

Executive Summary: At the frontier of collaborative and participatory governance:

Eight key discussions to support putting Christie into action – reflective learning with practitioners from Aberdeenshire CPP

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Summary: Research report

March 2019

This is an executive summary of the research report *At the frontier of collaborative and participatory governance: Eight key discussions to support putting Christie into action – reflective learning with practitioners from Aberdeenshire CPP*. A summary of the Eight Discussions to support group discussions is also available.

Read and download the full report on the What Works Scotland website at

<https://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/frontier-of-collaborative-and-participatory-governance>

Sources for quotes and references are available in the full report.

Part 1: Setting the scene: understanding the focus of the report

1.1: Introduction

The report understands public service reform in Scotland as part of a wider emerging international trend towards a collaborative and participatory governance concerned for partnership, participation and preventing inequalities. The thinking on policy and practice of the 2011 Christie Commission is therefore particularly relevant to this trend given its own focus on:

- ‘the four Ps’: partnership, participation, prevention (negative outcomes), (improving) performance;
- aspirations for a more equitable society and sustainable state finances: through empowerment of the workforce and citizens and communities; and, intentional coordination of public services and the economy.

This report argues for the value of seeking to understand the current frontier of such a developing collaborative and participatory governance so that ‘we’ can better understand where we are currently and where the opportunities may lie to make further progress – in putting ‘Christie’ into action. Yet, in many ways, this is frontier is already very familiar territory given concerns for partnership and participation have been on-going since the late 1960s in the UK. What is arguably ‘new’ here is:

1. the scale of the ambition and complexity of such a governance with its aspirations: to increase local democracy and accountability; to make a difference on ‘wicked’ social problems; and, to focus on public value and wider social implications.
2. the context of reform with its complex mix of crises and challenges: stubborn inequalities; public spending constraints (‘austerity’) and related workforce insecurity; and growing pressures on services via an ageing and growing population.

Working at this frontier will be demanding, challenging and uncertain given austerity. It would seem to require time, commitment and a certain stability to build effective collaborations for service reform and related social change. Further, given this complexity and degree of challenge, the report assumes such a governance will need to draw from a rich and complex picture of thinking and practice (theory and practice) in order to sustain progress.

The report, therefore, develops eight key discussions drawn from the experiences of a range of local practitioners and policy-makers with Aberdeenshire CPP via 23 reflective interviews in Summer 2017. It builds from various action research projects and activities between the CPP and What Works Scotland between 2015-16. These discussions can be used to support 'on-going dialogue and research' on emerging policy and practice in relation to public service reform. They aim to be both practical and reflexive – and so offer material that can to continue to sustain an active engagement with wicked, dynamic policy social problems e.g. inequality.

The narrative builds across the report from scene-setting in Part 1 and onto setting out the eight discussions in Part 2. It concludes in Part 3 by highlighting more particular themes and concerns that are currently relevant to and can emerge from such discussions.

1.2 Understanding the collaborative action and learning process in Aberdeenshire

1.2.1: Scope of the action research and related work between the CPP and What Works Scotland

From May 2015 to Dec 2016, a variety of collaborative learning and action activities (action research) were pursued by Aberdeenshire CPP, its partners and What Works Scotland under the banner of putting 'Christie' into action. This included:

Scoping: [Collaborative Learning Day Scoping Report](#) – see graphic below.

- Developing a strategic approach to community capacity-building for health and wellbeing:
- [Community Links Worker inquiry cycle 1](#)
- Community Links Worker inquiry brief for Cycle 2 ([Inquiring into Multi-layered preventative partnership: Appendix 2](#))
- [Case study on a Strategic Approach to community capacity-building \(PDF\)](#)

Developing multi-layered preventative partnership working:

- Development work with CPP Board/Executive – [Appendix 2 of the full report](#)
- [Inquiring into Multi-layered preventative partnership](#)
- [Case study on developing LOIP Priority regarding Alcohol and Culture Change](#)

Learning more about the potential of Collaborative Learning and Action:

- [Beyond Action Learning](#) – action learning sets meet improvement tools
- [Reflective learning webpage for CPP and What Works Scotland](#)

Related project work between/within Aberdeenshire CPP and What Works Scotland included:

- [Citizens' Jury in Peterhead](#)
- [George Howie \(Aberdeenshire HSCP\) presentation at What Works Scotland child poverty event \(PDF\)](#)
- [Training in dialogue and deliberation](#)

This reflective learning report builds from these action research activities.

What does putting Christie into action mean to you?

- Fairer communities
- Get more community ownership
- Have to give up some of our control
- Making the shift to prevention from reactive/acute
- Changing mind set around personal responsibility
- Rural area developments
- Real sharing of budgets - Participatory budgeting
- Culture change - all staff working with same understanding
- Redesigning how services are delivered to 'Mrs Smith'
- Working together - blurring the boundaries - trust

Effective partnership working

- IT systems that 'talk to each other'
- Need local budget
- No-one just in one partnership - multiple perhaps - so stretchy
- Funding common focus - LOIP
- Shadowing / learning not assuming
- What is 'evidence'? How accurate is the data?
- Need to collect more effective evidence
- Co-location - effective if done properly
- Some partnerships driven by one partner
- Some partnerships are enforced from above - is this ok - sometimes?
- Public Sector internal silos and inconsistency across Shire
- Priority session to align and share vision with all stakeholders

Community-led approaches

- Distinction between co-production and community-led?
- Healthy living network
- Still can be just tick-box exercise
- 'Planning for' real
- Understand choices (Participatory budgeting)
- Should be a good example of community empowerment
- Good partnership - service - user
- The 'working poor' are too busy working
- Let communities try things with support - if things fail, learn from them and move on together
- But can it counter global economic power, corporate multinational interests?

What are we learning about putting Christie into action?

- Close gap not widen it! BUT participation won't feed the bairns!
- Start small - this cultural change won't happen overnight
- Recognise the good partnership working with communities that we already have
- We need to stop using jargon - common language - simple!
- A lot of views/ideas How do these fit with practical service redesign?
- Need to engage those people within partner organisations who are not already engaging - people here already 'get it'
- Sometimes you need to take a 'leap of faith'!
- Be aware that this is a huge cultural change for all involved and will be a lengthy project 'Slowly, slowly, catchy monkey'
- Asking the difficult questions
- Get the LOIP right

Figure 1: Examples from the four key discussions at the first Collaborative Learning Day:

1.2.2: Action research as a creative and responsive social process

In this context it was understood as a process seeking to bring together diverse ways three key elements of:

1. collaboration, participation and cooperation;
2. research, inquiry and evidence-use; and
3. action and change.

