

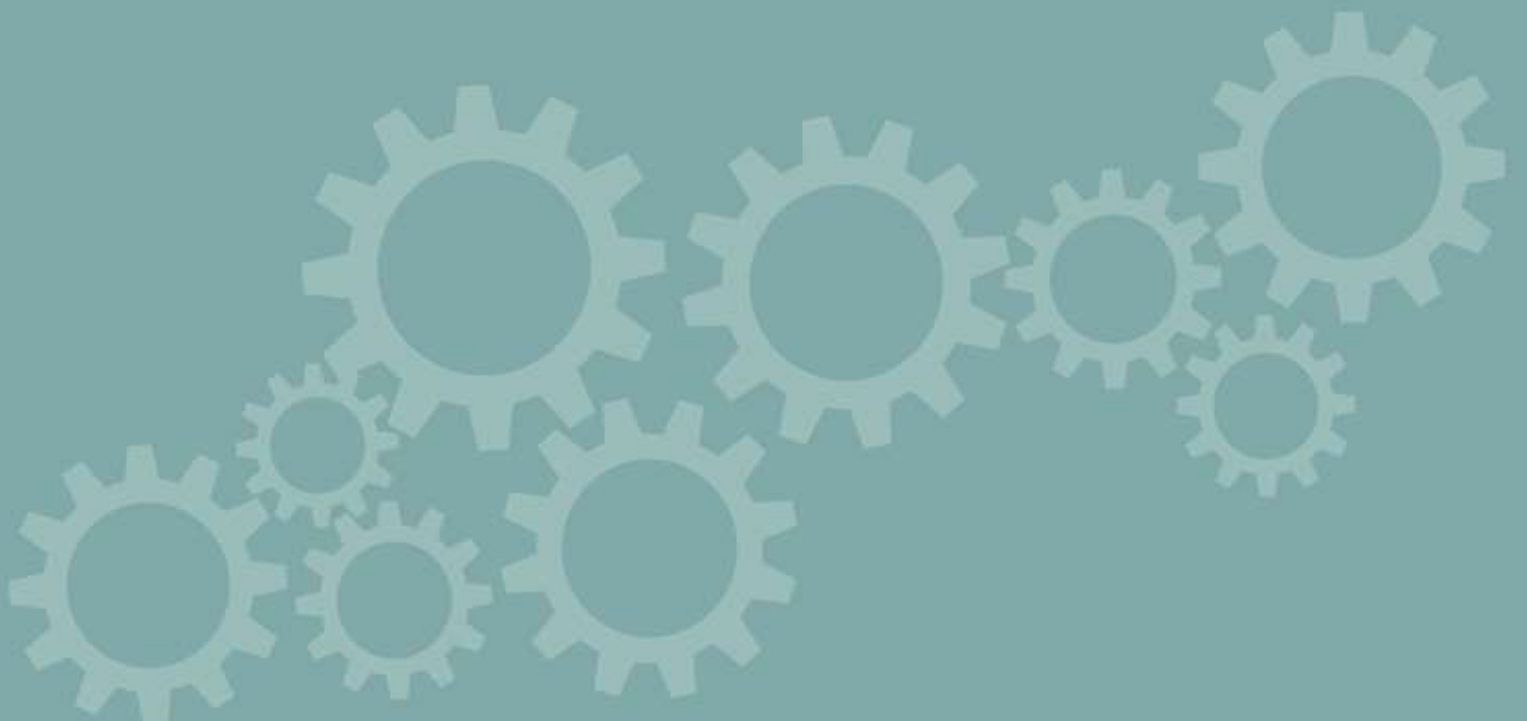
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## **What Works in Public Service Leadership: Exploring the Potential**

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**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
- Improvement Service
- Inspiring Scotland
- IRISS (Institution for Research and Innovation in Social Services)
- NHS Education for Scotland
- NHS Health Scotland
- NHS Health Improvement for Scotland
- Scottish Community Development Centre
- 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 to the What Works Scotland **Leadership** workstream.

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## About this paper

This paper presents an overview of some of the key concepts that underpin collaborative leadership in public service settings and reflects on some of the emerging themes identified by What Works Scotland that support change around public service reform (PSR) when working within the complex dynamics of community planning partnerships (CPPs) and across public service settings. It is based on on-going research by What Works Scotland across CPPs and other public services.

