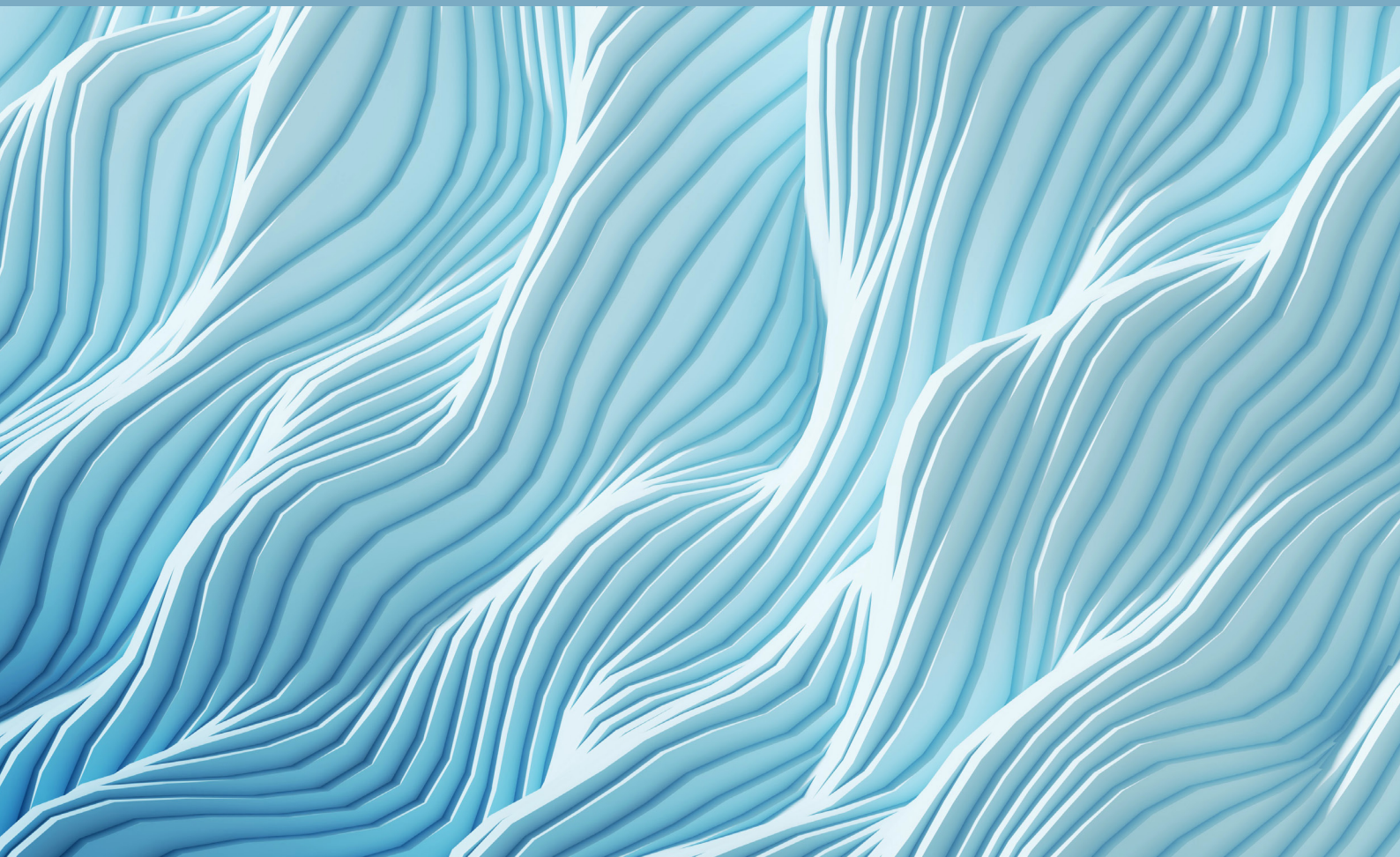




Glasgow Child Poverty Programme: Community Planning, Glasgow's Community Plan and the Performance Framework



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Ingredients for success for Glasgow



- ◆ Revitalising governance structures, such as the Community Planning Partnership, to work together, focused on a single priority - “child poverty is not on the agenda; it is the agenda”.
- ◆ Supporting all policy areas/ services to better understand how their work contributes to the single priority
- ◆ Development of a Performance Framework that is focused on one priority area and focuses on impact
- ◆ Leadership buy-in, and appetite to measure things differently

What challenge is this work trying to address?