Such a process aims to provide credible knowledge – and relevant to a range of stakeholders – as both a workable (practical, problem-solving) knowledge and reflexive (positioning, framing problems) knowledge. Potentially, it has the flexibility to work with wicked social issues and aspirations for systems and related social change that are central concerns for collaborative and participatory governance.

1.2.3: Informing this Learning Report

The report builds from the action research work and draws directly from reflective interviews with 23 participants working across the CPP in strategic, operational and community contexts to explore further the current frontier (Summer 2017) of their day-to-day work in seeking to put ‘Christie’ into action.

1.2.4: a public learning culture for systems change?

The action research work between the CPP and WWS wasn’t explicitly established to explore systems-change across the CPP as a whole. Yet, given the potential to develop a systems-focused action research, the report draws from this research experience and a wider body of collaborative learning and action work across the CPP (independent of WWS) to consider this potential – returning to this question in 3.2.3.

1.3: Collaborative and participatory governance: pragmatic preventative partnership and participation, social vision, and a learning culture for change

1.3.1: Collaborative and participatory governance in a ‘messy’ public service context:

As is highlighted in 1.1, Scotland is part of – potentially helping to lead even– this international policy and practice trend. Yet it is important to realise that the complex day-to-day realities of public service reform cannot be reduced to one such understanding or approach. Nor that the current evidence base simply confirms how collaborative approaches can be made effective in turns of outcomes in these contexts: some provide reason for optimism as to the potential innovativeness of partnership and participation (Sinclair, 2017; Cook, 2015); others are more pessimistic, illustrating how ineffective partnership and participation have been in relation to inequalities over the decades (Atkinson & Moon, 1994; Headlam & Rowe, 2014). The realities of public service reform are considerably ‘messier’ than simple prescriptions for there are:

- hybrid approaches at work that are bringing together top-down, business-focused and collaborative thinking in confusing combinations, and
- complex political, social and economic dynamics at work across organisations and services; citizens and communities; layers of political decision-making; and, wider society and economy.

1.3.2: ‘Christie’ aspirations: a more equitable society and sustainable state finances

The Christie Commission’s thinking offers a rich picture of developing policy and practice – not simply the four Ps. It argues not just for reforming services but related social change and recognises the dynamics at work between state, economy, civil society and varieties of empowerment e.g. workforce, citizen, service-user, community. Its central goals are both a more equitable society and longer-term sustainable state finances.

Whilst preventing inequalities is understood as fundamental to achieving these twin, inter-relating goals, implicit within the report is the recognition that an inclusive economy (redistribution) and local empowerment (local democracy and resilience) must be considered as well when seeking such service and social change.

1.3.3: A learning culture concerned for wicked social issues and action research

The Christie Commission's emphasis on complex systems, social needs and preventing inequalities, resonates with the notion of working together on wicked social problems. Systems-focused action research offers one potential route to working with such wicked issues – given it offers both practical problem-solving and wider reflexive engagement with problem-framing (Bartels & Wittmayer, 2014). Yet, as with all co-produced social research, there are risks of a *positivity bias* (Kothari & Wathen, 2012) and likely pressures to claim that the learning regarding theory and practice – what we are doing, why and for whom – is advancing more quickly on-the-ground than maybe the case. The working assumption being considered across the report is that such an approach to a learning culture will be valuable in seeking service change and related social change ... but must be used pragmatically given the inevitable 'messiness' of working across public service partnerships, communities and electoral cycles and so on. And must be considered appreciatively – recognising the substantial work and commitment that those involved give to make it happen; and realistically and reflexively to support developing understanding of theory and practice.

1.3.4: Overarching working assumption regarding collaborative and participatory governance

From these discussions (1.3.1 – 1.3.3) an overarching working assumption is generated to sustain the focus of discussions across the report on key issues for theory and practice. It is summarised here as follows:

That the current frontier of collaborative and participatory governance – or '*putting Christie into action*' – in this complex, 'messy' public service landscape requires an integration of these three elements:

- A pragmatic preventative partnership and participation that is creative, evidence-informed and politically-astute – and committed to a public service ethos.
- Commitment to a social vision concerned for a more equitable society and sustainable state finances – via integration of state, economy and varieties of local empowerment.
- A public service learning culture that seeks both practical problem-solving and 'bigger picture' problem-framing – where one option is systems-focused action research.

1.4: Discussions at the frontiers of collaborative and participatory governance

This summarises Part 1 and points towards Part 2 as building understanding of a developing approach to collaborative and participatory governance through a series of eight discussions developed through the reflective interviews. These seek to engage with the complexities and 'messiness' on-the-ground of such policy and practice – putting 'Christie' into action – and offer insights for concluding thoughts in Part 3 which returns to the overarching working assumption (as 1.3.4).

Part 2: Eight discussions for collaborative and participatory governance

The research presents eight discussions that, it is argued, are of value to the local development of collaborative and participatory governance and related public service culture change – and of a deepening of understanding of theory and practice at the frontier of such developing public governance. The discussions emerge from the researcher’s interpretation and analysis of the interview material ... and in the context of the understanding of theory and practice outlined in Part 1. They offer one interpretation of the research material although not the only possible one.

It is not, however, being claimed that are they the only important current discussions in this context. Others are recognised, but not focused on individually here: for example, using diverse sources of evidence; participatory approaches to evaluation and appraisal; and, working towards social and economic outcomes. Other themes will continue to surface as collaborative and participatory governance further develops and current opportunities, challenges and barriers emerge. Discussions of theory and practice can then potentially deepen where there is investment in on-going dialogue and related research.

Each of the eight discussions is structure structured as follows:

1. policy and practice context: ‘what’s at stake?’
2. reflections from-the-field from the CPP partners
3. developing dialogue: further ideas for theory, policy and practice

They aim to take readers from considering the wider context; through (some of) the experiences of seeking to actually develop policy and practice locally and centrally; and, on to commentary and additional research-related ideas that could be used to support on-going dialogue and research for putting ‘Christie’ into action.

