

National Colloquium on Public Service Workforce Development

Summary Report

This report gives an account of the National Colloquium on Public Service Workforce Development, a process during 2012 that was designed to further the recommendations of the Christie Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services in Scotland.

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A full set of documents relating to the National Colloquium, including meeting agendas and reports, attendance lists, project proposals and other outputs, is available at:

<https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/group/publicservicesworkforcedevelopmentworkshopsandnationalcolloquium>

Introduction and Background

The Christie Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services in Scotland concluded that the current model of public service delivery in Scotland was unsustainable. The Commission's final report made recommendations about how public services in Scotland should be developed and experienced in the future.

The National Colloquium on Public Service Workforce Development (hereafter the National Colloquium) began the work of implementing those of Christie's recommendations that relate to workforce development. Other recommendations arising from the Christie report are being progressed by different groups working across publicly funded services in Scotland.

The National Colloquium was overseen by a reference group of sponsor organisations: the Scottish Government, Scotland's Futures Forum, The Goodison Group, the David Hume Institute, Skills Development Scotland, the Scottish Social Services Council, and NHS Education for Scotland.

NHS Education for Scotland provided administrative support to the National Colloquium and co-ordinated the activities of an operational group with members drawn from the sponsor organisations. The operational group also engaged a professional facilitator to support its planned events.

The National Colloquium comprised five main events; a launch day at the Scottish Parliament (23rd January 2012), three workshops (20 February 2012 at the Parliament, 25 May 2012 at Scotland Colleges in Stirling and 14 September 2012 at Aberdeen University), and a final National Colloquium event at the Scottish Parliament (26 November 2012).

In addition, there were regular meetings of the operational group and, latterly, a series of focus groups to work up the proposals emerging from the National Colloquium.

During the process, the Workforce Development Group of the Scottish Leaders Forum offered to play a role in taking forward the outputs of the National Colloquium. At the final event in November, the Workforce Development Group was given formal responsibility for progressing this work and, in turn, secured the commitment and support of a range of organisations across publicly funded services.

The National Colloquium handed on to the Workforce Development Group two complementary strands of work;

- **Public Services Learning Scotland**, a collaborative learning space for those engaged in publicly funded services; and
- **Community Asset Workforce Development**, a common set of values and principles to guide the transformation of relationships between service providers and those who experience services.

These two strands of work are being progressed during 2013 by the Workforce Development Group, reporting initially to the Scottish Leaders Forum.

The National Colloquium purpose, aims and objectives

The initial purposes of the Operational Group were to:

- engage senior figures from as diverse as possible a range of publicly funded services in Scotland in order to tackle the challenges set down by Christie in the area of workforce development.
- deliver a process for dialogue, action planning and commitment-building that was qualitatively different from habitual forms of exchange (for this reason, the unusual term *Colloquium* was deliberately chosen to describe the process).
- devise, test and pass on a sustainable “project” that would deliver changes to the way public service workforce development is delivered and experienced in Scotland.

The stated aims and objectives of the process as follows.

Aims

- 1) To bring together Scottish Public Service organisations to determine a collective strategy for workforce development based on partnership working, efficient implementation and quality of provision.
- 2) To develop an exemplar workforce development initiative that would serve to inform future workforce development activities in the Public Service across Scotland.

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- 3) To provide a forum for Scottish public service organisations to explore and determine models of integration capable of supporting workforce development in more efficient and effective ways.

Objectives

To bring together senior members representing public service organisations in Scotland to:

- 1) provide a Scottish public service forum for developing and agreeing the strategic direction of workforce development practices, infrastructure, resources and planning.
- 2) address specific issues impacting on the rationalisation of workforce development in Scotland.
- 3) agree a pilot exemplar project which in a practical way would bring together public service bodies in new and innovative ways to support workforce development in Scotland.

Process

Briefing Event

23 January 2012 at the Scottish Parliament

35 Chief Executives and other senior figures in publicly-funded services attended the briefing event. The event set out the purposes, aims and objectives of the National Colloquium and invited discussion of them.

The key messages to emerge from this event were:

- high level vision, strategy and commitment are essential.
- attention must be paid to appropriate governance and to changing the way resources are distributed.
- the process needs clear impetus; it shouldn't be a solution in search of a problem.
- there needs to be a focus on pressing need and on wicked problems around which workforce development could be themed.
- potential solutions should not be over-ambitious, bureaucratic or involve new structures (quangos).

- the landscape of publicly-funded service delivery is complex and involves a large number of different kinds of organisations: the outcomes of the Colloquium must reflect this and be inclusive of this wide range of organisations.
- workforce development is enacted in both formal settings and informal; through courses and through internal processes such as appraisal and line management: both domains are in play.
- there is already considerable evidence of collaboration in practice across publicly funded services - the Colloquium should not attempt to re-invent these nor to claim that it is beginning from a blank sheet.
- the Joint Services College was cited as a specific example of a process developed to meet an urgent need in the military context.

