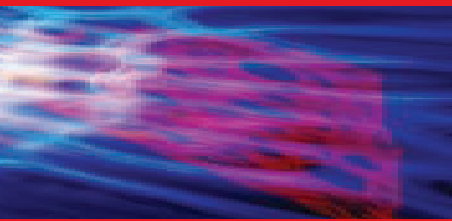


National Elected
Member Development
Strategy
For Scottish Local
Government





1. Strategic Drivers

The introduction of the Single Transferable Vote (STV) and multi member wards at the 2007 local elections resulted in significant change in Scottish local government. 45.9% of members were newly elected at the election and all but two Scottish councils are now administered either by coalitions or minority administrations. Since the election pressures to further 'modernise' how local government operates at both political and service levels have grown. The signing of the Concordat and the introduction of Single Outcome Agreements mark a significant change in the governance of Scotland with greater importance being placed on the local governance of public services. As a consequence of SOA's enhanced local partnership working by public services will follow as they focus their activities on delivery and performance accountability against common outcomes for communities. Allied to this, the emergence of the shared services agenda has further prompted rethinking of service delivery models and the role of the council as a service provider. Such thinking around delivery models will be influenced by a tightening financial settlement and the full implementation of Single Status and equal pay. Lastly across a range of policy sectors such as health improvement, early years intervention, community learning and corporate performance improvement new developments continue at a pace. All of the above raise fundamental questions about the nature of local public service delivery and in particular the role of local government as a service provider and in particular about its role in the governance of local public services.

Such complex agendas place the elected member at the centre of developments. In order to fully discharge their governance duties on behalf of the public, elected members will require ever greater levels of support from their own council and from the wider local and national government community. This may require the redesign of accountability systems of delivery organisations in order for members to hold local organisations to account for performance against agreed outcomes. Elected members should be able to influence such system redesign which in turn means that personal development supports that assist elected members in acquiring and further honing their political skills in carrying out their governance responsibilities will be of critical importance. As a consequence the Improvement Service (IS) has developed this strategy in conjunction with relevant stakeholders to set out a framework through which enhanced, more focused and more structured support arrangements can be put in place for elected members in leading local government through a period of considerable change.

2. Our Vision and Strategic Aims

Our vision for this strategy is:

To establish through collaboration among Scotland's councils, the Improvement Service and relevant partners high quality and cost effective development programmes and opportunities that support elected members in developing their skills to better govern Scotland's local communities.

Our strategic aims are:

- to provide national direction in anticipating, and planning to meet, the development needs of elected members
- to provide expertise, advice and support to elected members and to councils in meeting elected members' development needs
- to provide a focus for national, regional and local development programmes that support the needs of elected members
- to promote excellent standards in the provision of development programmes for elected members
- to encourage collaboration and the sharing of resources to provide high quality and cost-effective development opportunities for elected members

How we will take our strategic aims forward

- Collaboration- the IS and Scotland's councils will work in partnership, and where relevant will work with other partners, to implement this strategy
- Commitment - the IS and Scotland's councils will be active in sharing their expertise and knowledge with one another
- Evidence based - the IS and Scotland's councils will be proactive in identifying, sharing and taking up leading practice from across Scotland and beyond
- Flexible - the IS and Scotland's councils will remain conscious of the differences inherent to Scotland's communities and the councils and partner organisations that serve those communities, we will tailor where necessary our approach and deliverables to the needs of individual councils and their circumstances

3. Benefits

The benefits underpinning this strategy will be demonstrated by the effective delivery of development programmes and opportunities which result in:

- Saved time, money and effort by individual councils and local government as a whole by learning from the experiences of others and adopting leading practices more quickly and in using the best evidence, knowledge, expertise and information available to support elected members development needs
- Improved availability of high quality development programmes and opportunities by councils working in collaboration with each other, the IS and relevant partners to achieve innovation in identifying and supporting the development needs of elected members
- Changed perspectives and broadened expertise of elected members as a result of collaborative working between councils and considering a wider diversity of perspectives in supporting the development needs of elected members
- Improved local governance and accountability of public services to local communities

4. The Deliverables

It is intended that this strategy should provide for the range of needs that different elected members have across Scotland's councils. It will cover the needs that are relevant to all members and to those that have specific development needs, such as those elected members who hold leadership positions within their authority or on behalf of local government at a national level as a COSLA spokesperson. In reviewing the needs of elected members and the potential ways in which they can be supported we consider the following to be relevant. Appendix 1 sets out the deliverables in a diagrammatic fashion.

A Skills Based Approach to Continuous Professional Development

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual, supported by their organisation/ employer, to reflect upon their own learning, performance and achievements and to prepare a plan for enhancing their skills to help them realise their full potential. CPD can help develop individuals in their existing role, prepare them for greater responsibilities and help them become more creative in tackling new challenges.

