

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
SUBMISSION FROM FIFE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Strand 1 - Partnerships and Outcomes

To examine the on-going development of community planning partnerships and the community planning process and assess, how these could be built upon to support outcome-based approaches to service planning and delivery in local areas.

Key questions for this strand of the inquiry:

How could councils better integrate their partners into the process? How could the degree of commitment to the process amongst other community planning partners be improved? How can any legislative or administrative barriers that make partnership working more difficult be overcome?

Without a shared acceptance of outcomes then there will always be resistance to partnership activities where, no perceived benefit for the partner exists, or there are competing reporting and/or budgetary requirements on that partner. Partner aims and responsibilities should be identified and harmonised with those of the partnership to identify mutual benefit.

Legislation around a duty to participate with some clarification on accountability may be of some benefit.

How can local authorities and their partners move further towards real, integrated working?

There is evidence that this is working in practice within Fife. The integration of key personnel from partner agencies into a cohesive group with shared purposes, visions and resources. At a national level the expectation (possibly a statutory requirement) of a 'partnership' approach to shared policy setting and integration of these 'shared' objectives into partners strategic plans would assist.

The closer the work of partnership is harmonised with that of each agency involved will assist in absorbing extra workloads and task prioritisation can be rationalised.

What steps would facilitate the sharing of budgets in pursuit of shared outcomes?

The first step is acceptance and implementation of a 'shared' purpose, vision and strategic objectives. Each partner must be able to clearly identify the 'benefits' to the approach if they are to truly participate. Creation of a 'ring fenced' partnership budget, through which joint initiatives can be financed. There should be a pre activity cost/benefit evaluation process for each initiative to identify benefits and identify strategic links to, not only all involved, but also to others who may derive direct benefit whilst not necessarily participating.

How can the partners further improve on the progress that has been made and overcome the remaining challenges on engaging communities and voluntary sector organisations in the process?

It is imperative that at the outset the relevant partnership services and agencies are identified. Where an activity is centrally/partnership funded then a requirement to engage and participate should form part of any funding agreement. Again early identification of benefits, to all partners, in engaging must form part of the initial scoping exercise or agreement and a centrally funded budget should encourage voluntary support.

How can the community planning arrangements be adapted and developed to promote outcomes-based and preventative approaches?

Partners with a shared focus will naturally identify these approaches. Again Fife is a model example of how this process can be, and is, implemented. Development and sharing of 'best practice' models is an imperative.

How is the work of delivery on SOA outcomes managed, coordinated and driven through the various community partnership structures and agreements? How could Single Outcome Agreements be improved to deliver on community planning targets?

In Fife all community structures and agreements are linked to the SOA outcome objectives and hence to SG expectations. A strategic Assessment process advises on the priorities for the following 3 year plan and associated objectives. All partners ensure that the partnership/SOA objectives are embedded into their individual Strategic Planning processes.

What is the purpose of a Single Outcome Agreement in assisting the delivery of improved outcomes? How are local Single Outcome Agreements developed, and how do they relate to national priorities?

Local outcomes should be derived from a recognised local need. The need is identified through statistical analysis of the activities or occurrences that are reported. Generally the high end issues are the same throughout the country to a greater or lesser extent but local activity should concentrate and prioritise on the issues most pertinent to their particular areas. The local Single Outcome Agreements should reflect this.

How could local authorities and other public bodies contribute more to influencing and improving outcomes in their area?

Identification of common outcome aims. The duty to 'actively' participate in actions which can be directly linked to these aims, would ensure engagement by all. Lead agencies identified with regard to specific area issues should work with partners to improve services.

How can arrangements, processes and 'accountability be improved?

If partners are embedded into the concept of shared objectives and are embedding these into their Strategic Plans as described above then this would be a natural by product of that process.

Agencies can identify resource commitment and would be accountable through both partnership and individual reporting mechanisms.

Strand 2 - Benchmarking and Performance Measurement

To examine the development of work that has taken place over the last two years in relation to the development of benchmarking and comparative performance data and cost measurement and assess how it can contribute to the performance of local authorities in Scotland.

Key questions for this strand of the inquiry:

What are the main challenges (cultural, technical, geographical or other) in developing performance' measurement and benchmarking systems for local authorities across Scotland?

The main cultural challenge is getting 32 local authorities to agree a common framework of indicators against which to benchmark.

Technical differences could be overcome by preparing definition templates that rationalise the method for collection and storage of data. This would be greatly assisted if all authorities were using the same Performance Management Software.

Geographical challenges can be met by including constant factors within the indicators where appropriate, e.g. per head of population. Demographic differences will need to be taken into account in any broad picture, this may for example. be overcome by applying measures as averages over large population indices

To what extent has the work undertaken over the last two years by the Improvement Service, SOLACE and others contributed to developing a common approach to bench marking across Scotland's local authorities?

