
**Scoping Report from the Aberdeenshire CPP
and What Works Scotland's Collaborative
Learning Day on 8 December 2015:**

What does it mean to put 'Christie' into action?

James Henderson and Nick Bland



What Works Scotland (WWS) aims to improve the way local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service development and reform. We are working with Community Planning Partnerships involved in the design and delivery of public services (Aberdeenshire, Fife, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire) to:

- learn what is and what isn't working in their local area
- encourage collaborative learning with a range of local authority, business, public sector and community partners
- better understand what effective policy interventions and effective services look like
- promote the use of evidence in planning and service delivery
- help organisations get the skills and knowledge they need to use and interpret evidence
- create case studies for wider sharing and sustainability

A further nine areas are working with us to enhance learning, comparison and sharing. We will also link with international partners to effectively compare how public services are delivered here in Scotland and elsewhere. During the programme, we will scale up and share more widely with all local authority areas across Scotland.

WWS brings together the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, other academics across Scotland, with partners from a range of local authorities and:

- Glasgow Centre for Population Health
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland
- Improvement Service
- Inspiring Scotland
- IRISS (Institution for Research and Innovation in Social Services)
- Joint Improvement Team
- NHS Health Scotland
- NHS Education for Scotland
- SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)

This is one of a series of papers published by What Works Scotland to share evidence, learning and ideas about public service reform. This paper relates in particular to the **Collaborative Action Research** workstream.

James Henderson is a research associate and **Nick Bland** a Co-Director for What Works Scotland; both are based at the University of Edinburgh and working with Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership.

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Introduction

This report 'scopes' or explores the discussions across this Collaborative Learning Day as 'we' – a group of approximately 40 people from public, third/community and research sectors – sought to think further about *both* taking forward *and* deepening our understanding of public service reform in Aberdeenshire; a public service reform informed by the [Christie Commission's 2011 report](#).

There are three different 'voices' active within this report:

- the central voice of experience in Aberdeenshire through discussions on the Day
- the contextual voice that introduces and informed the work on the Day
- some emerging thoughts from [What Works Scotland](#) (WWS) on 'what next?'

This is very much the beginning of perhaps several 'conversations' and inquiries – in the broadest sense – during 2016 involving different parts of the CPP, the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and the third/community sector. Appendix 2 illustrates WWS' collaborative inquiry cycle of three phases – preparing the ground (scoping); considering evidence; and testing actions. This scoping report can then help to support a range of focused conversations and inquiries that seek to inform developing public service reform in Aberdeenshire.

The Context of our Discussions

Introduces key elements of the Christie Report and the Scottish Government's broad approach to public service reform since 2011.

The [2011 Christie Commission](#) reported to the Scottish Government on public service reform and outlined the key challenges faced, namely:

- public spending as highly constrained – reducing even – for the foreseeable future;
- demographic change: a growing and 'ageing' population in Scotland;
- stubborn inequalities: economic, social and health inequalities;
- 'failure demand': with services 'picking-up the pieces', instead of preventing inequalities.

Its proposed approach to developing solutions can be summarised as four interweaving narratives:

- *Participation/People* – service-user, staff and community empowerment;
- *Partnership* – local partnerships working towards social and economic outcomes;
- *Prevention/Place* – local services that prevent inequalities and promote equalities;
- *Performance* – focused on service improvement, cost efficiency and accountability.

Scottish Government has drawn on the 'Christie' narrative to direct policy and legislation including:

Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014: this puts health and social care integration on a statutory footing and focuses on local partnerships (localities), prevention and health inequalities.

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015: reforms Community Planning Partnerships including the development of Local Outcomes Improvement Plans (LOIPs); a focus on local partnerships

(localities¹) and tackling social and economic disadvantage. It also supports opportunities for the community sector e.g. community right-to-buy; asset transfer; and participation in service provision.

Our discussions on the Day: *there were four discussions – (1) ‘putting Christie into action’; (2) effective partnership-working; (3) community participation and preventing inequality; and (4) potential next steps and actions – see Appendix 1 for more information on the programme.*

About 40 people took part including staff with strategic, development, service providing and ‘community-facing’ roles – and those working in and across:

- *the public sector:* central and local community planning; public health; health and social care; community learning; community economic development; and waste management.
- *the third/community sector:* inc. Aberdeen Voluntary Action and the Rural Partnerships;
- *the research sector:* WWS research team, public health.

Discussion 1: What does it mean – do you think – to put Christie into action in Aberdeenshire?

This scene-setting discussion raised a range of complex themes, issues and concerns, in particular the importance of working with communities; improving partnership-working; and seeking to ‘redesign services’ so that they are better joined-up – but also focused on preventing inequalities.

