

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
SUBMISSION FROM HM INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY (HMIC)

1. PARTNERSHIPS AND OUTCOMES

1. 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?

- **PLACE CPPS ON A STATUTORY FOOTING** – while the various individual partner agencies are statutorily obliged to participate in community planning through their duties under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, community planning partnerships have no separate legal standing. As corporate entities they are therefore not accountable to anyone in terms of delivering on their SOA commitments.
- **STRAND LEADS** – where each partner agency has to take a strand lead.
- **CREATE “EFFECTIVE MECHANISMS FOR JOINT ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SOA COMMITMENT”** – in its guidance to community planning partnerships the multi-agency Concordat Oversight Group (COG) stressed that as all statutory public sector partners to the partnerships are ultimately accountable for public spending and policy performance, they are also accountable politically and publicly for the content of the SOAs. Therefore a crucial step for partnerships is to create effective mechanisms for joint accountability for SOA commitment that will run alongside their individual accountabilities for their own resources and services.
- **GOVERNANCE** – moreover, the above will need clarity around governance.
- **JOINT INSPECTIONS OF SHARED OUTCOMES** – these too would support the above.

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

- **SEE RESPONSES TO 1. ABOVE** – at the present time the commitment to SOAs of individual partner agencies varies, with some recognised as playing very active parts, others less so. Placing CPPS on a statutory footing should help to alleviate this kind of problem.

- **FOCUS FIRST ON IDENTIFYING COMMONALITIES AND OVERLAPS, THEN LOOK TO INTEGRATED WORKING** - the point here is surely moving towards effective integrated working. Evidence submitted by the National Community Planning Group to the Christie Commission highlighted the tension between community planning objectives and the day-to-day business, resources and myriad existing organisational priorities and pressures on partner agencies – where these are rarely sufficiently convergent to focus on joint CPP activities and tangible outcomes to the extent required or beyond short term impact only. Funding cuts are likely to exacerbate this situation further. Success is more likely where common services (e.g. procurement) or goals (e.g. reducing substance misuse) are identified first, followed then by what resource and activities would be required to achieve them, thereby allowing intelligently informed/directed integrated working practices to be implemented.
- **CO-LOCATION OR AT LEAST PHYSICAL PROXIMITY OF SERVICES** – there is evidence that this can help to break down the sometimes significant cultural differences, barriers and agenda of the various partner agencies and which can often stifle progress otherwise.
- **JOINT BUDGETS AND JOINT TARGETS.**
- **MULTI-AGENCY TASKING AND CO-ORDINATION** – another successful practice has been the use of multi-agency fora for jointly tasking shared resources in partnership activities.

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

- **AGAIN, SEE RESPONSE TO 1 ABOVE** – this would require proper, robust joint governance and a clear articulation of tangible outcomes that are assessed through joint inspections. It is arguable that the community planning process has not yet matured into the sophisticated and binding delivery platform necessary to achieve this.
- **BUT DIFFERING OPERATING MODELS AND PRIORITIES** – even were the above to be resolved sharing budgets across an entire CPP is still likely to be problematic. For example, while it may seem logical for Health and Social Work to share budgets around common themes such as services for the elderly, it is hard to see how the same could be applied to agencies such as the police whose response ethos, multiple disciplines and functions do not lend themselves to such a model.

4. How can 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?

- **COMMUNICATION AND INVOLVEMENT** – sustaining local community interest derives at least in part from a sense that people are actively involved in identifying local concerns and are able to see that something has been done. There are various ways in which this could be achieved, including local area committees, key information networks, surveys, social media and so on.
- **UNDERSTANDING WHAT WORKS** – following on from the above, a better appreciation and sharing of what does and does not work can obviously help to build on success in an efficient and effective way, and can provide additional leverage in negotiations around participation.
- **SUSTAINABLE FUNDING, RESOURCES AND OUTCOMES** – the voluntary sector relies heavily on local authority funding and many voluntary agencies that support CPPs have already become casualties of council budget cuts. In this context, the need for capacity building and long-term sustainable outcomes becomes more acute.
- **ADOPTING A WIDER PERSPECTIVE** – for understandable reasons councils and community planning partnerships tend to adopt a geographic view of communities. This can be to the detriment of e.g. minority groups.

5. How is the work of delivering SOA outcomes managed, co-ordinated and driven through the various community partnership structures and agreements?

- **AGAIN, SEE RESPONSE TO 1 ABOVE** – the lack of statutory framework and accountability mechanism means that how this is done varies and to variable degrees of success. There are, however, some common themes: the emphasis remains very much on end-product outputs rather than outcomes (perhaps justifiably so given the long-term nature of the SG's national outcomes they are supposed to contribute to, and SG guidance on local indicators) or process milestones; and given their lack of legal standing, organisational priorities will tend to take precedence over SOAs where these diverge. There needs to be greater clarity as to the intent of SOAs and more effort made to achieve the strategic convergence of priority areas.
- **THE RIGHT LEADERS** – where it works can be down to having the right people leading the right bits and very strong leadership from the Chief Executive.

