

# Knowledge Management

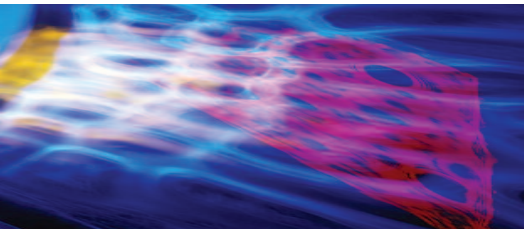
Connecting people with people  
and people with information

**Learn - Share - Reuse - Collaborate - Innovate**

We are committed to:

- Adopting leading and effective knowledge management practices in delivery of our programmes
- Supporting Scottish local government to underpin improvement through capture, sharing and faster uptake of its collective knowledge, innovative methods and leading practice
- Encouraging a culture within Scottish local government where seeking new knowledge and improved ways of working and minimising unnecessary duplication is the norm





## Introduction

The IS was established by COSLA, SOLACE and the Scottish Government with a remit to contribute to improvement in the efficiency, quality and accountability of local public services across Scotland.

Our overarching objectives state that we will work to:

1. Promote a learning culture and support collaborative working across local authorities and their partners;
2. Build capacity within local government to improve the skills of officers and elected members;
3. Promote good practice across Scottish local government;
4. Promote the use of knowledge management within local authorities to support sharing and learning, e-governance and business re-design;
5. Identify good practice and learning from outside Scotland and other areas of the public, private and voluntary sector to share with Scottish local government.

In line with these objectives, the creation, capture, sharing and re-use of knowledge and expertise is a theme running right across the programmes of work we undertake and is integral to the way in which we engage with and support the Scottish local government community and its partners.

Our first KM strategy and implementation plan, developed in 2005, stated that:

*Knowledge underpins everything the Improvement Service is seeking to do. Promoting learning and knowledge sharing is central to the whole concept of the Improvement Service. Knowledge is the most valuable resource it has available as it seeks to meet the challenges set out in its Business Plan. Therefore the means by which this most valuable resource can be best managed and*

*used in a practical sense, i.e. knowledge management, must be at the heart of the way the Improvement Service operates.*

*However, it is not just about putting knowledge at the heart of the Improvement Service. It is about facilitating this way of working across 32 Councils, as in many cases it is the Councils who have this valuable knowledge and experience in the first place, and it is Councils who must apply this knowledge in order to achieve real improvement. So everything in this strategy aims to address the issue of how to facilitate knowledge management across 32 organisations, not just one.*

Many of the recommendations made in the 2005 strategy have been implemented or are being worked on. (List of recommendations in Annexe 1) This update on the strategy outlines for 2007-2011:

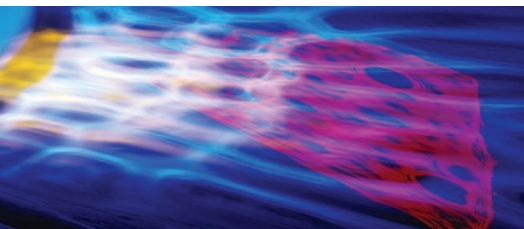
- the drivers and vision which underpin our continuing commitment to this way of working
- the key approaches which we will take to support achievement of the vision.

*As with all of our work, we are only one of a number of stakeholders sharing the aim and vision and we will need to work in collaboration with others - within and outside the local government sector - in order to achieve them.*

## Key Drivers

Local government in Scotland, in common with all parts of the Scottish public sector, is facing a challenging - sometimes conflicting - set of demands. Within a context of the 2007 Spending Review and tight control on costs and resources it must deliver:

- Improved services and better performance
- Greater efficiency
- Stronger citizen engagement



- Services focused on user needs and the customer experience
- Cross-organisation collaboration and joining-up of services
- The Scottish Government strategic objectives for public services
- Implementation of Single Outcome Agreements
- A culture where staff embrace change and are increasingly innovative

Within this context, adopting approaches which help councils to capture and share know-how and ensure that key learning, expertise and experience - internal and external - is shared and applied across the sector, can help to deliver accelerated, efficient and sustainable improvement.

