

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
SUBMISSION FROM NHS AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN

1. Many thanks for giving us the opportunity to comment on what will be a major area of work for us through the lifetime of this parliament. Our comments do not relate to specific questions asked in the request as they are more generally about the relationships between Public Sector partners and how they might be improved. We do not feel it is appropriate to comment on areas particular to Local Authorities but will frame our comments within the context of our understanding and experience of our relationship with them.

2. The public sector in Scotland has a long and mainly successful history of collaborative working; it has also, but perhaps to a lesser extent, developed strong links with both the Third Sector (voluntary organisations and Social Enterprises) and the Private Sector, in spite of the challenges sometimes thrown up by the purchaser/provider nexus. Where these relationships have worked successfully, it is our belief that this has been because ensuring shared vision, values and ambitions has been privileged in the early development of the partnerships and this has then been underpinned with excellent governance and stakeholder engagement; without these crucial first steps, all partnerships run the risk of becoming either ineffective at best or counter-productive at worst when competing priorities overshadow the shared outcomes to which partners were committed. In addition, the lack of this level of shared vision and ambition can easily lead to unintended consequences such as 'cost-shunting' between organisations.

3. It is important to learn from others what works well and not so well . Continuous learning from both is critical to the future success of partnerships and, perhaps more importantly, gives us clear evidence that is needed when attempting to work through the acknowledged challenge of cultural and organisational change that often accompanies partnership working. Successful examples of this are the excellent work already underway in many areas on delivering the Early Years priorities, including implementing *Getting it Right for Every Child* and promoting good corporate parenting.

4. On the subject of cultural change and its associated challenges, we would, in fact, like to challenge this accepted wisdom. It is often quoted as the major stumbling block upon which partnerships founder; in our view, focus should be on the overlap of cultures in partnerships, almost using an appreciative enquiry approach that identifies what we have in common – which is significant – rather than concentrate on what divides us. After all, most people who work in the public sector have, at

heart, a shared commitment to public service values and this is widely shared with colleagues in the voluntary sector. And, perhaps, this approach to understanding how partnerships can better work together is a reflection of a new level of sophistication in our understanding of how we should be delivering services.

5. If we are to develop further the concept of an Assets-Based approach to engaging with communities alongside a personalisation agenda that sees us building on the significant successes we have already delivered in promoting person-centred care, maybe recognising and prioritising the strengths we already have in our partnerships, learning from successes in other areas and not being frightened to look to other sectors for innovation and support – in effect our ‘assets’ - may be the best way to deal with a future where resources will be challenged by not only the demographic reality facing us but also the global financial situation and, critically, ensure that the most important outcome from improved partnership working is better outcomes for the people we serve.

We would be more than happy to expand on any of these thoughts.

John Burns
Chief Executive

NHS Ayrshire and Arran
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