- ◆ There was a shared understanding across partners that **the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) structure needed to be revitalised**, with partners recognising the infrastructure as “quite complex and not terribly effective”. Historically, the model relied on quarterly meetings to make services more joined up, but for many, this approach did not work, leading to cycles of “start again and try something different”.
- ◆ Alongside the growth of the Programme, the timing was right to **refresh [Glasgow's Community Plan](#) (Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP)), which spans ten years, and revise its Performance Framework**. The previous LOIP had “too many priorities” which were difficult to measure meaningfully.
- ◆ **Changing practice requires changing accountability**: “You can say you’re going to do things differently... but if we’re still being held to account in the same frameworks, nothing’s actually going to change”. Public service reform and whole system change are “such a nebulous concept... to then talk about how you’re going to measure that, that’s really difficult”. This led to recognising the need for “a different way of understanding accountability around child poverty”.

The urgency of financial constraints has forced councils and other public services to confront the need for transformation: “We’re grappling with what our future looks like if we don’t change.”

What has this work focused on?

Community Planning and the Glasgow Community Plan

- ◆ In revitalising the CPP, Glasgow “re-jigged the way that the strategic elements of community planning work,” radically reducing the number of meetings and refocusing the Executive Board’s purpose: “It can’t just be a show and tell”. The emphasis is now on unlocking decisions, supporting delivery teams, and achieving the outcomes in the [Performance Framework](#) that is under development. The role of the CPP is to act as “that collective force that brings people together around a single priority,” learning and evolving together as they implement change.
- ◆ Adjustments to governance structures were driven by questions such as: “Where does our expertise sit? How do we make this community planning ecosystem dynamic?” These changes were rooted in the role of a multi-agency team, comprising community planning partners and third sector organisations, with the aim of enabling their work: “That’s what community planning’s got to be for”.
- ◆ The Child Poverty Programme’s influence, combined with the city’s experience during Covid, has brought a sense of purpose to the CPP, and has made it “indisputable and quite instinctive” to make child and family poverty the single priority. “It might have been regarded as quite a brave decision,” but it was widely supported. Enablers like transport, employability and community infrastructure all contribute to the overarching goal of reducing child and family poverty. The new [Community Plan](#) is a concise 10-page document focused on three approaches: place-based working, public service reform, and systems change.

The Performance Framework

- ◆ To support delivery of Glasgow’s Community Plan, Glasgow have been revising the CPP’s Performance Framework. “If we don’t articulate what success looks like... we’re not going to get anywhere”. The Framework is designed to support achieving more tangible outcomes through collaborative planning, guiding strategic decision making even when “difficult budget choices are required”, and supporting “capacity to take brave decisions”. It is also an impact framework, designed to highlight what areas of work are not effective or where there is duplication in which disinvestment needs to occur. The process itself was a form of systems change, requiring partners to collaborate closely and strengthen their collective approach.
- ◆ The draft Framework has six outcomes (sometimes described as five plus the overarching goal of reducing family poverty), and roughly 32 measures. The vision is for the Framework to be adopted across organisational, geographic and partnership levels in Glasgow, becoming a shared tool that drives coherent, long-term, system-focused action on child and family poverty.

What is the impact of this work so far? Why is it important for tackling child poverty through progressing public service reform?

