



SCSN Policy and Strategy Paper No 01 – Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services: Recommendations

1 Purpose

The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide a summary of the recommendations of the Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services.

2 Background

- 2.1 The [Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services](#) (Christie Commission) was established by the Scottish Government in November 2010 to develop recommendations for the future delivery of public services. The Commission, which was chaired by Dr Campbell Christie CBE, operated independently of government.
- 2.2 The Commission gathered evidence on relevant issues and, as part of this, issued a Call for Evidence. More than 200 responses were received, including a submission made by the Council setting out how in Perth and Kinross we work together to get the best possible outcomes for our communities. This and all other responses can be seen [here](#). The Commission completed its work in June 2011 and published its final report on Wednesday 29 June 2011.
- 2.3 The Commission's [final report](#) includes analysis and recommendations to be used by the Scottish Government to determine the next steps for reform. The Commission warns that experience shows that all institutions and structures resist change, especially radical change. However, the scale of the challenges ahead is such that a comprehensive public service reform process must now be initiated. The Scottish Government, local government and other partners and stakeholders should now work together in urgent, sustained and coherent programme to reform and improve Scotland's public services.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 The Commission sets out its recommendations under four key objectives, which must shape a programme of reform:

[Services built around people and communities](#)
- 3.2 In developing new patterns of service provision, public service organisations should increasingly develop and adopt positive approaches which build services around people and communities, their needs, aspirations, capacities and skills, and work to build up their autonomy and resilience.
- 3.3 The Commission points to examples of positive approaches already being taken forward in Scotland at a local level to illustrate what can be done when local authorities work closely with users to design services that help people to help themselves. Perth and Kinross Healthy Communities Collaborative has been highlighted as a successful health promotion project involving local older people from communities. However, it states that these are isolated examples and a priority for government should be to ensure such approaches become the norm, benefiting individuals and entire communities.

- 3.4 The Commission believes that it is essential to the future delivery of public services that communities are empowered. It refers to the Scottish Government's proposal for a [Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill](#) in the new Parliament, giving power to communities to take over under-used public assets for their benefit. Scottish Government should explore the potential of the proposed Bill to promote a significant improvement in the quality of community participation in the design and delivery of public services. It should also promote action to build community capacity, recognising the particular needs of communities facing multiple social and economic challenges.
- 3.5 Managers and leaders within public service organisations should develop and extend the empowerment of front-line staff, to support their engagement with people and communities. The Scottish Government, local government and relevant organisations should develop a systematic and coordinated approach to workforce development. In particular it should consider how the education and development infrastructure across the different elements of the public service could be better coordinated. It should bring together leadership and management development into a single cross public service development programme. A competency framework should be developed to apply to all public service workers which focuses on the skills required for delivering outcomes in collaboration with delivery partners and service users. Inter-disciplinary training and development modules should be included in all professional training for public service.

[Working together to achieve outcomes](#)

- 3.6 To ensure its continued development, the current outcomes-based approach should be underpinned by a revamped political agreement between national and local government, as currently expressed in the Concordat. It should be a mutual requirement of this agreement that, alongside the single outcome agreement, each community planning partnership develops and agrees with the Scottish Government a clear plan setting out how partner organisations will pursue local service integration to achieve outcomes.
- 3.7 Community planning partners should develop and extend arrangements at a more local level (that is, more local than the local authority area) which facilitate public engagement and participation in shaping priorities, and in the design and delivery of services; and should establish arrangements to enable all parties to each single outcome agreement to account to the public for their contribution to the achievement of outcomes in those areas.
- 3.8 The Scottish Government should work with local government and other partners to devise and put in place an appropriate set of common powers and duties for public service organisations. This would involve assessing the value of existing statutory duties which apply to individual public service organisations, in terms of outcomes.
- 3.9 The Commission shares the commonly expressed view that the focus of budgeting should increasingly move away from institutional silos towards outcomes. It recommends the Scottish Government and local authorities explore Total Place type approaches across Scotland.
- 3.10 The Scottish Government and local government should review jointly the current arrangements for funding public service organisations, to increase flexibility. The Scottish Government should develop and extend the use of funding models which expressly require integrated provision of services – for example, through a 'change fund' scheme.

