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Partnerships



Copy to Community Planning Managers

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REVIEW OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENTS: UPDATE

As you will know, the Scottish Government and COSLA have been jointly leading a review of Community Planning. This has focussed on revising and strengthening the current approach in the face of financial and other challenges to ensure that community planning partnerships are a cornerstone of the outcomes focussed and partnership based approach to public service reform in Scotland.

We would like to thank you for the contributions that CPPs have made to this process to date. This update is intended to help you interpret the changes that are intended, and to highlight the next steps that we will be taking to implement these.

The review produced a Statement of Ambition for Community Planning that was published on 15 March.¹ This sets out clear shared aspirations for Community Planning in the context of public service reform, and how the existing Community Planning/SOA framework needs to develop in order to meet those aspirations.

Strengthening duties and accountability

The Scottish Government and COSLA have now agreed three core proposals for implementing the Statement of Ambition. These proposals build on the existing duties of

¹ The Statement of Ambition can be accessed here: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government/CP/soa>

community planning partners and clarify the responsibilities of Community Planning Partnerships.

They comprise three key elements:

1. *Strengthening duties on individual partners through a new statutory duty on all relevant partners, (whether acting nationally, regionally or locally), to work together to improve outcomes for local communities through participation in community planning partnerships and the provision of resources to deliver the SOA.*

The aim is to maximise the contribution that public sector bodies make to the delivery of local outcomes and to sharpen partners' focus on that core purpose of community planning. Where it is agreed, (by local partners and/or in line with national guidance), that a partnership-based or integrated approach is required, contributing to community planning would become one of the activities that a body would be expected to deliver as part of its objectives.

These proposals will be implemented within the existing lines of accountability of partner organisations. For the avoidance of doubt, those existing lines of accountability, such as those of NHS Boards to Scottish Ministers, or a Council Leader to their Council, will not be changed. Rather, Scottish Ministers will use existing lines of accountability to hold appropriate individual partners to account for the effective discharge of the shared duty.

2. *Placing formal requirements on Community Planning Partnerships by augmenting the existing statutory framework to ensure that collaboration in the delivery of local priority outcomes via Community Planning and the SOA is not optional and is made as effective as possible.*

Complementing the duty on partners themselves, these proposals are intended to give CPPs clarity about their role and functions as Boards, enable each CPP to undertake effective planning and resourcing of local priority outcomes through its SOA, and allow it to satisfy itself that it has the right delivery mechanisms and resource allocations in place.

The proposals also recognise that the autonomy of CPPs and the flexibility they afford local partners to assess local needs, engage with communities and build relationships is fundamental to the success of community planning. CPPs will therefore continue to have flexibility to decide how best to organise themselves in order to deliver improved outcomes. Similarly, national bodies and local partners will have flexibility to determine how to deliver improved outcomes that require a partnership-based or integrated approach. The new health and social care partnerships, for example, will take forward the integration of adult health and social care within a specific framework of governance and accountability designed for this purpose.

The intention is to address the type of formal requirements needed for CPPs to operate with joint and collective accountability at a local level, and to deliver effectively. That does not mean that CPPs will have to be legally constituted bodies. They will not employ staff or hold budgets, and decisions about resources will remain a matter for individual partners. However, where a partnership-based or integrated approach is required, the CPP will be expected to ensure that the development of robust and appropriately resourced plans and delivery arrangements for agreed outcomes are in place, and to exercise appropriate oversight over these.

3. Establishment of a joint group at national level to provide strategic leadership and guidance to CPPs.

We anticipate that effective national arrangements will make a vital contribution to the overall effectiveness of CPPs and SOAs at local level. They will do this by providing strategic leadership and guardianship of the process, by mobilising resources and expertise for its development, and by setting expectations and finding appropriate balances between local and national priorities in the content of SOAs.

We therefore envisage the establishment of stronger national arrangements through a new board or group with a remit to develop and communicate the overarching vision for community planning and SOAs and to oversee tasks such as the development of guidance; the interface with the wider public service reform agenda; building skills and capacity to support improvement, and the framework for SOA reporting.

CPPs will not be formally accountable to the new national group, nor would these arrangements restrict the focus on localities which is properly delivered through CPPs. However, such arrangements are intended to help focus the efforts of relevant partners consistently and over time in relation to agreed national priorities such as early years; health inequalities; youth unemployment; economic growth and stronger and safer communities.