The three strongest themes that people raised in their thinking and discussions were:

- *Working with communities:* empowering and sharing power; building capacity and reducing barriers to support community solutions.
- *Improving partnership-working:* changing cultures within/between organisations to support: cooperation instead of competition; collaboration; shared learning and communication.
- *Redesigning services:* moving away from silo mentalities and duplication; thinking about ‘whole systems’, creativity and getting ‘more for your money’; and working with all partners including service-users e.g. ‘Mrs Smith’.

They raised other key related themes raised too:

- *Working out how to do ‘prevention’:* and moving away from acute and responsive services;
- *Tackling inequalities:* so that it’s fairer for all; and working for ‘the common good’;
- *Working out what the ‘local’ means:* the relationship between ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’.

Individual comments flagged up other issues to consider in our dialogue and thinking:

- the importance of community ownership;
- emphasis on communities, is it always a ‘good thing’ or might it help sustain inequality?²
- the importance of personal responsibility.

¹ Note: these localities for CPPs are not necessarily to be the same as the ones used by HSCPs.

² Note: pointing to the role of ‘neo-liberal economics’ – often understood as extending the role of the market across society, save where ‘the market fails’ and state, third sector and/or ‘community must fill this gap.

Discussion 2: What makes for effective partnership-working?

Again discussions illustrated the complexity and challenges of partnership-working including: the importance of opportunities for learning and shared learning; being able to influence strategic decision-making and service development; finding a shared focus and suitable resources.

The [WWS Evidence Review on Public Service Partnership-working](#) illustrates this as a socially complex form of organising across different bodies (policy and practice). Whilst there is no one-size fits all approach, it suggests that key elements include: the right resourcing; shared sense of purpose and realistic expectations; involving ‘the operational’, ‘the strategic’ and wider stakeholders; and a flexible culture, open to joint-working and power sharing ... *collaborative rather than hierarchical*.

The Review puts emphasis on ‘the space’ staff need to build collaboration and engage with this complexity; to think creatively and critically; and understand the cultures of different partner bodies.

Participants shared their experiences of partnership-working, which are beyond easy summary here, but raised a range of issues and examples including (in no particular order):

- Local working: at small scales with local budgets; effective engagement; and local forums.
- Complexity of working across multiple partnerships – not just being in one partnership.
- Common focus and shared priorities – now via Local Outcomes Improvement Plans (LOIPs).
- Service design directing services.
- Appropriate timescales and staffing capacity.
- IT systems in different organisations/services needing to ‘talk’ to each other.
- Finding a better balance of power between partners, even where one organisation leads.
- Learning: use of existing evidence; evaluating; and recognising ‘failure’.
- Learning about other partners and the role of co-location here.
- Cultural changes: flexibility, commitment and shifting away from top-down ‘enforcement’.
- Engaging with the strategic and the operational; raising issues and influencing decisions.

Discussion 3: Community participation: role of co-production and community-led approaches

Presentations and discussions highlighted the diversity of existing examples in Aberdeenshire of co-production and community-led approaches, and the challenges for community participation in being inclusive when funding is tight as well as in seeking to prevent inequalities.

The Christie Commission highlights four broad strategies for strengthening community:

- involving services-users and carers in service design;
- community consultations;
- partnership with third sector organisations and their service-users;
- independent community organisations.

There is then potential for both (1) ‘co-production’ with services working with service-users and communities *and* (2) ‘community-led’ approaches where the community sector can lead. Two examples were given illustrating community-led approaches and related co-production:

- [Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network](#) – and its community-led approach to supporting the health and well-being of older people living in the community
- The ‘[community anchor](#)’ model: community development trusts and community housing associations, for instance, playing multi-purpose and community-led roles.

Discussions highlighted a range of issues and examples of community participation, including ...

The diversity of ‘community participation’ across Aberdeenshire – both co-production and community-led – including (but there are more): healthy living networks; community transport; ‘planning for real’, ‘conversation café’ and action research for community action plans; community ownership of assets by local organisations; community partnerships and forums with public services; community festivals, social enterprises and local economic development; and community councils.

Challenges for developing good practice in community participation were highlighted:

- public funding under pressure for community organisations and projects;
- co-production is a complex process – this is not easy work;
- the importance of actively including everybody – particularly those on low incomes;
- ‘consultation’ and ‘participation’ are not the same – they are different forms of practice.

Discussions of inequality began to highlight the complexity of using community participation to support preventative approaches:

- important to listen to how communities experience inequality – don’t make assumptions;
- individuals learning to making change themselves in order to tackle inequality;
- the limitations of community participation given global inequalities and corporate power.

