

Finance Committee

Prevention

Submission from West Lothian Council

Response

1. Why has the progress of reform proposed by the Christie Commission been so slow?

The current financial climate has had an impact on the rate at which public service reform can be implemented across Scotland. There is a lack of investment available to shift resources upstream given that resources cannot be shifted away from statutory and other committed requirements. More investment in early intervention and prevention is required nationally. Budget cuts also cause uncertainty about the resource available over the coming years to continue to work effectively, in terms of funding available and reduction in staffing levels. With reducing resources, large scale restructures of a wide range of public services are often required. Whilst this provides opportunities to consider new ways of working, including preventative work, it also is a challenge when services are less stable and funding is precarious.

The bureaucracy involved in shifting resources upstream can often inhibit swift decision-making and action. Resources and interventions cannot be quickly targeted where needed without decisions being taken through the appropriate governance routes.

Another issue to consider is that the impact of early intervention and prevention will often largely not be seen for years and so it is difficult to measure what progress has been made in the short term. Progress may look slow when the full impact cannot yet be seen.

Better sharing of what works well would help partners to roll out smaller initiatives on a larger scale (depending on priorities and resources), for example anti-poverty initiatives to mitigate the effects of poverty and small projects undertaking preventative work.

Despite the general challenges outlined above, it is important to highlight the significant progress already achieved in West Lothian in terms of reforming public services and shifting to prevention. The recent West Lothian Community Planning Partnership (CPP) audit report confirms that we are a mature partnership with a long history of good collaborative working, we are making good progress in improving outcomes for our communities and partners are well placed to implement public service reform. The CPP is nationally recognised for its preventative approaches.

West Lothian's reducing reoffending model is also seen as a national good practice model.

A recent evaluation¹ has suggested that embedding the Life Stages Outcomes Planning programme as far back as 2008 is likely to have led to the CPP's positive progress, allowing the partnership to implement public service reform at an early stage from a strong position. This partnership-wide programme embedded a new way of working and got us thinking early on about working in an outcomes-focused way, using a partnership approach to ensure more integrated service provision, using data and evidence to target services to reduce inequalities, engaging with communities to ensure that services are delivered around their needs, shifting resources upstream to deliver preventative services and ensuring we obtain maximum impact for our expenditure. The Life Stages work in West Lothian has enabled the CPP to target services at those most in need whilst continuing to deliver universal provision; however this may be a bigger challenge for other local authorities and CPPs.

The Life Stages principles have been embedded in the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) since 2011. The key theme of the SOA for 2013-2023 is 'tackling inequalities' and it has a focus on prevention and early intervention, community engagement, better use of data and information and targeting resources. There is also a robust performance management process in place to measure progress in achieving the eight local SOA outcomes. The CPP Prevention Plan² includes a number of positive examples of early intervention to date and outlines the commitment to further embedding the prevention agenda within CPP structures, processes and arrangements. Processes are in place to measure this shift to prevention through Covalent, the CPP's performance management system, and we can already see some early indication of positive impacts³. Preventative measures are also supported and measured through the CPP's Anti-Poverty Strategy, which adopts the Life Stages principles.

It is important to have strong governance arrangements in place to support the shift to prevention. In West Lothian, the multi-agency Preventative Interventions Board (PIB) was established in early 2012 to build on the work of the Life Stages programme. The Integration Joint Board will now be responsible for delivery of adult health and social care services in West Lothian, building on the mature partnership already well embedded. An Anti-Poverty Strategy Board and Anti-Poverty Strategy Development Group are also in place to take forward this partnership strategy. Mature partnership working arrangements are in place across the partnership and co-location of partners in the West Lothian Civic Centre has helped this. There is

¹ CPP Board Paper 'Life Stages Refresh' (August 2015)

² http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/3352/CPP-Prevention-Plan/pdf/Prevention_Plan.pdf

³ CPP Prevention Plan PIs Performance Report (CPP Board August 2015)

also good multi-agency working at a community level, using evidence based and effective interventions.

The West Lothian CPP has therefore already shifted to a preventative approach and has started to see positive impacts from this. The CPP is well placed to take forward the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, integration of health and social care and the new Community Justice model. The CPP will build on the effective and mature partnerships in place, with an increased focus on community participation, to continue this journey and deliver prevention and public service reform more effectively.

2. What are the main barriers to change and how do we address them in order to accelerate the rate of progress?

As outlined above, a lack of national investment in prevention has been a barrier to shifting resources upstream. More national investment is required.

Despite Christie's focus on outcomes, local authorities and partner organisations are still required by the Scottish Government to report on input and output measures, for example Heat targets, some Education measures (for example teacher numbers, school meal uptake) and Specified Performance Indicators identified by the Scottish Government and Audit Scotland and reported on annually (number of visits to swimming pools, visits to indoor sports and leisure facilities, visits to libraries and museums, etc). These do not tell us enough about outcomes and tackling inequalities and focusing on these measures takes capacity away from thinking about working in a more preventative, outcomes-focused way, limiting the potential to shift to this way of working.

Ensuring buy-in from decision-makers to shift resources upstream when the impact will not be seen until the longer term, or will be seen by another service area/organisation, is also a challenge. Robust data and evidence is needed on why this shift is necessary (i.e. on the needs in our communities) and on the impact that early intervention and prevention can have (evidence of what works to improve outcomes, demonstrate the impact of these interventions, cost-benefit analysis).

