At the frontier of collaborative and participatory governance:

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

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**What Works Scotland** 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.

What Works Scotland 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 collaborative action research workstream.

**James Henderson** is a research associate for What Works Scotland, based at the University of Edinburgh.

What Works Scotland is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Scottish Government [www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk](http://www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk)

**Acknowledgements**

Many, many thanks to all of the people, services and organisations across Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership who supported the collaborative action and learning (action research) work between the CPP and What Works Scotland from 2015-17. There is no precise total but a
conservative estimate is of 100+ people taking part in one or more research activity or a consultation on one of the reports. This work provides the backdrop to this report.

Further, many thanks to the 23 people who contribute reflective interview (or similar) material that directly informs the interpretation and analysis developed in this reflective learning report. The material is presented anonymously, so they are not named here but their input is fundamental to this report and related reflective learning.

Many thanks as well to Huntly and District Development Trust (Donald Boyd), Portsoy Community Enterprise (Roger Goodyear), and the Boyndie Trust (Duncan Leece) for the material that informs the case examples in Part 2, Discussion 8 (2.8).

And finally, many, many thanks to those who took part in the consultation process on Parts 1 and 2 of this report - Nick Bland, George Howie, Annette Johnson, Chris Littlejohn and Kevin McDermott; and likewise to Nick Bland and Justine Geyer for initial feedback on the summary materials.

‘Research team’ and others within What Works Scotland

This report builds on a range of action research projects carried out with Aberdeenshire CPP partners by What Works Scotland researchers Nick Bland and James Henderson between 2015 into 2017. Appendix 2 of the report provides a draft interim report material (Bland & Henderson, December 2016) on learning across this process. James Henderson carried out most of the final series of interviewing and then undertook the interpretation and analysis and drafting and re-writing of this report. Five reports – including this one – have been published and a reflective Aberdeenshire CPP/What Works Scotland webpage established at


See section 1.2.1 of the report for further details and/or the Aberdeenshire webpage on the What Works Scotland website at http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/casesites/aberdeenshire.

Many, many thanks to Nick Bland for his many inputs, insights and support over the last four years. And, similarly, many thanks to all the many others within What Works Scotland whose thinking, practice and learning have further stimulated and informed my own and the discussions in this report over that same period – including the ‘PLC’ (Hayley Bennett, Richard Brunner, Claire Bynner, Kevin Lowden) and the community anchor research project (Oliver Escobar, Philip Revell – and the project’s Advisory Group).

And, crucially, many thanks to Emma Baird and Lucy Janes for their extensive work on editing, proofing, laying out, generating graphics, and helping to fine-tune this very long report – very much appreciated!

Finally, of course, responsibility for the views, interpretations and analysis developed here, remain with the researcher (me), James Henderson.
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1. Setting the scene – understanding the focus of the report

Notes for the reader

Given the length of this full (final) reflective learning report the following are provided:

- Text box summaries at the beginning of each section to help readers follow the broader storyline (argument or narrative) pursued across Parts 1, 2 and 3.
- An Executive Summary to provide an overview and support understanding of the report’s focus, a shorter Introductory Summary, and a Summary of the Eight Discussions that could be used to support group dialogue are available on the What Works Scotland website.

1.1 Introduction – Eight key discussions for ongoing dialogue and action to support developing collaborative and participatory governance

Summary of section 1.1

This report:
- shares learning generated via the collaborative learning and action (action research) processes between the CPP partners and What Work Scotland
- focuses on putting ‘Christie into action’ (public service reform) as part of a wider emerging international trend toward collaborative and participatory governance
- seeks to build understanding of the frontier of this complex developing partnership and participation: the ideas seem familiar, yet the territory uncertain
- offers eight discussions to support dialogue and action as one way to support CPPs to build practice and reflect critically on this approach to public governance
- builds from scene-setting (Part 1); through the eight key discussions (Part 2); and, offers concluding thoughts for ongoing ‘dialogue and research’ (Part 3).

At the frontier of collaborative and participatory governance?

This learning report draws from the collaborative learning and action processes (action research) and related work undertaken between Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP) partners and What Works Scotland – largely between June 2015 and December 2016, but with some additional work through to summer 2017. It seeks to outline

http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/frontier-of-collaborative-and-participatory-governance

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and share some of the learning through these action research processes from some of those working across the CPP and What Works Scotland about putting Christie into action. That is, the policy and practice narrative generated by the 2011 Christie Commission which continues to provide the key (meta) narrative as to the direction-of-travel of public service reform in Scotland.

In this report, the Christie Commission (2011) agenda – a ‘Scottish Approach’ – is positioned as part of a wider international trend towards a collaborative and participatory governance. Such a governance is concerned for partnership and participation and prevention, particularly of inequalities, and so aspires towards a more equitable society. The report, therefore, talks of this direction-of-travel as a working at the frontier\(^2\) given there is no clear or simple route map of how to do it, rather a sense of crossing into new-ish territories. That is not to say many of the ideas and activities aren’t increasingly familiar – as per the Commission’s report – and in fact notions of partnership and participation within policymaking date from the late 1960s in the UK. But how to bring them together into a workable process of public service reform, and related social change across local, regional and national dimensions? Lots of good advice circulates in the ether, and there are plenty of developing policies, tools and approaches. However, making it happen on the ground, working towards the intended social vision and related outcomes, and being prepared to recognise and explore the unexpected and unintended results of such working is assumed in this report to be demanding, challenging work; as might be expected when engaging with complex ‘wicked’ social problems e.g. inequalities (Curtis, 2010). Hence, we find ourselves at the frontier of a familiar land, certainly not alien, yet with all the anxieties and complexities of having no easy pocket guide or commonly-held knowledge as to exactly what to do or where to go next.

**A reflective learning report focused on dialogue and wicked social problems**

This learning report builds from four earlier action research reports and other written materials – in particular a draft interim report (see Appendix 2) – co-produced to varying degrees by What Work Scotland and Aberdeenshire CPP partners. Crucially, however, it draws on a process that seeks to take this work a step further – namely a series of reflective interviews with 23 people working across the CPP within strategic, operational or community contexts or all three – and largely in the summer of 2017. These interviews supported three broad discussions between the participants and the two What Work Scotland researchers as to:

1. current experiences of partnership working and related participatory working
2. experiences of collaborative learning and action (action research)

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\(^2\) The metaphor of ‘frontier’ is taken from the field of groupwork where it has often been used to describe the developing learning of groups – and individuals within those groups – as they move forward into new experiences and territory and build new practices and understandings.

[whatworksscotland.ac.uk](http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk)
3. brief reflections on putting Christie into action.

Some of these activities, but not all of them, directly involved What Work Scotland, whilst the relationships between the participants and researchers built over a two-year period supported informed dialogue between us.

The central learning from this interview process is presented in Part 2 as *Eight key discussions to support dialogue on putting Christie into action*. Each discussion offers:

- policy and practice context
- reflections-from-the-field – the interviewees
- further thoughts from the researcher on developing dialogue.

These eight discussions are not as the only important discussions for developing theory and practice at this frontier – others are clearly relevant e.g. evidence use, participatory appraisal and evaluation, social and economic outcomes (as implicit within the development of preventative approaches). They do, however, as the report illustrates and argues, provide a valuable starting point for such dialogue.

Part 1 provides scene-setting in relation to the action research process between Aberdeenshire CPP and What Works Scotland (1.2) and in relation to collaborative and participatory governance (1.3). In particular, an overarching working assumption is developed (1.3.4) to sustain the report’s focus on preventative partnership and participation, social vision for a more equitable society, and, the potential role of action research in public service change and social change.

In Part 3, the report draws in section 3.1, too, on feedback and further reflections from some of the participants involved in consultation on the report to illustrate the potential for ongoing and deepening dialogue, and related further research on this challenging area of working (theory and practice). And further, in 3.2, a series of more particular ‘themes and concerns’ is outlined in response to the overarching working assumption generated in Part 1 and informed by the discussions in Part 2.

Given the assumed dynamic nature of this frontier, the report is not offered either as a practical ‘how-to’ guide or a more detailed book on how to carry out collaborative and participatory governance. For certain, there will be more than eight useful discussions to be had here but, as is suggested above, no simple route map seems likely to be available – rather a developing process through actual policy and practice.

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3 A discussion with public health professionals (Dec 2018) highlighted the importance, too, of (i) recruitment (and this doesn’t have to only mean staff – but could point to wider discussions of ‘recruiting’, finding and training other key people e.g. volunteers, activists, representatives, politicians); and (ii) digital technology and related inclusion.
Instead, by offering discussions to support dialogue, developing action and critical reflection, the report aims to encourage the creation of safe spaces for all stakeholders engaging with the complexities of public service reform and related social change to have the necessary and difficult conversations to support progress. It would be expected that seeking to work at this frontier and in relation to wicked social issues will inevitably involve considering opportunities, challenges and dilemmas and related successes and failures (Gibb, 2015). These stakeholders are very likely to include policy-makers, practitioners, politicians, people using services, communities and citizens concerned for public service reform at all levels – local, district, regional and national – and from all sectors.

Finally, as is outlined further in 1.2, it is important to understand that this report isn’t an evaluation of the work between Aberdeenshire CPP and What Works Scotland, nor of the CPP or What Works Scotland more generally – noting too that the interview data dates from 2017. These would be very different undertakings, needing different planning and resourcing. What is offered are issues and space to support further dialogue, reflection and learning in a new and uncertain era at the frontier of collaborative and participatory governance, and the developing Scottish Approach.

The report therefore follows this course:

- Part 1: Scene-setting – Research process, context and issues, and focus
- Part 2: Eight discussions to support putting Christie into action
- Part 3: Overview and further reflections.

1.2 Understanding the collaborative learning and action process in Aberdeenshire – including developing this learning report

**Summary of section 1.2**

1.2.1: A diverse research process in Aberdeenshire

The CPP and What Works Scotland collaborative learning and action process (action research) has been multi-faceted and involving the development of a range of initiatives and reports relating to: community capacity-building; collaborative learning; partnership and change management; and preventative partnership working.

1.2.2: Focused on an action research process

Understood as a social process seeking to bring together in creative ways three key elements of: (1) collaboration, participation and cooperation; (2) research and inquiry; (3) action(s) and change. Such a process aims to provide credible knowledge as both a workable (practical, problem-solving) knowledge and reflexive (positioning, framing
problems) knowledge. Potentially, it has the flexibility to work with the ‘wicked’ social issues and aspirations for systems change that are the central concern of collaborative and participatory governance (see 1.3).

1.2.3: This reflective learning report

Draws from interviews with 23 participants working across the CPP in strategic, operational and community contexts – as well as the wider research process in Aberdeenshire – to explore the frontier of their work in seeking to take forward collaborative and participatory governance (i.e. putting Christie into action).

1.2.4: Concluding thought on a learning culture for systems change:

From these discussions the potential for the action research work between the CPP and What Works Scotland to inform understanding of systems-focused action research is recognised – both to support further developments in 1.3 and to be returned to in Part 3 (3.2.3).

1.2.1 Key ingredients of our work across 2015 to 2017 and into 2018

Here a summary is provided of the key ingredients and reports of the collaborative learning and action processes in Aberdeenshire:

1) Community capacity-building for health and wellbeing: work led by Aberdeenshire HSCP and What Works Scotland involving a diverse range of other partners including Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action, Friends of Insch Hospital and Community and others:
   - Community Links Worker Inquiry: Brief for Cycle 2 – see Appendix 2 in the Multi-layered preventative partnership working report⁵.
   - Case study on a strategic approach to community capacity-building⁶.

2) Multi-layered preventative partnership working:

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⁵ https://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/inquiring-into-multi-layered-preventative-partnership/
• **Collaborative Learning Day and scoping report** (Henderson & Bland, 2016) regarding partnership and participation – see figure 1 (below) for illustrations of those discussions.

• Development work with the CPP Board and Executive – see Appendix 2: Emerging learning from the What Works Scotland/Aberdeen CPP collaboration: a summary of learning from the development work between CPP Board and Executive and What Works Scotland – *Nick Bland & James Henderson* (December 2016) ... a draft Interim Learning Report


• **Case study on developing LOIP priority re. Alcohol and Culture Change**

• This **reflective learning report on collaborative and participatory governance**

3) **Collaborative learning and action processes and reflective learning:**

• **Beyond Action Learning report** – action learning sets and improvement tools in health and social care partnership working (Soutar, Warrander & Henderson, 2017).

• **Reflective learning webpage for CPP and What Works Scotland**

4) **Some of the other key elements of the work between Aberdeen CPP and WWS – more generally:**

• **Citizens Jury in Peterhead** – Nick Bland (2017a)

• Aberdeen CPP participants at What Works Scotland National Retreats – access via section 3 on the Aberdeenshire case site webpage.

• **Chris Littlejohn (NHS Grampian) presentation at the What Works Scotland Health and Social Care integration event**

• **George Howie (Aberdeenshire HSCP) presentation at What Works Scotland Child Poverty event**

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14 [http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/casesites/aberdeenshire/](http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/casesites/aberdeenshire/)


whatworksscotland.ac.uk
Aberdeenshire CPP participants at What Works Scotland Training for Trainers course\(^\text{17}\) (Bynner, Escobar & Faulkner, 2017)

Appendix 1: Overview of Aberdeenshire CPP and What Works Scotland Collaborative Learning and Action joint-working (2015-2016; and related 2017-2018) outlines the fuller extent of action research undertaken between Aberdeenshire CPP and What Works Scotland and provides a timeline.

\[^{17}\text{http://whatworksscotland.blogspot.com/2017/05/facilitative-leadership-involving-citizens-and-communities-in-local-decision-making.html}\]
Figure 1: Examples from the four key discussions at the first Collaborative Learning Day:

**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

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**Effective partnership working**
- IT systems that ‘talk to each other’
- Need local budget
- No one just in one partnership - multi-partner - so stretchy
- Finding 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 share
- Proudy session to align and share vision with all stakeholders

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**Community-led approaches**
- Distinction between co-production and community-led?
- Healthy living network
- Still can’t 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?

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**What are we learning about putting Christie into action?**
- Close gap not widen it! BUT participation won’t feed the burn!
- 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
1.2.2 Working within the action research tradition – our research methodology

The key issues of our work together are described below.

1) Working within the action tradition concerned for democratic practice

Broadly speaking, the work in Aberdeenshire has been within a ‘family of action research approaches’ concerned for ‘participatory worldview’ (Reason and Bradbury, 2006). This is a flexible approach allowing use of diverse methods that seek to integrate elements of participation, collaboration and cooperation, research and inquiry, and action and change. As is highlighted below, this is particularly relevant to the developing democratic focus of collaborative and participatory governance and its emphasis on developing shared, inclusive approaches to understanding wicked social issues and decision-making (see 1.3.1 [1]).

2) Across the report the term ‘collaborative learning and action’ is used to point to both:

- this broad family of action research process where elements of participation, inquiry and action are explicitly adopted and integrated
- a broader body of collaborative and participatory approaches where elements of participation, inquiry and action are at work, but aren’t explicitly adopted and/or integrated, and so may not be fully understood as action research.

This allows the report to connect to and consider a broader range of collaborative, inquiring/research-focused and action orientated working from across the CPP, alongside more explicit action research projects.

3) Group-based inquiries, inflight approaches and ‘holding steady’

What Works Scotland’s original aspiration was to build formal action research group-based inquiries. It focused on a broad three phase, cyclical model for collaborative action inquiry: scoping the problem; exploring the evidence (inquiry); and testing change (action) – see diagram below.

Across the four case sites – Aberdeenshire, Fife, Glasgow, West Dunbartonshire – a variety of different approaches, some group-based, some not, have since been adopted – see the [What Works Scotland cross-case site report](https://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/collaborative-action-research-and-public-services-insights-into-methods-findings-and-implications-for-public-service-reform/)

The original action research cycle has similarly been used variably.

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In Aberdeenshire, two of the projects carried out a group-based inquiry:

- Community Links Worker inquiry cycle 1 report
- Beyond Action Learning report

The other projects and reports described above (and in Appendix 1) took what is termed an ‘in-flight approach’ (Henderson & Bynner, 2018). Here, the researchers worked with the participants and co-researchers to adapt the research process to the particular needs of the partnership at any one time. They concentrated on development work with the Board and executive or in relation to strategy development e.g. the LOIP (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan) and community health and wellbeing. In effect, pursuing a step-by-step adaptive process rather than a formalised inquiry.

In this context, it became crucial for the researchers to play a holding role – ‘holding steady, whilst changing tack’ (Henderson & Bynner, 2018) – that has sought to sustain an overall direction to the action research work, e.g. through reports and consultations on those reports. This has helped to maintain an accountable and trusted (valid) research process focused across the process, the outcomes, levels of inclusion, aspirations for change (catalyst), and credibility of the knowledge produced (Bruce et al., 2011).

The cyclical model shown below (figure 2), therefore, continued to prove useful as a metaphor for three of the broad processes involved. It served too as a reminder of the reflective, analytical and evidence-informed nature of the process rather than as an actual step-by-step guide.

Figure 2: Illustration of the collaborative research cycle initially adopted by What Works Scotland

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4) Practical, credible and reflexive research concerned for wicked social issues

Finally, it is valuable to note the thinking of Ray Ison (2008) on the role of an embedded (involved) and systemic (systems-focused) action research – or systemic co-inquiry – in supporting investigations of complex and wicked social issues. Ison argues that whilst:

- with ‘tame problems’ the stakeholders will be able to agree relatively easily on the nature of the problem before analysis begins
- with ‘wicked problems’ the problem remains difficult to define – changing and dynamic.

He advocates for an action research that is co-produced with those on-the-ground and seeks to understand the social systems at work through interactions. He argues this is better placed to continue to work to find ‘solutions’ in a dynamic and changing context.

Similarly, Bartels & Wittmayer (2014) argue for action research in the fields of complex policy and practice that seeks to sustain three dimensions or forms of knowledge, as:

- work-able – seeking practical and pragmatic knowledge for day-to-day use (a focus on problem-solving, for instance)
- credible – across diverse stakeholders (practitioners, policy-makers, citizens, researchers)
- reflexive – seeking deeper understandings of systems and systems change (and of your roles and positions within them) that can then support reframing of problems.

By holding onto these three elements, action research processes will be better placed to sustain longer-term working with complex wicked issues. The report returns to this in Section 1.3. In relation to Ison’s (2008) thinking on a systems-focused action research, these elements point to the value of both practical, problem-solving and reflexive, problem-framing within an ongoing process seeking to work with complex systems. But, crucially, in ways that are credible to a range of stakeholders.

1.2.3 This reflective learning report – the research process

The development of this report is a distinctive element in the collaborative learning and action process between the CPP and What Works Scotland. It can be viewed in different ways as:

- an action research process itself with reflective interviewing; opportunities for consultation and reflective writing; and actions – as per the Policy and Practice Briefing – that can be taken forward and tested out; and/or
- the final element of a wider action research process – concerned for the broad policy and practice focus of putting ‘Christie into action’; and/or
- a more traditional social research process with interviews and an interpretation and analysis in which the researchers do most of the work and then consult.
Perhaps, there is no final answer to what it is. However, it is useful to understand the key elements of this learning and research process. They include:

1) Interviewees and data collection:

The backbone of the final research report is formed from reflective interviews (or similar) with 23 different people carried out mostly between May and early August 2017\(^\text{19}\).

Other material and research reports from the wider process also contributed to the interpretation and analysis. This included interview material with 10 people\(^\text{20}\); a range of informal discussions with about 30 people earlier in the process – so not recorded as formal data; and discussions with three community organisations to generate short case examples (see 2.8).

The 23 interviewees were not randomly selected from across the CPP partners. Each had had at least some previous involvement in the CPP/What Works Scotland collaborative learning and action process. They were not then a representative sample in any sense, but rather selected partly because of that previous link and so having some experience and understanding of the research process and been influenced by it. And, in part, to gain further insights across the various layers of multi-layered partnership and participation and a range of relevant CPP partners and stakeholders. The research report therefore broadly refers to three layers of practice:

- **community contexts**: where participants are active in local communities as development workers, activists/volunteers, and leaders, advocates and politicians.
- **operational contexts**: where participants are involved in the provision and/or management of frontline public services.
- **strategic contexts**: where participants are involved in development of strategies and policies – managers and senior managers, politicians, other leaders, representatives.

The researchers sought participants from across those layers but within the interviews themselves, there was no simple divide. Most participants were active in at least two contexts and at least one spoke across all three. The report therefore places quoted material in relation to the context being discussed at that point in the interview rather than the formal (main) role of the interviewee.

Whilst it is tempting to put these layers in some sort of hierarchy – and indeed power is not equally distributed across the three – their relationship is inevitably more complex. For example, those providing community leadership in some circumstances can have a significant influence on the development of strategy and operations.

\(^{19}\) 19 individual interviews; 1 group interview; and 1 piece of reflective writing.

\(^{20}\) Material from 1 of these interviews is quoted in this report.
2) The diversity of interviewees, organisations and stakeholders involved:

Although 23 people were interviewed, this did not, in fact, achieve the levels of diversity that research concerned for inclusive partnership and participation would likely aspire to. For instance:

- as the quotes illustrate in Part 2, the researcher(s)’ interpretation has engaged more in discussions of practice in strategic contexts rather than operational and community contexts although it does highlight these too.
- whilst a gender balanced was achieved in terms of numbers – 12 women, 11 men – the men tended more towards ‘the strategic’. All 11 men discussed material relevant to a strategic context, compared to seven of the women.
- the range of services and organisations who were involved doesn’t do justice to the fuller range of partners and wider stakeholders across the CPP.

There is clearly work to do here in understanding and imagining what an inclusive research process would be like and how to resource it, and the report returns to this in the concluding discussions in 3.2.3.

3) Interpretation and analysis – key role

The researcher undertook a thorough analysis of the reflective interview material, informed by the wider body of evidence, to generate an early interpretation and analysis of the material. The role of the researcher(s) in providing an interpretation, and so prioritising key themes, is important to recognise. The researcher, for instance, used the emerging understanding of collaborative and participatory governance (see 1.3) as a focus for engaging with the interview material and communicating this through a consultation draft and a draft policy and practice briefing.

The consultation draft and draft briefing were then shared with participants and other interested parties who expressed an interest as a consultation and participation process – see 3.1. Use of summary material at the head of each section of this report sought to allow people to both follow the broad narrative (argument) and concentrate (feedback) on the elements of most relevance to them. The briefing supported this too. Those who participated in this consultation work were encouraged (but not obliged) to write reflectively in response to one or more of the issues raised – for inclusion in the final version and perhaps the Aberdeenshire reflective learning web-page.

4) Levels of anonymity

The report seeks to offer the participants anonymity to support discussion of the complex issues that seeking ‘change’ to services, culture and society inevitably involved. This includes sensitive editing of quoted material and discussion with four of the participants, where quotes were likely to be easily attributed to them by others working in the CPP. At the point of publication of the final version of the report, whilst anonymity seems very likely achievable more generally (for national readers), it is harder to achieve consistently at a local level.
within the CPP where people may know each other and their views well. The four participants contacted were all, in fact, happy for the material to go in the report ‘as read’. This suggests, therefore, that the researcher has succeed in his caution, but in the process may have unintentionally limited the learning potential from the report.

5) Not an evaluation or a case study: building learning for theory and practice

This report is not an evaluation of the work between the CPP and What Works Scotland, What Works Scotland’s approach in Aberdeenshire, or the CPP more generally. An evaluative research methodology that was seeking to provide a rigorous examination of some element of work would be very different to the developing action research process and data collection in Aberdeenshire and, so, resourced in a different way.

Neither is this rigorous, extensive case study research looking to understand the workings of public service partnerships across the CPP as a whole – and perhaps, for instance, exploring how the joint work between the CPP and What Works Scotland was/is influencing (contributing) to change across the whole.