- 3.11 All relevant public bodies should participate in the preparation of a joint long-term asset management plan under each local community planning partnership, based on a shared assessment of the current condition of their assets.
- 3.12 Public service organisations should work to extend and deepen a local partnership approach, building on but going well beyond the current community planning partnership model. In particular, there should be a much stronger focus on engaging with people and communities in partnership processes, including the design and development of a pattern of integrated service provision.

Prioritising prevention, reducing inequalities and promoting equality

- 3.13 All parties must prioritise and build in action which has the effect of reducing demand for services in the longer run. The common powers and duties proposed at para 3.7 should include a specific presumption in favour of prioritising preventative action, and action to tackle inequalities.
- 3.14 Competence for job search and support should be fully devolved to the Scottish Parliament, to achieve the integration of service provision in the area of employability.
- 3.15 The Scottish Government, local government and other partners must work together as a priority to develop specific public service approaches targeted on the needs of deprived communities. These approaches should be based on: highly localised and disaggregated data, a clear understanding of the successes and failures of previous regeneration initiatives, bringing together resources devoted by partners to each area, maximising the contribution that community engagement can make in enabling communities to achieve their own ambitions, innovative approaches to service delivery, and clear accountability on the part of all partners involved.
- 3.16 The Scottish Government should work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and other stakeholders to identify the key equality gaps in Scotland, and address these gaps through further development of the outcomes and indicators contained within the National Performance Framework; and to produce guidance on how the public sector equality duty can best be expressed in the context of partnership working.

Improving performance and reducing costs

- 3.17 All public service providers should be required to demonstrate clearly how their expenditure is driving the achievement of better outcomes through coordinated, collaborative working; and to undertake regular benchmarking against comparable services, and report publicly on outcomes achieved and financial performance.
- 3.18 Audit Scotland should be given a stronger and more proactive role in improving performance and reducing costs across all public service organisations. In particular, this should include oversight of the collective performance of public services in achieving outcomes around a common set of powers and duties; promoting better, more consistent and transparent use of data, including benchmarking to support continuous improvement by individual organisations and partnerships; certifying information on performance, costs, budget assumptions and projections of future demand; driving the integration and better presentation of financial and performance information within business plans and accountability systems; identifying opportunities for improvement through streamlining functions,

simplifying governance and accountability arrangements, changes to organisational structures and boundaries, sharing services and other initiatives such as co-location; and having the power to initiate reviews in support of its functions and to require joint work between organisations.

- 3.19 The Scottish Government and local government should seek to amalgamate the functions of the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission, to support an integrated approach to oversight.
- 3.20 The Scottish Government, local government and partners should take forward a rolling programme of bottom-up, outcomes-based reviews across service areas, to improve performance and reduce costs. Projected cost savings should be assessed and verified by the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission.
- 3.21 There should be a rebalancing of procurement and commissioning from cost efficiency towards effectiveness, with contracts focussing on promoting positive outcomes. There should be a requirement of competitive neutrality between all potential suppliers of public services, through a consistent and transparent application of commissioning standards to all providers, including in-house bids from public bodies.
- 3.22 The Scottish Government should provide all public services with forward revenue and capital budget projections on the same multi-year planning cycle. Also the Commission recommends the Scottish Government should replicate the Office of Budget Responsibility's independent fiscal sustainability analysis in Scotland, publishing annual statistics.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 The Commission calls on the Scottish Government and local authorities, together with all partners and stakeholders, to initiate these reforms to achieve substantial transformation of our public services. Today COSLA has [welcomed the report](#), saying it maps out a journey that local government is both willing and able to travel and has offered to commit immediately to the main themes described above, ahead of a detailed ministerial response.

Policy and Strategy Paper produced by:
Michelle Cochlan, Perth and Kinross Council
June 2011