

Report - to date - of the Strategic Public Social Partnership (PSP) Model in Scotland

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Research Findings Summary

Background

This Research Findings Summary¹ presents the findings of the research commissioned by the Scottish Government Third Sector Unit to explore the progress, to date, of the Strategic Public Social Partnership (PSP) Model in Scotland - “A strategic partnering arrangement which involves the Third Sector earlier and more deeply in the design and commissioning of public services.”

Therefore, Public Social Partnership (PSP) refers to partnership working at strategic, development and delivery levels, involving collaboration between actors from different sectors of the economy – in this case from the public and Third Sectors in the main – to design services appropriate to the needs of services users.

In Scotland, from 2006 onwards, a number of pilot projects were established to test procurement opportunities allowing Third Sector organisations to meaningfully contribute to the design and the improvement of public services. As part of wider attempts to grow the ‘enterprising’ (or trading) part of the Third Sector, through attempting to offer longer-term financial security for social enterprises, and, indeed, improving public service provision, a significant amount of investment was directed towards this aim.

¹ **Full Report** can be found at: (www.gov.scot/strategicpublicsocialpartnership-report). Alongside the detailed findings, this report includes a literature review focused on co-production in public services and alternative models of Public Social Partnerships in the UK and internationally, and details of the research methodology and list of references.

Three Change Funds were also created by the Scottish Government to help drive a shift towards preventative spending by promoting partnership working between Third and public sector organisations (and the private sector) in delivering new services in three areas: early years, criminal justice and care for older people.

Further, the Scottish Government's Third Sector Unit supported (investment of £2,759,368 since 2012) the development of six further Strategic Public Social Partnerships (Strategic PSP) to be involved in the redesign and delivery of 'new' services in specific strategic sectors. Alongside this investment, the Strategic PSPs also benefited from extensive support from the Ready for Business consortium² through the Developing Markets for Third Sector Providers contract³.

This Research Findings Summary focuses specifically on the learning derived from the experience of the six Strategic PSPs, outlined below:

- **HMP Low Moss – Prisoner Support Pathway.** Established in 2012, this Strategic PSP aims to develop and test a new approach to improving the throughcare support of offenders serving a short-term sentence;
- **NHS Lothian.** Established in 2013 with the initial aim of re-designing rehabilitation services, this Strategic PSP now includes five distinct projects each with a social partnership focus aimed at re-designing living well care, using sport to address health inequalities, and re-designing a specialist service for people who have experienced complex trauma;
- **East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) – Supported Living Services.** Established in 2012, this Strategic PSP aimed to review and re-design supported living services for people with learning disabilities;
- **The Life I Want (TLIW)** was established in 2012. This Strategic PSP was established to increase the voice of adults with learning disabilities

² <http://readyforbusiness.org/>

³ Awarded to the RfB Consortium by the Scottish Government from November 2011 to March 2017.

in planning and designing health and social care services, and promoting awareness about adult learning needs;

- **Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) – Community Transport** was established in 2013, with the aim of developing and testing demand-responsive transport services and building the capacity and capability of the community transport sector; and
- **Elevate** was established in 2016. Elevate aims to increase employment and training opportunities for people in recovery from drug and/or alcohol dependence.

Research Findings

This research explored four key questions, as follows:

1. Does the model 'work'?
2. Have the Strategic PSPs achieved the outcomes they set out to achieve?
3. Was the Ready for Business support useful to adopt the model, deliver the outcomes and develop beyond?
4. What are the lessons learned?

These question will now be answered in turn before considerations for future development are discussed:

1. Does the model 'work'?

The evidence suggests that the model exemplified by the six Strategic PSPs in Scotland 'works' as far as creating and developing new partnerships is concerned.

The areas of positive impact include:

- The designing and testing of pilots has enabled the Strategic PSPs to collectively develop a pathway to more collaborative practices between sectors.
- Shared appreciation between the host organisations and the partners, particularly of the effort required to drive partnerships forward, have contributed to improvements in the standard of services.

