

Scottish Executive

Transforming Public Services: The Next Phase of Reform - Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are six main sections to the document. The introduction sets a context for reform and indicates some of the principal challenges ahead. A vision for Scottish public services, their core values and the fundamentals of reform are set out. The importance of appropriate structures, achievable outcomes and the most valuable asset the public sector has, the people who work in public service, are highlighted. The document then sets out the most significant ways in which transformed public services will benefit the people of Scotland. The invitation to the dialogue on the opportunities and potential to work together to transform Scotland's public services is at the heart of the document.

Introduction

1. Transforming Public Services sets out why public services in Scotland must continue to reform, and our vision for reform. Our ambitions for service transformation apply across the whole public sector and the proposals and options in this paper are relevant to all our public services.
2. Reform is taking place within many areas of our public services and this document and dialogue process is not intended to divert or delay these existing reforms. Rather it is intended to learn from where we are improving the quality and efficiency of our services, drive and encourage continuous improvement in service delivery and challenge those areas where the service is unacceptable.
3. The document does not propose top down solutions but sets out key questions to be explored in depth at planned events in the next few months. Feedback from the resulting dialogue will be used to take forward the transformation of our public services for the benefit of the public.
4. There are significant challenges ahead for Scotland. People expect more of public services, and technology allows us to deliver services in new ways - but we also face increasing pressures on our economy and major shifts in population and work-force demography.
5. Benchmarking ourselves against other, similar-sized countries shows that whilst we may have improved on our performance against a number of criteria we still need to improve our performance across all of the key factors which make us a successful country.
6. Investment in Scotland's public services since 1999 has been at historically high levels.
This investment, combined with the measures we have put in place to continuously

improve performance, accountability and efficiency, have already delivered visible benefits.

7. The case for reform therefore is **not** based on an assumption that public services are generally failing. But we must recognise that in today's rapidly changing world we must respond to the needs of our citizens and ensure that our public services are organised in a way that leads to the provision of sustainable quality services focused on the needs of the service user. It is clear that standing still is not an option.

8. In addition, we should not impose self-limiting constraints on our capacity for innovation and creativity by placing limits on how radical reform must be, but should use the legislative and administrative powers we already have to encourage reform, foster innovation, sweep away obstacles and barriers to real gains and continuous improvement.

Vision for, and values of, reform

9. Our guiding **vision** for transformation is to have public services which we know to be amongst the most successful, effective and innovative in the world.

10. The **values** underpinning our commitment to public services are that they must:

promote social justice and equality;

build for the future - fostering sustainable change, which supports a growing economy, a better environment and strong communities.

11. The point of reform and change is that it will display itself in many forms - and will be implemented in many ways. But there are five fundamental elements which will underpin and support the modernisation of the public sector.

12. Transformed public services will:

- be **user focused and personalised**, organised around users' and citizens' needs and aspirations, not the convenience of the service provider;
- drive up **quality and encourage innovation**;
- continue to **improve efficiency and productivity**;
- be **joined up** and minimise separation;
- ensure **strong accountability**.

User focus and personalisation

13. Public services must be designed around the needs of the service user, and whilst more flexible, user-centred services already exist, there remains considerable scope for improvement. Increased personalisation and meaningful choice for service users is important and there are many ways in which the service user can display individual choice, where possible within practical limits and consistent with our values: the choice of when to use a service; the choice of how the service is used; and the choice of the type of service.

14. Choice in public services is different from the choice an individual might expect in the private sector. There supply outstrips demand and consumers exercise choice between providers offering the same service, where everything is priced, and where the user has a budget that constrains their choice. To be effective, choice must be sensible in recognising the drive to delivering efficient public services as well as offering the user real benefit. We recognise that user choice cannot be the only solution to improving public services, but if we aspire to such an aim through the way in which we organise our public services then positive outcomes are most likely to flow from the process of reform.

15. For example, tailoring health and social care packages around the users needs improves the overall experience for the patient and client. This level of personalisation can simply be allowing the patient to determine the time of a visit or what their priorities are during that visit without compromising safety and standards.

16. Alternatively, exerting user choice could be in relation to accessing public services. Here the user would determine how and when they want to contact a public service provider. This could be whilst they are out and about, e.g. doctor's surgeries, post offices or supermarkets; or in their own homes, e.g. phone, internet or TV.

17. The wider vision is of more personalised public services, seeing service users not simply as consumers, but also as **participants and citizens** - working with public services to create better lives for themselves and their communities. Service providers must also listen to the concerns of users - many people still feel daunted when trying to get redress for poor service.

Quality and innovation

18. Much has been achieved but we aspire to consistent world-class public services, and it is important to acknowledge that this is not the existing position. We want public services that instil a sense of confidence and pride in the users and providers.

19. To achieve our vision we need to do more to:

- foster an innovation culture - enabling and offering greater freedoms and operational autonomy and incentivising successful implementation;
- build in continuous improvement - developing Best Value and challenging under-performance with purposeful intervention whilst identifying and celebrating successes;
- achieve universally high standards - focusing on shared service delivery and shared outcomes which give delivery organisations across public services a common focus and goal: eliminating second best anywhere it exists; and ensuring high quality services are available at the most local level achievable.

Efficiency and productivity

20. Continuously improving all public services' efficiency and productivity remains a major element of reform. **We seek to increase choice within practical limits**, more efficient public services must transmit an identifiable user benefit.

