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Supporting capacity building in Community Planning Partnerships

Key Messages

This is the first in a series of communications from the project to support capacity building and continuous improvement within Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland.

1. Context

In recognition that public finances in Scotland will experience unparalleled downward pressure over the next 10 years while demand pressures on service delivery continue to grow, the Improvement Service developed a project, supported by funds from the Scottish Government, to build capacity within Community Planning Partnerships via a flexible approach to self-evaluation.

2. Objectives

The Objectives of the Pilot Project were to:

- help CPPs better understand their performance against their agreed outcomes and appropriate National Outcomes.
- help CPPs review their structures, leadership, processes and approaches to delivering and reporting progress against their agreed outcomes and appropriate National Outcomes.
- build skills and capacity within CPPs to support change and improvement to deliver their agreed outcomes and appropriate National Outcomes.

3. Feedback from Pilot Phase

The Improvement Service issued an invitation to all CPPs to identify suitable pilot partnerships. The respondents were varied both in their area of interest and in the types of areas they represented, so all four CPPs who requested a place in the pilot were confirmed by the PSIF Board and the Scottish Government.

There were four CPPs who conducted a self-evaluation during the pilot phase:

Date	Assessment	Area
17 Feb 2011	Thematic - Community Learning and Development	Clackmannanshire
17 March 2011	Thematic - Community Safety	West Lothian
28 March 2011	Board - Support Officers only	South Lanarkshire
19 May 2011	Board - Leaders and Support Officers	Falkirk

Overall, the pilot to build capacity amongst Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) via self-evaluation has met its original objectives. All of the CPPs who participated in the project were

overwhelmingly positive on the approach taken to identify strengths and areas for improvement within a partnership context. All participating pilot groups were able to identify a prioritised and relevant plan for improvement activity with the understanding that the evaluation of this project will continue long term as improvements are realised and the benefits evaluated for communities and community groups.

4. Themes Emerging from the Pilot Assessments

Both the self-evaluation pilots with Board and Thematic groups identified clear themes for improvement. A number of these are similar and, for the purposes of clarity, they are detailed below separately.

Thematic Assessment Themes

- Reviewing the existing membership of Groups to ensure that the right partners are represented at each meeting and that the relevant officers are empowered to take the necessary decisions on behalf of their partner organisation.
- Strengthen the link between the financial strategy for the area agreed at Board level and how this impacts upon the delivery of service by individual partners at a Thematic level.
- Streamline and actively use the wide portfolio of existing performance information to ensure that partners were informed in order to allow effective short-to-medium term planning and the longer term realisation of prioritised outcomes.
- Work together when planning activities to ensure service delivery is efficient and to explore innovative solutions to ongoing challenges in resourcing services for the community.
- Ensure involvement with Elected Members in leading and promoting the work of Thematic Partnership groups.
- Exploring customer journey mapping to streamline activity with service users or groups in terms of consultation, data gathering or service delivery.
- Improving existing communication and consultation strategies to ensure they are fully inclusive, accessible and engage community groups in a meaningful way, especially with regard to a future emphasis on co-production.

Board Assessment Themes

- Strengthen the link or “golden thread” between the Vision, SOA, Community Plan and individual partners’ organisational delivery plans for the area.
- Strengthen the link between the outcomes identified within the Single Outcome Agreement and the use of resources by individual partners or jointly by the Board.
- Further prioritisation of existing outcomes to ensure the greatest impact can be made with resources available to the Board.

- Strengthen existing governance arrangements to ensure that each partner organisation plays a full and active role on the Board, including that of challenging other Board members and holding them to account on behalf of the community.
- Reviewing the collation, monitoring and use of performance information to ensure that the right information was being collected, on a regular basis, used to inform short-to-medium term planning and the longer term realisation of prioritised outcomes.
- Develop Public Performance Reporting arrangements at the Partnership level to reflect the high standard used by individual partner organisations.

5. Lessons Learned from the Pilot Assessments for Future CPP Self-Evaluation

The officers and facilitators involved in the assessments noted the following lessons learned during the course of their pilot assessment and these are listed below to share good practice:

- There is a link between the time spent in preparation for the assessment and the degree to which participants felt they had made an informed and active contribution.
- The process used for the self-evaluation should not be the focus of the session, participants should all have a commitment to use the outputs of the session to ensure an improvement in all areas of partnership working over time.
- The maturity of working relationships amongst partners can make an impact on the success of the self-evaluation and honest, open, constructive feedback is the foundation on which to base the improvement activity.
- We will build a library or resource of good practice specifically focused on Community Planning Partnerships and similar partnerships outwith Scotland.
- It is important to acknowledge that officers within a partnership are not used to considering their results (data) to this degree and that the effectiveness of good performance management needs to be underlined if this is not a current part of the culture and ethos of the partnership.

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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.

