We believe that such a commitment would help achieve the benefits and efficiencies envisaged in the Devo Manc agenda.**

Treatment of Staff:

Under the 2010-15 Coalition Government public service workers experienced falling real wages and attacks on terms and conditions. Moreover, 120,000 jobs have been lost in the public sector in the North West since 2010 and many of our members have been subject to reorganisations and transfers to new employers.

There are no plans within the two initial Devo Manc documents (the Greater Manchester Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding) to change the employer or terms and conditions of public service workers. We welcome verbal confirmation of this from senior Devo Manc officials and politicians¹. We also note that the Tories on election ruled out the introduction of regional pay in the public sector.

- 6. UNISON will monitor closely the assurances and commitments around employee terms and conditions that have been given and must engage as much as possible in the process to ensure they are met.**

Availability of Services:

- 7. UNISON notes that there are no plans in the Devo Manc documents to introduce more user charges within the Health Service. We welcome assurances² in this area and will continue to monitor this closely.**

Quality and Consistency of Services:

- 8. UNISON supports moves toward the integration of Health and Social Care services in principle and will seek to work with all relevant employers to achieve agreements to ensure there is a positive improvement to achieve better outcomes for all parties including our members and the public who depend on those services.**
- 9. UNISON welcomes the assurances³ that the health service in Greater Manchester will remain part of the NHS. We believe that national standards of service, quality and accessibility should be retained in all of**

¹ At a meeting on 22 April 2015 with Richard Leese (Combined Authority Vice-Chair), Donna Hall (AGMA Secretary) and Ian Williamson (Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Devolution Programme Board Interim Chief Officer).

² At 22 April meeting.

³ At 22 April meeting.

Greater Manchester's public services and improved upon wherever possible.

Democratic accountability:

The Greater Manchester Agreement in November contained a provision that Greater Manchester should have a mayor. The mayor is to be initially selected for an interim 2 year period in the next month by the Greater Manchester elected councils and subsequently directly elected by the electorate of Greater Manchester in 2017.

The Memorandum of Understanding does not give any health and social care powers to the mayor but to a new Greater Manchester Strategic Health and Social Care Partnership Board who are made up of elected Greater Manchester representatives and those of the sub regional health employers.

North West UNISON is concerned about the lack of consultation prior to the announcements on Devo Manc. There is a need for a much wider and deeper engagement with the public in Greater Manchester about the purpose and appropriate form of governance arrangements than has currently taken place. This should involve a wide range of stakeholders and consider where Greater Manchester fits into governance arrangements for the rest of the North West.

UNISON will fully engage in the process and insists on full and senior level negotiations on all issues within our own employers and collectively with the new devolved governance arrangements.

- 10. UNISON's agreed national position is to oppose the creation of directly-elected mayors. UNISON North West will continue to argue against the need for a directly elected Mayor and to make that point at all levels. UNISON supports in principle a referendum prior to the introduction of a directly-elected mayor in Greater Manchester.**
- 11. UNISON North West supports the formation of a Greater Manchester Constitutional Convention to include trade unions, community and voluntary groups, political parties, public service user groups and other stakeholders to discuss future arrangements and developments. This should consider alternative models for democratically-accountable governance in the English regions other than having an elected mayor, including the potential role of newly-constituted regional assemblies.**

Decision-making

UNISON will seek to be fully engaged in the Devo Manc process to achieve the best possible outcomes for our members and for the public. The consultation arrangements which would normally apply were absent prior to the Devo Manc and Social / Health Care announcements must not be replicated in future elsewhere within our region and lessons must be learned.

- 12. UNISON will continue to demand to be properly involved in formal consultation arrangements at all levels of the devolved structures on an ongoing basis.**
- 13. UNISON will ensure our representatives are fully involved in consultation and discussion with their own employers through the normal structures**
- 14. Our central principle will be that recognised trade unions should be included in discussions and planning prior to decisions being taken with an ability to properly consult with members and effectively represent their views.**

UNISON NORTH WEST REGIONAL COMMITTEE