Most crucially, the action research process needs to be understood as having worked in the main with those within the CPP most interested in developing partnership, participation, performance and prevention – putting Christie into action. There is a large element of self-selection here, with one participant at the first collaborative learning day suggesting that the approximately 40 participants were those across the CPP most concerned for putting Christie into action.

What this report – and indeed the joint working between the CPP and What Works Scotland – offers is exploration of theory and practice; understood here broadly as ‘what are we doing, why and for whom’. In the process, the opportunities, challenges and dilemmas that emerge when seeking to put Christie into action can be considered, for instance, in terms of:

- **Theory** - what theories are being used or seem relevant to use in the future?
- **Policy** - what is the role of policymaking and existing policy, and how do they need to develop?
- **Practice** - what types of practices are people and organisations are using and developing?

The report seeks to offer a rich picture of what is emerging in terms of theory and practice in relation to collaborative and participatory governance that can support and inform wider discussions across all stakeholders in Scotland, including asking more critical and reflexive questions about blocks, barriers, realistic expectations and so on.
1.2.4 Concluding thought: toward a learning culture through systems-focused action research?

The research process and background material on theory and practice outlined across 1.2 is suggestive of a broader perspective as to the collaborative learning and action processes between the CPP partners and What Works Scotland. Namely, that it can be understood across the whole as an aspiration for pursuing systems-focus action research with a CPP that is:

- both practical and problem-solving and reflexive and problem-framing
- concerned for putting Christie into action by focusing on systems change.

The systems are unspecified and could be many and complex – not simply the formal systems of the CPP, nor solely to do with public services systems of partnership and participation (formal or informal) but potentially wider systems e.g. political, economic, communities. But there is an underlying assumption here that in pursuing varieties of action research and related activity with the CPP, a learning culture can emerge – intentionally, organically or otherwise – across the relevant partners, which develops further understanding of public service systems, public service reform and the potential for systems change through collaborative learning and action (action research). Systems change might involve changes to formal structures and policies; social processes, leadership and relationships; or culture, values and ethos.

It is important to note, however, that this wasn’t necessarily the explicit intent of the CPP partners or the What Works Scotland researchers at the beginning (or even at the end) of the fieldwork process together. Often more immediate pragmatic goals were at work – activities useful to the CPP and to aspects of the What Works Scotland research.

The issue of systems-focused action research is recognised in the overarching working assumption developed across section 1.3 and then returned to in the concluding discussions in Part 3 (3.2.3).

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

Summary of section 1.3

What is informing this learning process and report? Three key strands of thinking are set out.

1.3.1: Collaborative and participatory governance
Scotland’s approach to public service reform, with its emphasis on partnership, participation and prevention, is part of a wider international trend in thinking that sees the state as convenor of wider partnerships across sectors; seeks participatory and co-produced initiatives with citizens, service-users and communities; and is concerned for the ‘public good’, preventing inequalities and working on ‘wicked’ issues. It is important to realise, however, that the day-to-day realities of public service reform cannot be reduced to one approach nor that the evidence-base simply confirms how this one approach can be made workable. The reality is considerably ‘messier’ with hybrid approaches – top-down, business-focused, collaborative and participative – and political dynamics at work.

1.3.2: Christie and aspirations for a more equitable society

The Christie Commission’s thinking offers a rich picture of policy and practice – not simply ‘partnership, participation, prevention, performance’. It also argues not just for reforming services but related social change. It recognises dynamics between state, economy, civil society and empowerment; and, for strives for more equitable society and sustainable state finances.

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 issues. Systems-focused action research offers one route to work with such wicked issues. Yet, as with all co-produced social research, there are risks of a positivity bias and pressures to claim more is being achieved or learnt than is perhaps the case. The working assumption is that such a learning culture will be helpful. However pragmatic, creative and reflexive approaches are recognised as necessary in working with the complexities, inevitably ‘messiness’ and realities of public service partnership environments.

1.3.4: Overarching working assumptions that collaborative and participatory governance is generated through integration of; (1) pragmatic, preventative partnership and participation; (2) social vision – for a fairer society and sustainable state finance; and, (3) a public service learning culture developed via systems-focused action research.

Having established in section 1.2 a broad perspective on the research process between the CPP and What Works Scotland, it is important in this section to recognise some of the key ideas and thinking that have informed (explicitly, implicitly or unwittingly) the collaborative learning and action process (action research) between the Aberdeenshire CPP partners and What Works Scotland. Given the ongoing role of the Christie Commission’s (2011) narrative
for public service reform in Scotland, this provides the foundation for three discussions below:

- Collaborative and participatory governance and a ‘Scottish Approach’ (1.3.1)
- Christie as a rich picture of policy and practice and social vision (1.3.2)
- A public service learning culture concerned for wicked issues and systems change (1.3.3).

1.3.1 The realities of collaborative and participatory governance: working in a crowded, ‘messy’ and changing public service landscape

1) Part of an emerging international trend in relation to public service reform

The Christie Commission’s (2011) broad narrative, often summarised as ‘partnership, participation, prevention, performance’, continues to provide language for discussion of Scottish public service. It continues to legitimise discussions of related policy and practice across public service organisations, professionals and frontline staff, and with wider stakeholders – citizens, service-users, carers, communities, trades unions and so on.

In providing this distinctive language and narrative for a ‘Scottish Approach’, it is easy to miss that the Commission is one part of a one wider international trend. Bryson et al. (2014) writes of a new, emerging approach to public governance and administration internationally that is providing a narrative for change – replacing older, long-standing narratives of (1) ‘traditional’ (rational) top-down administration; and (2) New Public Management (since 1980s). This new approach is pursued under a number of banners, but this report uses the broad term collaborative and participatory governance to emphasise the key linkages to partnership and participation as per the Christie Commission.

Bryson et al. (2014) point to this approach in now very familiar terms as involving:

- a leading role for the local state as convener, catalyst and collaborator
- collaboration and partnership across public services and other sectors (third, private)
- co-production and co-creation – involving citizens, service-users, communities
- wrestling with wicked ‘social issues’ and tackling social problems e.g. inequalities
- concerned for wider debates about value and public services – effectiveness, cost efficiency as previously, but also ‘the public good’, accountability, visions of society.

Others contribute to this emerging broad tradition. Ansell et al. (2017) highlight that collaborative governance is:

- concerned to work across policy design, implementation and review
- political in nature – not just re. politicians, but organisations and partnerships too

21 Bryson et al. (2014) use the term ‘Public Value Governance’ and flag-up other including New Public Services and New Public Governance.
likely to thrive when a strong local state is ‘challenged’ by a strong civil society.

Fung (2015) points to a developing participatory governance that:

- includes mini-publics and citizen juries, participatory budgeting (PB) and participatory engagement with wicked issues
- is concerned to support legitimate and effective public governance and social justice
- values participatory, deliberative and representative approaches to democracy.

In drawing from the notion of collaborative and participatory governance, this research report understands (assumes) the aspirations of Scottish public service reform as largely engaging with these same broader international issues and concerns.

2) Reasons to be cautious 1: The evidence base on partnership and participation

Simply because collaborative and participative governance is emerging internationally, this shouldn’t lead to a naïve adoption of partnership and participation as the accepted way forward. There is an existing evidence-base on the potential of both in relation to public service partnerships, in many different service and geographical contexts. This report can’t offer a fuller discussion of this evidence-base but it is worth recognising the two broad trends.

**The optimists:** What Works Scotland’s evidence review of public service partnerships in the UK (Cook, 2015) is broadly optimistic in tone, and points generally to common ground between various sources of evidence as to how to do partnership working (good practice). This is in the context of a partnership working between two or more separate bodies and where the relationship is not contractual or market-based.

A series of key themes are highlighted as contributing to building effective public service partnership working including suitable resourcing and training; stakeholder participation; agreed objectives – see Appendix 3 for a fuller summary. Yet, the review also raises critical issues:

- A lack of current evidence base (for or against) for public service partnership working in being effective in achieving particular and agreed outcomes.
- Imbalances in power between different partners that may limit collaboration currently e.g. between larger public sector bodies and smaller third sector bodies.
- Partnership generally works better (process) when the partners come to understand that they ‘need’ each other to achieve certain goals – find common purpose – rather than when required e.g. through legislation or top-down ‘command and control’.

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**The pessimists:** Other reviews of partnership and related participation working and its effectiveness – Atkinson and Moon (1994), Headlam and Rowe (2014) for instance – have been less optimistic as to its potential. Pointing to a range of long-standing public partnership approaches – including in contexts such as regeneration projects since the 1970s. They argue that partnership working initiatives:

- tend to have limited lifespans, being replaced by yet further partnership initiatives as governments change
- don’t impact on inequalities and poverty (outcomes), providing at best provide limited mitigation of the worst impacts in particular places
- do work to the advantage of larger public service bodies over time rather than smaller third sector organisations and communities, who lack the resources to adapt to ongoing policy change.

Likewise, in relation to participation, Matthews (2014) in considering the roles of community representatives within partnerships points to significant imbalances of power in relation to resources and knowledge compared to public service bodies. More generally, this could likely be the case in relation to a range of initiatives seeking to empower service-users, carers, citizens, and communities of place and interest.

In this research, it is suggested that terms such as ‘partnership’ and ‘participation’ will inevitably be used to cover working together in a variety of different ways and policy and practice contexts – to which there are likely to be a range of commonalities and differences. There is not likely to be simple guidance or agreement as to how to do ‘it’, what ‘it’ might realistically-achieve or, probably, even what ‘it’ is.

We need, then, to approach discussions of collaborative and participatory governance (partnership and participation) realistically as to expectations of what can be achieved and the different ways the terms are being used. It is useful to encourage ongoing realistic and critical reflections on what is achievable and in what ways partnership and participation might make a difference in a range of different local contexts and where the barriers to aspirations for public service reform (service change) and related social change (e.g. inequalities) might lie.

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This report then makes a working assumption that partnership and participation in relation to public service reform (as broadly outlined through the Christie Commission) will be constructive processes but must continue to be considered reflexively – positioning our actions in wider contexts – and so critically.
3) Reasons to be cautious 2: Working in a hybrid and ‘messy’ policy and practice context

The now longer-term aspirations for a ‘Scottish Approach’, dating back to the 2011 Christie Commission at least, might suggest that the realities of public service reform currently will be one of how to achieve these aspirations. However, there is also the expectation for these to be more complex waters where different and potentially contradictory models and aspirations are at play. For instance, Bryson et al. (2014) argue that two existing, long-standing models of public service administration will still be active:

1. Top-down public administration: involving systems of management and political leadership – the latter as elected politicians (local government) or appointed Boards. The approach offers a centralised and rational (using expert knowledge) approach that aspires to efficiently coordinating public services through such a command and control.

2. New Public Management: as a focus on using business (market) approaches including contracting out-of-services to private and third sector organisations; and performance management (effectiveness), cost efficiencies, customer satisfaction and other measures. Politicians design policy objectives. Managers provide a top-down oversight of implementation, and team and partners may participate in designing implementation processes.

The collaborative and participative governance advocated by the Christie Commission – itself arguably a top-down, mandated approach through the powers of legislation, national politicians and senior management – is thus one of a number of competing ideas active in public service reform. Those seeking to provide leadership within public service partnerships are likely to be pursuing pragmatic strategies that, for instance, seek to ‘hold together’:

- various understandings of cost efficiency, social efficiency and effectiveness
- various approaches to partnership and participation
- various political agendas and needs – top-down, bottom-up and so on.

The realities of dialogue and decision-making on public service reform will be messy and potentially contradictory, and very challenging. But they can also be pragmatically creative. For instance, the Beyond Action Learning research report illustrates a developing process of bottom-up empowerment and partnership development, one strongly backed by senior management from three key partner bodies. It brings together the more collaborative approaches of ‘action learning sets’ with the insights, tools and facilitation processes of improvement science – understood here as part of a New Public Management approach. In this way, the facilitators of this initiative sought to take forward a variety of partnership-driven service development problems by building local trust and confidence; empowering local staff to seek change; and challenging local policymaking and decision-making.
Public service reform is not messy in terms of types of thinking, but in terms of the political interests (in a broad sense, not only ‘party political’). As highlighted in (1) above, both Ansell et al. (2017) and Fung (2015) point to the political nature of public service design, delivery and reform. Many different interests are at play here, and there is a need for champions and advocates to take forward particular issues and concerns to create change.

This report assumes then that the ideas and practices of collaborative and participatory governance will inevitably be engaging with – creatively, pragmatically and conflictly – other thinking and practices, e.g. top-down, business-focused thinking, as well as a wide range of political interests, e.g. organisations, other sectors, political parties, local citizens and communities.

4) Building a working assumption regarding collaborative and participatory governance

Looking across (1) to (3) above, the report’s emerging overarching working assumption is:

In this complex, ‘messy’ public service landscape, a collaborative and participatory governance concerned for developing public service partnership and participation – which wants to improve the capacities of public services (performance) to engage in preventative approaches that seek to tackle wicked social issues (improve inequalities – social and economic outcomes) and build more sustainable public finances – needs to be creative and pragmatic (sophisticated, rather than naïve) and able to engage with other active forms of practice and work across a diversity of political interests (groups).

1.3.2 Christie as a rich picture of practice concerned for a more equitable society

As was flagged-up above, the Christie Commission’s (2011) broad narrative continues to provide the language for discussion within Scottish public service reform and can be usefully summarised through the four Ps as: using ‘partnership and participation’ that is concerned to improve performance through a focus on preventing ‘negative outcomes’. The Scottish Government’s (2011) response to the Commission can be understood as accepting the broad direction-of-travel, without necessarily all the key arguments22. Together they

22 The Scottish Government’s (2011) response focuses on four pillars of: prevention (that reduce costs and inequality); partnership (collaboration and locally-integrated services); people (workforce and leadership); and performance improvement (transparency, digital technology, innovation). However, commitment to community engagement and empowerment and the roles third/community sector bodies quickly emerge too, for instance, through local place-based approaches (partnerships) quickly become apparent in the report.

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legitimise discussions of the Commission’s policy and practice agenda and provide the space for development of a Scottish approach.

Yet, this summary of the Commission’s work through the four Ps can limit understanding of the richer picture and language that the report generates for discussions of policy and practice and a concern to develop a shared cross-service and sector sense of a public service ethos. These rich discussions include:

- varieties of empowerment – citizen, service user, frontline staff, communities
- decentralisation of services – local partnerships and local third/community sector
- local democracy – accountability, community empowerment and autonomy
- outcomes-focused – person-centered services for all citizens and communities
- community resilience – community-led solutions and asset-based approaches
- complex political dynamics – politicians, organisations, citizens, electoral cycles
- prevention – inequalities, ageing and growing population, early years interventions
- management of local performance – outcomes, cost efficiencies, accountability.

Further, a simple focus on the four Ps limits understanding of the wider policy picture that the Christie Commission engages with and its key twin aspirations for a more equitable society and more sustainable public service (state) finances. Crucially, the Commission highlights the importance of:

- relations between state and economy – in seeking a more balanced economy and virtuous, sustainable economic cycle
- public spending – as public spending constraint and ‘austerity’ and growing demands on services through inequalities, an ageing population and ‘failure demand’
- shared (democratic) discussions of the future and social change – even climate change is acknowledged as relevant.

The Commission’s thinking, therefore, holds a key tension between:

- on one hand, the increasing demands on services, through stubborn inequalities and an ageing population, and a public spending crisis (austerity)
- on the other, arguing for a worldview of empowerment and local democracy, and a public service ethos concerned for inequality and future generations.

Whilst it recognises short-term financially dilemmas at a time of UK Government fiscal austerity, the Commission’s concern is to move away from short-termism and towards a

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23 ‘Failure demand’ – services that fail to get to the roots cause of a problem (prevent it from re-occurring) and thus continue to be repeatedly used.
committed, longer-term social and economic perspective for services, the state and society – so sustainable state\(^25\) finances and related social change.

“...we also have to look beyond the current crisis and devise a model of public services that is both financially sustainable and is capable of meeting the significant longer-term challenges society faces”

\textit{Christie Commission, (2011, x)}

In the previous \textit{Multi-layered Partnership Working} report, it was suggested that Christie shares aspirations with the Marmot Review (2010) which offers evidence as the value to all of a fairer society: to be achieved through universalist (whole population) approaches but proportionate to those facing the greatest health inequalities. And, likewise, to Wilkinson and Pickett’s (2009) extensive evidence on the social benefits for all, e.g. lower rates of crime and better community health and wellbeing, of increasing income equality.\(^{26}\)

Whilst prevention of inequalities and the related reduction of pressure on services is put forward as the key solution to this conundrum between sustainable state finances and an equitable society, researchers in discussing collaborative and participatory governance highlight a key tension. Namely, that democratic and collaborative discussion and dialogue may not be strong enough to tackle the barriers from other parts of the system – whether within public services or society more generally (Bryson et al., 2014; Fung, 2015; Ansell et al., 2017). Certainly, significant advocacy and leadership to support wider change, as policy change and social/societal change, would be needed to give partnership and participation the edge needed to create change. Whether this would generate sufficient longer-term impacts to redistribute (in practical ways) resources, income, assets (economic, social, political) and related power remains a challenging question.

Further, as in 1.3.1, the realities of actual policy and practice may be very different to the aspirations. Concerns for localism and community empowerment within Scottish public service reform is one dimension of what is happening. Centralising administration of public services in search of cost efficiencies is another e.g. Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Services and potentially local government.

\(^{25}\) The Commission offers pointers, e.g. preventative spend/approaches, to support sustainable state finances, but doesn’t offer a fully developed strategy. Likewise, here, the term is used as a space to open up and support dialogue: no one particular set of strategies is assumed nor discounted in considering make actual progress towards a more equitable society. However, the need to find alternative sources of investment to support preventative approaches, particularly in relation to the wider public sector and the community sector, is initially highlighted and explored in sections 2.7 and 2.8.

\(^{26}\) The Marmot Review (2010) (in England) pointed to a range of strategies: early years interventions; prevention of ill-health; ‘good work’ for all; healthy communities; and healthy living standards for all – see Appendix 1. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) evidence more equal (income-wise) developed societies as likewise having social benefits for all e.g. health inequalities, levels of crime and so on in their book ‘the Spirit Level’.
Building a working assumption to support dialogue

The report then builds further on an emerging overarching working assumption (see 1.3.1 (4) above), as follows:

In this complex, ‘messy’ public service landscape, those seeking to develop collaborative and participatory governance will be concerned to integrate the following elements:

- a rich, complex emerging body of pragmatic, creative, informed and politically-astute public service policy and practice broadly built around the roles of local partnership working and participation that seeks to improve the capacities of public services (performance) to engage in preventative approaches focused on tackling over-the-longer-term wicked social issues
- a social (of society) vision concerned for a more equitable society built on the mutually-dependent relationships between a financially-sustainable state, a balanced (inclusive) economy, and empowered citizens, communities and civil society.

1.3.3 A learning culture for wicked social issues and systems change

1) Complex, ‘messy’ policy and practice context within which to pursue learning processes

The Christie Commission report doesn’t draw on the term ‘wicked’ issues although it does give emphasis complex service systems. These are sometimes described as too complex for citizens using services to effectively access; complex social needs; and a complex society. Nor does it give any strong steer towards action research processes concerned for both pragmatic problem-solving and critical reflection – although it does value and emphasise the use of evidence and research, consultation and collaboration, and learning and improved performance.

The Commission does not point explicitly towards a wicked social issues approach or the role of action research in engaging with wicked issues. However, as was highlighted in 1.2.2, Ison (2008) makes the case for action research (co-inquiry) as an effective approach to work to change complex systems and tackle ‘wicked’ social and environmental issues – and engaging with varieties of evidence in doing so. There is, then, an underlying sense of the potential relevance to Scottish public service reform of such thinking.

Paul Cairney (2016) adds to this complex picture of the messiness of research and evidence-use in policy and practice development. Policymaking, he argues, is rarely in reality seeking

27 Note: the nature of that balanced inclusive economy is not considered here. The Christie Commission (2011) argues for the role of a growing economy and strong economic development to support sustainable state finances – and likely in line with Scottish Government aspirations for sustainable, inclusive economic growth. Yet, the Commission also briefly acknowledges the ‘fly-in-the-ointment’ – climate change and the need for preventative approaches to ecological crisis – although doesn’t articulate this as sustainable development.
to follow a rational and evidence-driven process. It is often political with policy-makers and others (of course) pursuing political agendas in the broadest sense. There is no shared understanding of what makes for ‘good evidence’ or strategies for finding and using it; nor is there a simple ‘policy cycle’ on any one policy to be logically followed.

Further, Cairney (2016) argues that the Scottish Government and a Scottish Approach are encouraging three broad strategies of evidence use to support developing policymaking and related scaling-up:

- **emulation**: of detailed particular interventions developed via intensive research e.g. via random controlled trials (RCTs)
- **story-telling**: that supports understanding and flexible development of practice through sharing evidence and experience re. practice
- **improvement methodologies**: drawing from existing evidence-base, and mixing learning in practice with data collection to develop and or scale-up policy and practice on-the-ground.

These different approaches to evidence use can be complementary and are very likely to each be active in any context. Cairney (2016), however, notes that they won’t always be supportive of each other given the political nature of evidence use in policymaking and related decision-making. For instance, they are then very likely to be in competition for limited resources (investment).

Action research holds processes in common with both ‘story-telling’ – with its concerns for practice development – and with ‘improvement’ and its concern for drawing on existing evidence and creating and monitoring change. However, as 1.2.2, it is concerned for positioning both discussions of good practice and creating change in the context of wider policymaking and social change rather than as solely improving services and existing practices.

In terms of policy and evidence use, the picture then can be expected to be complex, political and so ‘messy’ e.g. ambiguous and inconsistent uses of evidences. But also hybrid – as 1.3.1 (3) – with competing ideas, theories and practices that may or may find common ground. The Beyond Action Learning report illustrates one such integration of collaborative and improvement processes.

> It is to be assumed then that whatever collaborative approaches to sharing learning in public service contexts and in relation to working on wicked social issues is used, there will be a frustrating, and likely politicised, ‘messiness’ to which we must respond pragmatically, inclusively and creatively.
2) Wicked social issues and action research – an ‘obvious’ starting point

In this context, a focus on wicked issues and learning through collaboration, partnership and participation to engage with them may sound comforting – as in at least ‘we know what we’re doing here’. Yet Tim Curtis’ (2010: 90) reflection suggests this is not likely to be the case:

“Social issues and problems are intrinsically wicked or messy, it is very dangerous for them to be treated as if they were ‘tame’ and ‘benign’. Real world problems have no definitive formulation; no point at which it is definitely-solved; solutions are not true or false; there is no test for a solution; every solution contributes to a further social problem; there are no well-defined set of solutions; wicked problems are unique; they are symptomatic of other problems; they do not have simple causes; and have numerous possible explanations which in turn frame different policy responses …”

There would seem to be a further frustrating ‘messiness’ here. Perhaps it is one that is increasingly familiar to CPPs as they seek to work with the challenges of partnerships, participation and related culture change; job insecurity and public spending constraints and cuts; inequalities and an ageing and growing population; and the complex politics of localism, centralism e.g. Police Scotland and Scottish Fire & Rescue Service reform, sustainable development, and now Brexit.

If the Christie agenda is to be understood as concerned to tackle a number of inter-relating social, complex and wicked issues then we need to continue to reflect critically on how and whether the tools and structures of a developing collaborative and participatory governance, and indeed action research, are really up to this type of ‘very messy’ challenging work.

In this report, then, an initial working assumption is that a learning culture of partnership, participation and related collaborative action research provides a plausible model or starting point for engaging with wicked problems and systemic change. However, in inevitably messy policy and practice contexts, such an approach must be used pragmatically and creatively, and support critical reflections as to its own effectiveness too.

3) A learning culture, culture change and the positivity bias

As is illustrated in 1.2, there is a certain commitment from the researchers, a working assumption, that action research – understood broadly as collaborative learning and action
– has something to offer in terms of tools for collaborative and participatory governance in a democratic age.

