



This document supports SCSN's eLearning module on strategic assessments, and supplements the Scottish Government's Safer Communities Programme strategic assessment publications: Guidance for senior managers, A partnership strategic assessment and Partnership priority-setting matrix.

Evidence-based strategic planning uses robust evidence to set shared, outcome-based priorities and allows partnerships to deliver services based on need, evidence of what works and strive to tackle the root cause of the problem. It also highlights information and service delivery gaps and ways to fill them.

The process also involves a degree of forecasting, looking at local and national issues and assessing the impact these may have on the partnership. Strategic decision makers can use these to assess and minimise risk to the partnership, and seize opportunities.

Wider benefits are enhanced partnership working and analysis for individual partners as well as the partnership. There is also potential to link with budgetary planning and identify opportunities for prevention.

Strategic Assessments

Undertaking a joint strategic assessment is one such form of evidence-based strategic planning, and although it is nationally accepted as good practice, partnerships do not always have the capacity or expertise for the full process. For many this is because they have no access to analytical support.

Although other agencies undertake strategic needs assessments, the partnership strategic assessment we recognise today originated as one of the four intelligence products that make up the UK policing business model the NIM (National Intelligence Model). More information on NIM can be found here <http://www.college.police.uk/en/9015.htm>.

Strategic assessments have been standard practice in UK police forces for around ten years now and have been used consistently by the majority of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

In essence, this is a process which undertakes the following steps to allow partnerships to develop outcome-based priorities and subsequent resolutions to tackle these issues.

Once the business case has been produced and presented, and a project team identified comprising members from across the partnership (usually strategic leads, data specialists and analysts and policy officers), a rough guide to the strategic assessment process can be seen in figure 1.