Despite the challenges around shifting resources upstream, significant additional resources have been invested in time-limited preventative projects across the West Lothian CPP, supporting Change Fund impact. Financial monitoring and evidence generated from current activities is being used to inform future funding and resource decisions. A number of early action interventions in West Lothian are already paying dividends, for example the reshaping children's services programme is shifting resources from external sources to local upstream activities and interventions, and there are a number of reducing reoffending interventions that are already having

positive impact, for example there has been a reduction in reoffending for women engaging with the Almond Project, which was set up in September 2012 to improve outcomes around female offending and to reverse the recent increase in the female prisoner population, providing an assertive outreach service based on a key worker/mentoring model which maximises women's access to services and addresses the underlying issues that drive their offending behaviour. The Families Included project has continued to support delivery of a number of outcomes, including reduction in antisocial behaviour and improvements in parenting, school attendance, home conditions and family routines and in children's social skills.

The issue of 'stigma' has not yet been tackled. When consulting communities, most are happy with the idea of preventative interventions and targeting services where they are most needed. However, these kinds of interventions are still quite unpalatable with the general public and the media when it comes to delivering them. For example, community pay back orders are often seen as 'soft options'. This issue of stigma will need to be taken into consideration when taking forward the Community Empowerment Act and in the delivery of the new Community Justice model. CPPs have not been able to galvanise communities in the way that we would have hoped. Part of this is due to public sector financial restrictions. Not having a clear definition of what is meant by prevention, and the Scottish Government's change in rhetoric, has also not helped local authorities and public bodies, or communities. There has been no investment in communities to increase understanding of why prevention is important and why we need to be working in this way. Resource is required to support communities to participate effectively.

3. How do we ensure that the necessary culture change and greater levels of integration takes place?

In West Lothian, the Life Stages programme has already changed the culture of service design and delivery, embedding a new way of working across the CPP focused on greater levels of integration across services and partner organisations. Empowering and investing in communities is key to ensuring even greater levels of integration and culture change; however, this will require additional resource. The expectations on CPPs have never been higher but local authorities and partners have no additional resources. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 now puts Community Planning on a statutory basis and CPPs understand what they need to do in terms of prevention. However, there is no real resource put into a partnership approach to tackling prevention or investment in communities to empower them to have a greater role in service delivery and making decisions on issues that affect them.

4. How do we create a culture of innovation?

There is a culture of innovation in place and this can be seen across Scotland. Examples are the work of the Early Years Collaborative and the Scottish Community Development Centre's work around community development.

The issue is that organisations get caught up in the way things have always been, with no support being provided to breaking down barriers and ensuring that this culture of innovation is embedded in how we design and deliver services. This innovation needs to be more joined up and it needs to drive change.

5. What opportunities does digital technology provide in reforming the delivery of public services towards prevention?

Public services are moving towards digitalisation – supporting individuals to understand how this could benefit them is the challenge. All indications point to a significant number of people actively using digital services. There are some key groups who would benefit from getting online but are the least likely to do so. More work is needed to look at costs of internet access for low income families.

There needs to be a concentrated effort to market the benefits of digitalisation, to help people to help themselves, ensuring a shift from how it helps services save money to how it benefits the individual. This will require investment in a range of publicity, taster sessions and on-going help for those who require additional support. West Lothian Council have a Digital Inclusion Working Group to increase residents' access to help and support to improve digital inclusion and a Digital Inclusion Week is being held in October 2015.

Partners need to be better able to share data. There are still huge concerns around what can and cannot be shared. Systems often do not "talk to each other" and helping this to happen is time consuming and costly. It is likely that many CPPs are working independently on solutions which would benefit from sharing resources, expertise etc.

Organisations could also make much better use of technology in terms of shared services to increase efficiencies.

6. How should community planning be developed to support service integration and the focus on prevention?

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 will help with this, now that Community Planning has been put on a statutory basis and partners are legally required to work together and with the community. However, again this is un-resourced. More resource is required to develop community capacity. There is a danger that the Act will 'empower the already empowered'. More thought needs to

be given to resourcing at a local level, with services being based on local need and co-designed and co-delivered with local communities, ensuring that services are intervening earlier. It is important to build the capacity of communities to ensure effective participation of those experiencing the poorest outcomes, in order to really tackle inequalities.

7. What lessons can we learn from other countries in delivering a preventative approach?

Scandinavian countries, for example Sweden and Finland, are often looked to for their cultural and societal make-up and their focus on community interventions over institutional interventions. The Scottish Government and Scottish Prison Service have looked at Scandinavian models for Community Justice, where prison is seen as the 'last resort' and alternative community sanctions are used where possible.

Scandinavian countries are also often looked to for their social pedagogy models, where every aspect of a child's social and emotional development is nurtured. Sweden has a universal and integrated approach to early childhood education and care (ECEC) where all children of preschool age have a social right to high-quality full-time and predominantly publicly funded provision. Parental leave and ECEC entitlement are closely coordinated with children having an entitlement to a place from twelve months old. In international comparisons Sweden is considered to have one of the most generous ECEC systems in the world, providing high quality early years services to all children at low cost to parents.

8. What are the implications for the provision of public services if the decisive shift to prevention does not take place?

The implications will be to increase the strain on existing services and funding significantly to the point where needs of the most vulnerable are placed in unacceptable risk. Resources are now constantly tight and there will be a continuing tightening of resources available for public services. There are still too many children being born into poverty, negatively impacting upon their family lifestyles and circumstances. The CPP therefore still needs to deal with the issues associated with this, with resources still being directed at meeting the urgent demands of reactionary services, as opposed to resources being committed to tackling the causes of issues and focusing on community development – at a time where this is needed most.