But this is not the same as saying that action research is either an unquestionable tool or the only key research and learning tool for the broad job of seeking to implement collaborative and participatory governance.

Nor is this the same as saying that either collaborative and participatory governance more generally, or a ‘Scottish Approach’ more particularly, cannot be critically-considered (questioned).

Anita Kothari and Nadine Wathen (2012: 188) discuss a process of knowledge exchange in which researchers and knowledge-users (practitioners and related policymakers) work together to co-produce knowledge. They point to the risks of ‘positivity bias’ on the parts of both researchers and knowledge-users in these contexts. They mean by this the assumption that social research and knowledge-sharing processes will always provide useful answers – arriving with the right knowledge just in time.

Instead, they argue that the realities of social research are very different:

- It rarely provides new and striking findings or learning – knowledge gain is more likely incremental and may (of course) end as predominantly critical of the intervention/actions pursued
- But this will be hard for everyone to admit given the investment of time and funding
- Worse, to admit limited findings is to risk loss of credibility and future research and other investment opportunities for all involved in this ‘failure’.

Hence, the significant risks of a ‘positivity bias’ emerging in which new actionable (or useable) research findings must be found and shown – particularly if funding for further research work is to be gained on the back of such ‘success’.

They note one way of seeking to reduce the need for the research to be seen to be successful in terms of such actionable knowledge is through a focus on the impacts of the co-production process itself – the benefits of such collaborative learning – rather than the explicit outputs and learning from the research process. The gains for researchers and knowledge-users are in understanding each other’s ‘spaces’ and in creating a new communal space (s), which brings us back to the value of research in supporting the development of partnership and perhaps participation.

In relation to the potential value of action research processes, this would seem a crucial issue to continue to consider. Certainly, the risks of positivity bias through action research and over-stating its claims for success and failing to engage in more critical discussions. But also risks, surely, positivity bias in relation to its effectiveness in partnership-building. All

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28 Kothari and Wathen (2012) call this Integrate Knowledge Transfer
involved could have a stake in finding ways to emphasise its effective here too. Further, as with the evidence base on partnership within the What Works Scotland evidence review (Cook, 2015 – see 1.3.1 above), action research will also be open to the critique, too, that it may well improve partnership processes. But it cannot simply be assumed that this will be partnership working that can impact on/achieve the outcomes for which improvement is sought.

Again, then, in this report, the initial working assumption is that a learning culture of partnership, participation and related action research provides a plausible model or starting point for engaging with wicked problems and systems change. And, that it also offers scope for pragmatic, creative and critical discussions. As with all social research processes, a level of realism is needed as to what can be achieved and learnt from any one process, and that there are pressures to ‘prove’ that the research is innovative, useful and successful in one or more senses.

4) Build an overarching working assumption to support dialogue

The report can return again to build further on the overarching working assumption (see 1.3.2 (2) above), as follows:

Overarching working assumption regarding the current frontier of collaborative and participatory governance: putting Christie into action:

In this complex, ‘messy’ public service landscape, those seeking to develop collaborative and participatory governance will be concerned to integrate the following three elements:

(1) **pragmatic preventative partnership and participation:** as a rich, complex emerging body of creative, evidence-informed and politically-astute public service policy and practice – broadly built on local partnership working, participation and a public service ethos – that seeks to improve the capacities of public services (performance) to engage in preventative approaches focused on tackling over-the-longer-term complex (‘wicked’) social problems.

(2) **a social vision:** concerned for a more equitable society built on the dynamic and mutually-dependent relationships between a financially-sustainable state, a balanced (inclusive) economy, and empowered citizens and communities.

(3) **public service learning culture:** concerned to explore the use of – amongst other social and evidence-informed processes – systems-focused action research with which to engage with complex social problems and to seek both practical (problem-solving) knowledge and reflexive (problem-framing) knowledge.
1.3.4: In conclusion – using an overarching working assumption to focus discussion

Across section 1.3, the report has sought to build an overarching working assumption – as arrived at in 1.3.3 (4) above. This is not a hypothesis or theory to be tested; nor a coherent sequence that we can simply use to check the logic of emerging thinking. Instead, it seeks to bring together key elements of thinking, policy and practice (theory and practice) so that there is a deepening body of ‘knowledge’ with which to explore policy and practice further. But, crucially, to do this by providing a particular focus – a working assumption – through which questions of (relative) plausibility – can be discussed, and the implications for the further development of policy and practice engaged with.

1.4 Focusing this report: discussions at the frontier of collaborative and participatory governance

Across part 1, the report has set out its focus as seeking to understand the opportunities, challenges and dilemmas at the frontiers of collaborative and participatory governance. Whilst there is lots of advice and developing policies, tools and practices offered, making ‘it’ happen on-the-ground is complex and, what in consequence, results is not likely to be fixed but shifting. Hence, ‘we’ find ourselves at the frontier of a familiar land – notions of partnership and participation have been with ‘us’ for decades – but with all the anxieties and complexities of having to develop a complex, informed approach to meet the ‘messy’ realities on the ground. And all in the highly challenging context of public spending constraints (austerity).

Section 1.2 has provided background on the collaborative learning and action (action research) process – both the wider action research between Aberdeenshire and What Works Scotland, and the reflective interviewing that this final learning report particularly draws on. It also provides a rationale as to why systems-focused action research, and the flexibility of methods it offers, is likely to be relevant to complex collaborations concerned to engage with wicked social issues that are central to putting Christie into action.

Section 1.3 has built from this thinking to deepen understanding of:

- the emerging policy practice of collaborative and participatory governance – and the need for a pragmatic and sophisticated (rather than naïve) approach that is willing to engage with the messy realities on-the-ground – *pragmatic preventative partnership and participation*
- the Christie Commission narrative as a rich picture of policy and practice that aspires to a public service ethos concerned for a more equitable society and sustainable state finances – *social vision of change*
- the importance of building a collaborative learning culture(s) to engage with wicked issues – one that draws from systems-focused action research; yet the need not only for this culture to be practical and pragmatic (problem-solving) but also reflexive and

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critical (problem-framing) and wary of over-stating what is being learnt (positivity bias) – a public service learning culture.

These three elements have been articulated as key elements of an overarching working assumption – see text box below. This provides a particular focus to return to in Part 3 and consider in the light of the eight discussions in Part 2.

**Overarching working assumption regarding the current frontier of collaborative and participatory governance: putting ‘Christie into action’**

In this complex, ‘messy’ public service landscape, those seeking to develop collaborative and participatory governance will be concerned to integrate the following three elements:

1. **Pragmatic preventative partnership and participation**: as a rich, complex emerging body of creative, evidence-informed and politically-astute public service policy and practice. It’s broadly built on local partnership working, participation and a public service ethos, and it seeks to improve the capacities of public services (performance) to engage in preventative approaches focused on tackling over-the-longer-term complex (‘wicked’) social problems.

2. **A social vision**: concerned for a more equitable society built on the dynamic and mutually-dependent relationships between a financially-sustainable state, a balanced (inclusive) economy, and empowered citizens and communities.

3. **Public service learning culture**: concerned to explore the use of – amongst other social and evidence-informed processes – systems-focused action research with which to engage with complex social problems and to seek both practical (problem-solving) knowledge and reflexive (problem-framing) knowledge.
2. Eight discussions to support development of an emerging collaborative and participatory governance – *putting Christie into action*

In Part 2 of the report, the research offers eight discussions that, it is argued, are of value to the local development of collaborative and participatory governance or putting Christie into action. The eight discussions emerged from the researcher’s initial interpretation and analysis of the interview material – reflections from-the-field – and in the context of the policy and practice discussions outlined in Part 1 and developed further in Part 2.

They are then one interpretation of the research material and aspirations to support, inform and critically consider developing collaborative and participatory governance. They are not, however, the only possible interpretation of this interview material. Nor, more generally, the only important discussions for developing collaborative and participatory governance. There will be significant others, too, some of which surface in the discussions. These include integrating types of evidence use, suitable approaches to evaluation and appraisal, and working with social and economic outcomes – although this latter is at least implicit, and should be explicit, within the development of preventative approaches\(^{29}\). These are touched on in these discussions, but not developed further here.

Each discussion is structured as follows:

1. policy and practice context: what’s at stake?
2. reflections from-the-field (mostly summer 2017)
3. further dialogue for developing policy and practice.

They aim to take readers from recognising the wider developing context; through (some of) the experiences of seeking to actually ‘do’ and take forward this work on-the-ground; and, on to commentary (and some additional material) that can be used to support further dialogue on developing policy and practice for putting Christie into action.

The quotes are edited to remove many of the re-occurring elements of conversational style, e.g. ‘I think’, ‘you know’, and support understanding of the point being made. This leads to an easier read and supports the local anonymity of the participants.

The quotes are also positioned in relation to the context in which they are being made – although this is often apparent anyway – to support understanding of the material for the reader. But, again with the aim of supporting local anonymity, this is done as:

\(^{29}\) A discussion with public health professionals (Dec 2018) highlighted the importance, too, of (i) recruitment (and this doesn’t have to only mean staff – but could point to wider discussions of ‘recruiting’, finding and training other key people e.g. volunteers, activists, representatives, politicians); and (ii) digital technology and related inclusion.
- community context – working within local community settings including leadership
- operational context – provision, management, development of frontline services
- strategic context – working within policymaking, strategy development, strategic/senior management decision-making, and formal political decision-making.

The same person (participant) could be working within each of these different contexts and talking about each one in different parts of the interviewing, for example: a manager undertaking operational work and/or strategic work; or a local activist or politician working in the community and/or a strategic, decision-making context.

Finally, as highlighted in 1.2.3, the reflections from-the-field is not a representative sample from this CPP. That is beyond this research process. These reflections offer instead questions, insights, dilemmas and encouragement for those across Scotland who seek to engage in the shared challenge(s) of putting Christie into action.

2.1 Discussion 1: Working in the context of multiple crises and challenges: stubborn inequalities; workforce insecurity; and public spending constraint

Discussion 1 research

- **Context:** points to common understandings, as per the Christie Commission, of the current challenges and crises faced: stubborn inequalities; ageing and growing population; public spending constraints and pressures on the workforce.
- **Reflections-from-the-field:** illustrates the realities of some of these crises-on-the-ground: job insecurity and pressure on services; what poverty means in this context; the challenges of organisational and partnership change through collaboration.
- **Developing dialogue:** acknowledges the evidence for the incremental longer-term nature of change in public service partnerships and that this requires effective local leadership and adaption to local context. The research asks if there is a role then action/social research processes in sustaining a focus on these multi-stranded crises and challenges over the longer-term e.g. a decade and supporting the workforce and communities in engaging with this process too.

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2.1.1 Policy and practice context: what are the issues at stake here?

“The Commission believes Scotland’s public services are in need of urgent and sustained reform to meet unprecedented challenges.”

Christie Commission (2011; viii)

The Christie Commission (2011) outlines broadly a wide range of challenges, crises and dilemmas with which Scotland’s public services must seek to engage with as follows:

- persistent social and economic inequalities, deep rooted social problems and related ‘negative outcomes’ – an inequitable society.
- public spending constraints (fiscal austerity) – public services are now needing to ‘achieve more for less’.
- ‘failure demand’: public services are focused on coping with the impacts of negative outcomes rather than seeking to prevent them or intervene early and effectively.
- demographic change: particularly an ageing population that will increase pressure on and demand for services – and, likewise, Scotland’s growing population.
- a public sector/service workforce faced with job insecurity, uncertainty and change, pay restraints and pressure on working conditions.
- unbalanced economic development: uneven development and sharing of benefits across society that sustain poverty and inequality.
Multiple, inter-relating serious crises: there is even a brief recognition of environmental challenges and preventing climate change, too (p. 17; 55)! Further, there will be varying views as to how to understand these crises: what are the root causes and to what extent they should be understood as challenges, opportunities and dilemmas … or disasters even.

Dave Watson (2016), one of the key advisors to the Christie Commission, puts particular emphasis on the issues raised for the workforce – public sector and wider public services – given UK Government’s ‘austerity economics’ will cut Scotland’s budget by 12.5% in real terms by 2019-20. Since the 2008 crash, 31,000 devolved public sector jobs have been lost, 87% of those in local government; and, there’s an ageing workforce struggling to provide even statutory services while facing real term cuts to their pay.

Others might emphasise:

- the potential crisis of a ‘fiscal cliff’ and the need for considerably more urgent change in public service provision and public spending; or
- the potential for local democratic change to lead service development and improvement; or

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30 Dave Watson (Unison Scotland) is listed as one of three ‘expert advisers’ to the 10 Commissioners (Christie Commission, 2011) and continues to write on public service reform in the context of the report’s findings.
• the potential for greater investment in public services through increases in taxation.

Multiple perspectives, but each of these perspectives must seek to engage with the multiple challenges and crises listed above if they are to offer meaningful solutions and find constructive ways forward for public service reform in Scotland.

2.1.2 Reflections from-the-field: job insecurity; stubborn inequalities; culture change

The interviews focused primarily on exploring experiences of partnership working and collaborative learning in the context of putting Christie into action – and seeking ways forward – yet, inevitably participants pointed to the challenging context too.

1) Working in a context of job insecurity and pressures on services:

“...part of the way we save money is that we don’t need as many people to do some of the jobs that can be done through a more technology enabled way. You can manage that humanely and sensitively, that’s okay, that’s the honesty around what some of us may look to (do) ... Some people don’t want to take it on, if they see that ‘if I do it this way that means I won’t lose two people’; which again from a human element you can understand...”

[strategic context]

“In terms of people’s insecurities over their jobs, because there was so much speculation going on about the future (across various partnerships) ... where does everybody sit. ... that sense of ‘we have to hold onto this (our role) because it’s all we’ve got (right now), and we’re not letting it go’.”

[strategic & operational context]

“...they [local specialist service] currently are operating at 50 per cent because of maternity leave, sickness, retirement and difficulties in recruiting replacements. The staff there are under a huge level of duress and so it’s sometimes very difficult to... you’re firefighting to be able to find space to look at things on a much more collaborative basis where you’re potentially releasing resources that could potentially solve those problems... .”
“...shortage of doctors, shortage of money, shortage of virtually everything, transport to and from hospital ... they [health services] have got some massive issues that they’re working on and that’s occupying all of their time at the moment, and I can understand that.”

“Very impressed by the Christie document ... but the reality is just a step away from that, still. And how people actually behave, and what people have got to do just in their normal day-to-day job to keep the conveyor belt going. The way we’re organised, collaborative working always feels like something on top of that, not just the way we work. Because it feels like that, it’s the thing that always gets squeezed and doesn’t happen”.

One participant also flagged up that smaller organisations with a limited staff pool and budget, particularly (but not only) those in the third/community sectors, can be severely challenged when circumstance conspire against them e.g. staff on sick leave, maternity/paternity leave, annual leave and so on.

2) Stubborn inequalities and poverty

Aberdeenshire is one of the more affluent CPP areas in Scotland, however deprivation, poverty and inequalities exists in some neighbourhoods in many of the coastal towns – Peterhead and Fraserburgh in particular – is highlighted by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (ref). There are smaller pockets of poverty in other rural towns and more generally. The cost of food, energy and transport for a decent standard of living have been recognised as significantly higher in rural and remote communities (Hirch et al., 2013); whilst the ‘poverty premium’ means that those on lower incomes will pay higher prices for lower quality goods e.g. white goods (Treanor, 2017 – What Works Scotland: Child Poverty evidence review31).

Aberdeenshire CPP’s (2016) LOIP Priorities paper – including material on the child poverty LOIP Priority – points to approximately 6,500 children living in poverty, noting that the true scale may be masked by the rurality of the area, and that32:

> “Welfare reform, zero hour contracts, fuel poverty, the decline of the oil and gas sector, rising housing, childcare and transport costs, rising unemployment and associated debt and mental health issues impact on the number of children living in poverty, and is anticipated that current figures will increase.”

Several participants in this research added substance to support understanding of what this means on-the-ground for significant numbers of people in Aberdeenshire:

> “...we’ve got food banks ... there is obviously a need for it. It’s just that there’s always this perception: it’s like you are supported by the oil company(ies) ... but there’s a whole wealth of people that live in these rural places that oil industries (have) never been part of their lives and it’s highly unlikely that it ever will be ... as the older generation come along, especially when you start looking at the winters and things, it does become a struggle for them almost to ... is it fuel or is it food that I pay for?”

[community context]

> “Poverty in Aberdeenshire isn’t as visible as it is in Dundee and Glasgow and Edinburgh. Because it’s more hidden that makes it a bigger challenge. ... South West Aberdeenshire Citizen’s Advice Bureau do fantastic work. We’ve got the North East Scotland Credit Union, again coming in and doing some really good work in communities ... we’re looking at the level of support for the local food bank. A lot of people, quite rightly so, think that food banks in Scotland are something that we shouldn’t have to rely on. But because it’s part of life now, that they are here, there’s a real kind of core of support... (there) are people here that are in working poverty.”

> “There’s a huge debate in Aberdeenshire around about fuel poverty. When we start to look at these and realise just the sheer number of families that are affected by this. We’re really starting to (consider)... the working poor in Aberdeenshire... (and) also the gap between the average working family and the oil money that’s here.”

32 Note: more recently the CPP has contracted the Poverty Alliance to deepen the evidence-base in relation to child poverty in Aberdeenshire (see 2.7.2 [1]) or view here: http://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/our-priorities/reducing-child-poverty/
3) Considering what might generate public service culture change

There was discussion of the success of public service partnership working, locally and centrally, in the face of Storm Frank (Jan 2016) which had significant impacts through flooding on a number of communities across Aberdeenshire. In the face of disaster and emergency, as is very often the case, public services rose to the challenge...

“It was everybody working together, and the fact, what we were doing was aiming to prevent accidents, and save lives, and save injuries. That did make everybody very determined, and very focused, because what better outcome could you be striving for. ...the only other time, that I’ve ever experienced that is in emergency response. And I always find that worthwhile in the first place, but I do find it hugely satisfying when it’s one time when it doesn’t matter, again, what you are, who you are, you’re all very clear on what the end product has to be and what you have to do to help to achieve that.”

Yet in the face of more chronic, mundane, longer-term and ongoing crises and challenges, some of the participants pointed to more challenging contexts for partnership working:

“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.”

“I think generally that the day job sometimes gets in the way and that there is a focus on what is a priority for (individual organisations)... it’s one of the cultural shifts that’s required is that it just becomes a natural part of everybody’s day job that partnership working, collaborative working, is something that we do as a matter of course, rather than it being something that is a bolt on... So, those are the challenges, and also it’s about if you can get the buy in at a senior leadership level... it’s how that
actually translates and cascades down through the organisations, because there are some real challenges... difficulties and blockages that exist within these, particularly the larger organisations where at middle management level perhaps there’s a resistance to that type of partnership working.”

[strategic context]

“But again, we’re talking about a big system with lots of complexity to it. It’s not like a lab test, as it were, repeatable every time. It’s a much bigger social context, and other things to it. So again, I don’t think there’s any of these bits that (can be) lifted off the peg... 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.”

[strategic context]

“But, there is an increasing commitment or sense of a kind of understanding of the value of that collaborative approach to working... underpinned by things like the Community Empowerment Act, (and) health and social care integrating. There is a direction of travel that we’re moving in underpinned by the legislative agenda as well, which is perhaps what was required to move things forward. I’m generally positive about it, but we’re probably ten years away from actually getting to a point where we think, yes, this is really working... So, there is a lot of work to do.”

[strategic context]

“...the Community Empowerment Act which has, in part, flowed from Christie, the principles of Christie are ensconced within it. This piece of legislation could have gone a lot further, but we’ve got that Local Democracy Bill coming... To what extent are we treating these as a piece of legislation that we’ve got to comply with, we’ve got to be able to survive an audit, and to what extent are we treating them as a way of transforming the way that we do things? Because that’s what Christie was saying: that carrying on as we are isn’t sustainable. So, we need to completely transform the way that we provide services to the public. Services to the public, rather than, public services, because it doesn’t necessarily have to come from a public sector body, it can come from a third sector body, it could come from the community itself, or it can come from the private sector. ...It’s not even so much that it’s slow... as a (body), we’ve not said this is how we’ve worked over the last 10, 15 years, this is what the
future looks like, and this is how we're going to have to work in the future, and how do we get from A to B?”

[strategic & operational context]

2.1.3 Developing dialogue: a long-term focus on multiple crises and challenges

The discussions from-the-field in 2.1.2 above, with (some of) the participants, illustrate the day-to-day experiences of the challenges and crises that the Commission identified:

- The very real presence of both job insecurity and the demands and stresses that operational and strategic teams face in providing and reforming services.
- The complex nature of living in poverty (urban and rural), and moving in and out of poverty, in a broadly affluent North East Scotland; this without further consideration of the impact of other forms of inequality.
- The very real challenges of creating change in multi-agency public service partnerships with different partners having different priorities and levels of influence (power): incremental change over a decade seems a realistic time-frame?

There are very real tensions here between the multiple crises faced, the urgency for action, and yet the timeframe that public services reform can realistically work with. Whilst poverty and inequality, and related chronic social problems (negative outcomes) such as social isolation, are ‘social disasters’ requiring urgent action, current evidence on partnership working suggests public services are likely to move more slowly. As was noted in the discussion of the current evidence on public service partnerships in 1.3.1, incremental change seems the more likely outcome given both the current nature of complex public service partnership systems. There is also the deeply stretched context in which many staff now work and arguably, too, what counts as an emergency.

Although she argues for a wider relevance of the evidence to partnership working within care services, Alison Petch (2011: 7) in an evidence review of partnership working and integration in relation to adult social care services points towards success as dependent on local factors:

“Early adopters and pilot projects from the UK and further afield demonstrate that it is not structures per se that determine the degree of success for health and social care integration but the detail of local implementation. For example, the integrated model in Torbay [see below] was initiated following a poor rating for social services delivery; it has developed over a lengthy period, building incrementally and maintaining a central focus on how delivery could benefit ‘Mrs Smith’.”
Petch (2011) concludes that the evidence points away from structural (macro) integration at societal levels and towards local service integration at the frontline (micro) and perhaps service systems (meso) as more valuable. She argues for local strategic and operational leadership as generating ‘effective partnerships’ and that this needs to be understood as context specific and potentially variable in nature. The two text boxes below illustrate these two common inter-relating themes of local leadership and building context-specific change over time – one the previously mentioned health and social care integration in Torbay, South Devon; the other distinctively different, administrative and preventative change in Newcastle-upon-Tyne Council in partnership with local trade union branches.

They also pose a further key question – the role of social research. In Torbay, the researcher played a critical friend role and coordinated an action research process from the early development of the process. In Newcastle, the researchers undertook extensive in-depth interviewing and consultation much later into the process. In the case of the action research process in Aberdeenshire, the researchers sought to be part of the process of change in real time and looking to the future and its development; as well reflecting on and reviewing what had happened and was happening through extensive interviewing.

Social research can then offer a continuity to complement local leadership and local long-term policymaking, planning and review. One that supports CPPs in holding onto and keeping visible the bigger picture of the multi-stranded crises being engaged with; as well as the more focused, narrower picture on seeking to take practical steps to create change. Action research is one type of social research process that could undertake this role (see 1.2.2 and 1.3.3). There are other candidates too, for instance, those concerned for evidence-use and knowledge exchange; for ongoing evaluation and participatory processes; for observational/participant observational research e.g. ethnography.

