

“INITIATIVITIS”

Tracing **25** years of central government attempts to join up local public services in England



THE PROBLEM:

Over the last 25 years, central government has attempted to join up local public services in England at least **55 times**, illustrating the ‘initiativitis’ inflicted on local governments by the large volume and variety of coordination programmes.

By analysing and mapping some of the characteristics of these initiatives, **we have uncovered insights into the ways central government has sought to achieve local coordination, which can now help inform future programmes.**



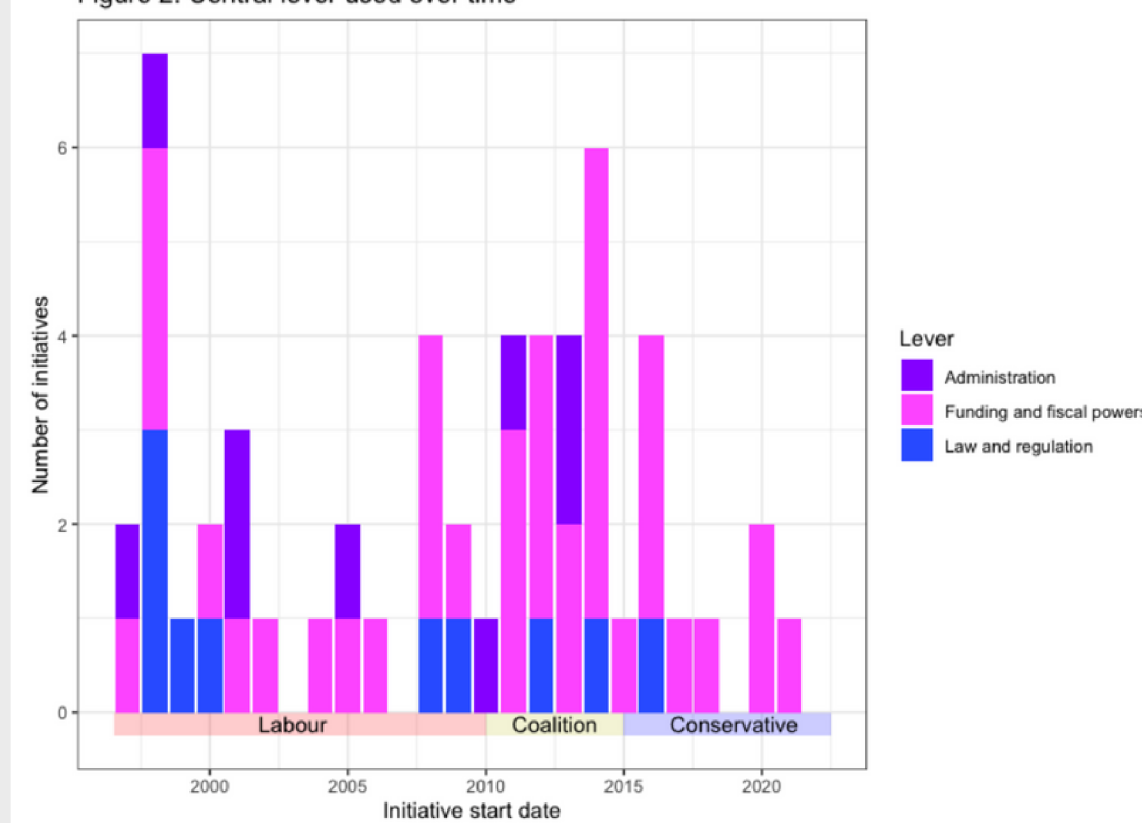
DEFINITION

initiativitis ● (noun)
a chronic condition causing governments to attempt to tackle systemic problems through many discrete, short-term programmes (initiatives).

Central government’s reliance on money as a reform tool

Funding was by far the most common lever used to affect change, as opposed to either more substantive legislative reform or lighter-touch administrative changes.

