



Improvement Service
Business Plan
2008 to 2011

Supporting local government to deliver
better outcomes for communities

Summary



Introduction

The Improvement Service was started up in 2005 to meet a need for advice, consultancy and programme support to assist in the delivery of the improvement agenda for local government in Scotland. Focussed on councils and their partners, we work to support their drive for better accountability, quality and efficiency through learning, sharing and delivering improvement solutions.

Statement of purpose for 2008 to 2011

'To support councils and their partners to improve the health, quality of life and opportunities of all people in Scotland through community leadership, strong local governance and the delivery of high quality, efficient local services'.

The IS is now just over two and a half years in operation and we have delivered on the key commitments made in our initial business plan. Established under a partnership of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE), we are moving into our next three year phase with the intention of embedding a greater sense of "ownership" of the Improvement Service across all councils.

The Context for our work

Local government is undergoing considerable change. The challenges and issues facing councils demand that their governance, organisational and partnership capacity be capable of delivering improved health, well-being and opportunities for individuals and communities. With the establishment of the Concordat between the Scottish Government and local government, the sector now has a real opportunity to take even greater control of its own development. Councils have the capacity and need to lead their own improvement by demonstrating ambition, being open to challenge, innovation and scrutiny and by committing to learning and sharing good practice.





The Improvement Service, as part of the supporting framework for improvement and efficiency in local government must focus its efforts on enabling councils to seize the opportunities arising from the Concordat.

What we will be working on

Our statement of purpose puts the end outcomes at the heart of what we want to support and recognises both the key local governance role that councils have and their service delivery functions.

During 2008-2011 all IS Programmes and activities will seek collaborative gain in working with partners towards the following outcomes:

1. Councils that organise their governance, planning and performance management around the outcomes they want to achieve for their areas and their communities.
2. Councils that are recognised and respected for the excellence of their governance and their leadership of place.
3. Councils that have the capacity, skills and knowledge to recurrently review and refine their services, their organisations and their partnerships to deliver improved outcomes for communities.
4. Councils that have the competence and confidence to improve their impact through partnership, shared service and shared capacity.
5. Councils that are recognised and respected for the efficiency with which they use the resources available to them.
6. Councils that are committed to innovation and improvement, and are excellent in the management of change.
7. Councils that routinely identify, adopt or adapt leading practice from elsewhere, and share their own knowledge and good practice internally and externally.
8. Councils that offer customer choice and convenience in how services are accessed and are able to demonstrate that they deliver exceptional customer service.

In making our contribution to achievement of these outcomes we will focus on the following specific objectives:

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES

We will:

- Support councils in improving the specification and measurement of outcomes as a basis for decision making and performance management.
- Provide support for embedding the outcome focus in partnerships through the promotion of effective collaborative working between local government and its partners.
- Support the roll out of the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) to a broader range of councils and partnerships to ensure the outcome focus is underpinned by robust self assessment.
- Work to enhance the capacity of Local Government to further strengthen governance and political leadership.
- Support a culture of continuous improvement and effective performance management and efficiency within local government.
- Continue to develop the Scottish Equalities Improvement Framework (SEIF) and integrate that fully into the PSIF.
- Continue to support councils in developing their response to climate change and to carbon and resource management.
- Continue support for 'Communities of Practice' focused on developing outcome agreements and support the development of 'Communities of Practice' around thought leadership in key outcome areas: health improvement; supporting children to achieve their full potential, and reducing poverty and inequality.



IMPROVING CAPACITY

We will:

- Support CoSLA and councils in implementing strategic workforce planning and moving towards local government in Scotland being an employer of choice.
- Support councils to undertake the Diagnostic Pathway projects – consolidating and nurturing expertise within councils as part of the programme.
- Work in partnership with councils and other key public organisations to consider how best to support the need for development of strategic leaders across the wider public sector, sharing knowledge and development initiatives.
- Review and upgrade our Operational Manager Programme allowing flexibility to reflect the characteristics of individual councils and with an increased focus on the local delivery of outcomes and collaborative leadership at local level.
- Create an OD network across councils and partnerships to develop and share leading practice in organisational design and development and change management capacity and expertise.
- Ensure that the widest range of OD-related materials are available in an e-learning format and on a responsive basis, i.e. can be accessed around the particular needs of the individual using it.
- Continue to deliver the Planning Development Programme, acting as a catalyst for improvements in the availability of relevant skills, knowledge and capabilities within planning services and establishing a basis for embedding better training and development practices.

IMPROVING DELIVERY

We will:

- Work with the Local Government National Shared Services Board, partners and councils to develop a strategy and framework for sharing across local government. Building and delivering collaborative opportunities that make best use of limited resources and ensure effective, joined up delivery.
 - Establish an agreed governance model for Customer First that can ensure the delivery of the programme and can promote the improvements in customer services.
 - Establish an IS programme development team that will work with councils (and other stakeholders) to exploit the products and services that have been created by the Customer First implementation.
 - Deliver a council owned and managed national Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure.
 - Work with all councils to implement and support live operational services from the national infrastructure.
 - Work with pilot councils to specify a 'basket of local services' that will be delivered through the national infrastructure, including portal services that will require online authentication.
 - Work with councils to deliver a local / national Customer Relationship Management (CRM) programme that can support 'first time services' and measure increased customer satisfaction.
 - Improve council customer communications through the delivery of an effective public information notices portal.
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IMPROVING PRACTICE

We will:

- Deliver a strategic KM approach which encourages knowledge sharing and the uptake of processes, tools, techniques and skills which will support self-improvement and self-assessment in local government.
- Encourage and support active Practitioner Networks/Communities of Practice which will enhance and accelerate uptake of leading practice across Scottish local government.
- Provide a robust and useful website which provides relevant content and is a gateway to knowledge and tools of value to Scottish local government improvement and delivery of outcomes.
- Increase the national and international knowledge resources and web content which we offer to enable access to a broader range of practice, experience and contacts for Scottish councils.
- Create and support a network of practitioners who are engaged in process improvement and change within councils and ensure that this is effectively linked with wider organisational development and knowledge management initiatives.
- Ensure that the IS leads by example as a KM-enabled organisation by incorporating good KM leading practice into all our programmes and activities, internal as well as external.

Our values and the way we work

We believe that we can add value by working collaboratively with others - combining our expertise, approach and understanding of the sector and of the needs of individual councils with the skills and experience of other organisations or individuals.

We aim to work in ways which ensure that we:

- proactively engage with our customers and stakeholders so that we really understand the sector and, as a result, have a good reputation and level of engagement with all councils
- provide valued support and encouragement to councils on their improvement journey
- provide services which are of value to our stakeholders and customers and also demonstrate value for money
- are regarded, strategically, as the first port of call for independent local government improvement information, support, advice
- are proactive in the identification and dissemination of effective practice from across Scotland and beyond
- fully integrate equalities into all IS projects and initiatives and into all IS working practices
- demonstrate good practice, Best Value and continuous improvement in our own governance and corporate policies and practices.

Details on our people, financial resources and programmes are available in our full Business Plan and on our website.

www.improvementservice.org.uk