Given the long-term nature of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and locality planning processes within the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – conceived of as running over a decade, investment in these type of action and/or social research process could offer a valuable resource for holding steady to the bigger picture of multiple challenges. Whilst at the same time providing support for the more practical steps for change. And, crucially, supporting the wider body of both the workforce and communities, as well as those already working at strategic and senior levels, in participating and contributing to longer-term processes.
Example 1: Integrating health and social care in Torbay across the 2000s

The integration of local management of health and social services in Torbay in South Devon, over the 2000s and beyond, is considered in depth by researcher Peter Thistlethwaite (2011). He points to a lengthy and developing process which built:

- from small changes initially, toward system-wide change
- on local integrated teams, pooled budgets and health and social care coordinators ... and commitment to service-users
- local and continued leadership and organisational stability – which can sustain a commitment to an outcomes-based vision and through difficult times – including in local government, not solely health;
- a shared dialogue and vision on improving care for ‘Mrs Smith’ – the individual person using a service or customer
- towards a preventative approach concerned to keep older people healthy and living in the community – and reducing the use of institutional services e.g. use of hospital beds, emergency admissions and delayed discharges, likewise use of residential care.

See: Integrating health and social care in Torbay: Improving care for Mrs Smith report on the King’s Fund website

Example 2: Partnership, co-production and prevention within a local authority with local trades unions across the 2000s

Researchers Hillary Wainwright and Matthew Little (2009) describe the process of change in the early 2000s of internal back office and IT services within Newcastle City Council, which were grossly out-dated and inefficient. The council considers contracting them out, but this is resisted by the local unions, and then further challenged by an in-house management bid supported by the trade unions and workforce. Key elements of the developing approach:

- a collaborative culture across council departments is built around a commitment to a public service culture or ethos.
- flexible, project management and emphasis on staff empowerment and talents

33 Integrating health and social care in Torbay: Improving care for Mrs Smith report

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• staff and trade unions are involved in transparent consultative processes of change – so seeking to support redeployment and avoid redundancies; but change is complex and painful
• private sector is engaged for particular projects on terms that meet with this public service ethos
• a culture of change that engages with service-users – including a contact centre (front-office) concerned to do the best for citizens
• savings made through more efficient internal systems and improved collection of local taxes (£28 million over 11.5 years) are re-invested in frontline services.

See: Public Service Reform – But not as we know it! on the Transnational Institute website

2.2 Discussion 2: Investing in facilitative leadership across multiple layers of partnership and participation

Discussion 2 research

• Context: points to the growing expectations of a facilitative leadership that can work across layers and sectors to make and sustain the myriad connections needed for successful and sustained ‘partnership and participation’ building – for collaborative and participatory governance.
• Reflections from-the-field: illustrates the need for organisational and individual commitment to, and suitable resourcing of, such facilitative leadership approaches and networks.
• Developing dialogue: highlights the potential to cultivate and strengthen the capacity for facilitative leadership through locally designed, cross-service and cross-sector public service ‘change-agent’ programmes and networks.

2.2.1 Policy and practice context: what’s at stake?

“Staff are key and their contribution must be central in the proposed transformation of service delivery. They will need support from management, where they are empowered to take responsibility for the continuous improvement of services. This

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34 Public Service Reform - But not as we know it! https://www.tni.org/en/publication/public-service-reform-but-not-as-we-know-it-picnic-publishing-2009

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requires organisational leaders who establish priorities based on a clear understanding of shared outcomes and actively encourage a ‘can-do’ culture.”

Christie Commission (2011: 36)

Given aspirations to shift away from top-down hierarchical management, the Christie Commission points to a focus on developing public services leadership which:

- builds partnerships around the notion of a shared public service ethos
- empowers frontline staff and build their sense of purpose in their work
- increases varieties of participation – in design, management and delivery
- focusses on social and economic outcomes through flexible, innovative approaches.

Williams’ (2013) provides discussions of boundary spanning staff who seek to work across organisational boundaries to support collaborative governance in public service partnerships. He points to them as active at different levels of organisation and partnership:

- frontline and operational levels – concerned for cross-cutting service provision
- middle management levels – concerned for partnership coordination
- senior management levels – concerned for strategic and political coordination.

Where collaborative and participatory governance is actively pursued within CPPs, it would then be anticipated that a wide body of staff and others (activists, volunteers, politicians) would be acting across these three levels:

**At ‘the frontline’ and within communities:**

- staff providing local services – public, third/community and private sectors
- community engagement – public participation staff and community leaders
- local leaders: activists/volunteers, community bodies, local politicians, trade unions
- co-production – including service-users, carers, advocates.

**Local areas – operationally and strategically:**

- operational and strategic management across services and sectors
- local leaders – as above; community engagement; co-production advocates/representative; community engagement.

**Centrally – central CPP structures and partner bodies:**

- senior and strategic management across services and sectors
- local leaders – as above; community engagement; co-production advocates/representative; community engagement
- political leaders – council and councillors, Boards (of public services), third sector representatives, trade unions, other politicians (MSPs, MPs, MEPs).

In the world of collaborative and participatory governance, where ‘we’ seek collaborative advantage through investing time and resources in these processes, there will likely be an
increasing scope for creative and diverse leadership within and across layers. Yet, crucial to the success of such an approach will be not only aspirations but the skills and resources for such a facilitative leadership.

2.2.2 Reflections from-the-field: organisational commitment; individual commitment; resourcing the process

The interview material illustrates an emerging ‘bank of relevant knowledge and practice’ being built through the hard-won experience of seeking to facilitate and commit to change across layers of partnership and shared discussion and action.

1) Organisational commitment to widening shared discussions

“...we've (local community planning partners) decided that it would be better rather than us work in siloes on a particular issue, that we come together and work out an approach, and see if we can produce a project. We have come a long way that we get in touch with each other if there’s something that needs to be undertaken and put our heads together, and we develop something together, and put it into action or deliver it. And that is happening. ...NHS, AVA (Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action); the police, we’ve done some initiatives with them. We had a local issue and got a few partners together, Community Learning Development.”

“But if there’s something that hits…that needs attending to, a short-term problem, we can make calls to each other, get together and come up with an approach. And that’s happening weekly now. I couldn’t do my job without them. ...And if someone can’t do something or they’re caught short or something, or their organisation can’t... doesn’t have the resource to do it, we’d look amongst ourselves and see who can pitch in. And that’s a good... at the grassroots level, that is happening.”

[operational and community context]

“it’s very difficult for a public agency to go into this kind of community engagement event if it already has a clear idea of what it wants the outcome to be, because it might get a surprise. So that’s a problem, because everybody now says we should be consulting... but my advice is don’t do that if you already know what the answer to the decision-making process is going to be, because it just creates bad feeling.”

[strategic & operational context]

“...where when you do workshops, where everybody’s sharing ideas and you have a ground rule that you’re not going to just dismiss something out of hand. ...one of the things that’s really valuable in the whole process is actually getting people who work
in different environments to understand their place in the partnership and that they don’t have the right to make dismissive statements just like that... that they have to observe some collaborative working rules. Because people get in to bad habits sometimes in their own organisations without even realising it.”

“...the biggest bit of learning I’ve got from that [various CPP/What Works Scotland activities] has been about the level of resource you put in to facilitate something. At first, it struck me as being over the top. And now when I look at it, I can see why you would want to have different people with clear functions. A bit like what I was talking about earlier for the partnerships: different people with different roles and clearly those roles all working to make the process work as effectively as possible for the people that we’re trying to work with.”

“Something practical that has made the work more effective is to change up the format of the group meetings. Workshop style meetings have been used; moving around the room, using flipcharts and post-it notes to prompt discussion. And seem to have been most successful, although there is still a place for conventional conversation and debate. It is probably beneficial to get people moving and use visual tools when the subject can be complex, hard to pin down and solutions are not easy to come by.”

“...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.”

[2) Putting yourself ‘on the line’...]

whatworksscotland.ac.uk
“I've never done anything like that before where I had run it [workshop]. But I felt it was quite important because I was just bringing (in) everybody ... it felt like this was the first time that we were coming together as a new team with me as the manager. So, I wanted to be the person that stood up at the beginning and said a bit and introduced it and facilitated it.”

[operational context]

“...what I would absolutely say is that if you have the right relationship, professional relationship, and an honest approach to it, you can overcome these things [a decision on a project that was controversial]. We took it on the chin and said: 'Okay, we take the point, but we've now got this resource coming into the area to look at these things, and none of you individually had the capacity to do that work. So, what we’re asking for you is to become involved in it and to direct it and to do something useful for yourselves but in a collaborative way.’ And that’s what they did ... they worked very well together”.

[strategic & operational context]

“The second recommendation (in a report) is (that) we set up a health and social care forum, which is a regional forum and our IJB [Integrated Joint Board] representatives would be from that forum: so that it develops a clear link between the grass roots organisations, the third sector representation and the IJB itself. So, getting that endorsement on both (all) sides has been absolutely critical, so it's been good.”

[strategic context]

“Barriers, probably I think, within...because we’re a Shire-wide group, we’re covering a big geographical area and that is a challenge. To get the people that we feel would be useful round the table at the one time is definitely challenging. And it’s challenging in lots of fields that we work in, not just in this work. We also all have... this is on top of our day jobs so-to-speak, so it’s... the timescales are challenging too.”

[operational & community context]

“...but then, all my projects are change projects... because you think, there's got to be a better way of doing things. There's a better way of doing things, and it's not really happening right now.”
3) Committing to resourcing the building of collaborative working and networks:

“We’ve also made sure for the local ones that our senior community workers – and we’ve got a senior community worker in every one of those networks – has got the facilitation role to make those local learning community partnerships work.”

[strategic context]

“We are aiming to formulate a peer support network within Aberdeenshire so that once we have a significant number of people who are trained… and are actually using the process of dialogue and deliberation, so that we have a peer support network to support and further expand the programme.”

[operational context]

“The mix of representatives on the group allowed for opinions and experience to be conveyed from a variety of partners, e.g. local community planning, national organisations, voluntary sector, and which contributed to a better understanding of which proposed solutions may or may not work. In this way, the different approaches, expertise and experience definitely added value to the process.”

[strategic context]

2.2.3 Developing dialogue: networks of support for multi-layered, boundary-spanning, facilitative leadership to build a shared public service ethos

The discussions from-the-field in 2.2.2 above illustrate how those working across the CPP are engaging with this emerging ‘matrix’ 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 bring 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.
This is a challenging area of development, particularly if/where partnership cultures have yet to significantly discuss how they can explore the shift away from top-down ways: and to exploring collaboration and participation that seeks to integrate top-down, bottom-up and horizontal. Williams (2013) argues that boundary spanners of all types will need to develop a range of core skills and knowledge to be effective in working across organisational boundaries. Broadly, these involve:

- relationship-building and communication
- ‘entrepreneurial’ and problem-solving
- interpreting and understanding different contexts
- coordination and planning.

Escobar et al. (2018; Escobar, 2011) point, likewise, to the range of skills and knowledge that public participation professionals (PPPs) – those in public services working to support participative approaches between services and communities – will need to develop to provide facilitative leadership. As well as the boundary spanning skills that Williams highlights, PPPs will need skills in:

1. ‘Process politics’: front-stage (more public) and back-stage (more private) working – for instance, when doing the ‘process politics’ and related ‘brokering’ and negotiating between various partners, participants and other stakeholders.

2. Knowledge-brokering and evidence-use: drawing potentially from a plethora of differing sources of evidence and knowledge to build dialogue across partners and stakeholders including statistical evidence and related data; research evidence reviews; information and interpretation of policy context; information and interpretation of practice; local knowledge – staff, service-users, communities, citizens and so on.

3. Coping with shifting complex roles: PPPs can find themselves moving between administrative roles (planning and coordinating) and activist (process politics) roles according to context, motivation, levels of personal stress (and risks of ‘burn out’) and so on. Individuals may prefer one of these two approaches, at least at any one particular time, but will likely play both over longer periods of time.

4. Notions of activist-related change, e.g. social processes, advocacy, relationship-building, and administrative-related change, e.g. systems and structures, can also be useful in highlighting two distinctive, but crucial approaches to change within public services organisations and partnerships. Both involve leadership roles across different layers and sectors but suggest different strategies or ways to make progress. Each could usefully inform and help develop local cross-partnership ‘change-agent’ and peer-support programmes and networks. These could draw on skills and knowledge from different services, layers and sectors and build a shared
public service ethos, as argued for by the Christie Commission (2011)\textsuperscript{35}. They can create resourced and safe communicative spaces in which those from across the different layers and sectors can meet on neutral ground and an equal footing – and for both practical discussions and wider reflections.

The current development of a peer support network within Aberdeenshire CPP for those across partner organisations who are seeking to facilitate participation, dialogue and deliberation between services and communities illustrates the potential of this sort of approach here. Whilst Example 3 below draws from the Beyond Action Learning report to highlight key skills and mindset for a facilitative leadership approach.

### Example 3: Illustrating the skills and thinking for facilitative leadership

The graphic below is a summary of conclusions from the Beyond Action Learning report (Soutar, Warrander & Henderson, 2017) and illustrates the sorts of flexible and collaborative thinking that facilitative leadership needs and seeks to bring to public service partnership and participation.

![Graphic summarizing key questions for facilitative leadership](image)

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\textsuperscript{35} For instance, Henderson, Revell & Escobar (2018) argue for the development of a local community sector-led change-agent programme that could in turn inform and support local CPP culture-change programmes.

[whatworksscotland.ac.uk](http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk)
2.3 Discussion 3: Inclusive structures for partnership and participation: deepening relationships with the local third sector and civil society

Discussion 3 research

- **Context:** points to the space that the local third sector potentially offers for local creativity, innovation and accountability, and so the value of inclusive processes. Yet, also the power imbalances and challenges of including the third sector and wider civil society on an ‘equal footing’.
- **Reflections from-the-field:** illustrates aspirations for deepening third/community sector/civil society participation at strategic levels; current opportunities and challenges e.g. participatory policymaking; connecting to community activists/volunteers; and the importance of funding relationships.
- **Developing dialogue:** highlights thinking on collaborative and participative governance as creating opportunities for re-imaging relationships across the diversity of local third/community sector and civil society – e.g. community bodies (place/interest); service-user and citizen bodies; union branches, etc. – as longer-term relational approaches built on trust, collaboration and investment.

2.3.1 Policy and practice context: what’s at stake?

What Works Scotland’s Evidence Review on Partnership-working (Cook, 2015) raises the issue of the dynamics of power within public service partnerships, pointing to key questions for CPPs to consider as including:

- how are the structures of public service partnerships supporting work on an ‘equal footing’ and seeking to share power?
- how to work with third/community sector bodies to create a shared culture?

Peter Matthews (2014) raises a related challenge in relation to participation and that communities and their representatives are at a constant disadvantage in fast changing policy environments in comparison to larger, (relatively) well-resourced public service bodies and their policy and research teams. Stephen Sinclair (2011) points to a number of challenges for third sector involvement in partnership working with CPPs beyond simply having an accepted voice and presence at formal discussions (front-stage). Although the data relates to field work in 2007, and in relation to one CPP, these challenges continue to sound relevant to current dialogue and include:

- being included in the informal discussions between partners (back-stage)
• being able to bring resources to partnership working – larger public service bodies will be favoured given size and deeper pocket, for instance
• does your style fit – having a working culture that mirrors public sector culture is more likely to bring engagement from public service partners.

Sinclair (2011: 17), however, concludes optimistically that whilst understanding the third sector as becoming equal partners in shaping the policy and practice agenda isn’t likely to be realistic, there is nevertheless scope for considerable creativity and pushing at existing boundaries to see what becomes possible.

Petch’s (2011: 6) evidence review of partnership working and integration in relation to adult social care services, although not specifically highlighting the role of the third sector, points to the value in being open to flexible notions of partnership:

“Consideration of the evidence for partnership working highlights the need to adopt a more nuanced approach, namely ‘what sort of partnerships can produce what kinds of outcomes for which groups of people who use services, when and how’.”

The language of public service reform in Scotland seeks to shift and decentralise both power to make decisions and the delivery of services towards ‘the local’, the third sector and communities bodies – through the Christie Commission, Public Bodies (joint working) Scotland Act 2014, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and now the Local Governance Review. The discussions of evidence outlined above illustrate how such change may be plausible but inevitably challenging and complex – particularly given public spending constraints (‘austerity’) and the lack of sustained, longer-term resourcing to invest in such processes.

Further, Charles Handy (1990) asks the valuable question. Why do people or organisations join in – pointing to three broad purposes: cooperation – to work with others; calculation – benefits to be gained; and coercion – have to be there. This flags the crucial question as to the terms on which the local third sector and civil society might participate and how a cooperative and collaborative environment can be cultivated.

2.3.2 Reflections from-the-field: toward an inclusive culture – aspirations, challenges

Many of those interviewed spoke positively of a positive and inclusive climate of partnership-building more generally and of the involvement of the third sector:

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36 The Scottish Government and COSLA’s Local Governance Review is consulting on how to devolve power to local levels of decision-making – view here: https://www.gov.scot/policies/improving-public-services/local-governance-review/

whatworksscotland.ac.uk
1) Aspirations for an inclusive partnership working culture

“We’re in a positive place because we didn’t have a learning community partnership(s), so we pulled it together and it involved partners from the local authority, community planning partners, third sector partners and it’s worked very, very well. It was initially task focused in terms of producing that CLD plan, but what’s been more important has been the ethos of the partnership working about how that group works. It’s been effective in making the third sector equal partners...”

[strategic context]

“That’s been a particularly good experience as a third sector partner within that [a policy review]. We have certainly felt that we have been equal to our public sector colleagues, so we’ve had an equal voice in that, shaping the direction of travel”.

[strategic context]

“Each organisation has its own cultures and ways of doing things, and if you’ve been involved in that organisation for 10, 20, 30 years, maybe you don’t have that natural looking outside to see how things are done differently elsewhere. Which is why that collaborative session [with CPP/What Works Scotland] is really important to actually understand how other people are thinking, what their priorities are, and how you can actually build on that and work together.”

[strategic context]

“The way our Board operates, when you’re all around that table, there’s not a sense of public sector, third sector. ...It is one example where everyone does work on equal terms and you have contributions from different people presenting what their own particular piece of work’s been. And the nature of the set-up of their organisation hasn’t really come into it around that table. That’s an important positive as well: you’re all there working for the community, to develop the same thing for the community, and therefore you’ve all got equal status around that table.”

[strategic context]
2) Complexities in working for a more inclusive culture between larger and smaller bodies

There are then aspirations for an inclusive culture, as (1) illustrated above, being articulated at a strategic level but (of course) a diversity of opportunities, challenges and dilemmas to engage with in seeking such changes:

“…one of the things that we’re working on just now is a third sector charter for the council, but it’s involving the other partners in the design of that. So that’s effectively the early stages of a co-design process: people are sitting down saying, this is what we expect from you, and this is what you can expect from us, and finding a form that works that everybody can then just sign up to. Those things are small, but they’re indicative of that change in relationship…”

[Strategic context]

“For example, (the) very high level strategic plan for health and social care. There was community consultation, but the extent to which third sector organisations felt that they had a voice or an effective voice within that process was very limited; that was reflected through the workshop sessions that we had. What we’re trying to remedy is going forward to what extent does the sector have an equal voice or certainly a strong voice that has the ability to influence that change…”

[Strategic context]

“Once you get to the level of local organisations at community councils, they are aware of what community planning is. They will be part of the local community planning organisation in their own area. But if you’re talking about the average member of the public… it’s not something directly affecting their lives as community planning. They want to know that they’ve got the organisation they need locally, but seeing it as a bigger whole would be expecting too much. …it’s important that those who are involved in running local organisations as volunteers, those involved in community councils, community organisations, that they’re aware.”

[Community & strategic context]

“The vast majority of people who live in communities won’t know anything about it [the Community Empowerment Act 2015] at all, and probably don’t want to. The people who live in communities who are actively involved in the kind of work we’ve talked about, there is a level of awareness of it. People find it a difficult piece of work to understand and we need to do a lot more o … understanding the new legislation and particularly how it might work… there’s an excitement about opportunities but
there’s a concern that that’s just their (public services) way of getting out of dealing with all the awkward stuff.”

[community & strategic context]

“It’s really improved both the view of the local authority from the people involved in that community as well as the local authority having a bit more trust in the community there as well. It’s quite a disenfranchised community. It’s one of the poorer communities... It was quite badly hit by the flooding but the flood response was much poorer than (elsewhere). There’s been quite a lot of repair work to be done with that relationship. That’s actually been a really positive piece to work on and has moved forward quite significantly.”

[community context]

“Now, that’s challenging [having to show impact] 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.”

[strategic context]

“What we’re trying to do is to make this the forum [where] the delivery partners can come together. And that the structure that they work within will include in each of those networks’ annual engagement with the wider community. As long as you’re quite explicit and clear about that, it’s a bit like the national standards for community engagement where you’re quite clear that are you informing, are you consulting or are you engaging?”

[strategic context]
2.3.3 Developing dialogue: long-term ‘relational contracting’ with the local third sector

Discussions from-the-field in 2.3.2 above illustrate an emerging picture:

(1) broad understanding at a formal and strategic policymaking level for working together on an ‘equal footing’ and a clear footing across public sector and third/community sector partners.

(2) growing opportunities for dialogue with smaller third/community sector bodies and groups as to the resources and opportunities that could/would prove useful to them … but a voice of realism too: that existing structures will need development (‘reform’) and new opportunities communicated and invested in.

There was a sense too of more work to be done in relation to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and supporting communities to understand and weigh-up the opportunities this can offer – remembering that there is a crucial issue here for smaller third and community sector organisations (and their boards and management committees) as to the levels of risk they would want or should be expected to take. e.g. asset transfer and the risks of passing on liabilities.

The emphasis within collaborative and participatory governance is on building long-term relations with the third/community sector and communities, citizens and service-users in particular to support co-production and co-creation. This arguably marks a change in language from New Public Management thinking (see 1.3.1 [3]) where the emphasis has tended towards:

- contracting out services – including to the third sector and community groups – to support cost efficiency, best value and effectiveness
- expectations for taking a business-like or enterprising approach – including the ongoing, ‘competitive’ pursuance of public service contracts and other public procurement
- service-users, carers and citizens playing the ‘customer’ role in relation to public services.

Such a focus would seem to have favoured the private sector and larger third sector bodies who have the resources and expertise to pursue contracting processes and potentially offer economies of scale – immediate cost efficiencies through a focus on one ‘product’ provided across large areas. Areas of practice where there has been controversy in relation to such outsourcing include concerns about:

- reduced wage levels, changing terms of employment, reduction in trades union membership
- lacking a sense of shared identity and commitment across public service provision – a public service ethos
• financially insecure smaller third/community sector bodies – moving from short-term contract to contract.

These issues are beyond a fuller discussion here, but the tone of a collaborative and participatory governance is suggestive of seeking to work in different ways with smaller third/community sector bodies and wider civil society to build local partnerships and participation. And, for instance, by focusing on a longer-term relational contracting with these organisations built on trust, shared aspirations and mutual benefit (Max Weaver, 2009). Here the economies of scope of local multi-purpose organisations can be supported – that is their ability through the complexity of their networks of local relationships with people, organisations and services to do many different activities and services (‘products’) at the same time.

Further, in Example 4 below, an understanding of a related relational commissioning is outlined – as is mentioned in 2.3.2 (2) above – and the building of longer-term relationships around the contributions that key organisations bring.

The shift to collaborative and participative governance is therefore providing a space to reconsider and re-imagine in pragmatic ways:

• how the local state works with others – top-down, business-focused, collaboratively – and what types of mechanism are needed here to support change
• which partners across third, private and public sectors – and each sector is very diverse – are relevant to which circumstance and context
• how to sustain a public service ethos for all those working to provide public services from whichever sector – including the role of the Fair Work Convention37 and its emphasis on themes of security, respect, opportunity, fulfilment and effective voice.

In returning to the local third sector, this raises the key question as to who a CPP might seek longer-term relationships with, and on what terms. The (local) third/community sector and civil society is diverse whilst the range of local empowerment envisaged by the Christie Commission varied – communities, citizens, people using services and frontline staff. If ‘we’ are to invest in longer-term relationships with key local organisations, who needs to be involved?

• local community organisations (place, interest, identity)
• service-users and carers groups and representatives
• citizens’ bodies and local trades union branches (frontline staff) and so on.