- Relationships among partners (public sector and Third Sector organisations and between Third Sector organisations) have improved generally.
- Awareness has been raised about the PSP model itself, and knowledge has improved around collaborative and inclusive ways of working - while sustainability was considered to be a thorny issue (see below), the PSP model is now widely recognised among various partners in the public and Third Sectors.

However, it has been less effective in enabling changed ways of working to become mainstreamed (which is a common issue shared by many alternative PSP models across Europe). The areas where challenges to success remain relate to:

- Power imbalances between public sector and Third Sector organisations can make meaningful collaboration difficult - many participants lamented the struggle in establishing equal relationships because of the perceived power differential between Third Sector providers and public sector commissioners. For most, the leadership has been acquired by public sector organisations.
- If top-level commitment and leadership is not apparent this can detrimentally impact upon success.
- Budgetary pressures and constraints have affected the work of the PSP model, creating difficulties in establishing collaborative and transparent settings, and in the context of austerity, it is challenging for public sector authorities to explore how to pool and redirect budgets, particularly if the emphasis is on saving money - budget priority-setting can often be a politically charged process.
- Although a short-term collaborative environment has been reached, a long-term collaborative way of working has not yet been developed, therefore whilst the model has been effective in developing partnerships, it has been less effective in creating the type of changes that allow services to become mainstreamed – variation in understanding the principles and scope of the PSP model across the six partnerships has meant that the model has developed alternatives to, or additional parts of mainstream

provision, but rarely involved services moving from piloting to mainstreaming.

- Therefore, long-term sustainability still represents a major challenge with few of the partners claiming to have fully re-designed, tendered and commissioned newly-created services. Sustainability needs to be identified right at the start of the process, with a view to ring-fencing funding from the outset.

2. Have the Strategic PSPs achieved the outcomes they set out to achieve?

All Strategic PSPs reported that they had achieved their initial objectives and delivered the outcomes they set out to achieve.

It should be noted that there is considerable variation among the Strategic PSPs in the stages of development, geography and sector contexts, and different understandings of the Strategic PSP model: some have focused on the Strategic PSP as an entity in its own right rather than a process of change, with different rationales as the basis for development, for example, some have been established to design new services, while others to rethink existing services and to increase the voice of service users in public services.

The research identified the following mechanisms that have supported the achievement of outcomes:

- Leadership capacity appeared to be an important mechanism enabling each partnership to meet their objectives/outcomes. The presence of a dedicated person (often paid through Scottish Government investment) brought guidance, ambition and enthusiasm to each partnership. Where partners have had previous experience of working with the Third Sector, this has facilitated the understanding of diverse organisational needs and thus enabled those needs to be met.
- Having the space to try things out and test new ideas was considered to be crucial to the process of re-developing services more effectively, enabling the construction of a space for piloting ideas, with fear of failure reduced,

allowing for trust among partners to be developed and nourished - having the financial support to experiment was important to engendering feelings of trust.

- The development of governance structures based upon rules and a process reflecting the input of all partners were recognised as key in developing the partnership.

However, the research found there were challenges to involving small organisations and evidence of varying degrees of service-user involvement among the six Strategic PSPs - ranging from consultation to actual leadership by Third Sector organisations. The research also found that spaces of experimentation can generate tensions as indicated by stakeholders who participated as they lamented a lack of clear goals and outcomes. In many cases the experimentation was not taken forward.

It should also be noted that several unintended outcomes were also reported, such as increased organisational learning both within organisations (mostly Third Sector providers) and among partner organisations.

3. Was the Ready for Business support useful to adopt the model, deliver the outcomes and develop beyond?

In all cases contact with representatives of the Ready for Business (RfB) Consortium was essential to the initial adoption of the PSP model. RfB also provided a level of 'handholding' management support to the Strategic PSP leads and managers to formalise the partnership, operationalise the ideas to be piloted and overcome the difficulties of joint working. RfB was seen to be supportive in brokering difficult internal relationships with senior management; offering legal and practical advice on such issues as project management and in relation to commissioning; and enabling the partnerships to access further funding opportunities.