The membership of the new group has yet to be decided but it will draw together the range of community planning partners required to give leadership to the agenda, including politically elected and politically appointed members.

Next Steps and Transition Arrangements

Further work is required to determine the precise scope of these arrangements and an implementation plan will now be put in place. The detailed considerations that will inform this process will be informed by a programme of evidence gathering and will require appropriate scrutiny and agreement through the usual decision making channels within Scottish Government and COSLA.

That activity will be developed in a number of ways:

New SOAs

Although we know from survey work conducted by the Improvement Service that many of these changes complement and reinforce the work already being undertaken within CPPs to review and refresh their SOAs in line with existing guidance, we also understand that embedding the new arrangements will require a preparatory period.

Whilst it is important to move forward quickly, it is also essential that we engage in proper discussion and debate to prepare the ground for implementation. In particular, the reshaping of SOAs will require new guidance and this will be an early focus for new national oversight arrangements. We therefore anticipate refreshed guidance being available in autumn 2012 to inform a new set of SOAs to be in place for April 2013.

CPPs are already refreshing their SOAs in the light of existing guidance, (including the Scottish Government's letter of 26 October 2011 on SOA reporting), and the forthcoming formation of new council administrations. The Scottish Government will continue to work with CPPs on these plans through Location Directors.

Legislation

Many of these changes can be introduced without legislation. However, some of the changes will require legislation and formal consultation around specific recommendations. Initial consultation on these will begin as soon as possible.

Capacity Building and Scrutiny

Partnerships will need to be properly resourced and supported if they are to continue to address the challenging demands described in the statement of ambition and above. All relevant local partners have responsibilities here. In partnership with CPPs, the new national group will also oversee and facilitate wider projects to enhance collaborative working and put in place appropriate knowledge and skills across a range of key areas.

The local government Improvement Service is also working in partnership with other improvement agencies and with Scottish Government to build the collective contribution that those agencies can offer to this process.

A key element in this capacity building activity will be the implementation of new arrangements for scrutiny of CPPs which are being developed by the Accounts Commission. This new scrutiny regime, a key element in supporting CPPs build capacity and effectiveness, will complement wider developments in scrutiny and will not duplicate existing approaches. Further details of the emerging proposals will be made available shortly.

Link to other Reforms

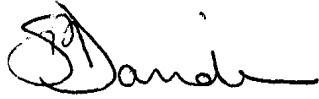
The Review identified the need to work through how community planning feeds into and supports wider aspects of the reform agenda, particularly the integration of adult health and social care services and the establishment of single police and fire services. As noted above, national bodies and local partners will have flexibility to determine how to deliver improved outcomes that require a partnership-based or integrated approach. The new health and social care partnerships, for example, will take forward the integration of services within a specific framework of governance and accountability designed for this purpose. Whatever specific arrangements are developed, each CPP will provide a focal point for all relevant partners to ensure a strategic overview of initiatives and resources, and to consider whether connectivity across (and where appropriate, within) partnerships is as effective as it should be and that opportunities for collaboration are fully exploited across the locality and within specific communities.

Conclusion

We hope that this update has been helpful in setting out where we have reached with the review of Community Planning and SOAs and how we propose to proceed. There are many questions to be answered and complex issues to be addressed as this work develops. However, the Scottish Government and COSLA Leaders are clear that these changes are required as part of the public service reform agenda and are determined to ensure, in partnership with CPPs and their constituent partners, that the framework of community planning and single outcome agreements remains a central and effective part of the response to these challenges. Location Directors; COSLA; the relevant professional associations; Scottish Government sponsor teams and the policy team within the Scottish Government's Local Government Division will of course remain in touch with you.

Finally, we very much welcome your contribution to the review and would encourage you to remain closely involved in shaping the plans. As part of that process, COSLA and the Scottish Government have agreed that a joint leadership event, bringing together relevant Scottish Government Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers, new Council Leaders and relevant appointed chairs of public bodies should take place on 12th June, in order to take stock of developments and agree how best to lead their implementation in practice. Formal invitations to that event will follow very shortly.

Should you have any questions in the meantime, then of course please get in touch.



SARAH DAVIDSON



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