6. What is the purpose of a single outcome agreement in helping to achieve better outcomes? How are local single outcome agreements developed, and how do they relate to national priorities?

- **ACCORDING TO THE SG WEBSITE** – SOAs are agreements between Government and CPPs setting out how each, and within that each partner agency, will work towards improving agreed outcomes for local people in a way that reflects

local circumstances and priorities, within the context of the Government's national outcomes and purpose.

- **DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE** – again it is likely that the exact process by which SOAs are developed will differ in each CPP but initial guidance advocated, among other things, involving local communities to inform them.
- **SOAS V NATIONAL PRIORITIES** – from a police point of view there can be differences between SOAs and national priorities which can in turn cause tensions around resources. Conversely, some SOAs simply encompass a selection of policing priorities that have already been identified as force or national police service priorities, e.g. reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

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

- **LEGISLATION** – activities and structures related to community planning really ought to be established and governed through legislation.
- **BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER/INTERDEPENDENCIES** – understand better what each partner agency can and cannot do and the limitations each has in terms of resources, remits and scope.
- **JOINT PLANNING AND COMMITMENTS**
- **CONTINUITY AND DRIVE** – of leadership in particular to forge good working relationships that are the foundation for successful partnerships; and a shared drive to integrate, share and make efficiencies and strive for public value.
- **SPECIFIED OWNERS** – have dedicated owners responsible for specific themes.
- **EVALUATING ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT** – the current system of performance measurement is predicated on the view that performance is to be measured rather than understood. This is an unhelpful and quite possibly highly inefficient way of working. Evaluating what is done within, between and across all 32 councils and CPPs to learn what activities and inputs have what effect (or not) would provide a robust base of evidence through which to influence and improve future working and subsequent outcomes.

8. How can arrangements, processes and accountability be improved?

- **SEE ALL THE ABOVE** – including greater clarity about who is responsible for what budget; what sort of return is expected on any investment; transparency in what has actually been achieved and how; joint inspection that is based on outcomes; and, better governance structures.

2. BENCHMARKING AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

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

- ASSUMPTION OF TECHNICAL COMPETENCE – it is assumed, but not necessarily the case, that senior managers' knowledge extends to a sophisticated understanding of how public finances could be made to work better.
- ASSUMPTION OF TECHNICAL COMPETENCE RE DATA, for example – i) interpreting data – senior managers and even performance analysts do not necessarily understand statistics, and this can lead to incorrect interpretations (often exaggerated) of what performance data can and actually does tell us, for example; ii) contextual information – while there is growing recognition of the relevance of contextual factors to explain data – and with this a growth in the use of, e.g. rates per population – many agencies still feel uneasy not providing misleading or uninformative raw figures; iii) making fair comparisons – the socio-demographic profile of local authority areas will be different and will differentially affect performance. Any system of benchmarking/comparison must be able to understand and take account of this.
- CULTURAL BARRIERS RE THE DATA – i) uniformity of data – unless everyone applies consistent counting conventions and collection methods (e.g. surveys) then it will continue to be impossible to make true comparisons. This has already proved difficult to achieve in national organisations with locally autonomous bodies such as the police service; ii) unpopular measures – similarly, sometimes the reason for the above is that agencies consider preferred measures uninformative or unhelpful, too expensive, irrelevant to their area, and so on and so refuse to adopt them;
- COMPARING V UNDERSTANDING PERFORMANCE – different approaches are required for assessing and for understanding performance, and yet many organisations persist in using one – usually a series of performance indicators – and wrongly assume that it can do both. The danger is that benchmarking becomes used in this way too, whereas in fact it should be used to help understand how performance might be improved.
- EMPHASIS ON GEOGRAPHICAL COMPARISON – continuing on from the above, the emphasis for performance comparison continues to be geographical area. If its purpose is solely to compare how well one local authority is performing against one or more others, then that is fine – although one local authority is not homogenous in itself but contains various pockets of mixed profiles; nor do populations differ in any logical or consistent way according to which local authority

residents come under. If the desire is to derive comparative data that might help to identify how improvements could be made, then more informative comparisons could be made, e.g. smaller geographical areas, MOSAIC categories, cluster analyses, or for benchmarking purposes, processes and results. Likewise, to realise the full potential of benchmarking comparators should not be limited to other local authorities.

2. 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 benchmarking across Scotland's local authorities?

- Both the Improvement Service and SOLACE have clearly helped by, for example, working on a common set of indicators for SOAs. However, this work could be developed further, possibly involving other public bodies. Benchmarking / comparators with the private sector would also be useful, especially for corporate services such as HR and finance.