Such an approach of reflecting upon and planning enhancements to skills will deliver major benefits to elected members in carrying out the complex array of roles that they fulfil on behalf of the communities that elect them. As such a skill based framework that supports the development of elected members should be implemented. This will involve:

- Individual elected members assessing how they are currently performing
- Individual elected members identifying priorities for skill development
- Council's planning how to address individual elected members identified development needs

Participation in a CPD process will:

- Improve elected members' understanding of their strengths, weaknesses and developmental needs
- Provide them with a better understanding of their role and responsibilities in governing communities
- Develop them in their existing role
- Prepare them for greater responsibilities
- Enable them to set development priorities
- Identify areas where they have difficulties and to identify strategies to resolve these
- Identify areas where they feel they have skills which are not being utilised fully and how these can be better exploited
- Provide them with professional and personal development opportunities that will enable them to enhance their effectiveness
- Enable them to take responsibility for their own development

In addition to a self reflective capability the issue of offering any elected member who wishes it the option of seeking anonymised feedback from individuals who can judge how the elected member exercises their political skills should be addressed. This is known as 360 degree feedback, which can be an effective process for gaining an insight into how others perceive an individual's behaviour, and how their perceptions of that person's behaviour may differ from their own. A 360 degree element should be build into a CPD framework, although care might have to be taken in selecting appropriate individuals to provide feedback to elected members as it would have to be their performance as a councillor that is commented upon not their role as a Labour councillor/ Conservative councillor, SNP councillor etc.

If undertaking such an assessment members might select from the following types of individuals :

- elected members within their political group,
- elected members within another political group,
- council officers,
- officers in partner organisations that the member deals with,
- individuals who sit on boards that the member sits on,
- constituents within the member's ward

Such a CPD framework could be developed within a single council, however in supporting collaboration between councils the benefits of a CPD framework may be gained with costs being reduced and learning shared. Moreover through collaboration it will be possible to develop a consistent CPD framework that will in turn allow individual members to compare their own profile and development needs with elected members within their own and other councils. Such a framework should remain flexible enough to accommodate the different levels of experience and seniority of members and to allow for implementation to be adapted to the local circumstances that prevail within individual councils.

National and Regional Skills Development Programmes

Following the completion of a CPD assessment and the creation of a development plan elected members should have access to a range of high quality and cost effective development activities to support their identified development needs. Such programmes should be developed and delivered to support the skills underpinning the wide range of roles all elected members fulfil within the community, the council and where relevant at a national level on behalf of local government as a whole.

Such programmes should consist of:

- Workshop/ Masterclass training interventions
- E-learning programmes
- Self assessment checklists
- Self reflection case study material
- Supporting reading/ online material

- Coaching and mentoring schemes

Such programmes should be developed on a collaborative basis involving individual councils, the IS and other relevant national bodies to ensure that they are high quality, cost effective and flexible enough to accommodate the different circumstances of individual members and their council. The range of topics covered by such programmes should be based upon a CPD framework to ensure that elected members can build a portfolio of development opportunities that reflect their identified development needs. Such programmes should focus on those areas that are best covered on a collaborative basis to meet the generic needs of member development. If developed on a national basis such programmes could offer a platform for encouraging collaboration between councils and elected members from different councils and for resource sharing among relevant national bodies and local councils to support the development needs of elected members. Delivery through bodies such as the Clyde Valley Consortium and the East of Scotland Learning Network, or other such regional bodies comprising of councils working together should be further encouraged to create regional level planning and delivery vehicles.

Modules developed under the auspices of such programmes could potentially be delivered at either a national or regional level, where appropriate. This should convey the following benefits:

- Ensuring cost effectiveness
- Avoiding duplication of effort by individual councils
- Allowing members from different councils to come together to share experiences and learning
- Allowing members of different councils to exchange perspectives on national/ regional issues and their implications for local government as a whole

Local Development Programmes

All councils offer internal support to their elected members. As an operating principle it should be assumed that any programme of development activities should begin at the level of the individual council. National and regional programmes must add value that cannot be attained by a council operating on its own. In adopting such a localist approach programmes can be tailored to the specific local circumstances and practices of individual councils. They can also benefit from being delivered in house by council staff and on council premises, thus keeping costs down.

Such local programmes could cover areas that are germane to the council as a corporate body and which build upon local policy or procedures. While focussing on the local needs of individual councils and its elected members such programmes should, where possible, share the development of materials, processes and knowledge with other local authorities and national bodies through a common online platform in order to maximise their effectiveness and ensure local government as a whole maximises its use of resources.