City-wide focus on a single priority

Breaking down siloed working & strengthening collaboration

Provides the foundations for strategic decision-making and shifts in practice

Measuring things differently and shifting focus from performance to impact

Driving prevention and early intervention

- ◆ The focus on a single priority is leading to the emergence of a “really clear strategic framework” that helps guide decision-making, even when difficult budget choices are required. This has led to “much more strategic” conversations and a greater “capacity to take brave decisions”. In particular, focusing on understanding investment through a collective lens to focus on reducing child poverty through collective action.
- ◆ Moving to a single priority has led to significant internal work within the Council to break down siloed working and strengthen strategic leadership. “We’ve tried to be much more vocal and explicit about what it is we’re doing”, with the aim of ensuring that all staff understand that child poverty is “all of our work.”

It is vital to help staff see their “golden thread”—how their own role contributes to making a difference—and to make the Programme and Plan’s single priority real and relevant to everyone, and to increase ownership.

- ◆ The growing visibility and traction of the Performance Framework: “the fact that the Performance Framework has landed in so many different places is a success in and of itself”. Performance is now being discussed differently in strategic spaces. Rather than being seen as “just about filling in a spreadsheet”, it is being treated as something that should be “about impact rather than performance”.

- ◆ The challenges of working within electoral cycles, where priorities shift depending on “who’s in and how long they’re in for”, often leads to short-term work. Glasgow believe that the thinking behind the Framework can help “reshape how we invest our time across those cycles”.

Key learning



Re-thinking what we measure

- ◆ The Framework is essential because “if we continue to measure the things that we’ve always measured... we’re not going to be able to change”. Glasgow recognise they cannot fundamentally shift child poverty by “continuing to [direct] money at initiatives”, since many levers such as benefits and employment are limited or inaccessible for families. Real change requires “changing the way in which we deliver our services”.
- ◆ Partners agreed the Framework needed to be “quite different” from traditional reporting. It could not simply be “you give us your stats, and together we’ll make a beautiful report”. Instead, the aim was to show the “added value” of partners aligning behind a shared priority, and to understand “what difference can we make as a City when we put our collective weight behind a shared priority”.
- ◆ Previous measures focused on mitigation, which creates “no incentive to do anything different”. If organisations are only judged on “the number of people we support through mitigation”, they will continue to invest in more mitigation. A Framework that measures systems change, and prioritises early intervention and prevention, is therefore essential to drive a different response. Without it, “we won’t be able to demonstrate that we are actually doing something really, very different in Glasgow”.
- ◆ Previous or current performance metrics are often unreliable indicators of success for this kind of reform work; for example, child poverty rates, as these figures are “completely outside of [a local area’s] control and can be radically affected by government decisions”. Moreover, an over-reliance on metrics like KPIs risks narrowing understanding—using outcomes and key results can help “get a breadth of people to understand the sort of thing you’re looking to achieve as opposed to the specific measurable thing.”

Metrics are often chosen simply because they are the things that can be tangibly measured, rather than what we actually want to measure or what can be changed—for example, “how well we understood the needs of a local community” or “how good we were at joining up services”.

We should be measuring “how well we are helping people manage, not navigate the system” and “how well we are designing the system to make it easier to navigate.”

- ◆ If the purpose is tackling child poverty, “what’s the shift that we would [expect to] see” and “what are the questions that we would need answered to explain whether we’re seeing that shift?” After exploring these questions, only then did Glasgow explore potential measures, intentionally avoiding a default to existing datasets: “It had to come from what do we need to understand... are there existing measures, or do we need to identify new things?”.



The challenges of measuring the progress and impact of systems change

- ◆ Glasgow highlight the challenge of translating the ambition for public service reform into something workable. How to move from a compelling concept, which many partners support, to a practical system for measurement and communication that captures the complexity of reform, supports clarity, and remains meaningful for a broad range of partners and audiences?
- ◆ It can feel almost impossible to measure the progress and impact of systems change and reform in terms of the short and medium term because of its long-term ambitions. “We need to have some sort of measurement of short-term change at a systems level, which we currently don’t have, that guides us in this work. But we need to have the sensible measures of where, on a yearly basis, do we think we would see improvement...I think on both city and national side, it’s been like, right, this is the long term thing, but we need to agree some sort of metrics for [...] cracking progress and for accountability”.