Crucially, the reflections-from-the-field should not be understood as a representative sample from this particular CPP; that is beyond this research process. Instead, these local practitioner reflections from their practices and policy-making offer questions, insights, dilemmas and encouragement for those seeking to engage in these shared challenges. The quotes that follow in this Summary are from some of those practitioners.

2.1: Multiple crises and challenges: inequalities; workforce insecurity; ‘austerity’

“The reluctance of human beings to change is just immense ... And so sensible processes that (seek) change ahead of the curve, on the whole, don't happen quickly enough It's just impossible to get people to accept that, and to actually voluntarily change at a fast-enough rate. They're happy to change everyone else's services, but not their own.”
(Research participant)

Context: the 2011 Christie Commission points to ongoing, multiple challenges and crises, including: stubborn inequalities; demographic change – a growing and ageing population; public spending constraint (‘austerity’); and workforce insecurity.

In seeking then to generate sufficient commitment and energy for the complex cross-service and -sector collaborative change envisaged by the Christie Commission, it is suggested that CPPs should consider constructing long-term action research – or other social research or participatory development processes. These would work alongside (in parallel) their formal and statutory community planning processes e.g. LOIP priorities. Crucially, they would seek to include the workforce, citizens and communities and work to sustain focus on the complex wider multiple crises and challenges as well as more practical problem-solving.

2.2: Investing in facilitative leadership that builds a public service ethos

“... the second thing is that it’s a commitment that you need towards the partnership working: that you have to really believe in it, but you also have to work hard at it. There’s a skill set involved that not everybody has developed, it’s not just an approach. It’s not just about a kind of an attitudinal thing: it’s about having a range of skills about negotiating and influencing and pooling together. And those are soft skills and we need the public sector to develop more of these.” (Research participant)

Context: points to the growing expectations of a facilitative leadership that can work across multiple layers, services and sectors to make and sustain the myriad connections needed for successful and sustained ‘partnership and participation’ building.

Reflections from-the-field: illustrates how those interviewed and working across the CPP are engaging with an emerging network of facilitative leadership that can work across partnerships and sectors. They highlight that this needs to include:

- Building a diversity of ‘spaces’ and networks for constructive discussion and dialogue as to the emerging opportunities, challenges and dilemmas.
- Valuing a range of leaders within different layers and sectors, and their commitment to pursue the challenge of bringing together (facilitating) varieties of partnership and participation – different spaces and networks.
- Suitable resourcing of these spaces, networks and related training to support the development of skilled, shared facilitative leadership for a public service ethos.

Developing dialogue: highlights the skills and knowledge that those concerned to develop and pursue facilitative leadership for a shared public service ethos will need to employ:

- Boundary-crossing roles (Williams 2013): relationship-building and communication; ‘entrepreneurial’ and problem-solving; interpreting and understanding different contexts and coordination and planning.
- Public participation professionals (Escobar et al. 2018): skills in ‘process politics’ – frontstage and backstage; knowledge brokering and evidence-use in participatory contexts; shifting back and forth across the complex roles of ‘activist’ to ‘administrator’; and, coping with the emotional labour (stress) involved.

The development of suitable facilitative leadership networks and related training therefore becomes crucial to support public service change – for instance, for learning about ‘dialogue and deliberation’ (Bynner, Escobar & Faulkner, 2017); and cross-sector change-agent working (Henderson, Revell & Escobar, 2018). These can be locally-designed and seek to work across strategic, operational and community layers and sectors.

2.3: Inclusive structures for long-term relationship-building with local civil society

“Now, that’s challenging (having to show impacts) for a lot of third sector organisations because they are very small and they’re doing very good work in the local communities ... the rhetoric is all good and that’s the direction of travel. But, it comes down to how do you cascade that down through an organisation like the

Council which has multiple layers of hierarchy and at some point it reaches (a) block. We've encountered that as a third sector, particularly around commissioning. That's something that is contentious and it's not unsurmountable: a lot of it comes down to just better communication and better engagement ... "

(Research participant)

Context: points to the space that the local third sector/civil society potentially offers for creativity, innovation and accountability, and so the value of inclusive processes for a democratic public service reform. The power imbalances and challenges of including the third sector and wider civil society are also recognized (Sinclair, 2011; Cook, 2015).

Reflections from-the-field: illustrate an emerging picture of:

- Broad understanding and perhaps consensus at a formal and strategic policy-making level of the value of working together on an 'equal footing' and on a clear footing across public sector and third/community sector partners.
- Growing opportunities for dialogue with smaller third/community sector bodies and groups as to the resources and opportunities that would prove useful to them ...but a voice of realism too: existing structures and funding options need development (reform) and resourcing, and emerging opportunities communicated and supported.

Developing dialogue: highlights thinking on Collaborative and Participative Governance as creating opportunities for re-imagining relationships across the diversity of local third/community sector and civil society. Moving away from business-focused concerns (New Public Management) for contracting out (outsourcing) services; and for business-related notions of cost efficiency, effectiveness and economies of scale – with related consequences in terms of conditions of employment, difficulties in building a public service ethos, and insecure (smaller) third/community sector bodies.

Alternative emerging thinking is concerned for exploring pragmatic long-term relationship-building with the local third sector or civil society e.g. community bodies (place/interest); service-user and citizen bodies; and local trades union branches. For instance, as longer-term investment in key local organisations ('relational contracting' (Weaver, 2009)) and 'relational commissioning' (Davidson Knight et al., 2017) that builds on trust, collaboration and financial security and related organisational independence.

2.4: Negotiating complex political landscapes – what role for deliberative spaces?

"I sometimes flinch when I hear people using co-design words all the time and it just becomes a bit of easy jargon at times. But the positive of that is that it has become accepted as, now, this is the way that we deliver services, that we do things much more in partnership. It's always then that question because 'power' adapt(s) to changing circumstances all the time. So, therefore, you can have all the language. But you have to always be careful and ask those questions about who's actually got the power ... , who's got the influence, who's not being heard, ...power just adapts to those methodologies. You have to find other ways to give people a voice and make sure that everybody's going to get heard..."

(Research participant)

- recognising local complexities – including diverse stakeholder interests and emotional commitments;
- bringing in evidence, expertise and insights to deepen dialogue, and
- facilitating deliberations to find common purpose or simply at this stage acknowledging unresolved differences and understandings.

