



## SCSN Briefing Paper No 12

### Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) Guidance

#### 1 Purpose

This briefing paper aims to give a summary of the SOA Guidance Paper published by the Scottish Government in December 2012, and an insight into the implications for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), and community safety representation in future SOAs.

#### 2 Introduction

The guidance is part of the Scottish Government and Convention Of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) review of community planning and SOAs; set up to develop community planning in the context of public sector reform in Scotland. A statement of ambition was released in March 2012:

*“Effective community planning arrangements will be at the core of public service reform. They will drive the pace of service integration, increase the focus on prevention and secure continuous improvement in public service delivery, in order to achieve better outcomes for communities. Community planning and SOAs will provide the foundation for effective partnership working within which wider reform initiatives, such as the integration of health and adult social care and the establishment of single police and fire services, will happen.”*

Following this statement, a letter detailing the next stages was sent to all Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) in May 2012 covering plans for SOAs, potential legislative changes around community planning and establishment of a joint group at national level to provide strategic direction and guidance.

The SOA guidance was released in December 2012, with a number of decisive shifts:

- Use of data to ‘plan for place’;
- Embedding prevention in SOAs;
- Highlighting priority areas; and,
- Drive to reducing outcome gaps.

SOAs are now also required to demonstrate how communities are being involved in the development and delivery of outcomes.

More information on this programme can be found on the Scottish Government website at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government/CP/communityplanningreview>.

### 3 Core Principles

A summary of the core principles covered within the SOA guidance follows.

#### 3.1 SOAs and performance reporting

All partners are expected to contribute effectively and to take shared responsibility for the effectiveness of the CPP, including for the development and delivery of new SOAs and the provision of resources to do this. The Scottish Government is proposing to introduce new legal duties to require them to do so. New reporting arrangements will be determined in time by the Scottish Government, COSLA and CPPs.

#### 3.2 A clear understanding of place

CPPs must develop a clear and evidence-based understanding of local needs and opportunities, underpinned by robust and relevant data and strong engagement with communities and partners.

Effective data underpins CPPs' ability to understand local conditions; to identify priorities and to base resource and service provision decisions as well as performance reporting on this robust data analysis. Strategic assessments or needs assessments are two ways of obtaining this clear understanding of place.

#### 3.3 Plan and deliver for outcomes

In order to improve local outcomes, each new SOA must set out priorities based on the CPP's understanding of place, and must demonstrate the relationship between these local outcomes and the National Outcomes.

The SOAs must be able to demonstrate change over time – what will be different for communities in the long-term, and what will be done in the short and medium term to secure this change. Measuring progress over these time frames is essential.

The resources of all partners must be deployed as a CPP works towards the outcomes, particularly focused on prevention, early intervention and the reduction of inequalities.

#### 3.4 Policy priorities

The key priorities are:

- Economic recovery and growth;
- Employment;
- Early years;
- Safer and stronger communities, and reducing offending;
- Health inequalities and physical activity; and
- Outcomes for older people.

These are the areas where there is scope for reducing inequalities, an evidenced need for improvement, lend themselves to preventative and early intervention approaches and where partnership working is critical to achieve change. They are also mutually enforcing – progress in one area can contribute to progress in another, for example early years and most of the other key priority areas.

### 3.5 Prevention

Preventative approaches are:

*“Actions which prevent problems and ease future demand on services by intervening early, thereby delivering better outcomes and value for money”.*

SOAs must now include a specific plan for prevention which reaches beyond the Change Funds into mainstream services. They must also demonstrate what will happen and how.

### 3.6 Community engagement

CPPs and partners should be engaging with their communities to identify and prioritise local outcomes, and demonstrate how they will be involved in achieving these outcomes; working with them to develop their capacity to succeed.

### 3.7 Equalities

Equality considerations should run through all the activities of the CPP and be woven into the development of its SOA. Having a clear understanding of community diversity is essential to develop a clear and co-ordinated approach to tackling inequalities in communities.

## 4 **Community Safety Partnership Context**

It is positive that community safety is one of the SOA key priorities, and CPPs have been recommended to use principles long-established in community safety such as early intervention, joint working and evidence-based strategic planning.

Central to this are partnership approaches at a strategic and operational level, which are person-centred, and tackle common underlying factors such as deprivation and inequalities and substance misuse. Links between other priority areas such as early years, employment and health should be promoted and used in approaches to delivering better outcomes for communities.

Developing a robust evidence-base is essential to deliver services based on need, evidence of what works and best value for money. Communities are part of the evidence, but also the solution. SOAs should both influence, and be influenced by, local police and fire plans and reducing reoffending area plans.

Creating a learning and openly transparent and accountable environment and getting partners to participate in this is key to stimulating progress and innovation.

## **5 Conclusions**

It is positive that community safety is one of the SOA key priorities, and CPPs have been recommended to use principles long-established in CSPs such as early intervention, joint working and evidence-based strategic planning. This should provide a great opportunity for CSPs to become more involved in SOA development, to share experiences of evidence-based strategic planning and, ultimately, see community safety placed firmly as a core part of community planning.

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