## 1. Introduction

The Scottish Approach to public service reform presents significant challenges to the leadership and change management within public services. Put simply, the focus on co-production, collaboration and working across professional boundaries requires forms of leadership that move beyond traditional hierarchies, notions of power and position based on assumptions of leadership and followership. This paper draws on Scottish, UK and wider international evidence from recent literature on public service leadership. It draws on contemporary evidence and experience to offer insight about the kind of leadership is required to support successful PSR.

### Public service reform in Scotland

The Scottish Approach to public service reform builds on a vision of:

*“a public service delivery landscape which is affordable, rises to the challenge of tackling inequalities and supports economic growth across Scotland: where communities are empowered and supported to take responsibility for their own actions; and public services are confident and agile enough to allow that to happen.”<sup>1</sup>*

In the pursuit of this vision, and in response to the 2011 Christie Review of Public Services, Scottish Government has set out Four Pillars of Public Service Reform<sup>2</sup>:

- **Prevention:** Reduce future demand by preventing negative outcomes from arising
- **Performance:** Continuous improvement through greater transparency, innovation and use of digital technology
- **People:** Unlocking the potential and creativity of the public service workforce through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership
- **Partnership:** Developing local partnerships leading to greater integration of public services and effective delivery with and within local communities

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government - Public Service Reform <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/PublicServiceReform>

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government (2013). *The 3-Step Improvement Framework for Scotland's Public Services* <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/public-bodies/pbconf/framework>

As such, the Scottish Approach places significant emphasis on partnership and collaboration. Successfully reforming public services therefore calls for a kind of leadership that fosters and promotes partnerships and collaboration within, between and beyond individual services.

This call is becoming even stronger as organisational culture changes. The traditional hierarchical approach to organisations underpinned by strong sense of group identity with high levels of rules and ascribed behaviors (Douglas, 1982) serviced by bureaucratic public service organisations (Hood, 1998) are now being replaced. Instead, organisations are seeking to develop a more egalitarian cultures underpinned by a strong sense of group with fewer rules and regulations serviced by mutualistic public service organisations (Hood, 1998). These are located within a networked infrastructure that also transcends traditional hierarchies through strong lateral interaction and self-improvement across the system. Public services themselves lead reform rather than being led through national prescription.

This paper aims to provide an understanding of the forms of leadership that are necessary for the future of Scottish public services and is guided by the following two questions:

- How is effective public service leadership enacted?
- What kind of public service leadership enables productive partnerships and collaboration?

Having outlined the background, aims and research questions of this paper, the following sections explore each of the above questions. Section two provides an overview of the literature on public service leadership. The third section focuses on public service leadership, partnership and collaboration. In section four the key findings are summarized and we reflect on its implications for public service leadership throughout Scotland.

## 2. An overview of public service leadership

Over the last decade there has been increased attention on leadership in the public services and its impact on public service delivery (Orazi et al., 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015; Van Wart, 2003, 2013).

Leadership of public services differs from private sector leadership in a number of important ways, including:

- Greater control of stakeholders, resulting in higher accountability to a greater number of different stakeholders;
- Higher levels of formalisation and red tape, in particular with regard to staffing and purchases;
- High public service motivation: less focus on high income, and more emphasis on work that is beneficial to others.

(Orazi et al, 2013)

Although public services operate under the formal responsibility of political leaders, there has been increased discretionary freedom, and thereby administrative responsibility at the operational level within local authorities (Vogel & Masal, 2015). While most approaches to public service leadership emphasise the agency of public servants, the ethical dimensions including social justice and moral purpose, whilst not unique to leadership in the public services, is nonetheless a key component of public service leadership (Vogel & Masal, 2015; Sun & Anderson, 2012; Van Wart, 2013).

Public service leadership involves dealing with complex stakeholder relationships with significant constraints in resources and ethical responsibilities, combined with all other factors that influence leadership more generally. This would suggest that strong positive relationships, a clear sense of direction underpinned by a clear set of values and ethics within a collaborative framework are likely to be important considerations for public service leadership. We unpack these in what follows.