Workshop 1 – “The What and the How”

20 February 2012 at the Scottish Parliament

56 senior figures from across publicly-funded services attended the workshop. As a stimulus for discussion, a range of examples were presented of collaborative workforce development in action. Delegates then engaged in small discussion groups.

The key messages to emerge from this workshop were:

- existing models should be built upon.
- there are local, regional and national dimensions to these issues and collaboration should take place at each of these levels, as appropriate.
- there should be a common vision, value set and understanding of publicly funded service delivery.
- we should avoid past failures in this area and know what were the factors contributing to that.
- current structures and models (e.g. commissioning and outsourcing) may be unhelpful and encourage silo working, blame, short termism and may disincentivise collaboration.

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- there should be involvement of a wide range of those involved in delivering publicly funded services, irrespective of the sector in which they are located (including private).
- there could be a common core of capabilities, skills and values across publicly funded services, around which training and education in the delivery of services might be integrated.
- there should be an assets-based approach
- there could be a joint staff training college
- there could be a learning framework for the skills required to deliver publicly funded services effectively

***Workshop 2 – “Workforce Development: resources, infrastructure and facilities”
25th May 2012 at Scotland’s Colleges, Stirling***

58 senior figures from publicly-funded services attended this workshop.

Sir Harry Burns, Chief Medical Officer, was invited to stimulate discussion with a presentation setting out the case for an assets-based approach to public services. In discussion groups, three emerging projects were considered, together with an overarching theme of resource distribution. The three prospective projects were:

- a staff college,
- a needs-led (assets-based) approach: and
- a learning framework for public service capabilities.

The key messages from this workshop were:

- there must be clarity about what problems proposed projects are intended to fix.
- projects must have the potential to improve service delivery, enhance mutual understanding and reduce costs.
- the needs-led project is so fundamental that it must underpin the others.
- cultural and organisational change will be required to bring about a needs-led approach to workforce development.

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- projects should build upon what works well and not duplicate, replicate nor add further bureaucracy.
- projects should learn from similar initiatives that have failed in the past.
- a college has potential to be a place where information can be shared across services.
- college and framework proposals might facilitate career flexibility.
- any proposed college should be user-led and focused on an agreed area of user interest (e.g. early years or older people).
- need to understand what we mean by a framework. Qualifications? Skills and behaviours? Evaluation? Accreditation?
- there should be a twin approach to any learning framework; ethos & values-led and practically focused.
- is there scope for a public services 'licence to practise': What are the skills and ethos needed to improve publicly funded services?
- we need to know how much resource is deployed where in the system and for what purposes: once we know that we can identify what is duplicated and what can be shared.
- work from and extend existing good examples of resource sharing.
- we must ensure necessary changes to governance, leadership, strategy and vision of participating organisations.
- recognise cultures and boundaries; when to respect them and when to challenge them.
- we need clarity about whose development we are concerned with: top, middle, front line; specialist, generalist, back-office, user-facing, all.
- we need clarity about who will commission and supply formal development and how: what will be the respective involvement of in-house development resources working together; colleges and universities; service users.

After the second workshop, it became clear that it was highly desirable to involve delegates in further shaping of the three proposals. Focus groups were therefore set up to work more intensively on each theme and to report back to the operational group.

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Meantime, the Scottish Leaders Forum, via its Workforce Development Group, expressed an interest in taking forward the proposals beyond the lifetime of the Colloquium process, thereby ensuring their sustainability. The outputs from the process so far, including the focus groups, were therefore further considered by the Scottish Leaders Forum. The Group proposed to take forward the Assets-based project and the College proposal (although renamed Public Services Learning Scotland) and to subsume the learning framework into Public Services Learning Scotland.

Workshop 3 – “Progressing and resourcing projects”

14 September 2012 at Aberdeen University

48 senior figures from across publicly-funded services attended this event.

Professor David Bell, economist, provided a contextual stimulus on the social and fiscal challenges facing publicly-funded services. Discussion groups were invited to critique the emergent proposals and to consider how organisations could commit to them.

Key messages emerging from this workshop were:

- we need a sense of urgency, a burning platform, to incentivise deep change.
- we need courageous leadership at all levels, from politicians to strategic executives and managers.
- collaborative learning must be transferred into practice.
- collaborative learning must have an impact on communities.
- an assets approach implies accessing the un-tapped potential of both our staff and the communities who experience services.
- a greater involvement of communities at the earliest possible stage will ensure more relevant targeted outcomes.
- community leadership should contribute to the development of a new public service culture and new expectations: solutions should be embedded in communities so that they can take ownership.
- we will have to change expectations to get rid of the dependency culture and move towards a greater sense of self-reliance and responsibility.

