

## ROLE OF PLACE DIRECTORS

1. Place Directors and Teams perform an important role: to ***understand, promote and support how public services work together and with communities, to improve wellbeing and outcomes on local and national priorities.***
2. There is now strong Ministerial focus on tackling a series of intense and common challenges facing Scotland and her public services at this time, as reflected in the [Programme for Government](#), [Bute House Agreement](#), [Covid Recovery Strategy](#), [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#) and [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#). While many of the interventions in these documents are specific actions and investments by SG, others require deeper changes in how public services work. These deeper changes will typically reflect what matters for people, places and communities locally.
3. With this in mind, the focus should be on the following in particular:
  - how ***SG strategic priorities land and play out locally***: recognising there is now a strong alignment between SG strategic priorities for Scotland and local partners' understanding of what matters most for people and communities in their own areas: notably Covid Recovery themes (financial security for low-income households; wellbeing of children & young people; good, green jobs & fair work); meeting Climate Change and Child Poverty Targets. But broad national challenges apply in distinctive ways in different places. These require responses from public services and their third sector, business and community partners that are shaped around what matters for local communities.
  - an ***underpinning focus on Place***<sup>1</sup>: broader Place-based work on tackling inequalities, sustainable public services and community empowerment; recognising that work may be taken forward sub-locally, locally or regionally.
  - With an emphasis on ***public services being shaped around what matters to people***, especially those experiencing disadvantage, in holistic and seamless ways.
4. Place Directors are also a ***bridge between a Community Planning Partnership (CPP) area and SG, a critical friend, and - where needed - a capacity-builder and local change agent***. This latter aspect means intervening (for instance by bringing in resource from elsewhere in SG) where this can be helpful to facilitate, or create conditions for, local and regional reform. In these ways, Place Directors are active and constructive participants in the ***collective leadership of place***.
5. We want to encourage Place Directors and teams to use their engagement to help us understand where there are ***innovative and potentially powerful examples of local transformation***, and where there may be ***obstacles*** that are genuinely inhibiting local partners' efforts to drive reform.

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, the definition used for *Place* is based on that used in the 'Place Principle - [Place Principle: introduction - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)'

6. Place Directors should focus on understanding and supporting the collective impact of public services on improving outcomes and empowering communities in **places** and for vulnerable **communities of interest**. We are also interested in how partners work together to make a difference at **regional** level, for instance to support sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

### **A Role Tailored to Where It Can Add Most Value**

7. Place Directors should use their discretion as to how they engage to add most value. Formal CPP board meetings will often be good places to engage, be visible to local partners and develop understanding of local challenges, ambitions and actions. However, in some CPPs they may be of less value – e.g. if these meetings consider issues formally rather than substantively; or if a theme (e.g. economic development) is considered in a different setting.
8. Place Directors should look to build and maintain good working relationships with key local leaders and other strategically important individuals. While these may differ from area to area, the local authority chief executive will always be a key contact. Others will typically include the NHS chief executive, HSCP chief officer, area commanders for Police Scotland and SFRS, the Third Sector Interface lead and CPP manager. Most areas will also have other local leaders who are committed and insightful.
9. Place Directors of course need to balance this role with their other responsibilities in work and beyond. So it is important that their role complements – not replaces - that of SG colleagues. It will not usually be for Place Directors and teams to test how individual reform programmes are taken forward in places across Scotland – that will be for relevant policy teams to lead on. In particular, policy leads separately need strong relationships with delivery partners and understanding of significant local issues, as part of effective policy delivery. A Place Director cannot be a substitute for this.
10. However, Place Directors and teams are uniquely placed to **check how SG's ambitions, national reform programmes and messages are landing overall locally**. For instance, how coherent and consistent do our messages appear; do local partners interpret these messages in the same way SG does; how well does our messaging help local partners plan for transformation with confidence; and to that extent are the Purpose, National Outcomes and Values in the National Performance Framework reflected in local action?
11. Place Directors are also well placed to demonstrate SG's commitment to **systems leadership**, and to understand how deeply local public services display the qualities of systems leadership. These qualities include collective working towards a shared vision; leaders throughout the system working on parity of esteem and focusing on outcomes for communities rather than organisational benefits; allowing variation in delivery models to fit needs of different populations; transcending organisational barriers; and willingness to experiment, take managed risks and learn.
12. In summary, the Place Director role offers a number of distinctive strengths:
  - understanding local conditions, challenges and opportunities

- seeing how these are being addressed in the round
- building and maintaining trusting relationships with key local leaders
- using these relationships to gain understanding of how life feels for local leaders and how SG expectations appear to them in the round
- using these relationships to provide constructive challenge where appropriate, as a critical friend
- feeding that local experience back into SG - how national policies and priorities (adapted for local circumstances where appropriate) play out on the ground
- using understanding of SG and wider system to connect local partners with sources of help and advice where needed.
- using these relationships to provide a rapid and direct channel of communication to senior local management when needed (e.g. to inform briefing for oral PQs; to inform Cabinet visits).