And on what terms will their involvement be and how will this be resourced and sustained?

37 https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/

whatworksscotland.ac.uk
Example 4: Exploring ‘Relational Commissioning’ – long-term cooperative relationships between funders, commissioners and providers

Research (in England) by Collaborate (Davidson Knight et al., 2017) with funders and service commissioners from both third sector foundations and the public sector is exploring the potential of relational or cooperative rather than competitive commissioning of services. Central to this thinking is a focus on complexity: in peoples’ lives; in organisations, partnerships and systems; and in the issues that arise for funders and providers in working in this context. The authors draw from complexity theory, using it to point towards:

- *the unpredictability of complex systems*: small variations, e.g. through context, can result in significant differences between seemingly similar systems
- *complex systems and ‘path dependence’*: whilst unpredictable, systems are not random and have histories we can learn from
- *being cautious re. knowledge claims and assumptions*: variations and unpredictability mean that in differing places and contexts ‘things’ can turn out differently – evidence can help but is only partial.

The report therefore explores – via interview material with funders – the potential for a relational system of commissioning that recognises:

- people and organisations as motivated to work to make a difference
- learning as the way to create change in organisations and systems
- systems need to be built around the quality of relationships
- given the complexity of systems there is no simple formula for achieving outcomes or evaluating impacts – so contributions rather than attributions.

They suggest this as a new paradigm for commissioning services, one build around relationships, trust, longer-term commitment and learning and a shift away from New Public Management’s concern for public service markets; managers and performance management; and the dominant role of management.

*See A Whole New World: Funding and Commissioning in Complexity report (PDF) on the Collaborate website*[

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2.4 Discussion 4: Negotiating complex political landscapes – what role for deliberative processes?

Discussion 4 research

- **Context**: points to the political dimensions of democratic public service reform across services and partnerships; communities and citizens; and, political structures and elections ... as identified through the Christie Commission.
- **Reflections from-the-field**: illustrates the varieties of political relationship-in-the-field: across professionals and officers; councillors and council structures; communities, community councils and their workings with other bodies.
- **Further dialogue**: highlights the potential of deliberative democratic spaces to bring diverse groups together to build collective understanding of each other; work with varieties of evidence; and, make informed, practical judgements whether through finding common purpose or acknowledging unresolved issues.

2.4.1 Policy and practice context: what’s at stake?

Ansell’s (2017) discussion of collaborative governance makes explicit the political nature of public service governance and administration.

Similarly, the Christie Commission (2011) recognises the political nature and complexity of democratic reform:

- Long-term piecemeal evolution of strategic public service authorities across political and social history.
- The political cycle can hamper efforts at long-term reform – even where there is broad political consensus for change, which is linked to short-termism.
- Roles of political leaders and their constituents as key stakeholders in reform.
- The need for coordination and agreement across central and local government.
- Local partnerships as the potential focus for public and political determining and prioritising (and accountability) of public service outcomes.
- Political parties as stakeholders in the Commission’s own review work (p79).
- Varieties of empowerment and related dynamics – people using services, frontline staff, citizens, and local communities of place and interest.
There is already then the realisation of the complexity of political processes at play here. Aberdeenshire CPP’s Submission to the Scottish Parliament’s Finance Committee in October 2015 likewise recognises the role of political processes and their relevance (both as support or barrier) to the development of preventative approaches:

“It is recognised that there is widespread political support for prevention, however political support for withdrawing or reducing vital acute services does not always exist, as these decisions are viewed as unpalatable. Political pressure may sometimes call for retention of the ‘status quo’ service provision – meaning that funds cannot be reallocated to preventative work. Resource management has been the key driver for change, rather than the principle of prevention, which means that priorities change as demand level fluctuates.”

The nature of political processes and pressures is further illustrated within the action research process through the multi-layered preventative partnership working report (Aberdeenshire CPP partners and What Works Scotland): this makes explicit this challenge for practice particularly as the need to build ‘political capital’ to support the development of

Illustration 2: some issues related to the complexity of democratic reform:

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preventative practice. Whilst, as was recognised in discussions of facilitative leadership in 2.2.3, public participation professionals and other boundary spanning staff will find themselves needing to build support for initiatives through both front-stage and back-stage working, for instance (Escobar, 2017).

Understanding complex political dynamics, being able to work with and juggle them constructively, and sustain commitment to pursue more accountable (transparent) decision-making have always been crucial elements in public service administration. Yet, in a shift to collaborative and participatory governance, the ability to work constructively with such an increasingly visible political complexity feels like a skill-set of increasing value and relevance.

2.4.2 Reflections from-the-field: the politics of collaboration and participation

1) Staff understanding that their judgements have political implications:

“…we are a very targeted service so therefore we’re going to have to work out where our resources go. People are getting more comfortable with making those value judgements that say we think there’s more need in this area than that area, therefore we think a higher proportion of our resources should be going in that area. …disadvantage is becoming something that as professionals we’re more comfortable talking about. Whether the political arena is always as comfortable with that I don’t know…”

[strategic context]

“…we needed to work through some of the perceived and actual barriers of this (including) ‘(it) might not be politically acceptable’. It might threaten people’s jobs at a local level because we’re taking away something: a role that’s very important and essentially the core of their role …there were a number of issues, that we were proposing to remove funding from a certain group and the decisions around funding would be made at a ‘difficult level’.”

[strategic context]

Considering how/when to work with local political representatives:

“…we did discuss should there be anyone else on the [steering group] … should we have an elected member? Ultimately, we didn’t. … It probably would have been good for an elected member to get more buy-in from their side… but, that can be challenging as well in the sense that there’s a belief… from some (elected) members that ‘we’ were right to make those decisions, so why do we need this (participatory)
process. It wasn’t a conscious decision not to have someone, but timescales were tight…”

[operational context]

2) The complexities of empowering communities in wider political contexts:

“I suppose some of the difficulties are dealing with [a national public agency] who have their own ideas. And, how we actually take that influence from the ground level and the communities and how we feed that up. But, also, how we keep communities feeling that they are supported even in the kind of challenges that that takes up.”

[community context]

“They’re [spatial planning and community planning] certainly from an economic development perspective, they’re not always easy neighbours because the criteria on which something is being evaluated isn’t always, from a community’s point of view, about money. And across the community, there will be a difference[s] of opinion. Some people in the community will always say, if such-and-such is going to bring in more jobs, so we should go for it? And others will say, but that doesn’t give any value to things that aren’t just measurable as economic outputs. Community value isn’t just about how many people are in employment, it’s about other qualities as well.”

[strategic context]

“…they’ve got long waiting lists (and) that’s not about fixing inequalities, that’s about fixing the leafy middle-aged suburbs... to have hip replacements done, and cataracts. Which are all really important, but they’re not getting to the heart of the most ‘needy’ of our society.”

[strategic context]

“We’ve got things like community councils and we’ve just done our review of a [scheme of establishment] for them. We’ve some way to go on participation to get truly great participation from all areas within our communities. We have very active people but we also have … the majority who are reasonably inactive... The Community Empowerment Act has helped in that to a degree, though I’m not convinced that it’s made a difference to those who really go to work every day and come home and don’t really have a voice in the democracy of this area. ... I think the
PB [participatory budgeting] side of it is one facet... things like community asset transfers, obviously that’s ongoing... the impact is on those who are active within a community anyway. I’m not sure we’ve activated the majority who are, at present, inactive.”

[community context]

3) Building diverse political capital to sustain dialogue and change:

“...you’re in that dual role where part of you is a PR person who is ‘selling’ this idea: communities can make these decisions themselves, so you believe in that passionately and you’re selling that concept. Then, you have to deliver on the method that you’re using to engage that community to prove the point, and there are two different things happening there. It’s quite hard to balance both of them.... you’re ‘selling’ that to the seniors and the staff, because they then have to go and ‘sell’ it to the local partners to bring the groups together. So, you’ve got to believe in it to get people involved in it in the first place... And then there’s the drive that we’ve said we were going to do these, so we have to deliver them...”

[strategic context]

“...pre-elections (council) ... we shared some of the headline strategic assessment issues with the political parties in January. So, before they did the local manifestos, here’s some useful kind of key facts and information about Aberdeenshire. Most of it was self-evident, most of which they would know about. But it gave them more of an evidence base, if they wished to draw on it in terms of shaping what their priorities might be. ....there’s a paper going to council next week which is the first very high-level summary of what the new council administration manifesto contained. But alongside that, we did a strategic assessment. We’ve tested that back through our own services... what’s the evidence telling us; what’s the manifesto telling us; and can we turn it into something that then makes sense ... Still lots of work to do over the next few months to refine that. We won’t be looking to agree the Council Plan until November. And we do want it to be a Council Plan and, ideally, all 70 members sign up to, not just a political administration, but we’re not quite there yet.”

[strategic context]
“Whereas the councillors... get involved holistically with the community and maybe have a better understanding of how it ticks as a whole than somebody who's going in looking at alcohol misuse, obesity or one specific area of it. We see communities, we see families, we see residents in a holistic sense. And so that’s something we can bring that other people in a professional situation don’t have the benefit (of) necessarily.”

[community context]

“The council has a ... subgroup which is a mixture of officers and elected members. Some of the elected members that are on that group are the ones that have an interest and a commitment to this area of work; others may be... a bit less so. But there’s an important opportunity for them in terms of trying to shape some of the (members) thinking...”

[strategic context]

Discussions with interviewees also illustrated a further crucial regional tier of partnership, collaboration, decision-making and so political engagement that the CPP was contributing to across North East Scotland as Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City; or Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Moray local authorities.

This was active, for instance, as: NHS Grampian and the acute services at the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary; Chief Officers Group (Child Protection); Chief Executives Group; Nestrans (North East Scotland Transport Partnership); the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Development Authority and so on.

2.4.3 Developing dialogue: understanding difference and seeking common understandings via deliberation and evidence-use in complex political landscapes

In 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 above, the research makes explicit the political workings of community planning partnerships and public service reform, as would be expected, and is articulated by the Christie Commission. These include:

- the political judgements and interpretations staff, officers and professionals must inevitably make in their work as to who to prioritise and when;
- the complexity of local democratic working and advocacy at play within local community/community planning contexts: the roles of community councils, community organisations and groups, councillors, public service officers, national bodies, spatial planning, community planning and so on;
the complex political work (process politics) that staff, officers and professional must undertake to build political capital across a CPP to support change – communities, services, local politicians, the electoral cycle, regional dimensions.

Oliver Escobar (2017) writes of the front-stage (public ‘performance’) and back-stage (private negotiations) of public participation professionals (PPPs) as they seek to win support for their participatory processes drawing from his ethnographic (in situ) research study within a Scottish CPP. One, at first unlikely, observation he makes, is the initial surprise that some feel as to the political nature of their work emerges:

“The official ‘job description’ of the PPPs studied here was to engage citizens and stakeholders in deliberative forums, but it didn’t mention anything about fostering ‘culture change’. This explains the bewilderment some PPPs felt about the political nature of their role.”

The discussions in 2.4.2 above illustrate not only professionals undertaking such roles but suggest that those offering local leadership whether overtly political as political administrations (political leadership of local government), councillors, MSP, MP, MEPs; or less visibly so as community councillors, community leaders and citizen advocates, and lobbying bodies from a range of sectors – public, third and private. As was suggested in 2.2.3, in relation to PPPs (Escobar, 2017), there is potential for each of these political participants to shift between acting as administrators and keeping systems running; and activists seeking to generate change.

In 2.4.1, it was suggested that this is not a new dynamic to public service administration, but an increasingly important one to recognise, value and develop constructively. If ‘we’ seek to create greater democratic engagement (culture change) across each contexts (communities, services, political structures) and layers (local community, local area, central), then:

- the scale of visible political activity increases: involving a greater number of participants, organisations and systems – empowerment in fact
- democratic expectations increase: becoming more visible (transparent), explicit and legitimised
- the need for shared skills of ‘collective leadership’ across organisations, layers and contexts increases: to hold together administrative and activist roles, for instance.

Collaborative and participatory governance requires then increasing skills and knowledge of and for democratic political processes – representative, participatory, deliberative – if it is to ‘hold’ and work with the inevitable tensions between different stakeholders. But, as with all political working, how to hold and sustain this in ways that are increasingly open (transparent), accountable and inclusive and yet pragmatic and constructive at the same time.

Oliver Escobar et al. (2018; Escobar, 2011) offers one potential tool, that of dialogue and deliberation. This is understood to involve principles and practices of:

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• critical engagement with the best available evidence  
• inclusion of diverse perspectives that can shed light on the issue(s) at hand  
• respectful dialogue that enables working through differences and disagreements, including productive exchanges of reasons, emotions and values  
• conclusions, recommendations and decisions that reflect informed, considered judgements.

Crucially, the process is facilitated and can be part of a wider process that could support an ongoing mediation between conflicted stakeholders. These principles are already expressed explicitly through democratic processes that include mini-publics and citizen’s juries (Fung, 2015): where citizens are randomly selected and work together to consider issues in depth – see Example 5 below of a citizen jury in Peterhead.

Yet the broad principles and practices could be extended creatively into other contexts – community, service and political – to create spaces where stakeholders are conflicted. Here, initial emphasis is on participation, collaboration and dialogue, yet seeks to find a more in-depth or critical shared examination (deliberation) of the issues at-hand: both more immediate practical concerns (initial problem) and wider policy context (which may reframe the initial problem).

These deliberative spaces offer the potential to revisit afresh highly-politicised and conflicted problems – to find and understand both areas of common purposes and sustained differences. There is the potential for the participants to:

• build understanding of each others’ perspectives, interests and concerns – so making increasingly visible the relational and political networks that are active ‘here’  
• sharing in an inquiry that draws from diverse evidence – but also, crucially, brings in reasoning, emotions, commitments and values  
• seek practical outcomes (actions), deepening perspectives, and recognising that not all differences will ‘magically’ dissolve but can at least be better understood.

**Example 5: Citizen’s Jury in Peterhead... exploring deliberative practices**

**1) The context and problem:** this project trialled an innovative approach to police-community engagement; facilitating people from a local community to take part in informed debate and collaborative problem-solving on a local issue that mattered to them. This had been used with other public services but not police-community engagement in Scotland.

A local community-organised 5th November bonfire was selected for this pilot. The bonfire had run for many years but had grown in popularity and size. Local police, fire service and council were concerned re. the organising of the event and related community safety.
issues. But relationships with the organisers had broken down. The jury was seen by all parties as offering a space for mediation.

(2) The process: it was important that the design and conduct of the jury was independent and impartial so that all parties were assured the jury recommendations would be unbiased.

A ‘stewarding Board’ was set up, chaired by the What Works Scotland research lead, with representatives from police, council, fire and bonfire organisers. The Board agreed how jurors would be recruited, who would be the expert ‘witnesses’, and what the jury would be asked to do. The Board agreed the jury would consider four options and make recommendations.

Jurors were recruited randomly – but with quotas for gender, age and socio-economic characteristics; and equal representation of opinions on the bonfire. A payment was made to compensate them for their time and to ensure equal participation. Sixteen jurors attended day 1; 12 for day 2 – the others were unable to return for reasons outside their control.

The research leads facilitated the jury and supported inclusive discussion and deliberation:

- There were three information sessions by pairs of speakers (services and bonfire organisers) giving short presentations as ‘witnesses’, followed by extended Q&As
- On day 2, options for the bonfire were discussed. All jurors recognised the long-standing tradition of the bonfire, the strong community pride and identity attached to it. But they identified the need for improvements to safety and organisation.
- The jury voted on the options and the large majority (11-1) decided that the bonfire should remain in its current location but with changes. They agreed a range of recommendations on safety and need for services and organisers to work together.

(3) Key impacts through the jury:

- Jurors were unanimously positive about the process – despite initial doubts and scepticism.
- Witnesses saw the jury as listening closely; asking constructive, thoughtful questions.
- The services saw how the jury helped to ‘unblock’ stalemate, renew relationships, open dialogue, and build understanding of the community’s views.
- Many of the jury recommendations were implemented and safety improved: although a pre-event meeting between services and organisers was not possible. However, both services and jurors had remaining safety concerns after the bonfire had taken place.
2.5 Discussion 5: Collaborative learning and action (action research) as creative, ‘unpredictable’ spaces to imagine and support culture change

Discussion 5 research:

- **Context**: points to ‘collaborative learning and action (action research)’ as a broad set of options for integrating: (1) deepening participation and collaboration; (2) inquiry and research; and, (3) action and change.
- **Reflections-from-the-field**: illustrates from across the CPP diverse formal and informal collaborative learning and action projects and emerging understandings – including the potential for learning to cross from the formal into the informal.
- **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... but needing suitable resourcing and management commitment across partnerships.

2.5.1 Policy and practice context: a broad family of action research processes

Broadly-speaking, as outlined in 1.2.2 (2), the term ‘collaborative learning and action’ is used to describe the family of action research approaches – which seek to bring together (integrate) three key elements of:

1. participation, collaboration and cooperation through groups and networks
2. inquiring researching and research – building-up evidence and a shared analysis
3. action, change, transforming perhaps – locally and potentially more widely.

The thinking is kept deliberately broad within this discussion in order to include activities that have, perhaps, strength in two of the elements above, but are light on the third. For instance, local community consultations and/or community plans will likely have strong elements of participation and action planning but may not always have a well-developed

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40 Sharing our findings from new approach to police-community engagement
http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/sharing-our-findings-from-new-approach-to-police-community-engagement/

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element of inquiry and research, e.g. drawing on other evidence and spending time in interpreting and analysing.

Reason and Bradbury (2006) consider a ‘participatory worldview’ as the underlying perspective to action research – and this chimes with the democratic aspirations of collaborative and participatory governance. The action research ‘tradition’ has developed over the last 70 years as part of an increasing democratisation of many aspects of society and the state, being used, for instance, by:

- organisations, enterprises and businesses (public, private, social/third)
- the state as services, networks and partnerships e.g. health, education
- community learning, community activism – including in developing nations

The increasing emphasis within Scottish public service reform on the language and tools of participation, collaboration, diverse stakeholders and local democracy and accountability thus provides fertile ground for exploring the value of this tradition in supporting public service and related social change (reform).

Key thinking within the action research tradition offers a distinctive approach to ‘culture change’. Chris Argyris (2003: 2) points to two different types of approaches to generating practice-based learning, knowledge and action:

“Single-loop learning remains within the accepted routines. Double loop learning requires that new routines be created that were based on a different conception of the universe.”

He argues that single loop learning is defensive and supports the status quo – of institutions and individuals (both practitioners and researchers) – sustaining values and power dynamics and adjusting current approaches. Double loop learning aspires to a wider vision of change in culture, values and structures that can broaden learning and generate new ways of framing problems. Thus, as with discussions of systems-focused action research in 1.2.3, we are encouraged to look both at problem-solving and problem-framing and to understand public service reform in a wider social context.

2.5.2 Reflections from-the-field: putting collaborative learning and action into actual practice

1) Collaborative learning and action projects outside of work undertaken with What Works Scotland

Outside of the collaborative learning and action undertaken between the CPP partners and What Works Scotland (see 1.2.1 and Appendix 1), our discussions both informally and

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41 The work of Paulo Friere in Latin America with disempowered peoples living in poverty is, for example, part of the tradition.

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through interviewing have highlighted a wide range of collaborative learning and action projects.

(a) In discussions, the following projects pointed to working that was seeking to integrate the three elements of participation, research/inquiry and action.

Locally-focused:

A local community survey in North Fraserburgh: led by a community organisation, Fraserburgh Community Development Trust, in partnership with public and third sector partners; in particular Community Learning and Development and local community planning and with support from the Scottish Community Development Centre. The survey engaged more than 200 community members in an area of about 300 households in a low income, ethnically-diverse part of the town – 20% of participants were from eight different non-British nationalities. The survey work informed the development of a local welfare centre involving a diversity of partners and coordinated by the CPP’s Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Group; and is run by the local Fraserburgh Development Trust; see the survey report here.

A local community survey co-produced by the local community planning group and a community council: the Scottish Government’s Place Standard Tool provided the basis for an extensive community survey and consultation process coordinated by the local community planning group (LCPG) and a community council – gaining 600 responses from approximately 3,000 households. Further responses and participation were developed through a community event run on the weekend – with 90% of participants not having participated in the survey. Draft priorities were established by the community council and LCPG and a further community event held to consider these. A community plan was developed and presented to the council.

Local community and wider local area:

Action research with communities and officers: an action research-type project involving a member of staff within one of the rural partnerships – and as part of their professional and academic studies – in interviewing participants from three communities and three public services (Council, NHS, Fire) in relation to experiences of the flooding in Aberdeenshire in 2016 (Storm Frank). In the process, discussions of the notion of ‘community resilience’ and its complexity were generated and shared with both the community participants and staff/officer/professionals from services – with the aims of developing shared learning and improving planning for future community resilience. See the full report here.

Local to central area:

42 See information on the Here for You centre.

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**Grassroots participation report:** a series of consultative workshop with local third sector organisations across the Shire led by Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action, and commissioned by Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership. The research was based on the third sector matrix and used a red-amber-green traffic lights system to give broad messages and feedback of current successes and challenges to the HSCP.

**Centrally:**

**An internal review of CPP structures:** to meet the challenges of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The review was led by the local authority and involved a number of participants from CPP partners: NHS Grampian; Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action; Housing; Police Scotland; Scottish Fire and Rescue Services; local community planning. Various sources of evidence were used including discussions with key staff from other CPP partners and visits to other CPPs. The final report as part of the [CPP Board Papers](#) (item 7) is here.

**(b) Other valuable examples of collaborative learning and action:**

**LOIP priorities:** both the ‘Reduce child poverty’ and the ‘Changing Aberdeenshire’s relationship with alcohol’ LOIP priorities draw on significant pieces of evidence/research (inquiry) to inform discussions (participation/collaboration) and build towards action planning (action/change):

- the child poverty priority: using research undertaken by the Poverty Alliance (McKenderick, McHardy & Kelly, 2018) for Aberdeenshire on child poverty and action for change – [see the report](#) 43
- the alcohol priority: using an extensive public health evidence-base developed by Aberdeenshire ADP – [see the discussion paper](#) 44.

**Community action planning:**

The [Community Links Worker report](http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/learning-about-community-capacity-building-from-community-links-worker-approach-aberdeenshire/) 45 (Aberdeenshire HSCP and What Works Scotland, 2016) illustrates the value of a [planning-for-real exercise](http://www.planningforreal.org.uk/) 46. This is a participatory planning and prioritising process and this informed development of a local community action plan for Insch. This was led by the local community planning group, Community Learning Development and Garioch (Rural) Partnership and working in partnership with a local community (anchor) body – Friends of Insch Hospital and Community – and the community links worker.

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The roles of Deveron Arts and Huntly and District Development Trust were highlighted in the town regeneration process developing there and led by the local community planning group.

Three interviewees identified community councils as key partners in developing community action plans. Whilst research from the James Hutton Institute’s (Praeger & Holstead, 2015) highlights the diversity of achievements and challenges for Aberdeenshire community councils (CCs). It points to the need for local authorities to highlight the achievements of CCs, provide in-kind support, demonstrate commitment and to work flexibly with them:

“CCs should be given a choice of whether they want to take on more responsibility. Where they accept more responsibility, this must be coupled with genuine sharing of decision making power and an appropriate budget.” (p6)

2) Other emerging themes from this body of collaborative learning and action

Different communities will offer different opportunities and need different approaches:

- in more rural areas community councils, community organisations and primary schools proved valuable partners – the latter key to accessing children and families
- in more deprived urban areas, locally-led community organisations – as in Fraserburgh [see (1) above] – will likely play crucial roles.

Key emerging questions for practice from the interviews included:

- whether secondary schools could play stronger roles in more urban areas
- how to engage with young adults after school and before starting families
- how to work in more transitory communities – with populations in flux – where community organisations may be less developed.