Discussion 4: The potential for future actions ...

*Commitment to further develop partnership-working and participation were raised by many. Others pointed to the need to focus on preventing inequalities, promoting equalities and better outcomes. The need to work at a steady, patient pace that could support suitable culture change was highlighted **and**, crucially too, the need and challenge to shift from positive aspirations – generated by discussions of ‘Christie’ – towards ‘the how’ of actually doing this complex partnership-working.*

This final discussion encouraged people to write down their further thoughts, aspirations and challenges (thus far) on ‘putting Christie into action’:

Many focused on developing their work in partnerships with services and with communities, for instance: the importance of communication – top-down and bottom-up; building trust; exploring existing capacity; sharing learning; working ‘with’ not just ‘for’ communities; the need for vision, creativity and ‘faith’; and the role of cross-sector working.

Others focused on particular goals or opportunities, for instance: inequalities and equalities – as a crucial starting point; opportunities through the new Local Outcomes Improvement Plans; and focusing on those using services and better services – e.g. person-centred services.

Others pointed to the huge scale of change aspired to through ‘Christie’: stressing that ‘culture change’ is slow and should value the ‘small steps’ – and that not all change is large or expensive.

Crucially, some expressed significant frustrations: recognising key challenges including: the slowness of change since ‘Christie’ in 2011 and the lack of risk-taking in the public sector. Further the need to shift to **the how** of ‘putting Christie into action’ and asking the ‘difficult questions’ to support this:

- how to actually do the redesigning of services
- how to involve communities and individuals – given the range of options
- how to improve strategic partnership-working
- will the values of partnership-working be good enough to make actual progress?
- those at this event are committed to collaboration – but how to build this more generally?

The feedback on the Day echoed this same range of views, aspirations and concerns. Just over 50% of people provided feedback (21 forms returned), including, for instance: all (100%) enjoyed the positive atmosphere for discussion, although not all the discussions across the day worked for everyone; and most (85%) had been stimulated in their thinking about public sector reform, although not all felt the learning was pitched at the right level for them. Most valued these early discussions of partnership and participation, but ‘difficult questions’ for all of us were raised:

- needing greater diversity ‘in the room’ – e.g. the community sector, disabled people;
- learning more from existing local examples of good practice;
- the complexities of ‘change management’ processes;
- winning support from those leading organisations and local politicians;
- concerns that public service reform might actually make inequalities worse.

Responding to the discussions on the day: ‘putting Christie into action’ in Aberdeenshire – some initial thoughts from What Works Scotland

The ‘Christie’ narrative can sound simple enough but the aspirations it represents are proving complex and challenging to take forward. For instance, Audit Scotland’s 2014 review *Community Planning: Turning Ambition into Action*³ flags challenges at all levels in Scotland – national, area-wide and local – as to actually building effective partnerships concerned for outcomes, communities, inequalities and engaging with health and social care – this is no easy matter; while its 2016 *Community Planning: an update*⁴ flags up lack of progress towards partnership-working that can redeploy significant resources. Audit Scotland’s 2015 review *Health and Social Care Integration*⁵ flags the need for a skilled, motivated and ‘relevant’ workforce.

The discussions at the Learning Day illustrated this complexity and highlighted:

³ View here: <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/community-planning-turning-ambition-into-action>

⁴ View here: <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/community-planning-an-update>

⁵ View here: <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/health-and-social-care-integration-0>

The existing 'pool' of knowledge and commitment in Aberdeenshire: there is a very significant body of people, organisations and services – at strategic and operational levels – from both public and third/community sector that are knowledgeable of and committed to collaborative approaches as: (1) partnership-working across services; and (2) with communities via co-production and community-led approaches. *The depth of discussions illustrated a range of existing examples and experiences⁶ from which both the CPP and HSCP can draw in seeking to put Christie into action.*

'Difficult questions' that need time and space to 'unpack' in order to develop relevant solutions: some participants were flagging-up the need to ask the 'difficult questions', in particular the *how* of doing this sort of socially complex collaborative working and change across a diversity of services, sectors, communities and levels. It seems unlikely that there will be a 'one size fits all solution' here. Others pointed to the need for culture change at a suitable pace and focused on achievable steps. *Collaborations that seek to support discussion, learn from examples of success and 'failure' and from other evidence, and test out actions, could provide 'space' to support realistic changes.*