13. Annex A sets out where Place Directors can add value and where others in SG should lead.

**Public Service Reform Team**  
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### What This Requires and How Place Directors Can Best Add Value

Issue	Suggested Role for Others	Where Place Directors Can Add Value
<b>a. Priorities &amp; Ambition</b>		
Understanding of local partners about these priorities and what these mean for them	Policy teams work with stakeholders to set out priorities clearly and test understanding. This includes (i) what success looks like for these priorities; (ii) how policies work in the round, including to support person-centred approaches; and (iii) scope to flex delivery to reflect distinctive local conditions.	Can help understanding of local partners about clarity of expectations (both individually and particularly how local partners view these in the round); what these mean for local partners; and what success looks like for them. Can channel any queries, concerns and other feedback to relevant policy leads.
Understanding of local partners about how to pursue these priorities in ways that reflect local conditions	Policy teams use stakeholder relationships to check understanding on this; and, where needed, provide clarification, guidance or assurance about scope for local discretion.	Can use understanding of local conditions to see how local partners intend to reflect these in pursuing these priorities. Can capture work at sub-local authority, local authority and regional levels, including across locational boundaries. Can relay any concerns and queries back within SG.
Ambition of local partners: what difference they want to make on these priorities.	Policy teams use stakeholder relationships to test this. Sponsor / relationship management leads test this in their engagement with public sector bodies.	Understand ambition of local partners collectively and act as a critical friend. Can relay any concerns and queries back within SG.
Commitment of local partners to underpinning principles of delivery: person-centred, holistic, seamless, empowering; built on strong, trusting partner relations.	Policy teams reinforce and test commitment to these principles in the context of their (person-centred) policies. Sponsorship / relationship management leads reinforce and test commitment for their public sector bodies.	Can reinforce importance of these principles and act as a critical friend. Can relay any concerns and queries back within SG.

Issue	Suggested Role for Others	Where Place Directors Can Add Value
<b>b. Delivery &amp; Accountability</b>		
Understanding of progress nationally	Corporate and policy-specific arrangements for performance oversight.	No formal role.
Understanding of progress locally	Policy-specific arrangements for performance oversight (where appropriate) - including to understand impact on inequalities.	No formal role. Can note how and how well local partners appear to monitor and understand progress; and liaise with relevant SG colleagues where appropriate.
Understanding of experiences of local delivery: what is working well; challenges	Policy leads, working with improvement support teams, sponsor/relationship management leads and others, seek feedback on positive examples and challenges. Use relationship management with national stakeholders to test their desire to understand progress, as part of sector-led commitment.	Can perform a supporting role in feeding back positive examples of which they're aware. Can pick up and feed back into SG, where there appear to be challenges to local delivery.
SG working with partners, using learning to support improvement and address barriers	Improvement support teams take account of learning for their support offers.	Role as "change agent" – connecting local partnerships to support offers in SG and beyond (PSR team can assist Place Directors in this).
Accountability for progress	Neither LAs nor CPPs are accountable to SG. But many partners are, through sponsorship.	No formal role. Can act as critical friend. Important role to build good ongoing relationships with senior LA management, so Place Director can approach them quickly should a need arise – e.g. info on key issues affecting the locality and/or council (recognising where Ministers may themselves be accountable - e.g. to inform briefing for oral PQs).
<b>c. Refining Policy &amp; Ambitions</b>		
SG's understanding of how it feels to be local leader and front-line staff (public services; third sector; business; community)	Tested and obtained as part of policy development; and through sponsorship of public bodies / relationship management with other bodies.	Important role to understand how life feels for local partners, and how they view SG's expectations both individually & in the round. Use own relationships with local contacts to develop understanding.

		Can obtain potentially distinctive feedback from what obtained nationally from local public sector, third sector, business & community interests. Opportunities to share reflections as a network
Using learning to inform refinements to policy (including to support both national and local priorities)	Policy leads reflect learning in refining policy.	Can reinforce learning messages, including for what these might mean for local priorities.