Senior Leadership Development Programmes

Those who hold political leadership positions within local government face greater demands and have to manage more complex challenges than those holding non leadership positions.

Political leaders have particular development needs, which while still reflecting those of an ordinary elected member, tend to be deeper and more situation dependent.

For purposes of this paper leaders can be construed as:

- Leaders of councils
- Leaders of political groups
- Executive members
- Policy committee chairs/ vice chairs
- Scrutiny committee chairs/ vice chairs
- Opposition spokespersons

- COSLA spokespersons

To meet their particular development needs the IS established the Political Leadership Programme (PLP) and a nationally organised but regionally delivered masterclass series for senior members. The PLP operates on a cohort basis with elected members remaining within their cohort for the duration of the programme. The programme consists of facilitated modules, delivered on a residential basis, although in future the residential nature of this programme may change to reflect feedback from elected members.

The specific objectives of the IS programmes for political leaders are:

- To enhance understanding and self-awareness of their personal contribution as political leaders
- To improve understanding of political leadership of place within the Scottish and European context
- To improve skills in providing leadership across a range of stakeholders within and outside the local council
- To provide opportunities for critical reflection and analysis to address current and future leadership challenges
- To enhance understanding of democratic legitimacy and accountability of leadership for public value
- To build an understanding of how leaders mobilize operational and organizational capacity for improved performance in governance and public services
- To capture learning for future development of Improvement Service programmes for political leaders

Any such programme should deliver the following benefits to participants:

- The clarity to navigate through an uncertain future whilst creating enhanced improvements for their Council
- Provide participants with the tools to set goals, monitor performance and raise standards
- Build and develop a successful Leadership profile providing increased personal confidence
- Enable participants to stimulate creativity and innovation with other people within their organisation

In being a national programme, that proceeds on a collaborative basis the PLP allows senior members to work with other senior councillors from different authorities to exchange perspectives, engage in debates and share practices. Participants also build their own leadership development profile focusing on strengthening their leadership skills through completion of a political leadership evaluation framework which leads to the production of a leadership development plan.

Accredited Leadership Programmes

Where it is desired, by elected members and councils, university level accreditation could be sought for development activities. Accreditation could be sought collaboratively by local government via the IS, which could work with councils to facilitate discussion between local government and the university sector. This could result in a delivery model wherein council staff and university staff could share the delivery of development activities.

5. Self - Evaluation of Elected Members Skills Development Programmes

In taking elected members development into a more structured and collaborative era the question of defining practice standards and quality assessing how the council operates as a learning organisation against those agreed standards will become important. Such an approach will also be important if we are to fully embed our strategic aims and in supporting elected members' development needs.

In developing an approach that will meet the needs of the relevant stakeholders the principle of proportionality should be at the heart of developments. A self - evaluation framework that allows a council to give assurance to the standard and quality of its support to elected members' development needs should not be burdensome upon the council nor upon individual elected members.

A self - evaluation framework could set out Scottish local government's collective standards, to be developed by local government working with the IS and other stakeholders, for meeting the development needs of elected members and the process through which the council can assess its own performance against those standards.

It is important to emphasize that this is not about trophy hunting, it is not about getting another plaque on the wall, and it is not about ticking the boxes to get accreditation. Quite simply, the purpose of a self - evaluation approach is to improve the performance of local authorities in supporting their elected members and in turn supporting improvement in council and partnership performance, through the further development of elected members.

A self - evaluation approach would have a number of objectives:

- To ensure consistency in how local authorities achieve quality development supports to elected members
- To support improvements in the performance of those responsible for the political governance of the council and its local partnerships
- To raise the profile of and encourage commitment to elected member development
- To raise the standard of elected member development and support across Scotland
- To recognise those local authorities who have demonstrated their commitment and achievement

By self assessing against agreed and shared standards across the local government community, local government, as a whole, and individual councils would be able to demonstrate the quality of service that they offer to elected members. Such an approach would also give greater profile to developments and recognition to the improvements that councils will achieve in this area.

6. Resourcing

A key factor in securing the coherent implementation of the above developments will be the identification of full and stable sources of resourcing. Resources will come in the shape of finance to commission programme materials and facilitators where relevant; human resources to help develop and deliver programmes and knowledge and intellectual capital. The use of resources should always be governed by the principles of:

- Maximising the efficient use of resources through sharing where possible
- Maximising the efficient use of resources to ensure the highest quality of programme design and content