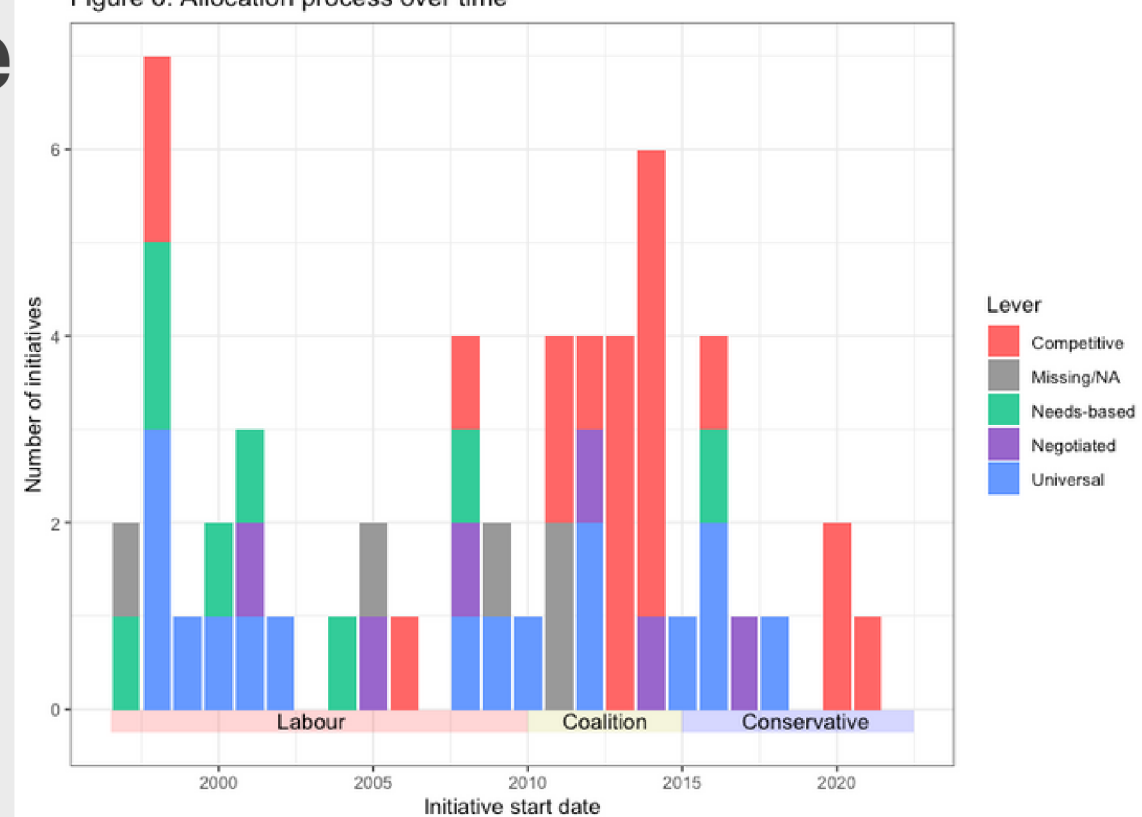
Figure 2: Central lever used over time



The use of competitive allocation processes

As is often decried by local government, competitive allocation processes were the most common way that areas were selected for support.

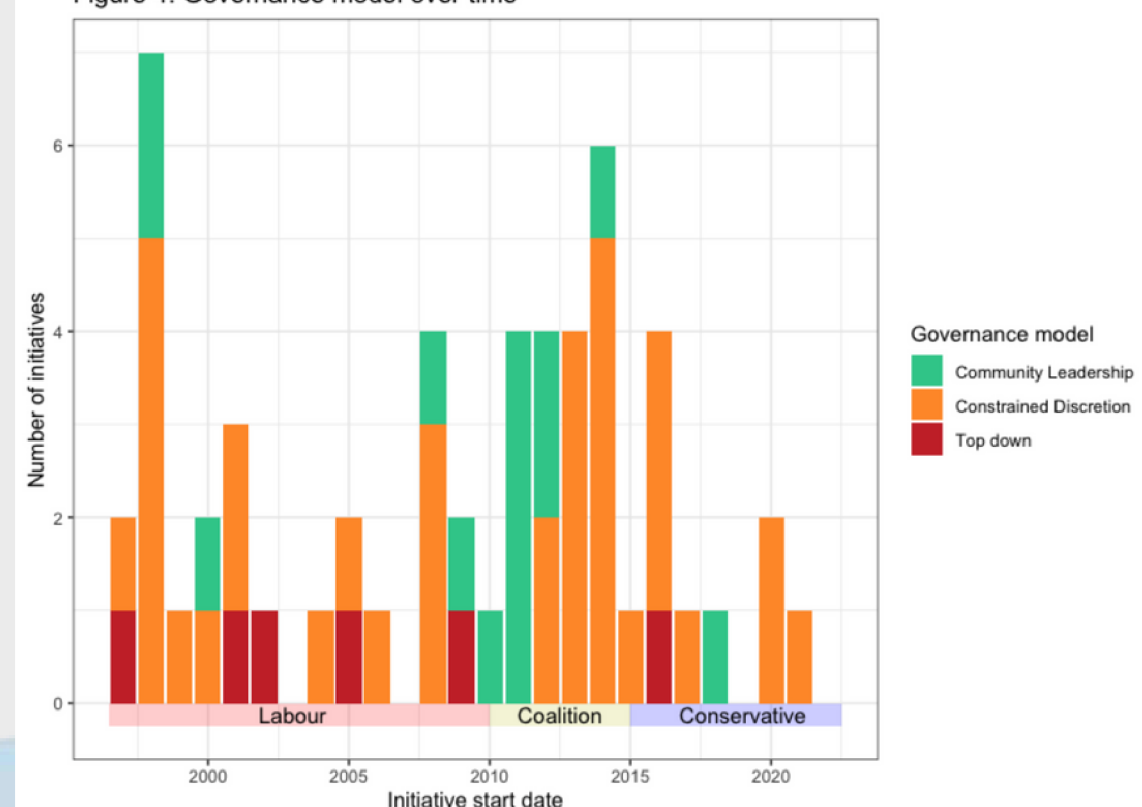
Figure 6: Allocation process over time



Centralised accountability vs desire for devolution

Despite aiming to devolve power, the majority of programmes retained centralised accountability structures. How can we reconcile meaningful local leadership with the demands of the Westminster accountability model?

Figure 4: Governance model over time



Key findings



EVIDENCE NAVIGATOR TOOL

We published a live online tool so policymakers can learn from past initiatives

- explore the characteristics of each of the programmes in our study
- access any evaluation materials that were produced