

Policy Briefing 06:

Community Planning Partnerships

A Strategic Delivery Agent



The commitment to the co-ordinated effective delivery of local services has been the mainstay of consecutive Scottish Executives and Governments since devolution in 1997. The main policy driver for enhanced Community Planning Partnerships came through the introduction of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003; the act states that the process of Community Planning is to be;

"... a process ... whereby public services in the area of the local authority are planned and provided after consultation and (on-going) co-operation ... among all public bodies ... and with community bodies..."

With its main aims being:

- Making sure people and communities are genuinely engaged in the decisions made on public services which affect them; allied to
- A commitment from organisations to work together, not apart, in providing better public services.

There are two further key principles in addition to the two main aims outlined above:

- Community Planning as the key over-arching partnership framework helping to co-ordinate other initiatives and partnerships and where necessary acting to rationalise and simplify a cluttered landscape.
- The ability of Community Planning to improve the connection between national priorities and those at regional, local and neighbourhood levels

Background

Community Planning before the introduction of the Local Government in Scotland Act was a less structured entity with limited powers. With the introduction of the act in 2003 additional of statutory duties have been included;

- Local authorities - to initiate, facilitate and maintain Community Planning;
- Core partners (Enterprise Networks, National Health Service, Police, Fire and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport - Regional Transport Partnerships from April 2006) to participate in Community Planning; and
- Scottish Ministers to promote and encourage Community Planning (including Communities Scotland's participation in Community Planning at local level, though this has now been subsumed within the Scottish Government).

Representation and Expectation: It is widely recognised that the voluntary sector as a service providers and as representatives of specific areas of interest can and will have a major impact on Community Planning Partnerships; the Government Advice note states,

"The voluntary sector plays a key role in involving communities and excluded groups, particularly at the local level. Local authorities and other Community Planning partners should ensure their skills are fully utilised (see Advice Note 5: Effective Community Engagement for further detail)."

Nevertheless, the reality on the ground can often be difficult territory for the Voluntary Sector, more often than not representation is piecemeal and limited to certain high profile and lobbyist led organisations who are not representative of the sector, to compound this there is often limited feedback to the local sector and even less ability to influence sector representatives and policy. It is within the authority of the Community Planning Partnership to appoint a voluntary sector representative though this is not statutory; the guidance to the Act stipulates merely that

"Local authorities, in their initiation of the Community Planning process, should consult and co-operate with a wide range of interests..."

Yet with an agreed approach and a robust engagement framework, Community Planning can be hugely effective. The key for full voluntary sector representation and effective engagement is for the local sector to agree common strategic objectives and to play a crucial role in the engagement process, it would be beneficial to have a local voluntary sector intermediary organisation to facilitate this process, ensuring impartiality and reducing undue influence. This type of approach will enable the voluntary sector to make Community Planning local committed to the 8 **Principles of Effective Engagement with Communities**;

- Commitment – demonstrating commitment to effective engagement
- Outcome orientated – meaningful and tangible outcomes
- Appropriate level – engagement that makes sense
- Recognising diversity – acknowledging the range of individuals and organisations
- Independence- Recognising that the most effective representation of community interests is likely to be via community bodies which are independent and accountable to their communities
- Learning lessons -Increasing their own knowledge and skills to successfully engage community bodies
- Support - Ensuring that support is provided for informal learning and community action focusing on the real issues affecting people's lives
- Reaching out - Reaching out to socially excluded communities and to groups, such as people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and young people

Localism: CPP delivery and impact

- Reducing bureaucracy
- Reducing duplication
- Promoting improvements in partnership working
- Enhancing direct service delivery
- Allow for citizen participation in public policy design, governance, and decision making processes
- Increasing accountability of service delivery agents e.g. local authorities, emergency services
- Promoting innovation in service delivery

Implications: Practical implications at local level

- Greater scrutiny of local budgets
- Increased partnership working through Community Planning Partnerships & Local Authorities
- Services based on the ability to deliver with maximum impact
- Changes in the way local procurement is undertaken
- Direct community representation at CPP Board
- Direct Voluntary Sector representation at CHP Board level

Restructuring:

In 2009 the Community Planning Partnership of West Dunbartonshire underwent restructuring to better enable it to focus on its role as facilitator and catalyst to bring partners together to achieve common objectives within the Community Planning process.

At the same time the Scottish Government re-organised the way in which money is distributed to provide support to the voluntary sector: the "Interface Model" came into being and, in West Dunbartonshire, WDCVS has been tasked to fulfil this function.

There is now an opportunity to develop and use this model to fulfil the sector's desire and aspiration to be fully engaged with the Community Planning process. Voluntary organisations have the opportunity to establish linkages with the relevant partners via the thematic groups of the CPP.

In the first instance the existing networks (Voluntary Health Sector Organisations Network and Independent Local Social Economy Network) will enable the exchange of information and provide points of contact with the Community Planning Partnership. From this starting position the interface model will be developed.

Read more: <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/community-planning/>

What can your organisation do?

Contact us for more information about your Local Voluntary Health Sector Network and get information on how to be a part of transforming the opportunities for the Third Sector in our communities.