

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE****PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****SUBMISSION FROM COSLA****Introduction**

1. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee's Inquiry on Public Sector Reform and Local Government in Scotland.
2. COSLA – the voice of local government in Scotland – has backed a bold approach to the reform of public services based on a strong evidence base and our democratic values. We want to promote an approach that is framed around the improvement of outcomes, based on integrating services, and which uses all the levers of reform to optimise the benefits that can be felt by our communities.

**An outcomes approach to public services**

3. COSLA and our member councils, in partnership with the Scottish Government, have already been the driving force behind an outcomes focused approach to service delivery. At its core has been the end to managing services by ring fencing their budgets to react to the problems that individuals and communities encounter. Together, we recognised that this was hugely expensive and did little to prevent problems from emerging in the first place. Instead we have started focusing our resources on delivering outcomes and measuring services by the improvements they engender in people's lives.
4. But COSLA also recognises that our nation faces significant challenges. Poor outcomes for a small proportion of the population drive very large amounts of public spending. We have an ageing population and face poverty and disadvantage in too many parts of Scotland. Young people risk being lost to worklessness and investment to address climate change, achieve zero waste and address road repairs is significant.
5. Therefore, while public services have had real success in addressing Scotland's most significant problems, more needs to be done to ensure that public services fully translate into better outcomes for everyone in Scotland. That need is all the more acute at a time when resources are reducing and demand is growing quickly.

**Community Planning and Single Outcome Agreements**

6. The Christie Commission found that many of the answers are to be found in empowering public agencies to focus on communities and to work more effectively together to improve the lives of the people of Scotland. Indeed, the building blocks that approach already exist through the process of Community Planning Partnerships and Single Outcome Agreements.
7. While those components are already a familiar part of the public sector landscape, as the Christie Commission recognised, there is scope to make further and faster progress. In particular, despite the legislative basis for Community Planning and the introduction of the SOA, the language of outcomes and partnership working has not always been fully absorbed into the day to day systems and cultures that determine

service delivery within local communities. The challenge is therefore to create the conditions which ensure that CPPs do not focus on outcomes at the margins of mainstream services, but come together for and with communities, to improve outcomes and prevention through a focus on place, prevention, partnership integration and performance improvement.

8. Achieving that objective also implies that sustainable and effective reform will mean redirecting resources 'upstream' to prevent social problems from emerging. So for example, giving every child the best start is crucial to addressing problems like obesity, heart disease, mental ill-health, educational achievement and poverty. It also means recognising links between worklessness, housing, physical environments, and financial exclusion, and behaviours that are damaging to mortality and morbidity such as smoking, alcohol, drugs, and poor diet.
9. COSLA has restated its clear endorsement of this message and embarked on a joint review with the Scottish Government to strengthen the Community Planning and Single Outcome Agreement approach. Together, a clear and unequivocal Statement of Ambition has been agreed establishing expectations in terms of partner involvement, identification of priorities, and the improvement of outcomes for communities.
10. This Statement, attached at Appendix 1, points the way towards a genuinely ambitious and empowering review process, but does not shy away from fundamental questions about the challenges and opportunities we must tackle. These are important considerations, because ensuring that outcomes drive reform is difficult:
  - I. Firstly, outcomes are interdependent – for instance, a person's well-being is defined not just by their overall health but also their safety, their opportunities, and their environment. In other words, only by integrating public services will we begin to truly nurture an outcomes ethos. The effectiveness of CPPs will in large part depend not just on action by councils in community planning partnerships, but on creating the conditions in which other relevant partners actively and fully participate in the process, and on supportive programmes of action and policy at national government level.
  - II. Secondly, Community Planning Partnerships must deliver improvement, and we believe can best achieve that by prioritising how partners' resources are used to address the outcomes which they are jointly accountable for. Crucially, while differences in local circumstances may lead to different approaches, partnerships also need to be able to drive out any inexplicable variations in performance. That is why we are fully committed to delivering best value, to robust self-assessment, and to measuring performance against the best and sharing excellent practice.
  - III. Finally, we recognise that Community Planning needs to be firmly linked to communities. Scotland's identity is to a large extent local, and people's expectations are similarly defined. Community Planning needs to engage and coproduce with communities, within the context of local and national democratic control, and in ways that are compatible with and add value to specific arrangements and accountabilities for other aspects of public services.

## Conclusion

11. COSLA believes that public sector reform can only be effective if it places the improvement of outcomes for Scotland's communities at its core. At times, public discourse has seemed pre-occupied with structural change, or measuring inputs and outputs as the sole route to better, more efficient public services. We have long understood that solutions to the complex, multi layered problems that we face cannot be solved by simplistic tools and it is encouraging that Scotland has largely steered away from that course. Instead, we believe that a focus on integration, prevention, and localism, given practical effect through effective Community Planning and Single Outcome Agreements, provides an unprecedented opportunity to make a real difference to Scotland's communities, and to create the conditions for long term success across the public sector.