21. Where we can, we must devolve power and responsibility because we know that real change, radical improvement and high quality is driven and sustained by the empowerment of those who deliver services and critically, by those who use them. Greater freedoms should go hand in hand with greater transparency and accountability. We will explore how greater freedoms can be given where services are seen to be managed well and local innovation and fewer administrative burdens can drive up standards further.

22. We are moving towards streamlined approaches to planning and performance reporting based on agreed outcomes. That means the Scottish Executive has to be more proportionate in its monitoring, and prepared to place responsibilities for functions in the right place and resist attempts to duplicate that function within another public service provider.

23. We will review all minor levels of local government funding streams, as they often demand disproportionate amounts of officer time to manage. We will also consider how to further reduce monitoring requirements to incentivise demonstrable high performance.

24. Robust scrutiny is vital but there are concerns over potential duplication of effort and over-burdening of the public sector. We will therefore conduct a fundamental review of inspection, regulation and audit arrangements.

Joining up and minimising separation

25. Public services need to respond to complex problems often requiring different public service organisations to work closely and flexibly together, involve local communities and users, and work together across barriers and boundaries to meet agreed outcomes. The way local authorities have worked with their health partners on the Joint Future agenda is perhaps the best known example of joint working in our public services. But while this has done much to break down the barriers between services, it has been at a huge cost in time and effort over a number of years. We need to further drive the successes of joint working within and across services, removing barriers where necessary.

26. Community Planning has been developed as a locally driven process. It underpins and will continue to be central to strengthening current mechanisms for joint working. We need to ensure community knowledge of, and involvement in, the community planning process. Community Health Partnerships are now gaining strength, and it is important that they continue to develop and grow. They are an important example of an approach to ensuring that local delivery meets local needs, while remaining rooted in national standards and delivery objectives.

27. An example of testing out new ways of delivering integrated services is the Integrated Services and Governance Modelling Project. This project has been developed by working in collaboration with local government and community planning partners, to explore further potential in public services integration.

28. The Openscotland Information Age Framework has provided a framework for developing and approving interoperability standards, but we do not have a common approach to the full range of technical issues needed to support joined up ICT. We need to consider whether there should be overall strategic leadership of e-government activity in Scotland to oversee major projects, direct the use of relevant standards and ensure compliance with them, develop policy on common technical issues; and realise synergies through partnership working.

Strengthening accountability

29. Devolution has advanced effective accountability, but more needs to be done if the general public are to feel that services are demonstrably accountable. Within the obvious limits of commercial and personal confidentiality, decisions need to be made in an open and transparent manner with proper debate and scrutiny; improving quality should be synonymous with increased accountability. We need to examine what decisions require to be democratically accountable, and in what way.

30. As we further transform public services for the 21st century we will continue to ensure effective and appropriate accountability for management decisions and organisational performance informed by benchmarking and customer satisfaction measurements. Those responsible for delivery have to answer for their performance, be recognised when they succeed and held accountable when they are failing.

Structures, outcomes and people

31. These fundamental elements of reform are closely interlinked, and raise questions about whether the existing complex map of Scotland's public services is the best structure we can have to plan, deliver and account for public services to a nation of five million people.

We must also support everyone who works in public services by creating productive connections across this complex web of partnerships, networks and contractual relationships. The status quo is not an option.

32. Our national priorities must be about outcomes - real improvements in communities and lives. As part of the development of an outcome approach, we want to look at whether funding should be more dependent on the contribution to agreed priorities. We also need to consider what other incentives we can put in place for high performance; and what sanctions may be appropriate for failure to fulfil agreed commitments.

33. We can do even more to develop the leadership capacity of Scottish public services. We will build on our successful Scottish Government Forum in December 2005 and will continue to work on not only issues of leadership but also workforce development and mobilising the wider human capital potential across Scottish public services.

How the public will benefit

34. Reform is about making a real difference to users and communities; maintaining and enhancing the overall quality and volume of public services whilst keeping a tight rein on public spending.

35. Transformed public services will benefit the public through:

user focus and personalisation

- enabling simpler access to public services;
- developing a genuine voice in how services are planned, delivered and held to account;
- giving individuals greater choice in how they use public services and what services they can obtain;

example: giving people with long term illnesses the knowledge they need to manage their own medication and treatment; allowing them to maintain as normal a life as possible and leading to better health outcomes;

quality and innovation

- delivering universally high standards of service for all as locally as possible;
- creating new services delivered in new ways;

example: provide user with multiple channels to access information on public services (supermarkets, buses, phone or TV);

efficiency and productivity

- providing resources for frontline service delivery through achievements in the Efficient Government programme;

example: reduce tax burden on local residents by making savings, for instance, by sharing financial and IT systems across local bodies;

joining up and minimising separation

- making real, measurable progress against priorities set by the people of Scotland;

example: appointing a named professional with legal responsibility for ensuring a child at risk is safe, and co-ordinating the support for that child;

strengthening accountability

- simplifying and quickening genuine redress when things go wrong;
- providing helpful and clear information about services and performance.

example: ability for the user to make complaint at point of grievance, e.g. on the bus.

Invitation to the dialogue

36. Through the dialogue based on this reform discussion document we want to discover the opportunities for Scotland's public services to work collaboratively to develop proposals for service reorganisation, and for local bodies to bring forward their ideas for local solutions: new ways to organise, structure and deliver public services in their area; linking funding and performance reporting directly to the outcomes we want to achieve, and allowing flexibility at the point of delivery to take account of local circumstances and needs. A framework for collaboration and change is being developed to support this process.