### Perspectives on public service leadership

Despite the vast body of both popular and academic literature on leadership, the concept of public service leadership is not fully explored. There is a lack of clarity as to what public service leadership is and what it entails both in terms of language and definition. This landscape is exemplified and further complicated by the various taxonomies associated with leadership research. Over the past three decades there has been a trend amongst researchers to characterise different models, styles and approaches to leadership depending on the types of behaviours, traits, values and beliefs expressed by leaders. This has led to an exponential expansion of the characterisation of different forms of leadership ranging from Charismatic (Shamir et al., 1993) and Deliberative (Strang, 2014) to high

leverage (Mongon and Chapman, 2012) and Toxic (Fischbacher-Smith, 2015). However, the extent to which these characterisations exist in practice is contested. As Leithwood (date) reminds us just because an adjective is placed in front of the word leadership does not mean this is a distinct form of leadership.

Given the difficulty of this terrain we use the five overarching characterisations identified by Van Wart (2013) in his review of public service leadership to summarise the key elements of leadership theory.

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Leadership focus</b>
Management theory	Leading for results
Transactional leadership theory	Leading followers
Transformational leadership theory	Leading organisations
Horizontal leadership theory	Leading systems
Ethical leadership theory	Leading with values

## **1. Management theory**

Management theory takes a functionalist approach to leadership in which it puts the focus on the role of leadership in achieving results (Van Wart, 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015). Organisations are regarded as systems that achieve desired goals by smartly using human, financial, technological, and natural resources. In this sense, leadership is seen as effectively managing resources through activities such as planning, organising, staffing, reporting and budgeting. Van Wart (2013) notes that this perspective on leadership teaches us that high expectations get results. Achieving results often requires leaders to play a variety of roles that employ a range of skillsets.

A second lesson that can be drawn from this leadership tradition is that the high expectations require continuous learning and development of people in leadership positions:

*“perhaps most pertinent of all, leaders need to understand that the leadership skills that worked previously may not work in new situations or in changed environments”*

Van Wart (2013: 561)

Ultimately however leaders will not be judged by their own leadership but the leadership they instil in others (Fullan 2004), suggesting that professional learning and leadership development are key to enhancing outcomes in educational settings (Robinson et al., 2009).

## 2. Transactional leadership theory

The concept of transactional leadership refers to a leader-follower relationship that is primarily characterised by a process of give-and-take (Orazi, 2013; Sun & Anderson, 2012). Transactional leaders express what is required from their team and what reward will be offered upon completion. Subsequently transactional leaders closely monitor behaviours for deviance from earlier agreement (Bass, 1998a, 1998b; Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003).

In addition to the 'transaction', for this form of leadership to achieve its goals all team members have to be sufficiently equipped to undertake the tasks they have been assigned. (Van Wart, 2013). A further insight that Van Wart (2013) draws from transactional leadership research is that leaders should build relationships where followers are highly productive because of the quality of the assignments they are given and the rewards they receive in return. The outcomes of such relationships are much better in comparison to so-called 'low-exchange' relationships. Transactional leadership theory also highlights that leaders should involve their team in decision-making as much as possible but should be careful not to do so more than is necessary (Van Wart, 2013).

While transactional leadership theory provides some valuable lessons for understanding successful leadership, it is generally accepted that this approach can only bring about incremental change (Sun & Anderson, 2012) and is more descriptive of the static public management of the 1950s to 1970s (Van Wart, 2013). Indeed, some authors have noted that the structural features of public services, such as strong authority and weak communication across hierarchical levels, could potentially reinforce transactional leadership (e.g. Vogel & Masal, 2015).

## 3. Transformational leadership theory

While management theory and transactional leadership are concerned with leading teams, transformational leadership focuses on securing organisational change through interactive relations between the leader and other actors (Van Wart, 2013; Sun & Anderson, 2012). Transformational leaders can be described variously as visionary, inspirational or charismatic leaders (Orazi, 2013; Sun & Anderson, 2012). Bass and colleagues (Bass, 1998a, 1998b; Bass et al., 2003) conceptualized four dimensions of transformational leadership:

- **Idealised influence:** refers to transformational leaders who are consistent in their underlying ethics, principles and values, who consider others' needs above their own and who are willing to share risks with others. This tends to engender trust, respect and admiration and others' desire to be identified with the leader or to try to emulate them.
- **Inspirational motivation:** encapsulates a transformational leader's capacity to build enthusiasm, optimism and team spirit by encouraging others to envision an attractive future, and provide meaning and challenge within their work.