The centrality of locally elected members to the improvement and change agendas facing public service delivery should be recognised by all those with an interest in supporting the reform of public services, including Scottish Government, individual councils, COSLA and the IS. Without elected members supporting improvement and change agendas at local levels much in terms of public service improvement could stall or fail to have the impact that it otherwise could have. Elected members will be fundamentally important in ensuring that improvements in outcomes for communities, families and individuals occur and as the only locally elected individuals within the community, they will also be a vital link to engaging with the community itself as part of the improvement process. Consequently getting the right mechanisms in place that support the development needs of elected members, as they lead the reform process locally, will be vital to the success of reform. Accordingly making resources available to support the development needs of elected members will be a vital element of the change process. As such all local and national bodies with an interest in supporting the further reform of public services should look to direct dedicated resources towards investing in the elements outlined in this strategy. Both local and the national level organisations should see resources as an investment in the quality of local governance and in supporting elected members to lead improvement in the reform process. If members are to lead the future transformation and improvement agendas on behalf

of local communities then they must be accorded the development supports they need to do so.

7. Key Stakeholders

To carry this strategy forward key stakeholders must be engaged with and brought behind the intentions underpinning this strategy. Without their active backing this strategy will not move the agenda for better supporting the development needs of elected members forward. Key stakeholders, include

- Elected Members
- The Improvement Service
- Individual councils
- COSLA
- The SMSDN
- The Scottish Government
- Local government professional associations, including SOLACE, SPDS, and SOLAR

8. The Next Steps

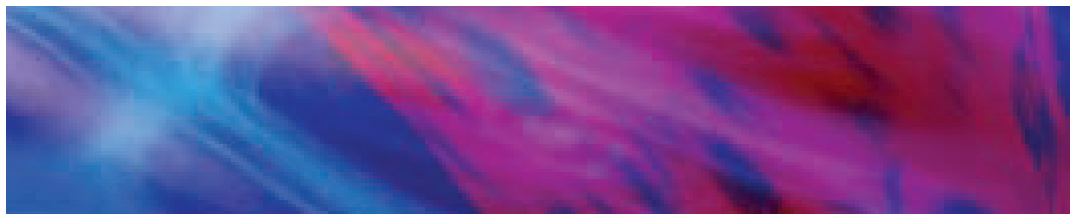
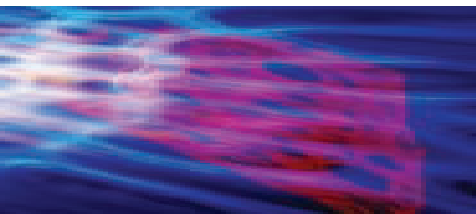
The COSLA Convention on 26 June 2009 agreed to establish:

- a national Elected Member Development Officer Working Group, facilitated by the IS. Its role will be to further develop and support the implementation of the National Elected Member Development Strategy.
- a political reference group within COSLA to oversee and direct the work of the National Elected Member Development Officer Working Group, to ensure that the strategy remains relevant to the needs of Elected Members. The successful development and implementation of the strategy is contingent upon political commitment and drive.

Appendix 1: Summary Table National Development Framework for Elected Members

Skills based approach to Continuous Professional Development	
What?	A structured and supported process for Elected Members to reflect upon their own learning, performance and achievements and to prepare a development plan
How?	IS has developed a draft CPD Framework for Elected Members
When?	Pilot currently underway
Why?	Consistent approach to CPD that will in turn allow Elected Members to compare their own profile and development needs with Elected Members within their own and other councils
Where?	Online Development Profile

	Local Development Programmes	National & Regional Skills Development Programmes	Accredited Leadership Programmes	Senior Leadership Development Programmes
What?	Council specific development programmes	Shared development and delivery of development programmes	University level accreditation for development activities	IS Political Leadership Programme (PLP) and masterclass series for senior Elected Members
How?	Delivered by individual councils and where possible, the development of materials, processes and knowledge is shared with other councils and national bodies	National - CPD Framework Development Programme commissioned by the IS & 7 pilot councils Regional - Delivered through Clyde Valley Consortium, East of Scotland Learning Network, & other regional bodies	Accreditation should be sought collaboratively by local government via the IS, which should work with councils to facilitate discussion between local government and the university sector	Facilitated by IS
When?	Ongoing	National - pilot CPD Development Programme to be in place from March 2009 Regional - underway	To be progressed if there is sufficient demand by Elected Members and councils	PLP launched annually. Masterclass series to be launched in early 2009.
Why?	Tailor-made development activities building upon local policy or procedures	Ensures cost-effectiveness, avoids duplication of effort, allows Elected Members from different councils to share experiences & learning	Provides Elected Members with transferable skills and qualification	To enable senior Members to work with other senior Members from different councils to exchange perspectives, engage in debates & share practices and to strengthen their leadership skills
Where?	Delivered individually within each council	Workshops delivered in collaboration in different venues & e-learning and other materials available online	Shared delivery within university and council	PLP is a residential programme. Masterclass series will be delivered regionally



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