Deepening our knowledge of inequalities and other 'specialist' areas: discussions on the Day of 'preventing inequality' raised difficult questions about how this might be achieved through partnership-working and community participation. What types of prevention might be best suited to impact on inequalities? How do we shift spending from current service provision to preventative approaches ('preventative spend')? What realistically can CPPs and HSCPs achieve and so aim to prioritise? ... Deepening knowledge of change management; evidence use; and 'measuring' service improvement is needed too. *Specialist knowledge will be required as well to progress collaboration.*

Next Steps? Potential areas for further work between CPP, HSCP, third/community sectors and WWS as 'conversations' and 'inquiries' that can support informed culture change could include:

(1)Using this scoping report as part of 'preparing the ground': as with phase 1 of collaborative action inquiry – see Appendix 2 – it raises initial questions and provides challenges, rather than gives the answers. Initial assumptions about partnership and participation, understanding inequalities, and processes of change are an early starting point, putting key questions and issues on 'the map'.

(2)Considering prevention and tackling inequalities: the HSCP and WWS are undertaking an inquiry considering the role of community capacity-building in health and social care integration – including preventing health inequalities. Early inquiry work is also underway with the CPP – and includes conversations with the CPP Board and Executive and in particular through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – LOIPs, localities, inequalities and community bodies.

(3)Locating opportunities for 'conversations', inquiries and shared learning: there is scope for diverse collaborative inquiry work – *whether or not supported by WWS* – to inform 'putting Christie into action' here. Bringing together those involved in such work to develop their practice and deepen their understanding of public service reform would strengthen such shared learning.

(4)Drawing on specialist knowledge and resources: the CPP, HSCP, third/community sector and WWS can draw on such resources. For instance, other Learning Days can seek to build on practical approaches to 'preventative spend' in the first half of 2016, and potentially on 'performance' later in 2016 – as per the Christie Principles. Other resources can be located as further challenges emerge.

⁶ Note: a range of strong local examples were given of co-production and community-led approaches. The nature of the discussion of partnership-working didn't highlight particular examples in the written recording, but did illustrate people drawing from experiences of this.

Making further connections: as part of a developing approach, WWS is seeking to meet with all those who came to this Learning Day to learn more of their experiences of community planning, health and social care integration and third/community sector working – and will be in touch. In the meantime, if you have further thoughts from reading this report, please do contact Sophie Humphries at: sophie.humphries@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or James Henderson at James.F.Henderson@ed.ac.uk. WWS would also be very interested in hearing about other action inquiry work within Aberdeenshire as they, too, are a part of the growing ‘pool’ of local knowledge and commitment to collaborative approaches here.

Appendix 1: Schedule for the Aberdeenshire CPP/What Works Scotland Collaborative Learning Day

10.00 – 11.15: Session 1 – Getting Started: So ... what do we think it means to put ‘Christie’ into Action?

- *Presentation:* Considering the breadth of the ‘Christie agenda’ – Participation, Partnership, Prevention, Performance* – and understanding the potential for collaborative inquiry in the context of public service reform (What Works and Aberdeenshire CPP)
- *Inquiry activity:* to generate understandings of current key issues in relation to public service reform

** Note: at this Learning Event we will be consider two of the four ‘Christie Principles’ of Participation and Partnership; we propose to return to the two other Prevention and Performance at future events.*

11.30 – 12.45: Session 2 – Partnership: what makes for effective multi-agency partnership?

- *Presentation:* learning more from the What Works Scotland’s Evidence Review on Multi-agency Partnership-working in Public Services – Nick Bland, WWS Director
- *Inquiry activity:* exploring experiences of partnership-working

1.30 – 2.45: Session 3 – Participation: Exploring ‘community-led approaches’

- *Presentation:* Considering ‘community-led approaches’
 - Examples from Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network, Ed Garrett
 - Examples from the community anchor approach, James Henderson (WWS)
- *Inquiry activity:* exploring the issues and opportunities raised by such approaches

3.00 – 3.45: Session 4 – What are we learning about what it means to put ‘Christie’ into action?

- *Inquiry activity:* considering together today’s learning and the potential areas for further learning and development
- *Concluding thoughts*

Note: Guidelines were outlined and agreed for the Day, including the collecting and use of written information, as follows:

- Respect – active listening; everyone gets to say what they need to say; ‘disagree respectfully’
- Anonymising – issues raised can be shared outside of this event but not the source
- Written information – material written down will be used in reporting of the Day (again only the issues) – make clear where any written material is ‘off-the-record’

We have sought to anonymise all written information recorded – as far as possible – and this report aims to focus on ‘the common issues and challenges’ currently faced, rather than naming particular examples of local/Aberdeenshire services, organisations and projects. The one exception being the work of Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network, who presented on the Day re. their role, activities and services.

Appendix 2: The Collaborative Action Inquiry and Research Cycle and its three Phases