- **Intellectual stimulation:** transformational leaders support people to approach existing situations or problems from a different angle, question their underlying assumptions and reframe problems. These leadership behaviours encourage innovation and creativity, and involve others in the process of finding solutions and taking up challenges.
- **Individual consideration:** Transformational leaders promote coaching and mentoring activities to support others to achieve their full potential. This entails providing learning opportunities, paying attention to individual needs for growth and achievement, and creating a supportive climate for learning and development.

(Sun & Anderson, 2012)

Given its continuous focus on organisational change, this understanding of leadership may particularly suit the turbulent and complex world we currently live in (Van Wart, 2013). However, a transformational leadership style also risks arrogance, grandiosity and a lack of ethical behaviour (Orazi, 2013; Van Wart, 2013). In addition, Van Wart (2013) highlights three other important lessons that can be derived from research into transformational leadership:

- Facilitating change, both in vision and in ethos, is a key responsibility for leaders.
- Transformational leadership supplements, and should be preceded by, transactional leadership.
- Understanding the need for change and the multiplicity of ways in which it can be achieved is more important than knowing what the exact change must be.

Research has identified transformational leadership has provided empirical support for its effectiveness, particularly when compared to transactional leadership (Orazi, 2013). Areas of strength include positive effects on performance, job satisfaction, extra effort and public service motivation (Vogel & Masal, 2015). However, much of this evidence is relates to contexts underpinned by formal leadership roles, and structures that reinforce traditional hierarchies.

#### 4. Horizontal or distributed leadership theory

In contrast to the three approaches described above, horizontal or distributed leadership theories understand leadership as a “social construct that emerges from the interaction between members and the organizational context” (Vogel & Masal, 2015: 1183). Rather than locating leadership skills and behaviour within privileged individuals, these approaches regard those competencies to be dispersed amongst individuals within the organisation (Orazi, 2013) so that everyone in the system is both a leader and a follower (Sun & Anderson, 2012). What is particularly appealing about this approach is that it creates opportunities for people to emerge as leaders in certain situations, without needing the formal structures to allocate leadership (Sun & Anderson, 2012). Ultimately, formal leaders

should aim to lead people to lead themselves and promote systems in which they are not needed themselves (Sørensen & Torfing, 2013; Van Wart, 2013).

Allowing room for self-management, empowering employees and leaving systems that are working well alone, could facilitate the distribution and dispersion of leadership throughout the system (Sørensen & Torfing, 2013; Van Wart, 2013). In his review on public service leadership Van Wart (2013) notes that this approach to leadership is increasingly valued because it fosters engagement, commitment and flexibility in a world that is changing fast. He also notes that some degree of horizontal leadership is necessary as soon as organisations start sharing power through partnerships and collaboration initiatives.

## **5. Ethical leadership theory**

As previously noted, there is always some ethical component embedded within the notion of public service leadership. Ethics-based leadership is concerned with good intent, proper means and appropriate goals (Van Wart, 2013). Leaders will always be confronted with competing values and demands (Van Wart, 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015). In order to make appropriate judgements in such a context, researchers generally agree that prudence and practical wisdom are crucial prerequisites (Vogel & Masal, 2015). Good leaders display integrity and are authentic, self-aware, and positive. They know how to lead through sacrifice, instilling a public service motivation and have an understanding of the long-term needs of the communities they serve (Van Wart, 2013). Vogel and Masal (2015: 1177) helpfully highlight the importance of ethical considerations by concluding “leadership itself is a moral obligation rather than just a right”.

## **Towards an integrated understanding of public service leadership**

The five theories of leadership summarised above are often presented as competing perspectives. However, the area of public service leadership research has developed a knowledge base that highlights the need for a complex and integrated understanding of leadership that encapsulates aspects of all the approaches described above and situates them within specific contexts (Van Wart, 2013; Orazi, 2013). All five of the theories to a greater or lesser degree are powered by social relationships and require relational trust that develops and maintains interactions between individuals and teams (Bryk and Schneider, 2003). This requires successful collaboration and partnership across boundaries at different levels.