*“we need better information sharing, we need a culture of enquiry and evidence giving”.*

Keith Yates, Chair of SOLACE (Scotland), Holyrood Magazine, November 2007

## The Knowledge Management approach

### Knowledge Management in the Public Sector

Public sector agencies throughout the world are focusing on implementing better Knowledge Management (KM) practices, recognising that, while we cannot actually “manage” knowledge, we can and should focus on managing the environment so that learning and knowledge is captured, distilled, shared and applied. Evidence from across the public and private sector is that KM fosters the re-use of intellectual capital, enables better decision-making and creates the conditions required for innovation. While many organisations may not use the terms “knowledge management” or “knowledge mobilization” to describe their activities in this area, many relevant activities are undertaken to enhance organisational

learning, improve service delivery and build capabilities and flexibility. KM is primarily a means of enabling business change and improvement. It comprises a wide range of tools, techniques, behaviours and supporting technology that can:

- help to solve business challenges
- help to encourage innovation and new ways of working

The concept of KM could, therefore, be regarded as shorthand for a range of tools, methodologies, behaviours which enable the creation, sharing and re-use of knowledge.

### Knowledge Management in Scottish Local Government

Within aspects of the Scottish local government reform agenda there are specific references to knowledge management, knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer and learning from good practice. In this context the scope of knowledge management encompasses:

- Informal and supported networks through which people collaborate to share resources, good practices/lessons learnt and to connect with one another. (Communities of practice, Communities of interest, professional network)
- Formal processes and tools for capturing feedback and learning (after action reviews, peer reviews, case studies, lessons learned)
- Reflective learning and formal evaluation practices
- Encouraging and enabling access to core information resources and evidence and the skills to use them effectively
- Initiatives and incentives which encourage people to learn and share with colleagues
- Effective staff induction, coaching and mentoring schemes
- Work shadowing and secondments

- Technology-based solutions and supporting infrastructures - Intranets and Web 2.0 collaboration tools

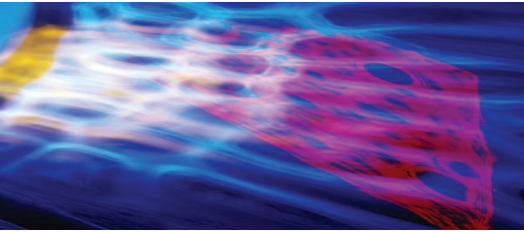
Every organisation already has an environment in which processes exist to help people create, find, make sense of and share knowledge. Much of the focus is on effective management of corporate documents and records to record and support business decisions and enable compliance with information rights legislation. Focusing equally strongly on knowledge management will help to enhance the environment. Used on an-going basis, the approaches outlined above can help the whole of the sector to develop a culture which is open to learning and where staff are willing and supported to discuss, debate and experiment.

### Strategic Vision

The Scottish local government sector has within it much of the knowledge necessary to support improvement but this knowledge needs to be made more easily accessible and shared across the sector to encourage re-application. The sector should also be proactive in looking externally for evidence and expertise to underpin improvement.

Our vision is of a Scottish local government landscape where:

- insights, expertise, experience, research, knowledge and information are routinely shared and made effective use of across the local government community to accelerate the process of finding solutions, improving services and delivering efficiencies
- officers and elected members make decisions and adopt new work practices which are informed by a range of easily accessible information and evidence resources such as research reports, toolkits, external good practices, experts’ advice as well as the practitioners’ on-the-job experience.



