



SCSN Policy and Strategy Paper No 09 –Achieving A Safer Scotland Public Sector Reform ACHIEVING A SAFER SCOTLAND

1 BACKGROUND

There is a majority Scottish Government¹ in a 5 year term from May 2011, new local government representation was elected in May 2012 and the Christie Commission published their report on the Future Delivery of Public Services in June 2011. As the public sector in Scotland, this gives us a clearer view than ever on our joint purpose and the way we are expected to achieve it. Yet the environment we are seeking to create is not without challenges. Most prominent of these is the fragile global economy forcing us all to be creative and do more with less. Incremental changes to make our public services² more efficient are not enough - we need transformational alterations to increase our pace of change and reduce demand for these services.

The findings of the Christie Commission tell us that to achieve this we need a decisive shift to a public service built on prevention and early intervention; greater integration and collaboration between public services at a local level; greater investment in workforce development and leadership; and a sharp focus on improving performance. In short, the Commission is telling everyone to be more like community safety.

2 MAIN REPORT

2.1 Learning from community safety

Typically, since the 1990s, Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) have a Community Safety (or safer and stronger) Partnership as part of their structure. These are strong partnerships which have a track record for effectively targeting local safety issues. Their success is down to strong partnership working gained through time and trust, as well as the use of effective tools like strategic assessments and joint problem solving. Evidenced based planning using the aforementioned tools has allowed partnerships to set joint priorities and make decisions about deployment of partners resources whether by collaboration between partners or integrating service delivery altogether.

This partnership experience has made the transition to outcome based working a fairly natural one. It has also helped partnerships to take a problem

¹ For the first time since the Scottish Parliament was created in 1999.

² Including police, fire, health service and local authorities.

solving approach to issues in a way that understands their complexity and the perspective of a number of partners. This has naturally led to a preference for preventative approaches. The availability and routine use of local data and evidence has also served as a platform for improving performance. Local strengths have been borne out of the community safety sector convening at a national level to learn and share through groups such as SCSN (and SLACS before it), ASBOF, ASBLF as well as shorter-term policy development groups, for example, the Antisocial Behaviour Framework - Promoting Positive Outcomes – and, on a smaller scale, groups to develop and test tools like the modules of the Safer Communities Programme. Involvement in collective work of this nature demonstrates and develops leadership nationally and locally.

2.2 Scoping the issue

As part of the Chairs and Leads event hosted by SCSN in September 2012, a SWOT³ analysis around assessing the impact on public sector reviews on CSPs was carried out by the group resulting in the following findings. Attendees found the SCSN event (and events like this) to discuss and share thoughts on public sector reform valuable.

Strengths were around increased commitment to partnership working, that all reforms are supporting localism and that workstreams are beginning to unite. It was also noted the public sector reform agenda can learn from community safety which was seen as advantageous.

Opportunities noted were linked to higher levels of scrutiny and accountability, increased integration with the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and greater chance of joint planning and re-design. Prospects for more joint delivery and increased collaboration were also noted. Reform also gives partnerships the opportunity to enhance information sharing.

Risks highlighted were around public (and staff) perception of reform, uncertainty and no single 'best practice' guidance being issued; voluntary redundancy could mean loss of expertise.

Threats are around the result of lack of clarity, cost-cutting and structural change as motivation rather than cultural change and improving outcomes. Some were concerned about local police and fire plans taking over (loss of partnership emphasis). Shared budgets were mentioned positively and negatively.

2.3 Transformation and accelerating the pace of change

Sharing good practice has allowed the community safety sector to advance learning, and is crucial in order to meet the expectations of public sector reform. While some local community safety practice is evaluated and some is

³ Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats

shared through informal links, SCSN and celebrations like the safer communities' awards and the community safety convention; there is still scope for improvement.

At a local level practices are not routinely evaluated and nor are lessons learnt shared widely to allow others to benefit from the insight. We need to find ways of getting the right information to the right people at the right time, and help them to use it. SCSN has a key role to facilitate this process, but cannot do it alone, and so a collective approach to creating a culture where learning is routinely identified and shared is essential.

By collating information on how community safety has progressed in the last fifteen years we can show leadership by helping one another, and others, to 'short cut' some of the learning process and accelerate the pace of change.

3.4 Opportunities through review and reform

Police and fire reform and the community planning review create opportunities to tackle barriers that have held us back and frustrated us. With a single set of police and fire service policies, local roles for these services will be clearer, with increased local accountability for delivery of community planning outcomes. Nationally, CPPs will be held to account for their practice and performance; and the review processes will lead to greater clarity around how we all work together.

While there are inevitably weaknesses and threats to public sector reform these are more than outweighed by the strengths and opportunities. SCSN has a role to support CSPs to make the most of these and ensure the value of community safety is embedded within public sector reform at a national and local level. It will do this through:

- Developing case studies and examples of successful partnership working driven by evidence based priority setting, and sharing them amongst the community safety sector and wider where appropriate;
- Facilitating development of appropriate forums for sharing information and ideas locally and nationally; and,
- Carrying out a training needs analysis to identify member's support requirements.