Dialogue and deliberation offers the opportunity for all stakeholders to ‘step-back’ from emotionally-charged political dynamics – whether the politics of organisations and partnerships, citizens and communities, and/or formalised political processes and party politics – and explore, understand and re-consider together through relation-building and reflection. An example is given of a citizens’ jury process in Peterhead (Bland, 2017a) – and these processes can be used to build local democratic participation and knowledge. However, it is argued, too, that deliberative spaces can be explored as to their value in other politically-charged public service partnership contexts.

2.5: Collaborative learning and action: creative, ‘unpredictable’ spaces for change

“The power of showing how something can work in a different area (or) in Aberdeenshire even better ... the power of actually saying, this isn’t just a pipe dream, somebody’s thoughts: you can do this, and this is how ... it’s not just that particular function or service example, it’s the principle around ... going back to mindset and culture and changing the way of thinking. That’s the really important prize ... but what will motivate most [people], and certainly outwith the CPP, when you get into service management, the operational world, they want to see action. They want to see outcomes and benefits, cut to the chase ...” (Research participant)

Context: collaborative learning and action (action research) offers many different options for bringing together different combinations (new and old) of: (1) participatory and collaborative activity; (2) research, inquiring, evidence-use and reflection; and, (3) strategies for action, culture change and perhaps social change.

Reflections from-the-field: illustrate an increasing number of diverse projects and processes in which more formalised collaborative learning and action has been active across different layers of the CPP in rich, creative ways. And, how this then begins to permeate and be used in more informal collaborative processes and settings. They point to some practitioners as seeking to engage with the complexity of such working through:

- working in varied ways with local community diversity to build participation
- the use of varieties of evidence and its triangulation
- the skills from collaborative learning and action projects becoming active in more informal collaborative processes
- potential tensions around justifying soft outcomes e.g. ‘culture change’ and ‘learning’ to management systems concerned for targets, outputs and data.

Developing dialogue: highlights the potential for collaborative learning and action as a creative space for learning and culture change in the face of complexity – rather than as a process solely concerned for linear change to meet targets and outputs. Yet needing suitable resourcing and management commitment across partnerships.

There is potential for partnerships to commit to collaborative learning and action as creative, ‘unpredictable’ spaces for learning and culture change. In these spaces complex challenges (wicked issues) can be wrestled with over time through imaginative, flexible and changing processes.

The *Community Links Worker inquiry research report – Cycle 1* is given as an example of the potential to create different types of knowledge relevant to varying stakeholders. This knowledge should be understood as held ‘within’:

- the inquiry team members itself
- the related written reports and outputs and,
- the wider networks that the team and reports engaged with and through.

It also illustrates the development both: of problem-solving activity and knowledge concerned for developing good practice and supports for that practice; and, of problem-framing activity and discussions that begin to emerge in relation to preventing inequalities and related policy and social issues.

2.6 Constructive disruptions: the value of independent, in-depth facilitation

“People who are in the midst of this process need a bit of bolstering themselves. ...folk need to have some sort of mutual support while they’re trying to do this. So that you can speak to others and don’t feel on your own or the only one that’s trying to do this (work). ...There can be surprising allies out there at times that it might be quite interesting to be able to draw on ... I don’t know who facilitates those kind of spaces: whether it’s action learning type groups, or something like that, that can bring people together who are just trying to be the change-makers. There’s some people who are in positions of influence who are really frustrated by the lack of progress as well and they’re not always the blocks ...” (Research participant)

Context: points to the potential for independent facilitation, where actively supported across senior management, to offer significant challenge to create change.

Reflections from-the-field illustrate:

- Emerging aspirations for, and understanding of, the importance of inclusive and supportive discussions – a listening culture (‘sharing the airtime’) – and the ‘how’ of working collaboratively
- The recognition that seeking to working with and facilitate group dynamics is challenging work and needs those involved to consider the potential of peer support, co-working, and the role of independent (external) facilitation
- Engaging with complex (wicked) social issues through partnership and participation will likely require a patient, incremental and committed building of relationships and shared knowledge ...from which common purpose can emerge.

Developing dialogue: illustrates the potential of sustained longer-term independent facilitation to create constructive disruptions within complex partnership and participation settings that find supportive ways to consider the difficult questions and generate change in those settings – and/or highlight areas where there are barriers to change currently. Examples are recognised from the *Beyond Action Learning report* (Soutar, Warrander & Henderson, 2017) and the *Pioneer Collaborative Leadership report* (Bland, 2017b); as well as What Works Scotland’s own work with the CPP Board/Executive in Aberdeenshire (Appendix 2 of the full report).

2.7 Preventing inequalities and preventative spend: seeking to pool resources

“In some ways we’ve done amazingly well thinking about this in terms of root causes. But in some ways it feels like it’s slipping away from being a partnership approach to, okay, you go ahead and do that. So, how do we herd the cats..?” (Research participant)

Context: there are aspirations for public service partnerships to better coordinate actions, pool budgets, and work with communities/other stakeholders to shift toward preventative approaches and reduce pressure on services. But ...definite challenges in doing so, including that potential savings are likely to emerge in the longer-term, whilst sharing savings as part of pooling budgets across different management structures is tricky. The Audit Scotland (2018) community planning update highlights prevention as a challenging area of practice across

CPPs generally. Seeking ways to invest in preventative approaches whilst continuing existing services (double-running) during periods of longer-term transition becomes crucial.

Reflections from-the-field: in relation to public service partnership coordination of resources, as wider budgets as well as staffing, they highlight key challenges:

1. Regarding more top-down collaborative approaches across the different public service organisations and partnerships: points to the importance of a wider body of those responsible for local resource management and decision-making across different CPP partner organisations being in position to actually contribute to the CPP's shared agenda.
2. Regarding local initiatives and projects to explore preventative approaches that can free-up resources or reduce pressure on services – a range of emerging potentially useful largely local opportunities and options is illustrated:
 - Shared team management – where different bodies have common interests.
 - Virtual wards as a space for partnership-working to keep people out of hospital.
 - Building the capacity of communities and citizens to be involved in dialogue on budgets, local priorities e.g. PB initiatives, Community Action Plans.
 - Increasing the transparency of central policy-making to support the participation of smaller third sector organisations.
 - Sharing and 'triangulating' local data (intelligence) to locate key target groups and make preventative interventions (predictive analytics).
 - Training staff across partnerships in preventative 'brief interventions' to support better service coordination or offer early actions.

