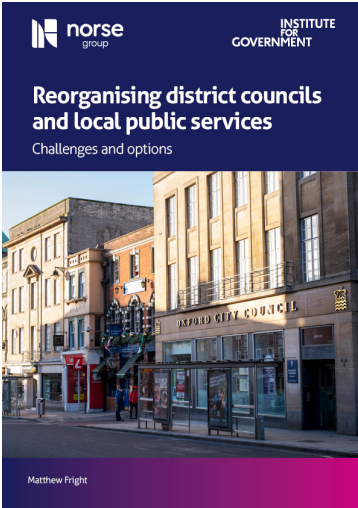


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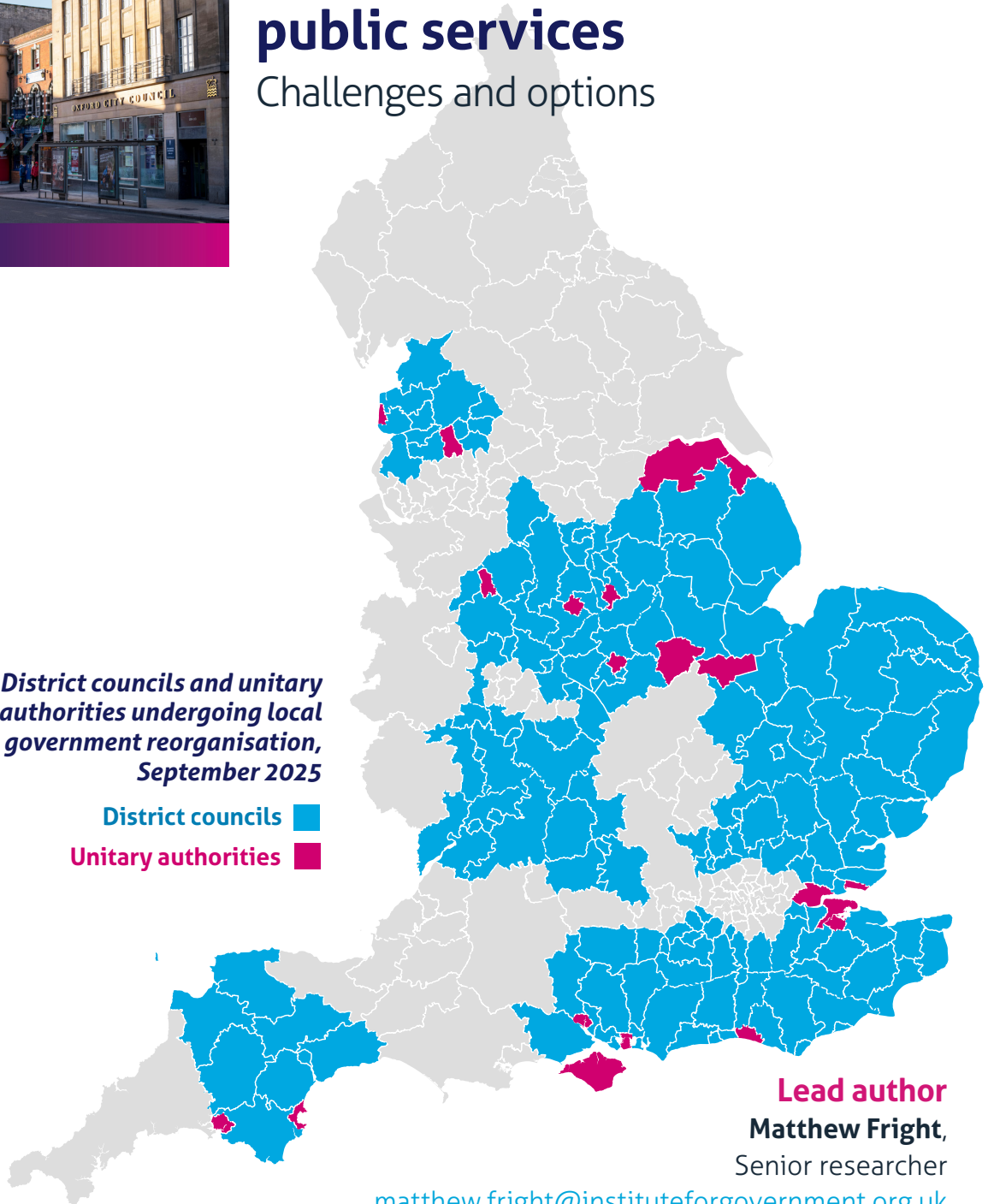
Reorganising district councils and local public services

Challenges and options



District councils and unitary authorities undergoing local government reorganisation, September 2025

District councils 
Unitary authorities 



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How to make a success of local government reorganisation

Local government needs to set the preconditions for success in the embedding and transformation stages of LGR:

- **Tailor your transformation strategy around the chosen geographic footprint.** Transformation plans must be tailored to the final geographic footprint and specific context – whether district councils are being merged into an existing authority, or a county council is being split.
- **Strengthen enabling functions.** Strong back-office support is critical, particularly well-resourced HR teams and integrated ICT platforms, which are essential for managing change and ensuring smooth operations
- **Engage and support staff throughout the process.** Leaders should be mindful of potential cultural clashes as organisations merge, and take steps to prevent disengagement and forge a unified workforce across the new unitary authority.
- **Embed innovation through contracting decisions.** Local leaders have a unique opportunity to design systems that promote continuous improvement and innovation, which, if embedded from the beginning, can create a culture of learning and adaptability that supports long-term success.

Central government needs to learn the lessons from earlier LGR rounds to support the sector through this change:

- **Provide clear support and guidance.** Central government should develop and disseminate practical guidance on transformational delivery, including how to exploit emerging technologies to streamline services.
- **Assess and strengthen central government capacity.** Central government should critically self-assess its capacity to manage simultaneous LGR processes across multiple regions and should identify and address any skills gaps through recruitment or external support, or adjust the reorganisation timetable accordingly.
- **Leverage sectoral experience and expertise.** The government should encourage its newly appointed independent panel of experts to engage widely across the sector to ensure lessons from past reorganisations are not overlooked.
- **Capture and learn lessons from early movers** by establishing formal review mechanisms to learn from the devolution priority programme areas and from Surrey, who are working to a faster timetable.

The full report can be read and downloaded at:
www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/reorganising-district-councils-public-services
 or by scanning the QR code.