- officers and elected members are willing to learn from one another, to experiment, to innovate, to share their mistakes and to discuss emerging practices in an open and honest manner utilising the communities of practice/interests or networks to which they belong
- people learn from the past in order to improve policy and practice in the future - resources are not wasted by reinvention of wheels or duplication of mistakes
- gaps in knowledge are explicitly identified and closed and vital knowledge is captured and retained for use by others
- appropriate technologies are provided and used to facilitate the capture, dissemination and exchange of knowledge
- Saved time, money and effort by learning from the experiences of others and adopted leading practices more quickly
- Made better decisions or avoided reinventing the wheel by using the best evidence, knowledge, expertise and information available
- Improved services or achieved breakthroughs by working in collaboration to achieve innovation
- Changed their perspectives or broadened their expertise as a result of collaborative working and considering a wider diversity of perspectives
- Focused on developing their own skills and supporting the development of others

All IS work must, therefore, contribute to helping everyone in local government to find it easy to create, share and access knowledge to support improvement. Our aim is to foster the creation and management of an environment that encourages knowledge to be created, shared, learnt and exploited for the benefit of all of local government, its partners and its customers. We should also act as a role model in the way we manage and share knowledge between ourselves and with local government.

*We are working towards a culture of collaboration where when a problem is identified the instinctive reaction is to ask - Who has solved this before? How did they do it? Will the solution work here? Who should I work with to achieve an effective and efficient solution?*

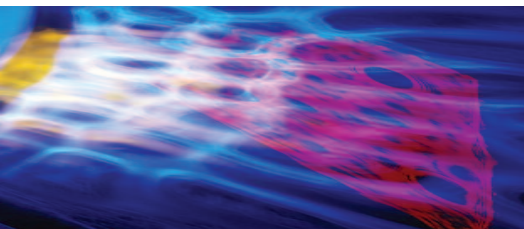
### Benefits

The benefit of underpinning our work with knowledge management approaches will be demonstrated by the effective delivery of our programmes and also by how much people within Scottish local government have:

### Delivering the strategic vision and aim

We will take the following actions in making our contribution to achievement of the strategic vision and aim:

- a) Focus on a KM approach which is owned and sponsored by our Board and Senior Management Team and is reinforced through the induction and development programmes for IS staff. Knowledge sharing and re-use behaviours will permeate every level of the IS and will be built in to the day-to day activities of every employee.
- b) Capture and share the knowledge used and developed in IS programmes to make it available for re-use by others. Knowledge is central to the programmes of work of the Improvement Service whether it is knowledge and experience held in peoples' heads or knowledge held in documents, datasets, publications, research reports. Using all relevant channels for dissemination of this knowledge will maximise the impact of our work.
- c) Evaluate all IS Programmes at planning stage to ensure that they incorporate activities and approaches which promote a learning culture and encourage and



support collaborative working.

Underpinning each programme, there will be a common knowledge management approach including some or all of the following practices:

- building and nurturing communities of practice
  - facilitating face-to-face and online events to build trust between members
  - providing knowledge and information resources to support improvement activities and innovation
  - capturing and sharing learningpoints/resources at different phases of the programmes
  - embedding the use of knowledge resources in critical business processes such as planning, decision making, training preparation
  - raising awareness and buy-in to a knowledge sharing culture
- d)** Use web technologies to enable access to the improvement knowledge base by developing and publishing our own content and by providing a gateway to content and communities of relevance to Scottish local government improvement. Our approach will be to partner with others and to leverage existing services and resources in order to avoid reinventing the wheel. We will use the technologies to provide resources and platforms which will help to stimulate and support self-sustaining improvement within local government.
- e)** Contribute to building and disseminating the knowledge base in Scotland on local government service improvement, ensuring that expertise and resources to support improvement are made easily accessible. We will also actively explore options and issues around access to commercial (charged for/subscription based) knowledge resources of relevance to local government improvement.

- f)** Work collaboratively with all those involved in the wide range of improvement activities and programmes across local government and the wider public sector, to play our part in ensuring that across the whole sector ideas, lessons learned and new knowledge are captured, shared and disseminated to the benefit of the whole sector.
- g)** Support a network of knowledge and learning facilitators to facilitate communities of practice, adopt and champion new knowledge sharing techniques, promote learning and to ensure that officers and elected members can exploit KM tools and knowledge resources. Where appropriate, we will provide training and support in various knowledge management techniques.
- h)** Provide support and guidance for communities of practice relevant to IS programmes and the local government improvement agenda. The members will own and drive the community but we will provide development support, training and tools, knowledge-exchange events and a web-based collaboration platform (offering a core tool-set to enable discussion, collaborative working, current awareness.)