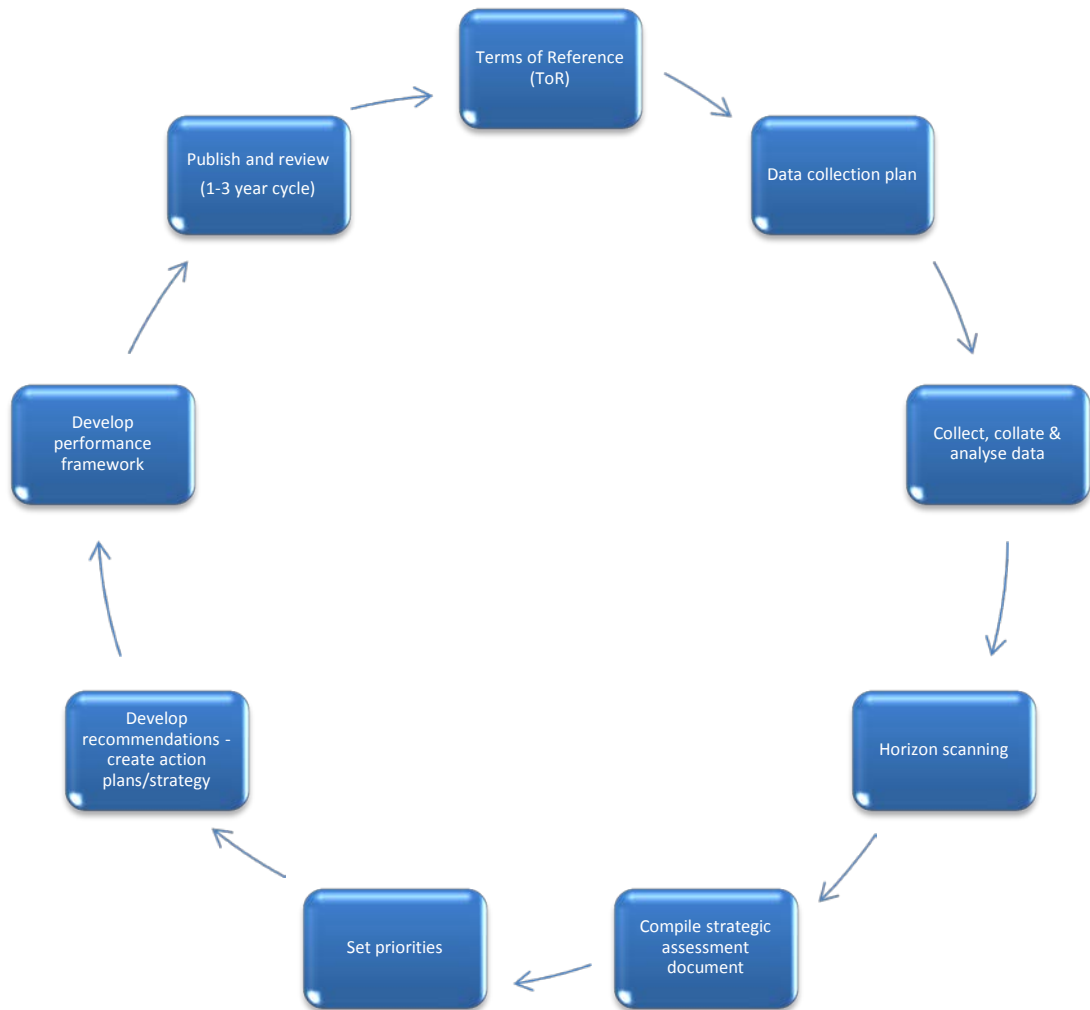


Figure 1

Where partnerships do not have the capacity or expertise to undertake a strategic assessment, evidence-based strategic planning is still recommended and achievable but the following characteristics should be evident within any evidence-based strategic planning process:

- Has support from the partnership and community, and partners are accountable.
- Is proportional to the area and capacity of the partnership.
- Has clear objectives, robust methodology and aware of limitations.
- Uses available quantitative and qualitative evidence to look at the current picture, emerging trends for the future picture and identify causal and cross-cutting themes.
- Is concise, balanced and unbiased with SMART (Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time scaled) recommendations and action plans / strategies.
- Takes cognisance of other local and national themes, strategies and work plans.
- Is translatable to operational staff and planning processes.

Strategic assessments are no longer the domain of the police or community safety. New guidance published in December 2012 by the Scottish Government and Convention Of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) as part of the community planning and Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) review directed that the new SOAs will “use an evidence based approach, underpinned by disaggregated data, to drive improvement in meeting the differing needs of local populations”. Indeed, community planning strategic assessments are becoming increasingly common.

Glossary

Cross-cutting theme

Common themes that are contributory or the root cause in a number of subject areas. In community safety these are typically, inequality and deprivation and alcohol misuse.

Data collection plan

A document that defines all the details concerning data collection, including how much and what type of data is required, when and how it should be collected and who is responsible for its collection.

Evidence

There is no set definition of the evidence to be incorporated into evidence-based strategic planning, but data from partners including health, social care, police, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), third sector and Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) should be represented. These can cover subject areas such as antisocial behaviour, public protection, gender-based violence, substance misuse, organised crime, unintentional injuries and fire safety.

The wider context can include national policies and frameworks such as the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) guidance, Promoting Positive Outcomes (antisocial behaviour) and Early Years Framework, and also approaches such as prevention and early intervention and participatory budgeting (involving communities in local decision-making and delivery).

Horizon scanning

A process which considers and analyses the impact of real and potential external issues on a partnership. A common framework used is PESTELO which examines Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legislative and Organisational (internal) factors.

Priority setting

A process which uses a framework to set partnership priorities. There are a number of frameworks in use, including a framework specifically developed for use by Community Safety Partnerships, which has the flexibility to be used by Community Planning Partnerships. These frameworks use the strategic analysis to populate a matrix which assesses each subject area on a number of factors including seriousness, scale, trend and community concern. The priorities are determined through partnership discussion of the populated matrix.

SMART

These are desirable characteristics of recommendations. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely.

Strategic assessment

A form of evidence-based strategic planning typically used by police forces and Community Safety Partnerships in Scotland and the UK.

Strategy

A plan of action or policy designed to obtaining a specific result or outcome. Strategies cover the outcome hoping to be achieved, as well as SMART

recommendations to achieve it and may also include a performance monitoring framework detailing outcome performance indicators which measure progress towards outcomes.

Terms of reference

Terms of reference show how the scope of the project will be defined and developed. It is created following approval of the business case. They should also detail – what has to be achieved, who will be involved, how it will be achieved and a breakdown structure and schedule.

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