3. What technical or other resources are needed to continue and complete the development of recent work on benchmarking?

- Where benchmarking is used to look at which, of a range of different approaches, processes or circumstances aiming to achieve the same thing produces the best results, we need agreement on common data and reporting standards, together with common definitions, around what we consider success to be or what it is councils/CPPs should be striving to achieve.
- As above, benchmarking / comparators with the private sector would also be useful.

4. 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?

- As with the first comment, there is no reason why it cannot be extended to good effect across all public sector bodies including CPPs, although the definition of success problem raised above may prove more difficult to resolve. The data generated can broaden CPPs' exposure to alternative, more effective, processes and ways of working with a view to understanding how they might reshape their own processes / activities in order to achieve better results.

5. How can the development of benchmarking help to improve the performance of local authorities in Scotland?

- It is a key method of helping to drive improvement, because it allows sensible comparisons and assists in identifying, developing and extending good/best practice across authorities.
- It is of more practical value than simplistic performance measures because it attempts to learn about the impact of different processes or approaches – not just those used by other Scottish local authorities but in any comparable function, service or organisation – on end results, rather than just making simple comparisons of the end results themselves.
- Nevertheless, it needs to be applied in an appropriate and constructive manner (not just as another statistical performance comparison tool) and should not constrain innovation.
- It also needs to be fed into and used by the governance process.

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

- There are arguments for and against this. On one hand is the argument that such things should be apolitical and have cross-party agreement / support to work, otherwise they will change with successive governments. On the other, it might be argued that unless Scottish Government has a role, at least for performance measurement as it is not clear what role it should take in terms of benchmarking, nothing will get done.
- An alternative view might be that such a role might more appropriately sit with scrutiny bodies. This has been the case in the past, pre the Crerar Review, while both performance and benchmarking remain integral elements of common inspection tools such as EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) model.

3. NEW WAYS OF DELIVERING SERVICES

1. 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?

Given the current challenging funding context there is a risk that public bodies retreat from partnership working into their own core areas of business, so this is a relevant question.

- Again it goes back to the suggestion that we work from reviewing core functions and objectives of individual organisations in order to identify areas of common priority and convergence amongst partner agencies. and then consider how best to integrate partnership working into these.
- Is there a role for central government to be more prescriptive about what good outcomes might look like, i.e. provide additional national direction without detracting from localised approaches?
- In the meantime, could SG and COSLA do more to share existing effective practice?
- Co-location.
- Developing an understanding of what the outcomes are, what the main drivers are for achieving them, and what each agency, department, team and individual is contributing to that end.

2. How can 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?

- The need for pragmatic solutions is not denied, and shared service modelling (SSM) is recognised as a sound business principle for, e.g. business mergers. What is less obvious is that the same approach applied to public sector reform would i) maintain performance and standards, ii) realise anticipated savings, or iii) work across agency boundaries within the broader context of unco-ordinated and single agency public sector reform compounded by an SG directive of no compulsory public sector redundancy.
- Reductions in senior ranks would allow for numbers to be maintained whilst reducing staff costs.

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

- LEGISLATION – again, this goes back to the argument under SOAs/CPPs for a statutory framework.
- INSTITUTIONAL –again, better understanding of the abilities and limitations of organisations and their resources; and establishing specified owners of specific areas of work.
- SHARED LEARNING – share learning from elsewhere, e.g. the successful Total Place initiatives.

4. Is there any scope for further national shared services along the lines of the shared recruitment portal for local authorities, “myjobscotland”?

- YES – the development of the Tell Me Scotland portal (which came about in part as a result of the success of myjobscotland) opens up possibilities for other national shared services.

5. What can be learned from elsewhere, for example from initiatives such as the Nottingham Early Intervention City or the Birmingham total place pilot?

Although there is much to learn from elsewhere, it is not as straightforward as simply regarding this kind of initiative as good practice:

- It should be about differentiating between short-term fixes and long-term solutions. The questions that should be asked are: how sustainable are these initiatives? Are they still operating now? Is it service personnel simply doing what they should be doing or has it brought about real change?
- It is also about persuading strategic leaders to adopt such practices, implement them jointly and make staff and resources available as necessary. Where this may detract from existing performance / service requirements strong and challenging leadership will be required, as will robust evaluation and governance.

6. 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?

- There is no reason why they cannot, but any intervention really needs to start with a clear vision of: i) what is desired; ii) what this will actually look like; and iii) what indicators will tell us if we are succeeding or not. Only then should work begin on devising collaborative activities around these. The priority should be, as Christie highlights, the earliest possible interventions. It may also be necessary to take a

longer-term view on these – a difficulty with many initiatives is that they are short-lived either because funding is only available for a limited period or because partner agencies' interest can wane if there are no immediate successes – but it may also be that the problems they are designed to tackle or the measures by which impact will be assessed simply take longer to resolve or identify (especially anything to do with prevention). For these reasons too, strong and sustained leadership is required.

7. 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 promoting improved standards of care?

- Greater use of technology through which to consult, communicate and provide updates on services.
- Identification of effective practice through scrutiny.

**HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)
February 2012**