### Principles underpinning our KM approach

In promoting knowledge sharing and learning across Scottish local government our approach will be underpinned by the following principles:

- **A balanced approach** - we will focus on all key elements - people, process and technology.
- **Stay outcome focused** - We will be selective in supporting knowledge sharing and learning in priority improvement areas, which will lead to specific outcomes and benefit.

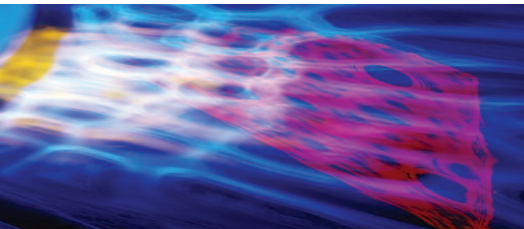
- **People before technology** - We will focus on linking up people, building trust and respect through facilitation, support for face-to-face events and provide user-friendly IT tools only as enablers.
- **Balance 'formal' and 'informal' learning** - we will welcome both formal and informal knowledge sharing/learning/networking opportunities, and be careful not to attempt to transform all informal knowledge sharing activities into the 'official space'.
- **User needs** - we will invest in understanding what users/community members really want before deciding what content should be made available.
- **Practitioners can think for themselves** - we will develop practical solutions together with local government and partners, rather than attempting to impose "best practices".
- **Learn together** - we believe that users can learn from experts and from one another. We will encourage two-way flows for sharing knowledge rather than adopting a one-way flow in 'pushing out' content and 'informing' users.

### Resources

All IS staff and IS programmes and projects will contribute to delivery of the strategic vision and aim. All IS programme partners and other stakeholders will also have a role to play. Development of the knowledge - base for improvement and of active practitioner communities will require contributions from staff across the local government sector.

To support delivery we will also have a core team of knowledge, information and research professionals who will:

- Engage with individual Local Authorities and relevant communities and networks to support improved approaches to KM across the sector



- Develop and manage a website and related collaboration tools which will provide a gateway to information about local government improvement in Scotland and to networks and resources which support that improvement
- Develop specific services to fill identified knowledge gaps where it is best placed to do so or provide advice on sourcing of appropriate resources and services
- Ensure that the IS has a critical mass of staff who are competent in using the various KM tools and techniques
- Provide KM specific support and training across all IS programmes
- Keep the IS and its stakeholders up-to-date with emerging trends and tools in the KM field by participating in relevant networks and undertaking CPD

### Monitoring the strategy

This paper outlines the overarching strategic vision and aim for the KM focus of the IS as a whole. Each year the IS Annual Business Plan will provide details on specific KM objectives, projects, deliverables and related budget for that year. Quarterly reports on the Annual Objectives will be made to the Improvement Service Board. Discussions on annual objectives and the quarterly reports will ensure that the strategy is a “living” document and that it is kept under review to ensure continuing relevance and appropriate actions.

### Key Reference Documents

#### Audit Commission

Seeing the light - innovation in local public services. May 2007

#### Cabinet Office

The Power of Information - an independent review by Tom Steinberg, founder and Director of mySociety, and Ed Mayo, Chief Executive of the National Consumer Council. June 2007

#### Cabinet Office

The Government's response to “The Power of Information: an independent review” by Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg 2007”. June 2007. Cm 7157

#### Scottish Executive

A shared approach to Building a better Scotland - a consultation paper on a national strategy for shared services. Report on the analysis of the responses to the consultation. March 2007

#### Scottish Executive

Transforming Public Services - The Next Phase of Reform: Analysis of the Written Consultation. March 2007

#### UK Government - DCLG

Products of the KM National Project - available on [www.productshare.org.uk](http://www.productshare.org.uk)

#### Fujitsu

Scottish Local Government Improvement Service : Knowledge Management Strategy and Implementation Plan. May 2005

#### John Mitchell

Knowledge Management in the Scottish local government context - Masters Dissertation (Robert Gordon University, 2007)

## ANNEXE 1

Summary of key recommendations taken from the first Improvement Service Knowledge Management Strategy and Implementation Plan produced by Fujitsu in May 2005

### 1. The importance of knowledge management to the Improvement Service -

recommendations relating to further developing the understanding of why KM is important in the first place, and to assessing its contribution to the business.