Other ideas held in 'a pool of thinking' – rather than being actively developed currently:

- 'Social accounting' approaches that can support wider discussion of costs and benefits (financial, social, environmental).
 - Shifting away individual organisational accounts and evaluation (attribution) toward contribution and shared accounts that support learning and dialogue.
3. The realities of seeking to coordinate across multi-layered partnerships for upstream approaches and 'cashable' savings: complex working that requires time and commitment:
 - to build understanding of the issues and related evidence involved across the partners, and then,
 - to locate and develop suitable 'shared interventions' that are distinct from the solo (silo) objectives and activities of individual partners to useful pursue.

Developing dialogue: This is a hugely challenging area of policy and practice. There are considerable complexities, including: how to fund preventative services 'now' given any actual savings seem likely to arrive in the longer-term; the incremental nature of culture change in public service partnerships; convincing all partners of upstream preventative approaches; and, workforce insecurity that limits collaborative commitment.

Strategies to usefully explore include:

- the POPP initiative that brought together public services with community approaches to improve the health of older people (Windle et al., 2009)
- NHS Health Scotland's (Craig, 2014) preventative priorities for reducing health inequalities and reducing pressure on services as a framework for accountability, and
- the potential role of multi-stakeholder local public service hubs (Watson, 2017).

However, this feels an area of developing policy and practice in its infancy rather than ready to deliver. There are considerable tensions to work with and through between:

- focusing on top-down collaborative approaches to agenda-setting via central structures and bottom-up developments via local budgets and decision-making, and
- the need for reasonable workforce stability for collaborative working and resources for investment in prevention and the dilemmas of public spending constraints.

2.8 Preventing inequalities and preventative spend: local economic & social development

“The Trust has developed the building into (a) Visitor Centre which attracts 55,000 visitors a year and is home to a range of successful enterprises including a destination restaurant, gift shop, garden centre, workshops, and office space for the Trust and another local charity. ...These enterprises provide voluntary training opportunities for around 60 unemployed people and paid employment for a further 30 people. Income is approx. £500,000 per annum ... with two-thirds coming through the tills and the rest via self-directed support funding (individual contracts with service-users from monies provided by public spending) for provision of services.”

(Research participant)

Context: given the need for further investment to support the transition towards preventative approaches until savings from reduced pressure on services ‘arrive’ in the longer-term, then other strategies should be explored by CPPs. In the move to the more pragmatic world of collaborative and participatory governance, public and third/community sector investment, ownership and enterprise options can all now be considered and explored alongside those of the private sector that have previously been dominant.

Examples from-the-field: of community enterprise, ownership and anchor organisations:

Initial mapping: community approaches and community capacity-building. From the Inquiring into Multi-layered, Preventative Partnership Working report



- Open-up scope for further dialogue on local economic and social development and its potential to provide external and potentially complementary investment for preventing inequalities ... through cross-partnership and sector approaches.
- Illustrate the potential of community ownership of assets to generate income and surplus ('profit') through local economic and social development: both the activities themselves and the surplus ('profit') can play roles in preventing inequalities and in finding common cause(s) with public services.
- Show the potential of community anchor organisations to play a leading role in facilitating local economic and social development and partnership-working with public services – for instance, local community-led place-making hubs.

Developing dialogue: highlights the potential to further explore local economic and social development as a means of building preventative approaches and finding further investment – through supporting the local economy, strengthening social capital and joint-working with public services on an 'equal footing'.

Emerging strategies could draw on working to integrate the resources and commitment of:

- larger public bodies and enterprises, and public procurement e.g. as per community wealth-building model (Jackson & McInroy, 2017)
- community enterprises, ownership and leadership, and
- local integrated, facilitative hubs that coordinate local activities and plans e.g. as per the community anchor model (Henderson, Revell & Escobar, 2018).

There is the potential, too, for CPPs to support and lead on this broad body of approaches to local economic and social development through shared learning and developing practice across the different emerging forms of local planning: community planning; spatial (town and country) planning; and local community/place plans. Focusing on local economic and social development provides rich opportunities for complementary developments to support and invest in preventative approaches and the provision of universal public services – offers potential for a modest redistribution of resources, income and assets.

Part 3: Concluding discussions: key learning to support on-going dialogue and research at the frontier collaborative and participatory governance

Part 3 of the Report concludes by presenting feedback and reflections from those involved in the consultation on the Report (3.1); and, by outlining current themes and concerns at the frontier of such governance ‘exposed’ via the discussions across Parts 1 and 2 (3.2).

3.1 Deepening and focusing ongoing dialogue and research through consultation work

Participants on the consultation on the report (Parts 1 and 2 only) raised on key topics from a variety of practice perspectives and in so doing illustrated current and/or emerging challenges for developing partnership and participation. These included:

- sustaining a practical action-planning focus (problem-solving) whilst also keeping a focus on the bigger policy context and issues (problem-framing)
- developing a matrix of informed leadership across the complex layers of public service partnerships to working on similarly complex policy issues
- building effective working (partnership and participation) within and across different types of local democratic practice – participatory, deliberative and representative
- sustaining commitment and resourcing for *both* community planning *and* local economic, social and sustainable development and prioritising low-income communities and anti-poverty measures.

These point towards (some of) the current priorities for ongoing dialogue and research that can direct and inform the development of theory and practice.

3.2: Current themes and concerns at the frontier – building theory and practice

This section sets out key emerging themes and concerns generated through the eight discussions in Part 2; and in relation to the broad issues for theory and practice established in Part 1 and feedback from the consultees in 3.1. The overarching working assumption provides structure for outlining this learning to support on-going dialogue and research for building relevant theory and practice.

3.2.1: Supporting pragmatic preventative partnership and participation

A working assumption: the current frontier of Collaborative and Participatory Governance – or putting ‘Christie’ into action – in this complex, ‘messy’ public service landscape requires an integration of three broad elements:

(1) a pragmatic preventative partnership and participation that is creative, evidence-informed and politically-astute – and committed to a public service ethos.