Interpretation and analysis of evidence:

Several interviewees spoke insightfully of deepening research processes, for instance:

“…Two things I would say: one is that data is absolutely important in not only determining what the outcomes that have been achieved (are), (and) also in setting the priorities, but it also needs the (sources) of local intelligence. So, it’s a bit like when the inspectors come to inspect a school, they always talk about triangulation, is the data backed up by other bits of evidence. …You use the data to underpin what your actions are, but you need other intelligence as well to put it into a context and ... part of that is about the community engagement.”

Others were less clear as to whether or how their collaborative learning and action work might draw on research processes.

Adopting a collaborative learning and action approach more generally:
Two interviewees made connections between more structured collaborative learning and action projects and a way of working that they brought into their wider partnership working, for instance:

“[at] one level quite a bit of my work involves what you might describe as a collaborative learning approach and particularly around the health inequalities agenda ... where local actions and local interventions which might make a difference in terms of closing that gap in terms of outcomes. There aren’t necessarily always very easily defined solutions that you can take off the shelf. A lot of the work in that kind of territory by its nature involves a collaborative, enquiring, reflective research approach in order to try and better understand or define what the issue or the problem is. As well as ultimately trying to tease out what might be the solutions that would change some of that.”

[ strategic context]

The challenge of justifying ‘soft’ outcomes across a range of partner bodies

One interviewee pointed to an underlying challenge in relation to culture change across diverse public service organisations with different cultures that work to different assumptions – that they will need to have a shared understanding of the value of collaborative approaches and qualitative research:

“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...”

[ strategic context]

“...that's a huge luxury of the time, is to be able to do the reading (in a CPP/What Works Scotland process). Because we see reading as a luxury, but actually it's not, it's an essential part of our job. But we are programmed to be operational, ‘doing’ the whole time; and, reading is (just) something you do before you go to sleep at night.”

[ strategic & operational context]

Using and sharing evidence creatively:
“... there’s all kinds of (approaches) like sigma, and the tools and techniques you can use, and you sell it as that: and that’s not actually what it’s about, that’s the means to an end. And sometimes the way in which we described it means it turns people off. So that example [CPP/What Works Scotland working together on using evidence]... if the content is around showing the possible, not just the potential, but actually you can do this, and it’s targeted in the right way; that’s massively productive if we get that right. I don’t think we have got it right up until now, and one of the things that... we don’t share that well enough within the public sector or cross sectoral, for that matter”

“Even now with the pressures that we’re under, we know that it’s coming, we just don’t share enough... There’s professional bodies that represent functions, whether it’s roads or planning or housing or legal. They’ll come together and they’ll talk about stuff at national level, but I’m not actually sure how much they share good live examples about how they’ve either transformed or changed their focus or made more efficiencies or done something different within their service, operational stuff, and really get that out there... just to grab hold of some of that and say, look, we’re all getting tough times here.”

“Can we try and... not try and bite the whole elephant, but just think about ways in which we can do that... and get examples about practice out there... (for instance). The only way that team in that area were able to do that is they thought differently about how they do their job: whether it’s about prevention, whether it’s about collaboration, ...an efficiency, a simple thing that might have been brilliant. The related bit it’s going to draw in is digital.”

2.5.3 Developing dialogue: collaborative learning and action as a creative space for change

Discussions from-the-field in 2.5.2 above illustrate an increasing number of diverse projects and processes in which more formalised collaborative learning and action thinking (action research) has been active – and across different layers of the CPP and in rich, creative ways – as well as some more informal ways.

It points, also, to some across the CPP as engaging with the complexity of such working:

- seeking to work in complex ways with local diversity and participation
- the use of evidence and its triangulation from various sources
- the skills from collaborative learning and action projects becoming active in more informal collaborative processes

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• potential tensions around justifying soft outcomes e.g. ‘culture change’ and ‘learning’ to management systems concerned for targets, outputs and data.

There is a sense of the emerging challenge here of seeking to work with the tensions that Bartels and Wittmayer (2014) identify (see 1.2) of action research for policy and practice needing to combine three types of knowledge that together create actionable knowledge:

- **workable knowledge**: able to contribute to the practical solving of ‘the problem’
- **reflexive/critical knowledge**: able to contribute to understanding the problem from wider perspectives ... and potentially to reframe problems
- **credible knowledge for a diversity of stakeholders**: communities, practitioners, policy-makers and researchers ... and including those normally concerned for targets.

In 2.5.1 above, Chris Argyris’ (2001) thinking on the role of double loop learning – the space to rethink and reframe problems – in creating culture change was highlighted. He argues further that defensive mindsets – again across this institutions and individuals – will be at work: initially positive changes will likely halt. Creating change will then be complicated needing varieties of leadership with relevant skills; and a culture that sees value in these sorts of processes and of investing resources in them – which given the dilemmas around the crises faced in public service reform outlined in 2.1 is a significant commitment.

The Beyond Action Learning research report illustrates the scale of process, resource and commitment likely needed for significant learning to emerge – in this case meetings of 2.5 hours with each partnership team every 6 weeks and over almost a two-year period. And, thus, the key role of senior management across the partners to sustain commitment at all levels to these collaborative learning and action processes – supporting the work of implementing change and helping to overcome defensive mindsets. Similarly, the Community Links Worker report was developed over 15 months by a cross-partnership team meeting 11 times – and 3 to 4 hours at a time.

These processes will need to be backed by senior management if they are to create culture change. Yet, the outcomes will be hard to predict, most often more easily illustrated qualitatively (as experiences) rather than ‘measured’ quantitatively (numbers). These may be hard to justify financially and in terms of the outputs or targets that management systems most often rely on.

Further, as Anita Kothari and Nadine Wathen (2012) argue (see 1.3.3), there is a significant risk of all involved – researchers included – of tending to a positivity bias in order to justify the research as successful by creating new and significant knowledge. Unfortunately, this is not the norm for any social research process. A credible research process will often make cautious or ‘mundane’ progress as to what is being learning. Crucially, this will include ‘failures’ as in hunches that don’t seem to quite work and may seem hard to justify (Gibb, 2015). Seemingly dramatic leaps forward (‘success’) in understanding are unlikely; and where they do happen will have been built on previous ‘failures’.
Kothari and Wathen (2010) point instead to the potential of co-produced research to build pooled knowledge, experience and skills of research and co-production — ‘partnership and participation’ in fact. Potentially, then, better at producing *practical knowledge and skills* that helps implementation rather than abstract knowledge that can easily be written down: Arygris (2003) calls this ‘implementable knowledge’ as in how to do things rather than what those things are. See Example 6 below.

This then suggests a very different understanding of what collaborative learning and action processes (action research) are likely to achieve. The emerging knowledge is more likely held by the people and networks involved rather than in reports and data. They can contribute to culture change...but this may not always happen directly through the process but instead as something that people take away into their day job – as is suggested in 2.5.2 (2) in bringing learning from formal collaborative learning into informal settings.

This is not to say that the influences of collaborative learning and action can’t be broadly tracked (monitored) and mapped over time – including through some quantifiable measures. The *Beyond Action Learning* programme used a participant survey to gain self-reported feedback; whilst the *Community Links Worker inquiry* report then influenced the development of the ‘strategic approach to community capacity-building for health and wellbeing’ – See the case study on the What Works Scotland website47. But it is to suggest, that there can be no immediate ‘re-assurance’ through direct, easily attributable and (likely quantifiable) impacts on targets.

Action research would seem to be better understood as offering creative spaces that can support and contribute to culture change – and these spaces can reflect back the levels of commitment to processes of culture change within wider partnerships and systems. To invest in them is risky in the sense that actual outputs and outcomes are not assured – nor when they will emerge – rather they require ongoing creative input, engagement and indeed change themselves. But, in reality, this is also the case for any research or improvement process – including those with seemingly decisive targets and measures.

Example 5: Knowledge for developing policy and practice – workable, reflexive/critical, credible, implementable and so actionable?

The Community Links Worker inquiry – Cycle 1 arrived at intersecting layers of knowledge:

1) Understanding the aims of good practice by a Community Links Worker – summarised as:
understanding the community and its assets and needs; linking community members to community assets and services; developing relevant community health activities; partnership-working with the community sector and communities; and partnership working with public services and the wider third sector.

2) Supporting the development of good practice in ‘Community Linking’ – summarised as: building from existing partnerships; working with a credible local organisation(s); developing the Links Worker’s skills, abilities and knowledge; developing suitable strategies locally and area-wide; learning from wider regional and national experience

3) Recommendations for further development work – summarised as:
- further research (Cycle 2) to explore strategies for ‘spread and sustainability’
- using the skills and knowledge of the Inquiry Team to support further development;
- using Cycle 2 to deepen understanding of how Community Linking can make a difference on key challenges e.g. inequality/poverty, social isolation/mental health.
- building effective links to wider key service partners and partnerships

The report was shared via wider local consultation; a Development Workshop; and a Scottish Government research programme⁴⁹ (see p8 of Full Report) by Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action.

Types of knowledge developed here:

Problem-solving, workable knowledge: is very relevant here – (1) and (2) illustrate a working towards directly developing and improving local practice.

Problem-framing reflexive/critical knowledge: is less obvious – but is begins to emerge:

- in (2) – through deepening the Links Worker’s knowledge on wider perspectives
- in (3) – through further research on making a difference on local poverty, leadership

Credible knowledge relevant to all stakeholders: and which combines both problem-solving and problem-framing (double loop learning) – and that is therefore very likely implementable knowledge (Argyris, 2003) – is less easy to demonstrate in reports. Whilst the (simplistic) summaries of (1) – (3) above don’t do justice to the material in the actual report itself, nevertheless the subtles of developing thinking and practice is hard to convey.

Implementable and actionable knowledge: the report in fact recognises the key resource that the Inquiry Team offers in (3) – the knowledge of policy and practice is embedded (‘held’) within them. They and the report together form the key resource for a CPP to tap into. Together they make for actionable knowledge ... of use in support of complex change.

2.6 Discussion 6: Constructive disruptions through independent, sustained facilitation

Discussion 6 research

- **Context:** points to the potential for independent facilitation, where actively supported by partnership management, to offer significant challenge for change.
- **Reflections from-the-field:** illustrates signs of a growing understanding of the challenges of collaborative group-working: building an inclusive, listening culture; for peer support for those leading; the value of co-working and independent facilitation.


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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 difficult questions and generate change.

2.6.1 Policy and practice context

In 2.1, the report points to the ‘unprecedented’ challenges and crises that the Christie Commission highlights and that seem to resonate with experiences on-the-ground and asks a crucial question: whether and how collaborative and participative approaches might create effective culture change in relation to this multi-stranded crisis. The discussions that have followed since in 2.2 to 2.5 have sought to provide evidence to inform reflection and discussion as to how ‘we’ might take forward collaborative and participatory governance through developing:

- multi-layered, cross-sector facilitative leadership – activist and administrative;
- inclusive partnership and participation built on long-term relational working;
- emphasis on dialogue and deliberation to support working with political challenges;
- collaborative learning and action concerned for a creative double loop learning.

A key element in many of these processes is the need for someone(s) to facilitate safe spaces that support dialogue, generate and sustain trust, and build shared understandings of current commonalities and difference. These can then allow for the creation of varieties of ‘challenge’ that might allow partnership and participation to progress and deepen. Perceptions of the facilitation and its independence from the participation is thus likely to be a crucial element in any such process – given the need for trust-building in complex political landscapes.

The various Aberdeenshire CPP partner and What Works Scotland reports illustrate the role of independent facilitation in taking forward action research processes (see 2.1). In this case, What Works Scotland has often provided or led facilitation that has sought to be independent of the interests of any one particular partner or stakeholder – although local perceptions might be different. And, in the process has sought to build shared understandings and generate challenge.

Likewise, the Beyond Action Learning report illustrates the potential of facilitated collaborative and bottom-up (local team) processes within a complex partnership-setting. These processes were supported by facilitators who were independent of the immediate local health and social care services partners and related teams – as in not a direct part of the operational management structures.

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Understanding further the potential role of independent facilitation in both creating the conditions to provide challenge(s) and then sustaining it over the longer-term, seems therefore a crucial element in the development of an effective collaborative and participative governance – one that might have the strength to actively engage with the multi-stranded crises of public service reform and make significant culture change possible.

2.6.2 Reflections from-the-field: facilitation and dialogue

1) Seeing the complexities and dynamics of working with and within groups

“You sometimes have to tease out why there might be an apparently strong objection to something that other people don’t seem to have a problem with. Doing that without causing a strain on the relationships round the table can sometimes be a little bit difficult. ...It’s the same with any collaboration though: people don’t see everything the same way. For whatever reason they have a misconception about something and it’s quite a long way down the line before you realise that actually they’re fundamentally coming at something from a slightly different place…”

[Strategic context]

“I had gone through the results with a fine toothcomb ahead of them presenting back what the priorities are, so I could challenge... I had to have enough understanding of what came back to be able to help facilitate the workshop where we had discussion of what came out, (so that) I could remind them that actually what came out there was this.”

[Community context]

“The more challenging groups will be the groups who don’t work in that (collaborative) way. ...it’s a much more, this is the way we do it and this is the way we’ve always done it... It’s going to be persuading groups like that, that actually you can get different and often better outcomes from adjusting your way of working with your audience as well. So, they will get more out of others by working in a slightly different way. ...in this time of budget cuts, we’re all being challenged to do things a little bit differently. There’s some groups who will embrace that and I find that easier than others.”

[Various contexts]
“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…”

[Various contexts]

“It was a very positive experience... having different opinions on the group worked really well and it made the most of the process. Having a reflection on ‘do you have the right people around the table’ is really valuable to have. I don’t think you can be precious about that. It’s good to be challenged within the group situation as long as that’s constructive. I don’t know how as a group, if we would have worked as effectively had we had a degree of negative challenge.”

[Operational context]

2) Recognising the value of support and facilitation within group processes

“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...”

[Strategic context]

“I actually think it was good (working with What Works Scotland) ... something that you had said at the outset was that the (process) generated people discussing issues, respecting one another, yet challenging. Which I think is, was very important, but it was a frustration... It’s actually down to ourselves, not down to you... but it was just the long journey to get to that point and that probably wasn’t (what) I was
expecting. But that’s not to take anything from your methodology, the way in which you engaged, the way in which you got us to engage, which I think was very important. Because if you hadn’t done it, then the only time that we’d ever engage was... nodding in agreement with each other as opposed to saying, ‘no stop, wait a minute’.”

[Strategic context]

“I wonder if there is a benefit of having somebody external, from a university, working in that [way, where] research is their thing, and what that brings to a piece of work. I can’t compare it, because I don’t know another way, so it’s difficult to say. But I wonder if, at this stage, if it could have been done from somebody internal, because of the stage the process was at?”

[Strategic & operational context]

“That survey that was done wasn’t done by me. It was done by a colleague and I think that was good, because someone else doing it they can come back to you and say, well, wait a minute. Have you thought about this? Because people are saying this, and this seems to be a message, and we need to do something about that. So, we’ve had at least two or three different sessions with staff where we’ve built on issues that they’ve raised and tried to say, okay, well, what can we do about that? And then that’s impacted on the work on the ground.”

[Strategic & operational context]

2.6.3 Developing dialogue: independent facilitation and committing to ‘constructive disruptions’?

The discussions from-the-field in 2.6.2 above illustrate:

- emerging aspirations for, and understanding of, the importance of inclusive and supportive discussions across the CPP of 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 independent 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.
In seeking to support processes of collaboration, partnership and participation, the research (2.6.1) pointed towards the value of independent facilitation. Implicit within this is support from senior management across a partnership to provide ‘sanction and sanctuary’ (Dickens & Watkins, 1999) for such process: that is a willingness to advocate for the importance of the process and to resource and support the protected safe (communicative) spaces on which collaboration, participation and challenge can be built.

The Beyond Action Learning report, in particular, highlights this crucial support from senior management for independently facilitated processes. Whilst the wider body of work facilitated by What Works Scotland – and the resulting reports (see 2.1 and Appendices 1 and 2) – illustrate an accumulating knowledge on putting Christie into action through independent facilitation and ‘sanction and sanctuary’ from partnership management.

Discussions of the Pioneer Collaborative Leadership programme take such thinking on theory and practice a stage further. This report provides a detailed illustration of the role of an in-depth facilitation within complex community planning partnership (place-based) setting (Bland, 2017b). The text box below – Example 7 – illustrates a reflective, carefully paced process that builds space for discussing shared challenges through facilitation concerned for ‘constructive disruptions’.

Key illustrations this case study offers, and which can support further dialogue, include:

- independent facilitation of complex collaborations concerned for wicked issues can create challenge and spaces for critical reflections and re-framing of the problem
- a loose framework of inquiry that gives participants a direction-of-travel they can quickly understand – and tools within this to support and develop their participation.
- the value of taking significant time to building relationships across participants and initial understanding of the perspectives and needs of all stakeholders – including people using services.

**Example 7: Pioneer Collaborative Leadership Programme: a case study**

The Pioneer Collaborative Leadership case study report (Bland, 2017b) covers early development of the PCL from March 2015 until November 2016:

“The facilitators worked with East Lothian Partnership as it considered how to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable families in Musselburgh, as part of a place-based approach. It is the most extended period for a site so far – from March 2015 until December 2016 – and provides a rich illustration of the PCL approach in practice.

“To take the Musselburgh Total Place (MTP) work forward, a conventional project structure had been established with a project Board, project team and a project
manager. The PCL facilitators attended Board meetings and worked with the project manager and project team. They integrated their facilitation within the structure of the Board - and subsequently project team – meetings, but distinguished their specific contribution from ‘normal business’.”

The facilitators used:

- an action inquiry methodology to support curiosity, inquiring and reflection
- an EERS approach (Elicit, Evidence, Resourcing, Start again): that seeks to detect what might be changing; evidence this; support change; return to re-start cycle
- a learning log as a group record of change within the group and more widely.

As paired facilitator teams they brought into the process ‘constructive disruptions’:

That is, seeking to disrupt conventional practices and purely transactional discussions and help to open a more imaginative discussion.

These practices included:

- inviting and/or building into meetings ‘pauses for reflection’ – to change group (traditional) norms and change the pace and expectations of discussion
- informed, selective challenging – deciding when to engage and when to hold back
- creating ‘holding spaces’ – pointing to issues, encouraging reflections, but not ‘forcing issues’ – allowing questions to surface over time.
- engaging with the context of the work with families with ‘complex needs’ and encouraging imagining of the experiences of the families and of the staff team(s).

Key learning from the process included:

- the ‘holding spaces’ allowed two initial strands of inquiry – experiences of the family and of the staff – to find common ground, then merge so shared inquiry could ‘flow’.
- Board members recognised themselves, as part of the reflective inquiry, and the importance of active listening; questions; reflections; spaces and time to reflect.
- the Board, in understanding (‘hearing’) the experiences of families and staff, could then support the design of a new service model.
- not all CPP partners were equally committed to staying with the process – and so not all were willing to committed to resourcing the new model.

See: Pioneering Collaborative Leadership: A Facilitated Approach for Learning in Action report on the What Works Scotland website⁵⁰

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⁵⁰ Pioneering Collaborative Leadership: A Facilitated Approach for Learning in Action report
http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/pioneering-collaborative-leadership-a-facilitated-approach-for-learning-in-action/

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2.7 Discussion 7: Preventing inequalities and preventative spend: pooling resources for upstream preventative partnership working is no easy matter

Discussion 7 research

- **Context:** points to the aspirations for public service partnerships to better coordinate actions, work with communities and other stakeholders, and pool resources (budgets and staffing) ... to shift toward preventative approaches and preventative spend to reduce inequalities and so pressure on services/spending.
- **Reflections from-the-field:** illustrates a variety of approaches to partnership and participation with ‘preventative potential’: culture change and top-down shared strategic-working; and smaller scale local initiatives for coordination across partnerships, discussions of local priorities with communities, and shared use of data.
- **Developing dialogue:** illustrates the longer-term nature of savings likely to be generated for re-investment through such preventative and incremental public service partnership-working. Potential areas of tension include: between top-down (central) and bottom-up (local) initiatives; building shared understandings of upstream preventative priorities; and workforce insecurity created by public spending constraints that limits collaborative commitment. Pooling budgets to support preventative approaches/re-investment as an area of policy and practice would seem in its infancy rather than a fully-formed approach ready to ‘deliver’.

2.7.1 Policy and practice context: what’s at stake...

“We do not believe there is any magic solution to this problem. Our view, however, is that we all need to recognise that there is no alternative: if we do not manage to effect a shift to preventative action, increasing ‘failure demand’ will swamp our public services’ capacity to achieve outcomes. In all aspects of our system of public services, therefore, from setting national policy to reforming the governance and organisation of public services, through to the design and delivery of integrated services, all parties must prioritise and build in action which has the effect of reducing demand for services in the longer run.”

(Christie Commission, 2011: 56) *bold added*
The central focus of the Christie Commission is on preventing inequalities and other negatives outcomes so reducing pressure on public service systems and spending... the need to shift public spending from ‘reactive services’ to preventative (and early intervention) services and approaches – or ‘preventative spend(ing)’. Partnership, participation and a related focus on improving performance are the broad tools for achieving this change. The complexity of such a change is acknowledged... as is a recognition that it will take time to achieve this.

In 2.7 and 2.8, the report explores two types of emerging, likely often complementary (potential) options regarding a shift towards preventative spend and approaches:

- re-investment as pooling budgets and strategies to support the development of preventative services and approaches (2.7); and
- external investment as in drawing resources from wider social and economic activity to directly or indirectly support the development of prevention (in 2.8).

This is not to claim that these are the only two options, but that they would seem to have particular relevance to CPPs and what they can realistically work on in relation to inequalities. Discussions of both these options were initiated in the Multi-layered Preventative Partnership Working report produced as part of the collaborative action and learning work between Aberdeenshire CPP partners and What Works Scotland. The report itself starts from earlier report\(^{51}\) from the CPP (2015) itself on preventative approaches and the Scoping Report between the CPP and What Works Scotland following early discussions at a first Collaborative Learning Day.

The first Collaborative Learning Day brought together participants from across the CPP partners to explore ‘partnership, participation and putting Christie into action’: and, crucially, identified inequalities and managing change as key areas for further investigation. And it positioned inquiries in Aberdeenshire in the broader policy context:

“The ‘Christie’ narrative can sound simple enough but the aspirations it represents are proving complex and challenging to take forward. For instance, Audit Scotland’s 2014 review Community Planning: Turning Ambition into Action\(^{52}\) flags challenges at all levels in Scotland – national, area-wide and local – as to actually building effective partnerships concerned for outcomes, communities, inequalities and engaging with health and social care. This is no easy matter; while its 2016 Community Planning: an update\(^{53}\) flags up lack of progress towards partnership working that can redeploy

\(^{51}\) Scottish Parliament Finance Committee, Scrutiny of the draft budget 2016-17 - Prevention  

\(^{52}\) View here: http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/community-planning-turning-ambition-into-action

\(^{53}\) View here: http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/community-planning-an-update

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significant resources. Audit Scotland’s 2015 review Health and Social Care Integration54 flags the need for a skilled, motivated and ‘relevant’ workforce."

The recent Audit Scotland update (July 2018) – see box below – points to the ongoing complexities for CPPs in relation to: the sheer volume of initiatives in which CPP and partners are involved; the difficulties in finding practical ways to take preventative approaches to inequalities forward; and, remaining (crucial) questions for some in CPPs as to whether they are best placed to coordinate such public service reform.

A second Collaborative Learning Day focused on ‘Preventing Inequalities and Preventative Spend’ – outlined in the Multi-layered Preventative Partnership Working report – engaged with a range of further evidence, in particular from:

- Neil Craig of NHS Health Scotland on ‘Best Buys for Preventative Approaches’
- Ken Gibb (then) of What Work Scotland on ‘Investing in Preventative Approaches’
- Kim Penman of Aberdeenshire HSCP on ‘whole population approaches’
- A range of presenters from across Aberdeenshire CPP illustrating local initiatives.