### 3. Public service leadership in collaborative settings

The research on public service leadership and government policy and practice all increased their attention to collaboration (Vogel & Masal, 2015; Van Wart, 2013; Morse, 2010). One key explanation for this is that collaborative initiatives tend to involve a range of services working in partnership to achieve goals that could not be accomplished by a single service or organisation (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). This is particularly evident in the work of community planning partnerships and other multi-agency approaches that are being adopted by public services. However, it is also the case that the complex and demanding work of these partnerships makes it a challenge to maximise their full potential.

In some cases organisations and partners that are pulled together have very different ways of working, different values, different professional identities and different agendas. In other cases they may not even want to work together at all (Vangen & Huxham, 2003).

Irrespective of the partnership's background or history, research suggests that leadership is critical to its development and the building of inter-organisational collaborative capacity (Silvia & McGuire, 2010). These contexts require an alternative form of leadership that moves beyond outmoded, traditional notions of leadership because:

- hierarchical leader-follower relationships cannot be assumed as collaborating partners are assumed equal (Sun & Anderson, 2012; Silvia & McGuire, 2010)
- formal positions have less impact on the enactment of leadership in partnerships (Vangen & Huxham, 2003)
- there is greater complexity of leadership roles enacted within collaborative settings that combine different cultures and professional identities (Vogel & Masal, 2015)

As such, successful leadership in collaborative settings is characterised by minimal hierarchical influence and a detailed understanding about the complexity of leadership roles.

Given the complexity of the issues in hand, it is both unsurprising and unrealistic to expect a single overarching theory or model that encapsulates successful leadership in collaborative settings (Morse, 2010). Whilst there is no panacea, blueprint or formula for successful leadership some research has been done that offers helpful insights into the patterns of leadership practice found in collaborative settings.

#### Patterns of leadership in collaborative settings

In collaborative settings good leadership demands working in ways that builds trust, manages relations, connects people and facilitates collaborative activities and processes. For example, in a study of almost 2500 county emergency managers in the United States, Silvia and McGuire (2010) observed that leadership behaviours in network settings differed greatly from the behaviours exhibited within the emergency managers' own agencies. Leadership in a collaborative setting was characterised by *people-oriented behaviours*.

These behaviours included treating members as equals, sharing information throughout the network, looking out for the welfare of members and creating trust amongst network members. Their survey also identified that good leadership in networks involved a significantly lower degree of task-oriented behaviours such as scheduling work, setting expectations and task assignment. However, leadership in networks was found to involve organisation-oriented behaviours focusing on being mindful of the external environment to identify resources and work with stakeholders.

Morse (2010) explored leadership in three cross-sector regional collaborative initiatives. He argued that the leadership of individuals in these settings is defined by two essential characteristics. Firstly, building and cultivating trusting relationships and secondly, entrepreneurialism by which he means the capability to see opportunities for collaboration and the mobilisation of resources including other people. Morse (2010) highlights risk-taking, passion, energy, vision and persistence as important qualities to motivate individuals to collaborate.

In addition to cultivating trusting relationships and having an entrepreneurial attitude Morse (2010) also highlights the importance of what he terms 'relationship capital'. By this he means the ability to draw on, develop and sustain relationships with key individuals. Strong and trusting relationships are necessary to sustain commitment through challenging periods and often serve as the glue that holds partnerships and collaboration initiatives together. These relationships are particularly important for inter-organisational collaboration that may suffer from conflicting values, governance, interests or perspectives.

Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) take a similar position by arguing that interpersonal networks are the foundation beneath formal inter-organisational partnerships. Trust enables people to deal with the risk and uncertainty that is often involved in collaboration and, while trust will develop over time, a basic level of trust is needed at the start of any collaboration initiative (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). In their exploration of the factors that influence the capacity and practice of collaboration, they place particular emphasis on the presence of reticulists who are:

- **skilled communicators:** with the ability to adapt their language to specific settings and empathise with others through negotiation and seeing a situation from a range of perspectives.
- **excellent networkers:** gain access to a range of settings, seek out and connect up others with common interests and goals
- **strategic in orientation:** they can see the 'big picture' and understand how different partners can contribute to achieve common goals
- **contextually astute:** they understand how opportunities and constraints within the organisation can influence individual's behaviour
- **problem-solvers:** they think laterally and creatively to seek solutions to the challenges they face

- **Self-managing:** they take risks within a framework that understands organisational capacity. In this sense they have sound organisational skills.