1. Coordinating public service provision through collaboration remains hugely challenging

The reflections-from-the-field, particularly in discussions 1 and 7 (2.1, 2.7), illustrate the level of challenge involved in seeking to pursue aspirations for public service collaboration, partnership and participation. Some organisations and individuals see value in committing to these approaches; others are more cautious; whilst the need for significant resourcing and top-down decision-making may act against aspirations for local collaboration. Further, the existing evidence-base as to the potential of partnership and participation is mixed, with relative optimists (Sinclair, 2011; Cook, 2015) and pessimists (Headlam & Rowe, 2014).

The complex ambition for putting Christie into action across multiple layers – central, district, local community – and sectors remains hugely demanding. Particularly so, in the context of multiple crises and challenges

highlighted by the Christie Commission – e.g. stubborn inequalities, ageing and growing population, workforce insecurity and fiscal austerity, longer-term pressures on state finances. This suggests the crucial importance of continuing to make these challenges and demands visible and explicit – to remind ourselves of the scale of ambition here and the need to learn from both ‘successes’ and ‘failures’. This intentionality provides the thinking spaces for a necessary realism and for seeking the necessary levels of constructive challenge – sufficiently powerful vehicles – for service and social change (process) relevant to these aspirations (outcomes).

2. Incremental change as a realistic pace of reform for collaborative partnerships

The current evidence base regarding public service partnerships and collaboration (Petch, 2011; Sinclair, 2011; Cook, 2015) points towards the incremental nature of change through public service partnerships – rather than as a more dramatic, urgent or sudden ‘transformational’ change. Public services can and do respond rapidly, collaboratively and effectively to emergencies and disasters (of course) ...but more generally seem better orientated towards a more measured pace-of-change. Earlier practical examples of reform point to a decade as a more likely time period across which to consider relevant change, for example: health and social care integration through building shared management systems in Torbay, South Devon, (Thistlethwaite, 2011) and back-office/IT systems change within Newcastle City Council in collaboration with local trades union branches (Wainwright & Little, 2009). It is important to note – as in these cases – goals, processes and scale of public service systems change can be decidedly different but aspirations are being viewed in the longer-term.

The incremental nature of public service reform suggests that active, flexible planning to support and monitor change, e.g. action research, other social research, evaluative processes and so on, will be valuable in sustaining a shared focus across such a time period – and involving the wider workforce, citizens and communities. Running in parallel to management and political decision-making and monitoring structures, they can highlight the organisational barriers to change that will inevitably continue to emerge as actions are developed (Argyris, 2003).

Further, what is also strongly suggested by the action research in Aberdeenshire, and across three other case sites (Brunner, Bennett, Bynner & Henderson, 2018), is the need for a reasonable level of job security across all employed to provide public services in order to build and sustain the working relationships needed for complex collaborations and democratic change. Longer-term action research can maintain a focus on this concern too.

3. A rich picture of theory and practice to inform and build facilitative leadership

The report points towards the fundamental role of facilitative leadership in coordinating and creating change - a leadership that is concerned for:

- Collective working across different layers of partnership and participation; roles and types of leadership; and types of organisation and sector.
- Crossing existing organisational boundaries – and so needing skills of communication, coordination, ‘enterprise’ and creativity, and understanding context (Williams, 2013).
- ‘Process politics’ and the front- and back-stage working necessary to create change and deliberative spaces for all stakeholders to consider change (Escobar, 2017).
- Evidence use and the varieties of evidence – local, statistical, reviews, practice-based, ‘emotional’ – to be explored in deliberative spaces (Escobar et al., 2018).

This rich mixture of knowledge, skills and abilities points towards the need for a dynamic understanding of interacting theories, policies and practices between people and systems – a deepening of theory and practice (what are we doing, why and for whom). Here, there is unlikely to a clear formula for success (Busso & Bartels, 2014) instead a continued engaged in dialogue over the changing complexities of policy and practice and their emerging impacts – as would be expected with wicked social problems (Curtis, 2010).

The discussions in Part 2, particularly 2 to 6, therefore can be seen to scope some of the key ingredients for such a theory and practice of facilitative leadership for collaborative and participatory governance. These include:

- networks of support for collective multi-layered leadership
- inclusive democratic working and the role of civil society in sustaining this
- political and deliberative working
- diversity of collaborative learning and action approaches (action research), and,
- independent in-depth facilitation.

It is argued that it is the active, creative development of these practices together as theory and practice that will be crucial to generate the necessary power for collaborative change.

4. The third sector/civil society role in championing public service and social change

Discussions of collaborative and participatory governance point to the key role of the third sector in providing leadership for constructive challenge for change and innovation in complex systems – including advocacy on inequalities/social justice (Fung, 2015; Ansell et al., 2017). The report flags key local democratic elements in civil society that can play that role as including: local community organisations of place, e.g. community anchors and enterprises (Henderson, Revell & Escobar, 2018); local community organisations of interest/identity, e.g. disability advocacy groups, community enterprises; other local citizen, people using services and carers’ initiatives; and local trades unions branches (Wainwright & Little, 2009).

However, the development of financially secure civil society bodies built on strong local governance that can pursue long-term approaches will not be accidental. The report makes the case for the local and central state role in long-term relationship-building with these key local organisations (‘relational contracting’ (Weaver, 2009)) – through relational commissioning (Davidson Knight et al., 2017); public procurement; varieties of social and economic planning activity; and investment in community ownership and related enterprise.

5. Local leadership as a current priority for on-going dialogue and research

Part 2 offers a wealth of examples of local, central, operational and strategic partnership working – and related opportunities, challenges and dilemmas – and has strength too in relation to participation and engagement with communities and citizens. Yet is less developed in terms of the role of local community leadership and limited in terms of the current development of local deliberative practices.

The responses from the local consultees highlight their current focus and concern for:

- the relationship between ‘local’ and ‘central’ in terms of strategic development
- local community leadership and preventing inequalities
- local preventative partnership working, and
- local democratic practices (participatory, deliberative, representative) including the relationship with local councillors.

This points toward a current agenda for developing theory and practice – on-going dialogue and research – as needing to focus on a bringing together of local public service reform and local democratic reform.

3.2.2: Working for a social vision: more equitable society and sustainable state finances

A working assumption: the current frontier of collaborative and participatory governance – or putting ‘Christie into action’ – in this complex, ‘messy’ public service landscape requires an integration of three broad elements:

(2) commitment to a social vision concerned for a more equitable society and sustainable state finances – via integration of state, economy and varieties of local empowerment.

