

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE**  
**PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**  
**SUBMISSION FROM DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**

**Strand 1 - Partnerships and Outcomes**

There is increased evidence that community planning partners have a shared commitment to delivering improved outcomes in their communities. In Dundee, this has resulted in a clear agreement around top strategic priorities facing the city and its population and a co-ordinated approach to tackling the causes of deprivation and the opportunities for economic growth.

Since its inception the Dundee Partnership has included a wide range of partners in its key decision-making groups including the voluntary sector and while acknowledging limitations, representatives from local communities. This has allowed for a genuine sharing of the broadest range of perspectives and alignment of objectives

The development of outcome frameworks has assisted community planning partners to identify the shared responsibilities to contribute to all of the outcomes agreed for the city. There are examples of improved co-ordination of services, co-location of services and joint commissioning which inevitably bring partners closer together. Examples would include:

- the New Beginnings service which is a multi-agency team established to identify and assess the needs of unborn babies at risk of compromised parenting related to such factors as parental substance mis-use, mental health or learning disability. The overall aim of the service is to improve the outcomes post birth for babies at risk. The staffing team includes Children and Adults Services workers from both Social Work and Health
- there is an increased presumption towards co-location in the development of new community facilities with the model being developed in the Whitfield Life Services Centre, a new collaboration between the Council and NHS Tayside

Dundee Partnership has taken extensive steps to engage as meaningfully as possible with communities and the voluntary sector. An overall framework for engagement has been developed which connects all aspects of the partnership to the variety of communities of interest, geography and identity. These see the most powerful expression within local community planning partnerships which have been developed for each ward which bring together key officers from Neighbourhood departments, local elected members and community representatives. They develop a local community plan for their neighbourhood along with a community engagement framework to ensure that communities are involved in defining and responding to issues addressed by them.

The outcomes based approach is increasingly understood and implemented and the Dundee Partnership is in the process of developing its new Single Outcome Agreement for 2012 onwards. The experience gained so far will ensure that the

outcomes and in particular the indicators and evidence base, are stronger and will provide a better basis for reporting to the public partners and central government on progress.

While the city council and partners are engaged in numerous approaches to tackling inequalities and promote preventative approaches, this remains a long term challenge. In many cases this is due to the need to maintain services responding to negative outcomes for individuals, families and communities while attempting to move resources to greater prevention. The financial support provided through the Scottish Government Change Funds provide a meaningful means of protecting services in the short term while designing and putting in place long term solutions which are preventative and/or achieve early intervention.

The Dundee SOA clearly demonstrates the connections between national outcomes and Dundee outcomes. These are delivered in the main through the strategic theme groups of the Dundee Partnership and monitored by the senior decision-making bodies within the Dundee Partnership and through them to the public sector partners and others.

The greatest room for improvement in the Single Outcome Agreement process is in ensuring the availability of outcomes based performance indicators. Greater support could be made available from the Scottish Government in establishing a clear and agreed set of national indicators which can provide local datazone level results which would enable partnerships to track process on a regular basis but also crucially to determine changes within the local authority particularly in relation to closing the gap between affluent and deprived neighbourhoods.

In Dundee, there is a recognition that outcome agreements in themselves present a challenge in reporting progress in the short term to communities. For this reason the partnership develops a SOA Delivery Plan as the other half of our Community Plan. This is more action orientated with short term indicators attached and these provide a much stronger means of monitoring and reporting progress on an annual basis.

## **Strand 2 - Benchmarking and Cost Comparison**

Benchmarking is an essential component in any system designed to raise standards and provide a higher level of accountability for management.

Working in partnership with the Scottish Government Statistical Service we are already seeing a good alignment of the Outcome approach in Single Outcome Agreements and the available national statistics generated by public services.

We would also recommend that the Scottish Household survey be expanded to provide a good national reporting model of public and customer feedback on the quality of a priority range of public services and outcomes that can be broken down by local government area. This should be across all public services and consideration should be given to including other sectors of consumer interest as well such as financial services, transport and retail. Sweden developed a Consumer Satisfaction Index across a wide range of sectors and it was reported in the same way as economic figures as another way of measuring the growth in the economy.

Benchmarking by using internationally recognised self assessment models such as the European Foundation of Quality Management model (redefined by the Improvement Service as the Public Sector Improvement Framework) has further advantages. It enables organisations to measure their progress on a journey to long term sustainable quality and self improvement and enables comparisons, with the assistance of organisations such as Quality Scotland, beyond Scotland and the public sector to find best practice.

Developing more robust benchmarks of efficiency and productivity will be central to delivering efficiencies. Local authorities need to benchmark their costs and productivity against the best in class to ensure that the greatest possible efficiencies are being achieved. We are working with SOALCE and the Improvement Service to develop such measures.

Improvements are also required to the national performance management framework for Local Government as set through Statutory Performance Indicators. These are helpful as the basis of comparison can be aided by the audit process to provide robustness. These should focus on the achievement of measurable outcomes and the effectiveness of partnership working. This can be built on the foundation of improvements already made, such as the Accounts Commission's reduction in the number of SPI's in its recent Directions. Core SPI's should be reviewed and refocused so that they are more closely related to areas where minimum national standards may be applied. These would be supplemented by local indicators drawn from Outcome Agreements and other sources to provide a rounded picture of performance in terms that are meaningful to local people.

A significant amount of data is generated within the public sector and more use should be made of this to support benchmarking of outcomes, performance and use of resources. The SOLACE Scotland benchmarking project is one example of how improved information and knowledge can lead to better decision making and greater productivity and assist in holding public service providers to account. The CIPFA, APSE and Housing Best Value Network are others.

### **Critical Success factors**

It needs to be relevant to councils and robust: based on clear statistical and methodological standards. And it needs to be cost effective to collect and collate, which also means avoiding creating additional bureaucracy for front line staff and customers solely for the purpose of collecting statistics. Emphasis should be placed on making better use of existing operational and accounting data.

**Use**

The statistics should be used as “can openers” to debate the cause of the differences from a systems perspective rather than crude league tables or finger pointing at management staff. This is an important principle to avoid game playing with the figures.

The primary use should therefore be to support self evaluation processes within Councils and national policy and professional development arenas. That said it should be reported in an open and transparent way so that the wider community can contribute to the debate and hold councils accountable around pursuing the best benchmark on the topic.

**Dundee City Council  
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