(Adapted from Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002)

The importance of reticulists has also been emphasised by others who have suggested that leadership in collaborative settings is characterised by working across structural and emotional boundaries, a phenomenon that has also been addressed as boundary spanning, boundary crossing and brokering (Broussine & Miller, 2005; Morse, 2010; Silvia & McGuire, 2010). Similarly to reticulists, boundary crossers have the ability to build strong and trusting relationships, negotiate between other actors, connect problems to solutions and mobilise resources and efforts (Silvia & McGuire, 2010).

### Leadership as a balancing act: ‘spirit of collaboration’ vs collaborative pragmatism

While much of the leadership literature focuses on leadership that is enacted by individuals, there is increasing evidence to suggest that leadership in collaborative settings requires a reframing that places leadership as a phenomenon that is not only enacted by people, but also by structures and processes (Vangen & Huxham, 2003; Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004; Morse, 2010). This perspective conceptualises leadership as “the mechanisms that make things happen in a collaboration” (Vangen & Huxham, 2003, p.562).

Vangen & Huxham (2003) adopted this perspective to explore how partnership managers make things happen. Drawing on their work with public service partnerships throughout Scotland, they conceptualised the individual dimension of leadership in collaborative settings. They suggest that it combines two key elements of leadership activities; the ‘*spirit of collaboration*’ with activities that tend towards a more pragmatic perspective or ‘*collaborative thuggery*’ where activities tend to be more manipulative and less democratic.

Leadership activities within the ‘spirit of collaboration’ include:

- **Embracing the right members:** leaders need to continuously look out for, invite and attract the people and organisations that are needed to move the initiative forward. It also entails the activities leaders undertake to welcome interested partners and introduce new members to the work of the partnership.
- **Empowering them to enable participation:** these activities are designed to bring people together, creating an effective collaborative infrastructure, ensuring the flow of information and to nurture individual members towards full participation.
- **Involving and supporting all members:** leaders have to support and help overcome inequalities and equalise the commitment of all members.
- **Mobilising to make things happen:** mobilising others is a key dimension of leadership in collaborative settings. For instance, leaders encourage and energise

members to work on behalf of the partnership and move the collaborative agenda forward.

(Vangen & Huxham, 2003)

Vangen & Huxham (2003) also emphasised that it is important to be realistic about the complex task of leading in a collaborative setting. While they argue that leaders should aim to lead from the spirit of collaboration, they recognise it is not always realistic to do so. It is inevitable that occasionally inter-organisational and cross-sectoral collaboration will run into issues such as conflicting values, intentions, and levels of commitment.

Dealing with these issues requires pragmatic approaches that may seem to be contradictory to the spirit of collaboration and at times a 'culture of collective thuggery' may prevail (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Leaders will sometimes have to manipulate the collaborative agenda in order to move the partnership or initiative forward. For instance, they can manoeuvre members towards a certain issue, decide on behalf of others, or impose an understanding of a particular issue on other members. For leaders in partnerships the choice for manipulating the collaborative agenda will often be a trade-off between keeping momentum and moving things forward on the one hand, and promoting time-consuming but genuinely collaborative activities on the other. Whatever the trade-offs it is vital that a guiding coalition of the willing and able maintains focus on pursuing the collaborative agenda and its intended goals. Thuggery can only ever be temporary.

To illustrate this tension Vangen & Huxham (2003: 571) quote the manager of a health promotion partnership stating that there is a "need to deliver on things as well as getting together". In addition to manipulating the collaborative agenda, leaders in collaborative settings will also find themselves playing politics in order to make things happen (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Sometimes they have to find ways to exclude others who are surplus to requirements or appear not to be worthy of investment, negotiate between partners who would prefer not to be involved in the partnership, find out who is worth investing in and understand the political undercurrents within their particular collaborative setting.