6. Preventative partnership and participation is in the early stages of development

This report and the earlier reports with Aberdeenshire CPP (*Scoping report; Community Links Worker report; the Multi-layered preventative partnership working report*) continue to point to this fundamental area of developing theory and practice as in its infancy (note: remembering the data in this report is from Summer 2017).

The existing broad evidence base from NHS Health Scotland (Craig, 2014) supports a direction-of-travel concerned for upstream whole population health approaches, tackling health inequalities and reducing the growth of pressure on public services and budgets. And this is in many ways now illustrated through the Scottish Government and COSLA's (2018) Public health priorities for Scotland policy document and its focus on a whole systems approach. But the how of doing this work through local policy and practice development is complex and only beginning to actively form into actual explorations of partnership and participation concerned for wicked social problems.

Current opportunities, challenges and dilemmas include:

- Evidence base: strong on broad direction-of-travel but currently still developing in terms of what can usefully be achieved locally and by whom.
- Partnership-building: partners have existing agendas and policy commitments; and may have limited commitment to upstream, whole population approaches.
- Resources and investment: are needed for transitions from existing services to preventative approaches as cashable savings may only be realised in the long-term.

The work on the LOIP Priorities in this report (data up to summer 2017) shows the patient working and discussion needed to build a collaborative agenda and that partners may have limited resources to commit to shared approaches alongside individual agendas. Although, the statutory duty to build a shared agenda through LOIPs is seen as a useful focus and legitimises dialogue. These tensions and the context of public spending constraint, and so limited finance to support re-investment, are coherent with expectations as to the incremental, longer-term nature of developments of public service partnerships ... if sufficient challenge can be maintained to create change across partners.

7. Incremental change or urgent action? Seeking wider options for change

The Christie Commission, whilst realistic as to the pace of likely public service reform, also indicated a strong sense of urgency due to the:

- current bleakness (social disaster) of stubborn inequalities and related fiscal challenges, and
- demographically-driven fiscal challenge of an ageing population (if years lived in poor health increase).

In both cases, action is needed 'now' to improve the lives of many people living with or facing poverty and inequality and in the process to reduce pressures on services in the longer-term and work toward sustainable state finances and avoid a potential 'fiscal cliff'. In this context, incremental public service partnership and participation would seem insufficient to generate the rapid service and social change needed.

The report, therefore, brings into focus some of the wider policy developments that could support direct or indirect investment in preventative approaches – and potential for a modest redistribution of resources, income and assets – including:

- community ownership and enterprise – and related investment in social capital
- public ownership, enterprise and procurement (Jackson & McInroy, 2017; Watson, 2018)
- public investment strategies e.g. borrowing, public bonds, local banking, taxation
- locating groups at high risk of health inequalities via predictive data analytics and 'investing' in their lives

- public sector accounting that promotes longer-term state investment
- shared working across community planning, spatial planning and local place plans.

Each of these point to emerging spaces for CPPs (local and central) to take wider leadership roles in relation to the broader workings of the state and economy; committing to and resourcing civil society; and, actively working with the dynamics and tensions between local practice development and bigger picture policy-framing and development.

8. Varieties of local hub: public service coordination and local place-making

Given the argument in (7), wider avenues across the state, economy and social economy could be channelled to provide investment in preventing inequalities, uneven economic and social development, and more urgent change. Local hubs of various types can coordinate such activity and Discussion 8 (2.8):

- illustrates smaller scale developments through community ownership, community enterprise and community anchor organisations, and
- highlights other opportunities for building the local economy and employment and so strengthening local social capital.

These can in turn build stronger working relationships with local public service partnerships. A variety of local hubs of different sizes, concerns and scales are currently being considered:

- public service hubs (Watson, 2017)
- community health hubs
- community safety hubs
- local third sector hubs
- hubs for local communities of interest
- local social enterprise and business hubs
- community anchor organisations.

Each 'model' or approach has particular strengths and concerns. Community-led anchor organisations (Henderson, Revell & Escobar, 2018), for instance, seek to pursue a holistic approach to local economic, social, democratic and sustainable development – and so local facilitative leadership – through a multi-faceted approach to community-led placemaking.

3.2.3: A public service learning culture and systems-focused action research

A working assumption: the current frontier of collaborative and participatory governance – or putting 'Christie' into action – in this complex, 'messy' public service landscape requires an integration of three broad elements:

(3) a public service learning culture that seeks both practical problem-solving and 'bigger picture' problem-framing e.g. one option being systems-focused action research.

9. Collaborative learning and action: diverse options for learning and change

Collaborative learning and action or the family of action research approaches (Reason & Bradbury, 2006) offers a flexible and pragmatic approach and wide range of options for integrating elements of collaboration, research and action. The report illustrates this via:

- The variety of work between Aberdeenshire and What Works Scotland (1.2.1) including: an inquiry team; development work with the Board and Executive; informal developing inquiry across CPP partners; and, participatory case study development.

- The diversity of other collaborative learning activity in Aberdeenshire (Discussion 5) including: community-led survey work; joint work between a local CPP and community council; interviewing with a local community and local services; and the CPP's central review of its structures and ways of working.

Similarly, the What Works Scotland cross-case site report reflects a range of action research options pursued with CPPs (Brunner, Bennett, Bynner & Henderson, 2018).

Crucially – as (1), (2), (6) and (7) above – aspirations for collaboration even as action research, don't 'automatically' (of course) create sustainable change. Key elements for creating relevant learning and change will then be familiar – and very likely include:

- ongoing independent, in-depth facilitation
- inclusive and deliberative inquiry work with and across all relevant stakeholders
- access to experienced action/social researcher – and related evidence/knowledge
- engaging with facilitative leadership networks (action) – and wider peer learning
- recognising the political dynamics – across organisations, communities, politicians.

10. Problem-solving knowledge and problem-framing knowledge

Discussion 5 develops the case for collaborative learning and action (action research) as seeking to develop three different types of knowledge:

- Workable knowledge: concerned for applied solutions to practitioner problems.
- Reflexive knowledge: positioning developments in wider policy and social contexts.
- Credible knowledge: relevant to stakeholders – policy, practice, research, community.

Bartels & Wittmayer¹ call the resulting integration of these three knowledge types actionable knowledge. Similarly, discussions from Argyris² of problem-solving (single loop learning) and problem-framing (double loop learning) seek an implementable knowledge that goes beyond abstract reporting to being useful in actual policy and practice.