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- use techniques such as open-source learning and action research to engage with communities.
- we must build reflection and engagement into people's jobs.
- front line staff and their managers must learn to work differently so that decisions are taken at the front line.
- public service needs a value proposition to which staff are recruited and trained.
- public education needs to complement this process so those who experience services understand what is changing.
- go to where this is happening already and learn from what is working, and what has not worked.
- for collaboration to succeed, there needs to be a pooling of human, social and physical resources, including knowledge resources.
- there are issues of competence, risk and safety in the assets-based approach; these must be addressed.
- risk assessment for these propositions should focus on the risks of not creating the collaborative model.
- we must build in sustainability from the outset – do not rely on enthusiastic, committed individuals: it's more a case of getting the systems and approaches right from the start.

The National Colloquium on Public Service Workforce Development

26 November 2012 at the Scottish Parliament

101 Senior figures from a wide range of publicly funded services attended the National Colloquium.

Members of the Scottish Leaders Forum presented progress reports on the two ongoing projects and invited delegates to pledge themselves and their organisations to each of the projects.

Key messages emerging from this event were:

- broad support for the projects.

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- a number of pledges of support to each project, to disseminate outcomes, to further shape thinking and to serve as collaborative partners, hosts and pilot-sites.
- a range of commitments to use networks, existing collaborations, community engagement processes, physical resources, expertise and budgets in new ways to support the outcomes of the Colloquium.
- need for an evidence-base that these are effective approaches.
- need to assure that all relevant organisations are aware and kept informed.
- need to engage the HR/OD communities within and across organisations.
- need to ensure that any ethos & values base is used as a tool in recruitment and career progression.

Outputs and Outcomes

(Outputs in this context are understood to be resources that people could use; Outcomes are understood to be changes in practice or in knowledge and skills).

The operational group considered carefully what were the expected outcomes for different stakeholders in the process, recognising that the priorities of each may differ. It also recognised that the National Colloquium was a stimulus to public service change and many of its desired outcomes will only be measurable in the long term.

The process provided the following outputs.

- A structured space where a diverse range of publicly funded organisations could come together to deepen their understanding of the implications of the Christie report for workforce development.
- Momentum (political, intellectual and practical) for the agenda of a more collaborative, assets-based approach to workforce development.
- Engagement of a diverse range of delegates with practical knowledge and experience of collaborative and assets-based approaches, both successful and not, and with access to the lessons learned from those experiences.
- Project proposals that could be taken forward by organisations working together.

The process may have provided the following outcomes.

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- Greater understanding of the need for collaborative and assets-based approaches to workforce development.
- Greater confidence and enthusiasm to engage in collaborative and assets-based approaches.
- Greater mutual understanding between participating organisations of their own and others' place in the system of public services in Scotland.
- Greater political will to collaborate over workforce development.

Reflections and learning points

Any intervention into a complex system is challenging. Simplistic solutions to complex problems invariably result in unintended consequences. The operational group therefore chose to use an emergent process to stimulate the whole system of publicly-funded services in Scotland. Participants were invited to engage with the dilemmas presented and to generate workable ways forward. The early parts of the process were deliberately divergent, inviting the widest possible range of views and stimulating understanding with provocative inputs. Later, the process converged on the most promising ideas that had been generated.

It was naturally difficult to foresee how the National Colloquium would proceed and what outcomes it would generate. However, the operational group did contain appropriately robust voices and the concern not to waste the opportunity was ever-present.

Positive learning points include:

- to attract the widest possible diversity of delegates, it was important to use all the networks available to the operational group to supplement general invitations to participate.
- it was important to recognise and engage with what is already being done and to resist an assumption that the agenda is entirely new.
- the involvement of the Scottish Leaders Forum was an important (and unpredicted) step towards sustainability.

Points for reflection include:

- the discussions remained conceptual for a long time and risked becoming cyclic: this may have prevented a necessary focus on practicality.
- attempts to get delegates to consider questions of resource distribution and the possibility of giving up resource did not succeed as well as might have been wished.
- it was more difficult than expected to agree upon projects with a clear practical outcome: this may have been because of the strongly aspirational nature of many of the workshops.
- it would have been helpful to have been able to map where existing resources for workforce development are located across publicly-funded organisations: after conversations with Audit Scotland, it was clear that this information is not known centrally: a project to gather this information would be extremely useful.
- it would have been helpful to engage with service-users and communities during this process, particularly in light of the strong emergent emphasis on assets-based approaches to workforce development.

This summary report has been prepared by Alastair Work, Colloquium Facilitator on behalf of the Operational Group.