This collective thuggery is the darker side of leading in collaborative settings. It raises moral and ethical challenges for leaders in terms of what is valued and what is not and whether the end (goals) justifies the means (process). The term collective thuggery itself redresses the tendency within the literature to over-romanticise collaboration and leadership in collaborative settings as an instinctively 'good' and 'worthwhile' pursuit.

In a similar vein Vangen & Huxham (2003) note that the rhetoric surrounding working in partnerships tends to overemphasise the supportive leadership that is indeed required to make collaboration work and argue that to generate collaborative advantage, leaders should draw on a mix of the spirit of collaboration and collaborative thuggery in parallel. This complex enterprise of being an apparently transparent reticulist whilst manipulating to achieve a goal has been articulated as: "going behind people's backs in a trustworthy kind of

way” (Vangen & Huxham, 2003: 574). Therefore, leadership in collaborative settings can best be seen as a continuous balancing act between acting in the spirit of collaboration and doing those things that move the collaborative initiative forward.

## What works? Leadership in collaborative settings

As we noted previously it is unrealistic to expect a single overarching theory or model that encapsulates successful leadership in collaborative settings. Neither does the evidence lead us to a blueprint or prescription for leaders, this would be both unwise and oversimplify the complexity of leadership in collaborative settings. However, the literature highlights the importance of treating leadership in collaborative settings as a predominantly social process focussing on eight key areas:

1. **Building trust with and between members:** working selflessly to create a culture of openness and trust between colleagues.
2. **Maintaining and developing strong relationships:** deliberately building, reinforcing and sustaining high quality relationships.
3. **Facilitating collaboration and equality between members:** paying attention to and promoting equitable practices to optimise involvement.
4. **Stimulating the flow of information between members:** actively supporting effective communication to reinforce positive relationships and effective interactions.
5. **Understanding the environment:** recognising the importance of context, the level of capability and capacity within the collaborating organisation(s).
6. **Identifying opportunities, resources and potential stakeholders:** promoting an entrepreneurial and risk-taking culture, being outward-looking and optimistic.
7. **Mobilising people and resources for the greater good:** involving and empowering people to take on new roles and responsibilities to build personal and organisational capacity.
8. **Taking a pragmatic stance:** Recognising there are times when a directive approach must take precedence over the spirit of collaboration, without losing the support of a guiding coalition in order to drive the collaborative agenda forward.

Each of these eight areas of focus are unlikely to act in isolation; rather they are interdependent and will each influence each other. For example, as trust develops, relationships are likely to be strengthened which in turn may lead to increased potential for involvement and potential for people to take on additional leadership roles which in turn may build organisational capacity. Conversely, decreases or negative trends in one area are likely to have a detrimental effect on other areas and there will be cases where decreases in one area, such as taking a pragmatic stance, may have a positive effect in another, for example, maintaining and developing strong relationships. The key to leadership in collaborative settings appears to be finding the appropriate blend between the supporting and directive actions that make things happen in collaboration.



## 4. Conclusions and implications

This review of literature on public service leadership stresses the complexity of the task that is placed in the hands of our leaders. The demands made on public services in Scotland as they seek to implement the changes suggested by the Christie Commission and to meet the challenges of both health and social care integration and the Community Empowerment Act are significant and challenging. Not only do they operate in a context that is characterised by complex stakeholder relationships with an increasing call for involvement with services users and communities in the commission, design and delivery of services, they are having to do so with significant constraints in resources, diverse ethical responsibilities, ever-increasing accountability for performance and securing positive outcomes, and they also have to enact their leadership for a wide variety of purposes. Good public service leadership is not characterised by one single style or model. Rather, it is an integrated form of leadership that facilitates change by identifying assets, empowering individuals and re-culturing organisations and systems to deliver improved outcomes.

Effective public service leadership is promoted by setting high expectations and investing in continuous learning. It involves understanding the nuance of context and how people think, their strengths and weaknesses and supporting them to fulfil their potential. Successful leaders tend to have the ability to inspire, to coach and to challenge others, to put the needs of others before their own, and to create opportunities for others to lead. Finally, public service leadership is not just a right but also an obligation that calls for integrity, authenticity and self-awareness. The challenge for public service organisations is to create an environment with the conditions that allow this leadership to flourish.