This formalisation of partnership working - establishing a unique mission, vision, business plan, logic model and communication plan - as well as day-to-day support,

brokerage of difficult internal and external (to the Strategic PSPs) relationships was effectively delivered by the RfB Consortium.

While the recognised need for RfB diminished as the partnerships matured, the availability of a direct contact (even by phone) was recognised as important. However, there was no evidence identified which might indicate that knowledge was being shared/embedded within organisations beyond the specific Strategic PSP members (such as, for example, the training of public officials/providers in co-production techniques). This represented a key missed opportunity for embedding learning in a wider context, rather than simply providing an ad hoc contribution.

4. What are the lessons learned?

Ultimately, the Strategic PSP model has worked well and has been implemented successfully on the basis of how it was initially conceived, and the Scottish Government investment was necessary in order to facilitate this (direct funding and through supporting dedicated hands-on RfB support).

The model has enabled the development of a space for different partners to come together and begin a learning process, adjusting practices and attempting to change ingrained ways of working. In the view of most partners, the Strategic PSP model has been an important contribution to recognising the value of more-collaborative and inclusive ways of working.

However, collaboration requires time and effort for those involved and to change ways of working. Leadership is important in sustaining the development of the Strategic PSP model, and in future, clearer targets would be helpful, such as identifying commissioning targets from the outset.

The Strategic PSP model has arguably worked best as part of a wider push towards co-production, for example where changes in legislation have helped to create a conducive environment (e.g. the personalisation of services agenda). This is not to say this would have happened without governmental intervention in testing out this model of collaborative working. Outside of this context, as noted the Strategic PSP work was rather seen as additional to mainstream provision.

The evidence suggests that the Strategic PSP model has served as a useful test-bed for piloting new approaches to partnership working. The model has enabled the capacity and credibility of (some) Third Sector providers to be enhanced. It has improved relationships among partners, promoting collaboration in different sectors and quality services (new or re-designed) to be developed to reflect the needs of their users.

Considerations for future developments

While the experiences of the six Strategic PSPs have provided positive outcomes, work is still required to more deeply embed this philosophy of working into the policy and service design and delivery infrastructure. The opportunity now presents itself for the Scottish Government to build upon this achievement ensuring there is enough understanding of the model, rules of engagement and procurement legislation to 'normalise' this way of collaborative working - mainstreaming such an approach would indicate that Scotland is at the international forefront of new approaches to embedding the co-production of public service design and delivery.

Indeed, a distinct 'Scottish Approach' to policy has been constructed based upon the principles of collaboration, co-production and partnership. This is clearly reflected in the integration of environmental legislation, health and social care provision and in the Community Empowerment Act. The legislative framework across Scotland also talks strongly about collaboration and a distinct approach to human rights. Procurement legislation has also changed to reflect the need to shift risk more equally to help level 'playing fields', and pushes for 'sustainable procurement' involving social, environmental and economic outcomes in procurement.

The research has also evidenced that collaborative working needs sufficient time and resources to work and considers that the Scottish Government should now provide further strategic leadership by encouraging more interdepartmental working and collaboration across different Divisions.

Further, developing trusting relationships and sharing learning have been evidenced as crucial elements in facilitating balanced partnership working.

Providing strategic awareness training to senior managers/commissioners within the public sector appears a possible way to overcome challenges and to promote the Strategic PSP model as the future way of working.

It is important to ensure that all that has been learned so far on how to implement a model of collaborative working is not lost. The research considers that commitment to funding should continue, and that the Scottish Government can act as an international leader by embedding collaborative practices that mainstream partnership working between sectors, which will be of ultimate benefit to the people of Scotland.



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