I am not sure this is evident within the fire and rescue services in particular. There has been input from Scottish Fire and Rescue Advisory Unit as well as the Chief Fire Officers Association as well as the Scottish Governments Statistician Group which has contributed to developing a common approach; however this could be improved with a more joined up effort.

What technical or other resources are needed to continue and complete the development of recent work on bench marking?

Fife Council, (including Fife Fire and Rescue Service) in partnership with Stirling and Clackmannan councils have recently procured Covalent Performance Management Software, Which I believe is also being used in 18 or so of the 32 councils in Scotland. The benefits of using this software are already being realised after only about a year, for example a single data collection methodology with readily accessible data sets to monitor and evaluate. If a Scottish approach using common software could be agreed this would improve benchmarking significantly.

To what extent can the developing work on benchmarking be extended across community planning partnerships? How can data derived from benchmarking influence the future direction of community planning and the contents of future SOAs?

The collected data must be compatible and collected in a consistent format. As shown in Fife the understanding of what data sets are available and the benefits of combining data sets to give a broader societal risk profile is a good example of how this can be brought together.

We are already developing indicators for the community planning partnerships to meet their general needs and to feed relevant data to the area groups that work at the practical level under the partnership in Fife. This data is used to demonstrate that outcomes are being achieved and the partnership are meeting their stated goals to improve the wellbeing of the communities of Fife

How can the development of bench marking help improve the performance of local authorities in Scotland?

This should create a target for achievement; however it must be relevant and demonstrably related to the individual baselines.

With specific reference to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, we currently have 8 services that benchmark with each other. Under sector reform we may have up to 32 local units reporting through hubs to the national board and ultimately the Chief Fire Officer for Scotland. Now more than ever it is crucial that we develop benchmarking to ensure these local units understand how their performance is being measure and how it contributes to local community planning partnerships and the service nationally.

Should the Scottish Government have a role in providing national impetus to the development of benchmarking and performance measurement?

Yes there is definitely a role for Scottish Government. In Scotland's Fire and rescue Services work has already begun through initial meetings with the Scottish Governments Statistician Groups. However this is somewhat disjointed ,and as a result data produced in the Scottish Governments Statistical Bulletin is not necessarily aligned to exiting agreed data sets and indicators, including our Statutory Performance Indicators as reported by Audit Scotland. Any National impetus must therefore deal with data inconsistencies.

Strand 3 - Developing New Ways of Delivering Services

To examine progress in relation to the development of shared services and other innovative ways of achieving, economies of scale and harnessing the strengths and skills of key public sector partners to deliver the best possible quality services in local areas.

Key questions for this strand of the inquiry:

How can cultural and organisational change be promoted to ensure that local authorities and community planning partners are able to work together to develop the kind of integrated services that are aspired to by local communities?

There have to be clearly stated expectations and an understanding of them. There has to be consistent monitoring processes to ensure changes take place with a positive outcome. Excellent leadership is required and there has to be a clear buy in from the top down into what needs to happen to inspire organic change in organisational culture. This new culture has to be promoted with regular feedback on the benefits and achievements of the more collaborative approach.

How can the tensions between shared services creating savings through potential reductions in the number of staff involved and the economic impact brought about by any resulting job losses be resolved?

Potential structural changes required have to be identified and a consistent change management process implemented to ensure minimisation of any impact. If services are designed to meet the needs of communities specific project / service design balance sheets can be maintained with resultant costs or savings accounted for in a partnership budget, to be shared. Or through monitoring of financial impact amongst partners to determine funding models.

How can any legislative or institutional barriers to developing shared and innovative service delivery, models to their full potential be overcome?

There must be a legislature provision to allow services to negotiate any barriers to required change. As above re duty to 'actively' participate.

Is there scope for further national shared services along the lines of the shared recruitment portal for local authorities, 'myjobscotland'?

Yes. Nationally negotiated contracts for services are likely to deliver on economies of scale for items such as power and fleet requirements.

How can innovative delivery methods for services and collaborative arrangements (as mentioned, for example, in the Christie Commission report) help to improve outcomes and tackle embedded social problems focused in defined geographical areas?

By identifying alternative delivery mechanisms which can deliver on stated outcomes. This will require a degree of cultural evolution as advised in Stream 1 where the best outcome may be delivered by a partner who sees no, or little apparent benefit.

What scope is there for developing ways of delivering services, such as the personalisation of care, in order to mitigate the effects of shrinking resources while also promoting improved standards of care?

Utilising alternative delivery models, maximising efficiency, removing unnecessary actions and implementing shared delivery models, including new and emerging technologies.

**Fife Fire and Rescue Service
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