Upstream, whole population approaches were understood to be, broadly-speaking, best supported by a growing evidence base for preventative approaches but, and crucially, likely savings to public services in many cases would be in the longer-term (see Craig, 2014). Aspirations to finance the shift to preventative services/approaches via current savings generate by such a shift were highlighted as not necessarily simple to achieve because:

- the current evidence-base suggests that the savings or reduction in the growth of pressure on services may be in the longer-term rather than shorter-term
- of the potential need to plan and budget for double-running of both reactive and preventative services in the short and medium-term
- a reduction in the growth of demand and so a stabilisation of service costs rather than a reduction may be more likely
- not all savings are necessarily easily cashable and so potentially transferable to other services e.g. core running costs of buildings and core staff team
- of difficulties in transferring financial savings across organisational boundaries.

In this context, the two options listed above – (1) Re-investment (sometimes called ‘dis-investment’55) and (2) External investment – became key elements for discussion within the two case-studies in the report.

Broadly, these two options can be understood as pointing towards the following policy and practice:

55 The term ‘re-investment’ is preferred here to make clear that any public service savings are to be used to re-investment in other public services – rather than as a way of reducing current public spending.
1) **Re-investment strategies**: public service coordination of public spending through partnership and participation can include:

- Collaborative-working and related pooling of budgets and shifting of resources to shared strategies and interventions.
- Predictive analytics: using data to target particular groups of people who are likely – without preventative interventions – to use public services extensively in the longer-term (over their lifespan, for instance).
- Re-working of public accounting procedures to incentivise longer-term approaches by public services.
- Use of intermediary bodies – between public services to – support coordinated action and investment across public service partners on particular initiatives.

2) **External investment**: additional or complementary funding, investment or resourcing is found via other parts of the public sector and state or other sectors in order to:

- ‘double-run’ services (existing reactive services and new preventative approaches/services) until demand for the existing service falls away and, if needed, the investment can then be re-paid;
- to provide complementary social and economic activities that reduce pressures on public services – and in ways where any additional investment and borrowing is repay-able.

In 2.7, the report focuses on ‘Reinvestment’ and returns to ‘External investments’ in 2.8.

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**Community Planning: an update - Audit Scotland report**

Most recently, the Audit Scotland CPP update (July 2018): impact report, which follows from its 2016 report, notes generally in relation to CPPs:

“Since our community planning report was published in March 2016, the wider public service reform agenda has evolved. This has increased the importance of local and regional partnership working, in particular Integrated Joint Boards, City Deals and education regional improvement collaboratives. This increasingly crowded landscape of public service reform creates risks around the capacity and ability of CPPs to fulfil their role in delivering the system-wide change envisaged by the Christie report.” (p3)

“Although we have not done any further local audit work in CPPs since publication of the update report evidence from our community empowerment development activity with our scrutiny partners, relevant performance audit activity, and local Best Value audit work indicates that:

- local authorities and their partners are still finding it difficult to make a strategic shift of resources towards preventative activity
- some progress is being made in using the Community Empowerment legislation to give local communities a stronger voice in planning local public services
- more work is needed to align CPP activity and public service reform at both national and local level

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• there are concerns amongst some community planning partners about the extent to which community planning is still seen as central to the Scottish Government’s broader public service reform agenda” (p16)

See: Community planning: an update. Impact report on the Audit Scotland website

2.7.2 Reflections from-the-field

1) Seeking collaborative resource co-ordination across public service partners

“If you’re talking in terms of financial resource, a lot of the people around that table (CPP Board) don’t have the final say on that. Their organisations have control nationally and have aims and objectives nationally that may or may not fit with what the LOIP is doing. ...But in terms of using people and getting involved within an organisation, actually working locally in the community, that’s a far more productive way of meeting the objectives, and one that we have far more control of locally, whichever organisation it is. ...it’s key that we have people that are senior enough to be making decisions in an organisation. Who don’t [then] get involved in the chain of command when they get (to) report back what was said at the meeting around the table. You’ve got to have people that can make decisive comments then and there. And I think we do have that now…”

[strategic context]

“...there needs to be a fundamental shift in people’s understanding around what community planning is. ...they (strategic managers) knew vaguely what it was. But how it touched their daily role and daily functions, there’s probably a recognition that, yes, it probably does, but ... If we are serious about looking at community planning as a way forward and the collaborative approach then that that needs to permeate through the public sector organisations. ...If we can get the structure right and the focus right, it will just start to, almost by osmosis, it will spread out and people will recognise the values of partnership working.”

[strategic context]

“The whole effort to improve and develop a deepening understanding of partnership working has been done by the CPP with its partners. What I mean by that is that... (as) part of the CPP we were exposed to some of the wider aspects of partnership

56 Sharing our findings from new approach to police-community engagement
http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/sharing-our-findings-from-new-approach-to-police-community-engagement/

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working including participation with yourselves [What Works Scotland] and I find that very useful because it’s been quite thought provoking and challenging. And, as a result of that, perhaps the silo mentality that had existed… has diminished a little bit to recognise that we have a wider collective role across, not just different partner agencies, but different partnerships in Scotland and beyond to address the underlying determinants that we’re interested in…”

[Strategic context]

“One of the other challenges for me… is the parallel structures that exist. So, it’s things like GIRFEC, the health and social care partnership or community justice to an extent, which are almost parallel to community planning. The concern would be that what happens is that there isn’t a link or a bridge between those different structures and that things potentially fall through the gaps. So, if we are looking at a more focused community planning role, what’s the function of the Board in making sure that they still retain an oversight of these other parallel structures of partnership working?”

[Strategic context]

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[Strategic context]

“In Aberdeenshire, it works well at community level, because (of) the local community planning partnership, that seems to work quite well. But at the centre, up until now, I don’t think it has worked that well. There has not really been enough for the partners to do jointly; that may change with the introduction of the LOIP because we’re actually concentrating effort on the LOIPs, whereas beforehand nobody was asked to do anything very different from delivering their own service. …just keep delivering the service that we’re delivering, …do[ing] a manual report to Community Planning. Whereas because we’re only going to have two LOIPs [the third LOIP priority emerged more slowly] in the future: which are changing Aberdeenshire’s relationship with alcohol and reducing child poverty. That’s one thing that people can actually start to concentrate on…”

[Strategic & operational context]

“We had to review that everybody (partners) was in a position to commit to it (project and budget), and to commit to the resources. One of the more complicated bits was actually dealing with our neighbouring local authorities. Because having to move money from one local authority to another is a bit more complicated. We also derived a formula for sharing the costs, and that took quite a lot of negotiation.
There was a bit of a tension around there, that we wanted it to be seen to be a community planning partnership project, but we wanted neighbouring authorities to be there... the outcomes were to Aberdeenshire's benefit, although the beneficiaries of those outcomes were possibly from a neighbouring authority. So, we actually had quite a lot of negotiation about the funding formula, to go into the pot.”

“Resources is always a difficult one in terms of financial input. If you're talking in direct financial terms, that’s always a difficult sense and there are so many other influences on that rather than just what we want them to [consider] around the table; or the national [body] saying what gets put in and what doesn’t get put in. But in terms of what can we all contribute to developing this LOIP; what we can all contribute to the outcomes; there is a willingness to share and everybody do what they can within that. The whole process of the LOIP has made everything... clearer and the definitions to be clearer. And, therefore, people will be able to focus more directly. Obviously, we had our agreements with whatever beforehand, but ...it didn’t seem so direct...”

2) Insights into promising areas for developing local preventative practice

Joined-up team management to support social inclusion:

“...[this] collaboration emerged... between CLP and the ADP where we jointly fund a range of community engagement officers that have been working with the ADP forums and so they’re now situated within the CLP community development team. And what’s been really gratifying has been to witness capacity coming from the wider community learning development infrastructure to contribute to sustaining some of these community movements... and that’s a very welcomed development because it reduces stigma. Then we’re no longer talking specifically about this issue or that issue but we’re talking about people in the round and we’re treating people as people...”

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Virtual wards and partnership working:

“This year, through the virtual community ward, we’ve had about 600 people who we’ve managed to support to stay at home, when they would have, prior to this model, been admitted to hospital. That’s 600 avoided admissions to hospital, in the last year: and that is a really robust outcome... . It’s based around the locality teams, and it’s based around a small number of the key professionals that we had in the original core team: the GPs, the district nurse, the care at home, home carer, the care manager, basically coming together every day, every morning... They spend about 10 or 15 minutes, basically running through the most vulnerable people in their patch. And they take immediate action from that session, by sharing that resource about who can go and do some actions to support the person and prevent them being admitted to hospital.”

[strategic context]

Engaging communities in complex discussions about money:

“(there is) quite a good tie-in with the PB [Participatory Budgeting] work ... in terms of getting communities to reflect on their services and what would you do without to provide something else. I think that there needs to be a degree of questioning within that: why has it always been done that way?... Yes, funding is being cut. We know we have significant savings to make over the next year. I don’t think that’s going to change beyond that. If you’re involving communities, engaging with them to discuss that, you have to inform them to give them the full picture. If we can’t have that ...if we cut the money here, this is what’s going to happen. ... Yes, we’re asking them the hard questions and getting them to reflect on: ‘what is the value of that to them’. Is it that we’ve had it that way forever, so we want to keep it that way? Or, is it actually, there’s a better way of doing this, which will allow us to save x amount? But, we need to inform people to allow that to happen...”

[Community context]

Increasing transparency across multiple layers of partnership working:

“...it’s about transparency... who are our third sector representatives at the IJB [Integrated Joint Board – Health and Social Care Services]? Who is articulating our voice? Hence the reason that we’ve moved to this kind of refreshed model of looking at those representatives from the Forum and the sector themselves... Our position, this has always been that [a TSI] shouldn’t necessarily be the organisation that’s
doing the representing: we should be the organisation that’s there to support those representatives, advise them as we see fit. But, they should be informed experts almost from that field, and we’re not, we are kind of generic in that sense. We need to move to that model where there’s... the right people are sitting round the table, and it’s a transparent process to make sure that those representatives are linked back into the sector themselves. And there is a clear line sight from what’s happening at the grassroots all the way through to the IJB.”

[Strategic context]

**Working together to target ‘disadvantaged’ groups through sharing data...**

“...It’s taken some time to develop a Community Safety Hub... that has come about as a consequence of really widespread deliberation and discussion. We’re contributing to that a small amount of intelligence but equally it’s our expectation that one of the outcomes from that would be intelligence that can guide our assertive outreach activities. That’s engaging people who are not currently engaged with services who might benefit from that and that’s been a genuine multi-partnership effort... That requires data sharing but it’s data sharing on a very sensitive topic and we’re unclear yet as to how much weight to place on each of the variables in any triangulation. It’s taken probably two years to move from conception to implementation and the reason for that delay was pretty much down to fears around data protection, security of intelligence, and all those sorts of issues...”

[Strategic context]

**Understanding local priorities: bring together both community voices and data:**

“Beyond the survey work, obviously we do a (small) desk-based survey where we look at the statistics and evidence that are there. We pull together the evidence of the number of police reports that we get from our police colleagues; anti-social behaviour type things. A lot of the evidence is actually just going out and speaking to folk, listening to what’s being told to some of the communities, looking at what the community groups are delivering locally. Because often we’ll find the type of community groups that are working in a community identify some of the issues they’re having. Folk get together and try and solve their own issues on the ground level quite often.”

[Community context]
A range of ‘brief interventions’ across partnerships:

“It’s actually the same people are seen quite frequently [getting drunk on the streets] …‘frequent flyers’. The question is, what other things could (agencies) be doing? Within a police custody context, one of the things from an evidence point of view suggests there might be a bit of mileage in is the delivery of an ‘alcohol brief interventions’. The role of the police or the custody suite staff is not just to make sure people are safe when they’re there… but, actually, (to) explore the opportunity to deliver an alcohol brief intervention which helps make that link between the reason that you’ve just sent spent the night in a cell and your drinking behaviour."

“Are we in that position where that’s just a routine part of practice? No, we’re not. So we started to put some alcohol brief interventions training in place for those staff working in that context… There’s scope for … alcohol brief interventions in a range of different settings where it could become part of routine practice. Could be delivered at scale, with fairly minimal training and support for staff that enables them to feel skilled and confident, that can have an impact.”

[Strategic context]

Other types or variations on cross-partnership brief interventions in relation to health and wellbeing, and which point more broadly to this sort of training staff teams across partners in making links to other services, were also flagged during the research. ‘Making Every Opportunity Count’ (NHS Grampian) is a light touch approach to create brief conversations between staff, service-users and carers regarding health and wellbeing. The ‘Every Contact’ approach by the Scottish Ambulance is another that checks for signs of social isolation and risk with older people using the service.

Social accounting

“It’s really important, when you’re working with services like acute, to actually take that evaluation one step further and put it into hard facts. …And to say, I have prevented through [community-based working] five people coming into hospital this week, which equates to £2,500 per day, I have saved you. …And that’s the kind of message that these bodies listen to. …That’s where it is important to actually, have the connection with research, so that you can actually evidence it, and say, ‘right,
what is it ... that I can measure, that will tell me this is going to have an impact in the future’. 57

[community context]

Reporting on outcomes: moving away from attribution and towards contribution

“...it quite often will be driven by siloed mentality such as the expectation to produce reports or outcome data that relates specifically to that agency or that partnership ... (yet) by and large decent outcomes come... not from a silver bullet but from a range of interventions... synergy. I certainly learned that over the years and so have my other partner colleagues. But sometimes it’s quite difficult, you have to behave against the grain, (and) where the grain in the past perhaps has been the expectation that we would complete Annual Reports for the Scottish Government, for example. That would imply that they were for us to celebrate our unique contribution.... (Now) even at a national level people are increasingly recognising that we need to approach things across a wide base.”

[strategic context]

Getting community buy-in

“The aim of preventative spend is something we’re always trying to do... and the usual problem of how you do preventative spend. But does that mean you can reduce the reactive spend, and it’s usually very difficult to reduce the amount of reactive spend and say, well, we’re spending it on preventative. ...I’m not very sure that those (development) days [CPP/What Works Scotland] ... that there were any light-bulb moments where I thought, that’s good... When I was reading the paper that you [What Works Scotland] sent through, I did think of some examples... (where) there was an element of preventative action in there. One that came to mind was – and this is part of one of our regeneration projects was painting the underpass... and getting the schoolchildren involved in the design, and actually doing some of the painting. Somebody told me recently that it’s actually, after almost a year, it’s still not got any graffiti on it... things will last longer if you actually, truly, get the locals involved and in fact, almost don’t start something until the locals say they need it, and then work with them on it, as opposed to doing what you think is best.”

[strategic context]

57 The discussion flagged up Social Return on Investment approaches – where proxy (substitute) figures can be used to support ‘calculations’ of social costs and benefits. Another approach is that of Social Accounting and Audit which creates a balance sheet for audit of social, environmental and financial costs and benefits.
3) Challenges of preventative partnership working – cashable savings, ‘upstream working’ and building effective partnership

“...most of the reduced admission is extremely difficult to be cashable, because we’ve got the fastest growing rate of over 65s in Scotland. If they roughly stay still, we need to have dramatic reductions in the number of people that are admitted, because our demographic is changing so quickly. ...So, the cashable bit is very hard; we’d have to be doing even more impressive rates to actually reduce the bed space, or any of those things. ...it’s absolutely what we need to achieve, but they are much harder, because of the amount of change you’ve got to make to release money. Lots of our money is tied up in staff, and we’re not allowed to reduce our staff numbers...”

[strategic context]

“People absolutely get the recommendations that come from the Christie Commission. ...You see some modest changes... and Government since the Christie Commission reported, they have come back and said their observation has been that the pace of change [Scotland-wide] has been slower than they expected ...It’s not been as quick as we would have liked. Why is that? Again, from a Shire perspective, it is about taking things to that next stage, (going) from those good partnership working links and relationships, and that shared understanding and shared commitment, to re-jigging the financial figures a bit to ensure that we are investing much more on prevention, earlier prevention.”

[strategic context]
Emerging challenges for a preventative Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

Aberdeenshire CPP is working with three LOIP priorities – see these on the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership website – one of which is Changing Aberdeenshire’s relationship with alcohol. What Works Scotland worked with the CPP to support early discussions with Board and executive on potential LOIP priorities (see Appendix 2); and, on a development workshop for the Relationship with Alcohol Priority – See the case study on the What Works Scotland website – focused on using evidence to explore upstream, whole population approaches.

Reflective interviews in Summer 2017 highlighted the complex, challenging partnership-working and action planning discussions that had then emerged – with key issues raised:

The need to building understanding of upstream approaches:

“...there has been a collaborative learning effort there in terms of helping people [partners] to have a deeper understanding of the issues that are at stake, ...excess alcohol consumption isn’t simply a function of an individual choosing to drink too much”

Working for a shared understanding of the root causes of inequalities:

“We know that this is a very difficult thing to do and those who are more disadvantaged, they’re even less likely to change behaviours. ... Instead of maybe trying to help people (partners) to understand the effectual role of the ‘upstreamed’, systematic, (socially) determined (factors) like availability, pricing, marketing, and so forth.”

Recognising the links between the priority area and wider social and service challenges:

“It’s really easy to slip into a very narrow view of what we’re trying to achieve, (rather than) what the wider partnership preventative benefits are of engaging in this issue.”

The complexities of supporting effective local participation on challenging social issues:

“...with all the stigma that surrounds it... we’ve decided it’s a relevant and important issue that’s driving service demand; how do we meaningfully engage with communities around this issue? So those are the challenges without even

58 http://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/our-priorities/local-outcomes-improvement-plan/
59 http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/inquiring-into-multi-layered-preventative-partnership/

whatworksscotland.ac.uk
going into ... the economics around it: the difficulties of trying to shift investment to a more preventative focus.”

Finding and sustaining common purpose across a wide body of partners and organisations:

“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...

“...we looked at what their evidence base was telling us. ...But the first take on that was that there was something like 50 odd potential actions, so way too many ... it’s trying to define what is it that’s unique about this LOIP programme of activity that might be different from the core business of the constituent partner agencies.”

A blog piece by the lead officer points to longer-term relationship-building across partners

“Over time, it became clearer that a rational policy planning approach wasn’t adequate and my approach had to evolve. ...For example, in conjunction with various partners, we recently delivered a Licensing Matters event, targeted at licence holders...”

See Changing alcohol culture: developing our LOIP priority and what we’ve learnt about partnership working on the What Works Scotland blog

See the CPP’s action plan for the Priority and learn more of the development process on the Aberdeen Community Planning Partnership

2.7.3 Developing dialogue: pooling resources for preventative approaches?

Discussions from-the-field in 2.7.2 above in relation to public service coordination of resources, as budgets as well as staffing, highlight key challenges:

1) In terms of a more top-down collaborative approach across the different public service organisations and partnerships: points to the importance of getting a wider body of those responsible for local resource management decision-making across

the different CPP partner organisations thinking about ‘their’ contribution to the CPP’s work.

2) **In terms of initiatives and projects to explore preventative approaches** that can free-up resources or reduce pressure on services – a range of emerging 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 policymaking 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 in search of ‘cashable savings’ and upstream prevention:** This is complex working and it takes time:

- to build understanding of the issues and related evidence involved; and then,
- to locate suitable ‘shared interventions’ that are distinct from the solo (silo) objectives and activities of individual partners to useful pursue.

The emerging picture generated via 2.7.1 and 2.7.2 points to the scale the task in developing partnership and participation (collaborative and participatory governance) suitable to developing preventative approaches across a CPP that can share and coordinate budgets and resources (remembering that this is 2017 data)... It is possible to imagine some of the key elements:

- collaborative approaches to top-down working with senior management and political leaders that have the power to ‘sanction’ sharing of resources
- development of cross-partnership management structures attuned to the needs of community planning and multi-layered preventative working
- horizontal cross-partnership discussions that are empowered to consider resource use and make decisions – including role of service hubs (real or virtual) that support co-location and coordination
• brief interventions as one way to build a shared preventative public service ethos and culture across staff teams in different bodies
• the development of ‘bottom-up’ influences through PB, Community Action Plans etc. – and which can then be given actual decision-making powers
• better targeted preventative interventions e.g. through shared data and analysis – these can support an approach concerned for predictive analytics and longer-term approach to public accounts
• social accounting to inform a broader dialogue on financial, social and environmental ‘costs’ and ‘benefits’ and build a longer-term approach to public accounting

This report highlighted in 2.1.3 the (likely) incremental nature of change within collaborative and participatory approaches to partnership working in public services – save where disaster intervenes. Sinclair (2011) similarly argues through drawing on the thinking of complexity theory that building the connections and learning for change across complex systems is incremental, unpredictable and will take time. And, the text box in 2.7.1 on Audit Scotland’s (2018) recent report illustrates this as the case across CPPs in Scotland.

The discussions and learning from above continue to support this picture of incremental change. If ‘we’ are building a collaborative and participatory governance concerned for not only change in public services culture but wider social change that involves citizens, communities and service-users and a social vision of a more equitable society then intuitively this would seem most likely. This would resonate, too, with the emerging body of evidence and practice that What Works Scotland has been accumulating through its series of seminars and participatory events on preventative policy and practice. These suggest the longer-term development of relevant approaches through trial, error and ‘failure’, rather than a decisive ‘break through’ moment when all becomes clear (Gibb, 2015).

In this context, the report highlights the two examples below – taken from the earlier Multi-layered preventative partnership working report – as likely to support valuable cross-partnership dialogue on seeking to pool resources:

• Example 8: the report of the National Evaluation of Partnerships for Older People Projects (Windle et al, 2009) highlights a certain potential for reducing pressure on services through partnerships with community-based working.
• Example 9: the 6 priorities for upstream, whole population working evidenced by the NHS Health Scotland (Craig, 2014) as a framework for dialogue and planning.

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63 http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/category/prevention/

whatworksscotland.ac.uk
Further, Example 12, in 2.8.3, illustrates the developing train of thought around local service hubs (public and community).

There would seem potential for tensions (creative or otherwise) here between:

(1) **Top-down collaborative approaches**: as per the strategic discussions in 2.7.2 (1) above – and as, perhaps, NHS Health Scotland’s six upstream, whole population evidence-based themes (see Example 9) – which would seem to give clear direction as to how to generate preventative programmes and savings; and,

(2) **Locally-led collaborations and innovations**: as per 2.7.2 (2) above and Examples 6 and 10 – although NHS Health Scotland’s evidence-base (Example 9) can be relevant here, too – where the focus is on local decision-making ... and therefore less predictable and potentially challenging.

And, likewise, between:

(3) **The need for longer-term workforce stability**: across public services and related bodies in order to sustain collaborative and participatory learning and dialogue needed to create change in complex systems. As per the Beyond Action Learning report in which an initial collaborative process was built over the best part of two years. Similarly, as per the Case Examples 1 and 2 given in 2.1.3 where decade-long evolving learning and change management processes were needed, and,

(4) **Public spending constraints or ‘fiscal austerity’**: that create workforce insecurity and a lack of confidence in the future that can undermine collaborative processes that seek to create change; and, of course, limits the options for locating finance for investing in preventative spend in order to take forward the crucial preventative agenda.

Given the complexity of potential tensions (1) to (4) that could be worked through, this suggests pooling budgets across CPPs to support re-investment in preventative approaches is an area of policy and practice in its infancy rather than a fully-formed approach ready to deliver results.

**Example 8: In search of cashable savings?**

Section 5.3 of the *Multi-layered Preventative Partnership Working* report highlights:

“National Evaluation of Partnerships for Older People Projects (Windle et al, 2009) does provide some evidence of the potential for **cashable savings** for particular services through an extensive initiative and evaluation in England. It found that an integrated approach that brought together services and community-based activity could impact on service delivery and costs, e.g. emergency admissions, delayed discharge, duplication.”

[whatworksscotland.ac.uk](http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk)
There were, however, difficulties in passing savings across partners, e.g. local authorities and health services.”