- As each of the programmes in the business plan are progressed, further develop the assertion that knowledge management is of crucial importance to Improvement Service. Ensure that this is widely communicated. Augment it with practical examples and stories over time and use as key educational material.
- As part of the development of the specific programmes as set out in the business plan, work out how elements of this strategy can be applied to each. Develop a specific and more detailed implementation plan for each.
- Develop a framework for measuring the effectiveness of the contribution which knowledge management is making to the objectives of the Improvement Service, and monitor these measurements over time. Use this feedback to constantly evolve this strategy.

**2. People** - here the recommendations focus on key groups of people, rather than attempting to introduce change too widely.

- Develop a set of key leadership competencies and behaviours relevant to leading a knowledge organisation and include these (together with case study materials) into any leadership development programmes run or influenced by the Improvement Service.
- In particular ensure that those leading Organisational Development are aware of the importance of knowledge management

and its close links to OD. Furthermore seek to include these same competencies and behaviours into the Organisational Development agenda pursued by Councils. This should include some means of measuring progress and assessing the benefits which result.

- Develop a set of core knowledge management skills and behaviours required from people who are directly involved in any of the programmes of work being undertaken by the Improvement Service.
- Develop a similar set of skills and behaviours for programme and project management staff. In addition define a set of key working practices, which should become a normal part of the way programmes are managed.

**3. Process** - the process recommendations centre on the need to develop practical ways of supporting the management of the complete knowledge lifecycle - creating knowledge, organising and storing it, and sharing it with others.

- Establish a model for setting up and running successful communities of practice as a means of bringing together expertise in given areas, developing practical solutions and ensuring that learning translates into action. These need to include models for ongoing groups which can continually evolve good practice, and short lived teams set up to address specific issues in accelerated timescales.
- View these communities or networks of people as a means of storing and disseminating knowledge as well as developing new practice. Ensure they are properly 'signposted' to the wider community and that they have responsibility for capturing and sharing the knowledge that is the output of their work.
- Develop a range of means for sharing knowledge as widely as possible These should include existing groups or networks (or where these don't exist setting up larger communities of interest). Approaches such

as secondments, coaching and peer mentoring should also be used.

- Develop structured and rigorous processes for evaluating anything that will be promoted as 'good' or 'best' practice, such that this is supported by hard evidence. Ensure that part of the development of such practices, includes clear guidelines on embedding them into core business processes and measuring their effectiveness.

**4. Technology** - the recommendations here relate to the role which the Improvement Service's web site should play in supporting knowledge management.

- Develop a site which has three main aims:
  - a content store specific to the programmes set out in the business plan
  - a channel for news and comment to the Local Government community
  - a portal for easy access to relevant content already available elsewhere
- Focus the design and functionality of the site on the priority programmes set out in the business plan.
- Set a threshold level of functionality which is required for the launch of a web site and take the time necessary to develop this properly. However this should not be a very complex or functionally difficult threshold. There should be an ethos of start simple and develop over time based on practical need and feedback from users.
- Take the development of information management standards and content management processes very seriously. Invest the necessary time to develop these adequately, where possible based on existing public sector standards.
- Consider using a closed part of the site as an intranet for Improvement Service staff.
- Pursue possible options for developing a site based on existing infrastructures, before deciding to develop a site from scratch.

Guidelines and suggested ways of pursuing these recommendations are included in the main sections of the 2005 report.



Westerton House, Westerton Road  
East Mains Industrial Estate  
Broxburn EH52 5AU

**T.** 01506 775558

**F.** 01506 775566

**E.** [info@improvementservice.org.uk](mailto:info@improvementservice.org.uk)  
[www.improvementservice.org.uk](http://www.improvementservice.org.uk)

**Improvement Service** is devoted to improving the efficiency, quality and accountability of public services in Scotland through learning and sharing information and experiences.