If actionable knowledge is to be credible to 'all' stakeholders then it will very likely take multiple and inter-linking forms – for instance, the Community Links Worker report and inquiry generated:

- Knowledgeable people (embodied): an inquiry team with knowledge and experience to share in person and through rich practitioner narratives (story-telling).
- Written outputs (abstract): a final report, summary and web-material, policy briefing, a draft brief for further inquiry, case-study material, a book chapter.
- Learning with wider networks (embedded): report consultation process, development workshop, wider dissemination work including national processes and peer learning.

Actionable or implementable knowledge demands that we go beyond abstract reporting – whether as reports, summaries, articles and so on – to generate a rich, dynamic inter-relating and 'living' webs of knowledge and related practice.

11. Creative, unpredictable and safe spaces for learning and change

¹ Bartels K and Wittmayer J (2014) Symposium introduction: usable knowledge in practice. What action research has to offer to critical policy studies, *Critical Policy Studies*, 8 (4): 397-406

² Argyris C (2003) A life full of learning. *Organization Studies*, 24(7), 1178-1193

Discussions 4 (deliberative practices), 5 (collaborative learning and action) and 6 (independent facilitation) provide examples of inquiry work in which ‘safe spaces’ can be generated and sustained to support creative, often contested discussions. These seek exploration, innovation and change rather than being solely-focused on ‘improvements’ – in the more limited sense of the word – as targets, outputs and outcomes. They are unpredictable and so ill-at-ease with the positivity bias that often arises in co-produced research (Kothari & Wathen, 2012). Here, expectations of ‘success’ are high for all stakeholders and future work and funding perceived as dependent on them. However, incremental knowledge gains are more often the outcome from co-produced research, and these may be seen as ‘failure’ rather than as part of longer-term building for change.

From this perspective, it is the commitment to longer-term collaborative learning and action that will more likely create the complex learning required to support Collaborative and Participatory Governance. For this to happen the inquiry work must continue to be:

- well-supported by senior management and offering safe spaces and support for change (Dickens & Watkins, 1999; Henderson & Bynner, 2018), and
- be creative and flexible itself – changing to meeting the emerging challenges.

See, for instance, the *Beyond Action Learning* report that illustrates such an on-going process that brings together collaborative action learning sets with improvement tools.

12. Systems-focused action research – scope for piloting this approach?

“Unless we really think about what it is we want to change in these systems, and then change the attitude of the people that work in these systems, we're on a hiding to nothing. And that does not take away from the quality of the work [with What Works Scotland] that's been done, because the quality of the work is excellent. But what impact is it going to have. ...it's like setting little fires, and you have to keep on stoking those fires, for them to keep going. ... Culture change is hugely difficult and takes a huge resource. ...Because the only other thing that changes culture is disaster”. (Research participant)

Finally, the report offers the necessary fuel for the imagination as to one (broad) potential approach to supporting a collaborative public service learning culture – namely a systems-focused action research for longer-term engagement with wicked social problems. Here the inquiry work is concerned to map and explore both:

- the social systems in which the partners experience their work more directly – of which a local or central community planning can be one obvious element, and
- the wider social systems in which they are positioned e.g. workings across various levels (local to global) of the state, the market and communities/social capital.

Looking across the Discussions in Part 2 of this Report an initial picture of such an approach emerges that be used to support further piloting (‘testing out’) as follows:

- **Diverse local and central inquiries:** across layers of partnerships and different sectors.
- **Networking across the whole:** that brings these inquiries and participants together.
- **Senior management buy-in across CPP partners:** to provide safe spaces and commitment to action.
- **Longer-term, adaptive and creative collaborative inquiry and leadership processes:** that sustain high levels of challenge needed for incremental change – including from civil society e.g. equalities groups, community organisations, trades union branches – and are suitably resourced to support good research.
- **Shared interpretation and analysis of evidence:** safe spaces for participatory working and analysis – informed by evidence reviews and understandings of policy and practice that create challenge.

- **Pragmatic – practical, inclusive and reflexive:** concerned for both problem-solving and problem-framing; the inclusion of diverse stakeholders; and a willingness to engage openly with ‘successes’, ‘failures’ and its own limitations.
- **Reasonable level of stability to sustain collaboration:** suitable resourcing over the longer-term to sustain commitment e.g. sufficient job security in the public service workforce; and resourcing and valuing of citizen, community and third sector roles (Brunner, Bennett, Bynner & Henderson, 2018).

3.2.4: Concluding thoughts: at the frontier of collaborative and participative governance: ‘testing out’ a rich picture of emerging theory and practice

The report offers two final reflections as to potential ‘next steps’:

Firstly, the report can be understood as a ‘first shot’ at a rich picture of theory and practice at this frontier – through engaging in the variety of accumulating discussions across Parts 1, 2 and 3. It seeks to outline the necessary and emerging complexity of language through which to deepen on-going dialogue and research. And so, to build and legitimise safe places to explore what happens as ‘we’ seek to pursue *pragmatic preventative partnership and participation* concerned with a *social vision for a more equitable society and sustainable state finances*.

Further, in seeking to understand this work as theory and practice – what are we doing, why and for whom – it seeks to build the case for investing in ongoing dialogue and research and multi-faceted forms of knowledge to support and inform its development rather than, for instance, through abstract reporting of recipes for success.

Secondly, in exploring the potential role of collaborative learning and action in developing a public service learning culture, it points toward one potential focus for further dialogue and research, namely *the opportunity to construct and explore a more particular approach to a public service learning culture informed through systems-focused action research*.

Both of these reflections point towards substantial bodies of (potential) future work that could be developed. In presenting their outlines through accumulating arguments and discussions across this report, readers and stakeholders get to make more informed judgements as to whether to invest in such processes: ‘yes, no or maybe’?

Other elements within the full report:

- Appendix 1: offers an overview of the action research and related work between Aberdeenshire CPP and What Works Scotland.
- Appendix 2: an interim learning report of the action research and related work between Aberdeenshire CPP and What Works Scotland (December 2016)
- Appendix 3: summary of the key themes from the What Works Scotland evidence review on public service partnership working.
- References list: all references from the Executive Summary are listed in the full report.

What Works Scotland is a Scottish Government and ESRC-funded research collaboration focused on improving the way local areas use evidence to make decisions about public service development and reform.