## APPENDIX 1

### REVIEW OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENTS

#### STATEMENT OF AMBITION

**Effective community planning arrangements will be at the core of public service reform. They will drive the pace of service integration, increase the focus on prevention and secure continuous improvement in public service delivery, in order to achieve better outcomes for communities. Community Planning and SOAs will provide the foundation for effective partnership working within which wider reform initiatives, such as the integration of health and adult social care and the establishment of single police and fire services, will happen.**

1. The Scottish Government and COSLA remain fully committed to Community Planning and Single Outcome Agreements. It is these key strategic building blocks, not structural change, that will achieve our overarching purpose of sustainable economic growth, better outcomes and reduced inequalities for local communities in Scotland through delivery of high quality public services.
2. This framework of Community Planning and SOAs, within the broader partnership between national and local government, has already made real impact in improving partnership working between public service agencies and local communities. However, at a time when resources are reducing and demand on public services is escalating, the Christie Commission found that action is needed to build on this success by removing barriers to effective partnership working and to ensure that leadership and cultures, systems and structures, and accountability arrangements across public services fully enable the delivery of better outcomes for communities. The Scottish Government has agreed with these conclusions and has established a broad programme of public service reform. This review is a key element of that programme.
3. The Scottish Government, COSLA and other Community Planning partners recognise that changes, including as necessary legislative change, will be needed to ensure the successful realisation of the ambitions described here. A programme and a timetable for delivering these will be developed by the Review group. This Statement of Ambition provides a clear basis for this programme, supports the work already underway within CPPs, and makes clear the ambitions of Scottish Government, COSLA and other community planning partners to move forward quickly after the local elections in May.

#### Conditions for Success

4. Public services must improve outcomes, and reduce the outcome gaps within populations and between areas. For Scotland to successfully and fully embrace an outcomes approach, all public services must play a full, active and appropriate role in Community Planning whether acting nationally, regionally or locally. Councils have a lead role in Community Planning and this Review must build their capacity, and that of other partners and of CPPs themselves, to ensure that better outcomes for communities are delivered through a strengthened framework of Community Planning and SOAs
1. Communities have high expectations of public services and have a key role to play in helping to shape and coproduce better outcomes within their communities. If community planning partnerships are to unlock that potential, their foundations must

be built on a strong understanding of their communities, and provide genuine opportunities to consult, engage and involve them. CPPs must be able to engage closely with the needs and aspirations of their communities, within the context of local and national democratic control, with strategic oversight of other specific arrangements and accountabilities for key aspects of public service delivery. CPPs must therefore be able to influence and drive planning and investment decisions by partners towards achieving the outcomes set out in SOAs. This must include ensuring effective involvement not just of the public sector but also of the higher and further education, private, and third sectors and so CPPs must be appropriately empowered to enable them to deliver these requirements effectively, and be able to operate within a national policy, legislative and financial environment that is similarly focussed on improving outcomes.

### The SOA

2. At the heart of CPP activity is the development of an SOA that is an explicit and binding 'plan for place' to be agreed with the Scottish Government. It must include clear and formally agreed outcomes, indicators and targets, for which all partners are jointly accountable in line with their respective contributions. The SOA must be clear about both the long term outcomes to be achieved over the next decade, and the contributory outcomes, indicators and targets by which progress towards these will be demonstrated over the short and medium terms. The CPP must ensure that the SOA is resourced: partners must contribute appropriately and will be held to account by the CPP through a strong role for local elected members, and by the Scottish Government for those contributions.

### What Community Planning Partnerships must do

3. **Understanding place:** CPPs must be effective in mobilising the knowledge and resources of all relevant local and national agencies to develop a clear and evidence-based understanding of local needs and opportunities, underpinned by robust and relevant data, and be capable of monitoring this over time to drive and demonstrating continuous improvement. Responsiveness to local circumstances, but within the context of the National Performance Framework and appropriate national requirements and standards, must be at the heart of Community Planning and SOAs.
4. **Planning for outcomes:** CPPs must translate this understanding into genuine planning for places that recognises the particular needs and circumstances of different communities, and that provides clear and unambiguous joint prioritisation of outcomes and improvement actions.
5. **Delivering outcomes:** the planning process must translate into hard-edged delivery of local priorities and achieve appropriate public service integration in pursuit of local priority outcomes. To achieve that, CPPs must have a clear understanding of respective partner contributions, how total resources will be targeted to deliver the priorities, and how partners will be held to account for delivery. Where changes are required, including through legislation, to ensure that the SOA is effective and binding, and that it drives integration and a focus on prevention, these will be made. Delivering effectively will also require investment in the people who deliver services through enhanced workforce development, and effective leadership.