The kind of leadership required by inter-organisational collaboration and partnership working adds a further level of complexity to public sector leadership by increasing the diversity in leadership roles and responsibilities and the breaking up and rearrangement of traditional hierarchies and power structures. To work effectively public service leadership has to be collaborative, facilitative and supportive in nature and requires an even stronger focus on building trust and interpersonal relationships than is required for leadership in less complex settings.

While the general discourse on partnerships and collaboration is one of great optimism, we have found that successful leadership in collaborative settings also requires a certain degree of pragmatism to get things done and drive the initiative as a whole forward. Taken together, public service leadership that enables productive partnerships and collaboration is relational, facilitative, strategic and pragmatic.



## Implications for the leadership of PSR in Scotland: Where next?

In the introduction we highlighted Christie as a key driver for PSR and drew on socio-cultural theory (Douglas, 1982) to argue that the PSR is designed to support more egalitarian cultures. This entails a cultural shift and the emergence of new forms of mutualistic public service organisations based on strong networks and self-improvement rather than the traditional producer-capture orientated bureaucratic organisations of the past (Hood, 1998).

In turn, these new forms of organisations will require a rethinking of leadership that goes beyond the necessary, but increasingly less important, system management approaches. There is a need to challenge and question hierarchical cultures and bureaucratic organisations where leadership roles are developed, funded and administered on a national basis with strong lines of vertical accountability (Higham, Hopkins and Matthews, 2009). Furthermore, the leadership required to support the emergence of mutualistic organisations will have to move beyond the type of effective leadership in collaborative settings outlined in this paper where, for the most part, collaboration is viewed as a mechanism for improving one's own provision.

For mutualistic public service organisations to lead the change rather than rely on national prescription to deliver change we need to develop leaders with the credibility, capacity and expertise to lead local and national system change across a range of services. They will have to do this whilst sustaining their own team/department/organisation or service and engaging authentically with the communities they serve. This is a future where partnerships, networks and federations working laterally with shared, coordinated and distributed leadership across many types of boundaries will provide both the delivery of services *and* the challenge and support for improvement of services. It will include the development of sustainable, environmentally sound and socially just practices and capacity-building through professional learning and leadership development.

Put simply, in the future those working in public services will frame and lead provision of their services and set the direction for and support service improvement in partnership with those engaging with the service. Co-production with service users will become the norm. Not only will this involve moving decision-making much closer to the point of delivery, it will also move beyond public service producer-capture.

There are some encouraging signs that these new ways of working are beginning to emerge in some parts of the system. Within CPPs What Works Scotland has supported collaborative action research (CAR) in four local authorities to generate and use evidence to improve and reframe practice. This has also involved rethinking roles and responsibilities to lever cultural change by linking leaders at different levels across a range of services and encouraging them to develop a localised agenda for the system improvement.

Within the Scottish Attainment Challenge the introduction of Attainment Advisors has created a network of system leaders that have redefined external support for improvement.

These advisors work at multiple levels, from individual classrooms working on issues such as learner voice, with families and communities to inter-authority networks providing challenge and support to close the attainment gap. Importantly, these advisors are developing a new role within the system and are engaged in and taking an increasing lead in designing their own bespoke professional learning programme. This is an example of moving from system management to building systemic capacity that strengthens the middle tier as recommended within the OECD system review in December 2015.

Through health and social care integration we have seen the potential for new ways of working emerge. Health and social care are now cooperating as they have never done in the past and key to this cooperation has been the development of integrated working practices that has involved consultation not just with the professionals involved in the delivery of the services but also with those in receipt of the services. In Aberdeenshire emerging approaches to system leadership include the strategic ambition of the Health and Social Care Partnership to build community capacity in health and wellbeing. This emphasises the importance of working in the partnership itself, and outwardly with a network of local public, third and community sector organisations, and with communities, to develop and sustain community-led social and economic activities to improve health and wellbeing and tackle inequalities.

The above examples are emerging forms of leadership practice that suggest with external support and sophisticated professional learning opportunities public service leadership can rise to the challenge of system leadership and support the development of a system where self-renewal is generated from within the services themselves in partnership with the communities they serve. The challenge will be to move from isolated instructive examples of this type of practice to a wide-spread and coherent approach that permeates all services and the communities they serve in a context of diminishing resources and ever-increasing expectations.

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