Without clear measures, the risk is that this kind of reform work “does random sporadic things which are in themselves good” but simply “adds another layer” to an already fragmented system, rather than solving the underlying problem.

- ◆ Measuring the kinds of change within reform can feel intangible; for example, how to measure culture change within an organisation: “It could just be like a complete shift in culture...but we’ve never measured things like that before”.

- ◆ The Framework is not about simple attribution: "It wasn't about saying we will achieve this outcome if these measures go in the right direction". Instead, it provides "the best picture to describe the progress we're making", using quantitative and qualitative measures alongside narrative on practitioner and citizen experience.



Tensions between change processes and the "as is" system

- ◆ Embedded in the Framework is the hope to measure things differently. But this requires a move away from target-driven reporting that is often demanded from Elected Members, senior officials and national government. There is the risk of "slippage into old ways of working arising from demands" for rapid progress against targets that may not be realistic, or "from other strategic/operational logics that are at odds with transformational change".
- ◆ There continues to be a persistent gap between theory and practice. Although a revised Framework should, in theory, allow for greater funding flexibility, "the practicality really isn't". "Government still seeks detailed reporting" and are developing new performance frameworks, while several local areas, such as Glasgow, are "attempting to narrow the amount of performance reporting" into a single coherent plan.
- ◆ The Programme's broader evolving, flexible approach to funding, performance and accountability does not align with, for example, internal and external audit procedures that are conducted using traditional financial scrutiny methods. The work of the Programme becomes about "taking [auditors and other stakeholders on that journey as well and helping them] understand and adapt to the Programme's evolving approach to performance and accountability".
- ◆ Navigating overlapping performance demands within the "as is" system is challenging, with multiple other areas of the system developing their own performance frameworks which, depending on the service, can often be focused on external measures, such as inspection frameworks. This reinforces why future engagement with inspection bodies is essential. Although the new Performance Framework will not eliminate inspection, Glasgow believe "it could surely have some impact" on taking a joined-up approach.



Pace, scale and collaboration

- ◆ It's not possible to do everything all at once; this work takes time, and the scope and focus will evolve. There are challenges in simultaneously “trying to do the thing and think about connections”. Glasgow emphasised that these challenges are “normal and expected” throughout the complex, iterative process of designing a system-wide Performance Framework.
- ◆ Colleagues often found it difficult to engage with the development process for the Framework, given their own delivery pressures. There were challenges in early articulation and communication of this work as an iterative process, particularly in “juggling multiple, overlapping messages: explaining what the framework is, why it is different, why “you don’t need all this stuff in here”, why citizen voice matters, and why the focus is on impact rather than attribution. With “so many different audiences”, this [can become] overwhelming”.
- ◆ There are specific skills needed “to be working in an innovation space” and the resilience required when things evolve unpredictably.

Future opportunities

- ◆ The need for citizens to be able to see how the Framework evidences change. Glasgow hope residents will recognise that “using the measures, the approaches, the narratives” generated through the Framework enables them to see “the changes that are happening in the city”.
- ◆ The ultimate ambition is that the Framework “becomes the way of working in Glasgow”, and guides decision making at all levels, from city-wide strategy to neighbourhood investment, and across organisations. This requires deeper involvement from City partners to ensure commitment to the Framework for the CPP.
- ◆ The aim for the next stage is to engage with inspection bodies such as Audit Scotland, the Care Commission and the Scottish Housing Regulator, so partners feel the Framework is “a core part of their work, rather than something that they have to do over and above”.

Notes:

1. All quotes are from Glasgow Programme and Scottish Government colleagues.
2. This document is part of a wider briefing pack.

Contact us

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