### How Community Planning Partnerships should operate

6. **Organising for Outcomes:** Each CPP must have structures that reflect its local circumstances. CPPs do not have to take direct responsibility for delivery of outcomes

or integration of services where specific fit-for-purpose arrangements are already in place or are being developed. However, CPPs must have a strategic overview of such arrangements, with partners playing their constituent parts in planning and delivery arrangements to ensure that they are robust, appropriately joined-up and genuinely drive performance improvement. The proposals to integrate health and adult social care services are a particular case in point and demonstrate this approach. CPP partners must ensure that these new integrated services are appropriately connected to their wider assessment of the needs of local communities and that the outcomes to be delivered by these new integrated partnerships are reflected in SOAs and wider CPP planning. Community planning and SOAs must in turn be core to the implementation of proposals for integration of health and adult social care services and in the operation of the proposed Health & Social Care Partnerships.

7. **Accountability for Outcomes:** The unique responsibilities of CPPs require strong governance and accountability arrangements, which must complement other arrangements such as the accountability of NHS Boards to Ministers. CPPs must be genuine Boards with all the authority, behaviours and roles that implies for them and constituent partners. That will mean clear joint and collective accountability for delivery, and CPPs will be expected to hold all partners to account for their contribution to local planning and the delivery of those plans. Where this review identifies blockages to the effective participation of some partners, systemic issues or other changes required to ensure that this responsibility is exercised, these changes will be made to ensure that full participation in the CPP happens.
8. Political oversight is key to accountability. Local elected members will exercise oversight and formal accountability through their involvement in CPPs, and will exercise joint oversight and ensure accountability with the Scottish Government through the SOA. The Scottish Government must hold national agencies to account for their contribution to local community planning and SOAs, within the context of their National remit and responsibilities. Where changes, including through legislation, are required in order to ensure effective oversight and accountability arrangements are in place these will be made.

### **How Community Planning Partnerships should improve outcomes**

9. A focus on performance improvement is a fundamental pillar of public service reform and a key element in the development of the Community Planning and SOAs framework. Securing best value is the key driver of performance across public services.
10. While differences in local circumstances may lead to different approaches, CPPs will be accountable for the achievement of improved outcomes, including the delivery of SOAs. CPPs will be committed to outcomes-focused performance improvement and quality standards, including national requirements where appropriate, with robust self-assessment as a starting point. This will drive out inexplicable variations and ensure that CPPs deliver improvement, deploying the totality of partners' resources to achieve the outcomes for which they are jointly accountable. This process will also help groups of CPPs to work together across wider geographic areas where it is clear that the identification of opportunity and the delivery of activity at a regional or national level would be more effective.

### **Reporting Outcomes:**

11. The development of transparent and accessible public reporting, together with an appropriate level of external scrutiny, is key to providing assurance about CPP effectiveness and SOA delivery, and to supporting CPPs in performance improvement.

A cohesive approach to capacity building, driven and owned by CPPs themselves, is required, which is supported by co-ordinated activity by the Scottish Government, improvement bodies and others where appropriate. Scrutiny arrangements for CPPs and those for individual partners must complement, not cut across, each other; and take account of the differing governance structures and accountabilities of non-public sector partners.

### **Conclusion**

12. This shared Statement of Ambition makes clear the commitment of the Scottish Government, COSLA and representatives of Community Planning Partnerships to retain and develop Community Planning and SOAs as the heart of an outcomes-based approach to public services in Scotland. It also sets out what is required from the Community Planning and SOA framework, and of national government, for these aspirations to be fully and effectively realised.

**ANNEX****Key Principles for Community Planning (from 'Future Shapes' paper discussed by the Senior Officers Group on 31 Jan)**

The following set of principles will shape the further work of the review. The community planning and single outcome agreement framework is about:

- Delivering **demonstrable** improvements to people's lives
- Delivering unambiguous **performance** commitments and cost effective service models
- Using an evidence based approach, underpinned by **disaggregated** data, to drive improvement in meeting the differing needs of local populations
- Focusing upon reducing outcome **gaps** within populations and between areas
- Focusing upon delivering **joint** prioritisation of outcomes, interventions and resource use by public services and in so doing strengthening joint working between and the integration of public services
- Promoting early intervention and **prevention** approaches in reducing outcome inequalities
- Strengthening **scrutiny** by local democratically elected politicians of how partnerships operate to achieve better outcomes
- Strengthening **community** engagement and participation in delivering better outcomes