Whilst beyond a fuller discussion here, Windle et al (2009) provide detailed discussions of the research and findings which can be used to stimulate dialogue across partners as to the sorts of approaches for bringing together services with wider activity to most likely reduce the rate of growth of demand on services and related budgetary pressures. What currently would seem to remain problematic is the passing of finance/budgets and any cashable savings from one public service organisation to another – save where an integrated management structure is in place e.g. health and social care integration or perhaps (not part of the Windle et al. report) where a public service coordinating body is established by several public service organisations to carry out a particular function.

Example 9: Sustaining a focus on upstream priorities for preventative approaches

The Multi-layered Partnership Working report highlights:

“The [NHS Health Scotland] (Craig, 2014) concludes from the evidence on prevention:

“We suggest the following priorities:

- programmes that ensure adequate incomes and reduce income inequalities
- programmes that reduce unemployment in vulnerable groups or areas
- programmes that improve physical environments, such as traffic calming schemes
- programmes that target vulnerable groups by investing in more intensive services and other forms of support for such groups, in the context of universal provision
- early years programmes
- use of regulation and price (e.g. minimum pricing, taxes) to reduce risky behaviour

And one response to thinking about these priorities in that report:

“… I found Neil Craig’s observations thought-provoking and [they] certainly helped me consider that there may be other perspectives, other narratives which are important. I was working on the assumption that there were ‘right ways forward’. In reality, these do not exist, just a series of compromises and foreseen and unforeseen consequences. Neil, in his report (Craig, 2014) on the best preventative investments for Scotland, gives six priorities. I think these form the start of what would be an accountability framework that can give a clearer steer on the improvements that we are looking for.”
2.8 Discussion 8: Preventing inequalities and preventative spending: investing through ‘local’ economic and social development?

Discussion 8 research

Context: points to the shift towards aspirations for preventative approaches and spending as needing further sources of (direct or indirect) external investment, e.g. given the need to double-run existing and preventative services, for instance. These could support a potentially longer-term process of transition until the social and financial benefits of prevention ‘arrive’. In the move to the more pragmatic world of collaborative and participatory governance, public and third/community sector investment, ownership and enterprise options can now all be explored alongside those of the private sector.

Reflections from-the-field: illustrates three community organisations and enterprises (a community enterprise, local social enterprise, community anchor organisation) that show the potential for local economic and social development through community ownership and how it can complement (universal) public service provision.

Developing dialogue: highlights the potential to further explore local economic and social development as a means of building preventative approaches and finding further investment — supporting the local economy, strengthening social capital and integrating with public services. Emerging strategies could draw on the integrated resources and commitment of: (1) larger public bodies and enterprises, and public procurement; (2) community enterprise/ownership; and, (3) local integrated, facilitative hubs that coordinate local activities and plans. There is the potential, too, to further integrate spatial planning, community planning and local community action planning.

2.8.1 Policy and practice context: what ‘issues’ are a stake here?

“So, the Commission does not regard public services as a drag on economic progress. It takes a positive view of public services and stresses the importance of a virtuous cycle between improving the delivery and effectiveness of public services and fostering stronger and more balanced economic development. And it strongly believes in the importance of developing a fairer society in pursuit of that goal.

“Given our analysis... action to prioritise prevention needs to be accompanied by specific action to tackle inequalities. This section considers two aspects of that question – the reform of service delivery relating to employability; and wider action on regeneration.”

Christie Commission (2011: p.9 and p.57)
In the *Multi-layered Preventative Partnership* report a number of external sources of investment – relative to the delivery of public services – were suggested as ways of supporting a double-running of services during a transition from more reactive services to more preventative services/approaches or providing complementary activity that could reduce pressure on services. Broadly speaking these could take three forms:

1) Public sector (state)-led initiatives and enterprise:
   - taxation and (specific) public levies
   - varieties of (traditional) state borrowing
   - varieties of public investment funds or bonds – that recycle surplus (‘profit’)\(^{64}\)
   - use of public procurement and community benefit to support local investment
   - planning gain monies from public/private development and partnership
   - public ownership of enterprise e.g. transport, energy supply, childcare, IT and so on\(^{65}\).

2) Private sector finance and investment:
   - through traditional sources of borrowing to other sectors e.g. via banks
   - payment-by-result approaches financed through private investment e.g. SIBs\(^{66}\)
   - Corporate Social Responsibility – for instance, as a result of ‘inward investment’
   - planning gain monies from public/private development and partnership

3) Social and community economy – and related investment:
   - community-owned income generating assets e.g. housing, renewable energy, property, invested endowments;
   - community social enterprise and other trading activity by public and third/community sector bodies.
   - local economic and social ‘systems’: larger and smaller e.g. local trading and food production; local currencies – time-banks and LETS
   - sources of ‘patient’ capital and low/no-income social investment e.g. community shares schemes

\(^{64}\) See, for instance, the Scottish Government’s Charitable Bonds Investment Programme that lends to Housing Associations and re-invests the interest paid in further social housing – [http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/supply-demand/charitable-bonds](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/supply-demand/charitable-bonds); or, the Welsh Government’s Innovate to Save Programme at: [http://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/innovate-save-aims-tackle-some-most-complex-issues-fac](http://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/innovate-save-aims-tackle-some-most-complex-issues-fac).


\(^{66}\) Piloting the Social Investment Bond (SIBS) and related ‘payment by results’ approach is, however, presenting real challenges in terms of application; and has been broadly criticised in terms of the ethos it supports in relation to public services (McHugh et al., 2013; Ronicle et al., 2017)
• community development financial institutions – that are focused on investing in community social enterprise

This report describes these broadly as local economic and social development, where ‘local’ might mean anything from local community-focused development to a regional programme that is investing in individual places – and so would have potential for economic and social interventions and impacts on a particular locality, district or town.

In reality, however, local economic and social investment will likely draw from each of these three sectors – public, private and social/community. For example, large regional investment programmes such as City Region Deals will draw from both public and private sector finance – and might offer community investment; more focused regeneration of communities through housing, for instance, will again have significant public and private finance, but can also focus on the social/community economy e.g. community ownership.

In relation to public service reform as collaborative and participatory governance, and seeking external and complementary investment, it is important to understand how such investments can preventing inequalities – or if they might increase inequalities. For instance, in relation to NHS Health Scotland’s (Craig, 2014) priorities for preventing inequalities, improving population health and reducing pressure on services (see Example 9 in 2.7.3), emerging priorities that link easily to local economic and social development include: income maximisation – work and benefits; improving the local environment; and, support for disadvantaged groups to access services – including early years interventions.

There is, however, no simple formula on offer here. Indeed Craig (2014) notes a lack of current evidence-base (either way) for community-based interventions in relation to preventing inequalities; and a risk of increasing inequalities between communities if more disadvantaged (working class) communities are not prioritised. How local economic and social development can support preventing inequalities is not then a given but has to be worked out and through as a local ‘wicked’ social issue.

Further the potential for different priorities and tensions between community planning, spatial (town) planning and local community priorities has already been flagged by one research participant [see 2.4.2 (2)]. This suggests that seeking to build partnerships between public services programmes and local economic and social development programmes itself requires commit to informed cross-partnership and sector dialogue and deliberation rather than ‘more of the same’.

2.8.2 Examples from-the-field: the local community economy

What Works Scotland’s development work with the CPP Board and executive – see Appendix 2 – involved engagement across the CPP Partners including those explicitly concerned for both economic and social objectives e.g. Skills Development Scotland, Nestrans (North East Scotland Transport Partnership), Scottish Enterprise and an informal
discussion with the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce. However, the focus element of What Works Scotland’s action research was on supporting the development of partnership working in relation to the new aspirations and expectations via the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

The reflective interviewing did not directly encourage discussions of local economic and social development – given a framing around public service partnership and participation – although this would have been pursued where participants raised it. The resulting interviews were not a rich source of relevant material on this topic – more occasional source – which is suggestive (but not decisively so) of this as a potentially low priority area for the CPP partners to work together on.

Thus, What Works Scotland’s closest direct engagement with discussing the role of ‘local’ economic and social development within the action research process with Aberdeenshire CPP was within the two case studies included in the Multi-layered Preventative Partnership Working report. Here, there were early discussions of the potential of a range of smaller scale local community-based initiatives to generate income, provide additional resources (‘in-kind’) and support local coordination of resources – see for instance, the graphic below – including:

- community social enterprise
- joined-up pots of local funding for development of local community initiatives
- volunteering and accessing social capital
- local community hubs (and service hubs) to provide complex coordination of local services, social capital and local enterprise.

The research process also supported participation and/or informal discussions with: the Council’s Community Economic Development team; the IDEAs project that works with adults with disabilities; Aberdeenshire Rural Partnerships; and, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action.

Each discussion flagged-up a variety of community organisations concerned to develop community ownership and enterprise. And this led onto further early discussions with three different types of local community organisations in Aberdeenshire and the generation of brief sketches of those four bodies to illustrate their development potential and these are provided in the text boxes below in this section.

These aren’t necessarily representative of the wider community sector in the Shire, yet aim to show the diversity of community ownership and enterprise activity – and the different types of local community that each seeks to be accountable too. There is a much wider body of community sector organisations in Aberdeenshire. In relation to Community Development Trusts alone this includes Ballater, Fraserburgh, Laurencekirk, Peterhead, Stonehaven, and Udny – view the Development Trust Association Scotland website at http://www.dtascot.org.uk/dtas-member-network/our-members.
Initial mapping: community approaches and community capacity-building. From the Inquiring into Multi-layered, Preventative Partnership Working report

Examples of community enterprise

- Networks of Wellbeing in Huntly – mental health charity that refurbishes old bicycles. Has worked with Syrian ‘New Scot’ refugees
- SensationAll for young people with multiple support needs
- Bellwade Farm (Learning disabilities support)
- Meldrum Community Café
- Community Development Trusts:
  - Laurencekirk
  - Huntly – has a farm, turbine (grid access an issue)
  - Boyndie Trust – Café, Community Transport
  - Stonehaven Towns Partnership
- Maggie Law Maritime Museum
- Port Soy Boat Festival – self-sustaining, and bring its money to community
- Friends of Insh Hospital and ICAN, Insh Community Association
- Ellan Recycling (Can Do) and Wood Recyclability
- Community Halls at Mintlaw. Insh. New Macchar, Blackburn
- Pitscurry Project Buzzard Café
- Axis Sports Centre
- Fly-Cup in Inverurie – catering social enterprise that employs adults with learning disabilities
Portsoy Community Enterprise – community of place

Portsoy Community Enterprise – community of place is a social enterprise that has since 1993 been organising the *Scottish Traditional Boat Festival* and from this has then developed a range of other community enterprises:

- The Salmon Bothy (museum and events venue)
- The Boatshed (boat building), and via a trading subsidiary
- Portsoy Links Caravan Park
- and the new Sail Loft bunkhouse.

Working collaboratively, the whole organisation provides local economic and social benefits from tourism and a related range of activities for the town of Portsoy and surrounding area; with all its assets community-owned.

Trading income for the total organisation in 2016 was just under £250,000. Whilst very dependent on voluntary input, total employees now number two full time and four part-time. There is also significant economic benefit for the town and surrounding area, mainly from the Festival, but increasingly from the other arms of the enterprise. There is also a year-round educational programme that includes: boat-building with the local secondary school, Banff Academy, both as part of the curriculum at the school and as one day-a-week training placements on-site (the latter funded through corporate social responsibility); and boat-building and traditional music sessions with local primary schools as local volunteer capacity allows.

*Source:* a discussion with Portsoy Community Enterprise, for more information see: [http://www.portsoy.org/](http://www.portsoy.org/)

Boyndie Trust – Social enterprise for community of interest

Boyndie Trust, near Banff – Social Enterprise for community of interest – was formed in 1999 to provide skills development and job coaching for adults with special needs, together with creation of employment for the area. In 2003, Aberdeenshire Council transferred a semi-derelict (valued at £28k) Victorian school building to the Boyndie Trust for £1; ownership of the property and further fundraising generated £600k for investment in refurbishment. The Trust has developed the building into the Boyndie 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. The Trust also hosts the Banffshire Rural Partnership which facilitates local community economic development, provides a community transport service and training for local organisations as social enterprise.


A community anchor organisation: Huntly and District Development Trust

The Trust began in 2009, building on the earlier work of the Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership, a local authority-led initiative. It works in Huntly (pop. 4,300) and the wider local area (overall pop. 11,500). A board of up to 12 local directors and a membership of 450+ provide its direct local governance ... but its local responsiveness and accountability is extended through the depth of its local connections with a diversity of local organisations, groups, volunteers and activists. As well as being local-owned and controlled, as a community anchor organisation, it is multi-purpose and undertakes a range of activity, including:

Local economic and related social development:
- owns and is developing Greenmyres Farm as a community asset – and working towards providing a range of social, community and trading projects
- bringing in additional funding e.g. enhanced community benefit (renewable energy)
- developing a community-owned wind turbine – with potential annual income in its second decade of £300K and opportunities to leverage in further income/investment.

Social and community development and services:
- community development:
  - local community grants – with Deveron Arts and Huntly Community Council
- training and administrative support for local groups e.g. Community Kitchen; community transport
- working with Network for Well-being on local activity to support mental health.

- ‘Room to Roam Green Travel Hub’ and related low carbon, community well-being activity:
  - increasing participation in sports and physical activity – including cycling and walking and exploring a Sports and Well-being hub;
  - Community Car Club, community transport, eco-driving.

**Local leadership, advocacy and local participation:**

- consultation on local activities and development with local people
- its own local governance and membership structure
- working with the Local Community Planning Group, other public services and community partners on a regeneration plan for Huntly.


### 2.8.3 Developing dialogue: the role of local economic and social development?

Discussions in 2.8.1 and 2.8.2 above:

- Open-up scope for 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 can play a role in preventing inequalities and supporting public services.
- Illustrate the potential of community anchor organisations to play a leading local role in facilitating local economic and social development and partnership-working with public services – for instance, as local development hubs.

The community organisations and enterprises above illustrate their growing potential to undertake and coordinate complex local economic and social activity. And through a community-owned wind-turbine, as per Huntly and District Development Trust (HDDT) above, to create longer-term income-stream for an area that can leverage further support;
community-owned housing, property and retail are examples of creating longer-term income streams.

Crucially, these roles, as with the local economic and social roles of public, private and (other) third sector bodies, should be understood as not seeking to replace (universal) public services but rather to work with and in parallel to them. Broadly-speaking, they create opportunities to bring more of society’s finances and resources to focus on supporting local social and economic development concerned to prevent poverty and inequality; to re-invest the surplus (profit) in further such potentially preventative activities; to complement universal public service provision; and, potentially support a modest redistribution of resources, income and assets.

A fundamental element in each of the examples in 2.8.2 above are the roles of local leadership (activists, social entrepreneurs and so on) in leading and supporting the development of community organisations with assets and income-generating capacity for the long-term. However, two key needs should be noted:

1. Community organisations and ownership needs to be understood as part of a potential approach that seeks coordination, commitment and investment from a wider range of public, private and community/social partners – see Examples 8 – 10.

2. Not all communities have such leadership capacity currently – they will need investment in local organisations, staffing and development workers to achieve this.

Seen in this light, the Examples 8-10 below illustrate the potential for an emerging strategy which can be biased towards disadvantaged communities and neighbourhoods and/or organisations that work to support those at in poverty or at risk of poverty in socially-mixed or affluent communities.

*Example 10 – cross-sector investment in community ownership:* illustrates how the community wind-farm was led by Huntly District and Development Trust and its staff, activists and volunteers through accessing a range of support and investment from the state, community sector, a bank, (social) investment body and local community funders.

*Example 11 – coordinated cross-sector local economic and social development:* illustrates the Common-Wealth Building approach. This takes ‘local’ economic and social development a stage further by showing how locally-based and committed public sector, other larger third sector and perhaps private sector institutions – anchor institutions rather than ‘community anchor organisations’ – can use their (fair) employment and procurement activities to build the strength of the local economy. A key part of the strategy, however, is investment in local community organisations e.g. local coops, community enterprises and community anchors.

*Example 12 – local hubs for local development and partnership working:* this points to the potential for local strategies that integrate preventative public service delivery with preventative local economic and social development.
In returning to the focus of this section (2.8.1) and seeking external and complementary investment to support either the transition to preventative public services/approaches or support and reduce pressure on public services, then these examples provide pointers – and can support further discussion and dialogue.

It is beyond the scope of discussion here, and indeed better to be done more directly through developing actual dialogue within CPPs, but there is scope to return to NHS Health Scotland’s framework (Craig, 2014) of upstream, whole population practices – see Example 9 (2.7.3) – to consider how a combination of these three Examples (8-10) could begin to impact on local inequalities e.g. income maximisation, service access, local environmental improvement (place-making) and so on – as outlined in 2.8.1.

**Example 10: investing in community ownership through cross-sector working**

Huntly and District Development Trust (HDDT) committed to developing a community-owned wind turbine and have been successful in creating a long-term local income source for both organisation and community. They were able to draw on a range of state and other investment and support to take this project forward:

- a farm and land brought through Scottish Land Fund (covered 90%) and two local (community-based) loans – the potential for a wind turbine was part of the shared strategy.
- CARES loan scheme (state back) covered pre-planning costs for communities renewables.
- Loan for turbine development: 85% via Clydesdale Bank; 15%, Social Investment Scotland (a social investment finance initiative).
- ‘Feed-in-Tariff’: state subsidy for renewable energy production [see 4.2 (1) above].
- Core-funding through the Scottish Government’s *Strengthening Communities Programme* of the Trust’s development worker; initially funding of a full-time post, tapering to part-time over a 3.5-year period.

These investments were crucial in supporting the Trust in establishing this sustainable source of income – as were the huge commitment of the Trust’s development worker, other staff, activists and volunteers, and wider community.
Example 11: The community wealth-building approach

This approach was first developed in the USA. It seeks to bring together a range of larger ‘local’ public, third and potentially private sector partners’ bodies, e.g. local council, hospitals, colleges, universities and housing bodies. These are known as ‘anchor institutions’ because of their local commitment – and given their nature are unlikely to move. Together they can focus their combined resources and commitment on local economic and social development for the benefit of a local area – including through use of procurement; investment in local coops, social enterprises and community organisations; development of public ownership; commitment to sustainable development, and so on – see more information here.

A number of US cities have taken this broad approach – see more here. Whilst in the UK, Preston Council is currently the most noted example of developing such a strategy. Working with five local partners from further education, housing and the police, the initiative seeks to promote/support:
- the Living Wage and direct public procurement to support the local economy;
- the development of local cooperatives and community social enterprises;
- the development of local community initiatives and related social capital.

In Preston, the approach has been particularly strong in ‘holding’ local public spending within the area to support local economic development and spending – read more here through the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) report (Jackson & McInroy 2017).

Note: the New Economics Foundation’s ‘Plugging the Leaky bucket’ approach to local economic development is a complement to such thinking – providing other locally-based economic and social strategies... see here.

Example 12: Locally-led development and partnership-working hubs?

The notion of a ‘local hub’ to support co-location and coordination of services and/or community-building activity is becoming increasingly common. The research with Aberdeenshire CPP partners has highlighted a diversity of related initiatives:

- Aberdeenshire Community Safety Hubs: in Inverurie and Peterhead that coordinate partnership-working in relation to the 4 key themes of the community safety strategy – mentioned in 2.7.2(2).
- The virtual ward – in effect a local and ‘virtual hub’ for each of the 20 locality teams within Aberdeenshire HSCP – mentioned in 2.7.2(2).
• **Third sector co-located hubs** – for local third sector bodies to co-locate and increase local coordination e.g. as one option being considered in Inverurie.

• **Community Hubs** – community-led health and well-being centre, e.g. as currently one option being considered in Insch (Friends of Insch Hospital & Community).

These inevitably vary in size, scope and ‘localness’ but are part of a shift in thinking toward complex, local coordination that offer economies of scope (multi-tasking in effect) over the economies of scale of larger bodies; and, as well, the potential for greater local democratic control. Further examples include:

*Community Services Hubs:* Dave Watson (2016: 5, 36) argues that

> “Community hubs could physically site services together, breaking down the silo mentality that Christie identified. Service design would be done with citizens and frontline staff adopting ideas from Systems Thinking, The Enabling State, Participatory Budgeting and Co-operative councils. This would then form the basis for a debate on the best structure for local government to provide the essential democratic accountability. … Hubs could contribute (to) the joined up preventative work that is so crucial to tackling inequalities. They could include the new generation of children and family centres envisaged in Professor Susan Deacon’s ground breaking 2011 report on early years provision.”

*Multi-purpose community-controlled hubs:* the [What Works Scotland report on Community Anchor organisations](http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/exploring-the-roles-of-community-anchor-organisations-in-public-service-reform/) illustrates six exemplars from urban, rural and remote Scotland that are long-standing community-led organisations in low-income, ‘mixed’ or economically-struggling communities. These seek to coordinate and facilitate complex local activities and services:

- Local economic and community sector development – the local economy
- Social development and community-building – strengthening social capital
- Partnership-working with public services and the local state.
- Local leadership, advocacy and local democratic activity.

Danson and Whittam (2010) advocate joined-up networks of local enterprise hubs as one key way to coordinate wider local economic and social development initiatives.

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Part 3: Concluding discussions: at the frontier of collaborative and participatory governance – ongoing dialogue and research

Part 3 of the report concludes by:

- presenting feedback and reflections from some of those involved in the consultation on the report – in particular re. local developments, leadership and democracy (3.1)
- outlining a series of more particular ‘themes and concerns’ in response to the overarching working assumption generated in Part 1 (3.4), and informed by the discussions in Part 2 and 3.1, which can be used to deepen discussions of theory and practice further for collaborative and participatory governance (3.2).

Part 2 has generated eight key discussions at the frontier of collaborative and participatory governance that the research illustrates as usefully contributing to developing policy and practice within (and across) CPPs – through multiple layers of local and central partnership and participation. They offer material for further ongoing dialogue and the opportunity for longer-term engagement with wicked social problems that are at the heart of putting Christie into action.

A full summary and overview of the eight discussions is given in the Executive Summary, Introductory Summary and as Summary of the eight discussions (that could be used to encourage group dialogue). As a reminder, they are listed here:

1. Multiple crises and challenges: inequalities; workforce insecurity; and ‘austerity’  
2. Investing in facilitative leadership that builds a public service ethos  
3. Inclusive structures for long-term relationship-building with local civil society  
4. Negotiating complex political landscapes – what role for deliberative spaces?  
5. Collaborative learning and action: creative, unpredictable spaces for change?  
6. Constructive disruptions: the value of independent in-depth facilitation  
7. Preventing inequalities and preventative spend: seeking to pool resources  
8. Preventing inequalities and preventative spend: local economic and social development.

As noted earlier this is not intended as a full and comprehensive listing of relevant discussions when pursuing collaborative and participatory governance. ‘Integrating diverse types of evidence’, ‘opportunities for and types of evaluation’ and ‘focusing on social and economic outcomes’ are, for instance, also recognised as valuable areas for discussion but need more attention than they are given through these particular reflective interviews. Crucially, it would be likely that further key discussions would emerge, develop and

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sometimes replace the areas of discussion outlined here, for instance, over a long-term ten-year period argued for in Discussion 1 in relation to seeking relevant change.

Given the riches of these diverse discussions, Part 3 provides the opportunity to return to the overarching working assumption and its three elements developed in Part 1 (1.3.4) – see the text box below – to provide focussed concluding discussion. 3.1 explores feedback and further reflections from some of the participants involved in consultation on the report to illustrate the potential for ongoing and deepening dialogue and related further research on this challenging area of working (theory and practice) for collaborative and participatory governance.

In 3.2, a series of more particular ‘themes and concerns’ is outlined in response to the overarching working assumption generated in Part 1 and informed by the discussions in Part 2 and 3.1. These illustrate the potential for ongoing dialogue and research to deepen engagement with the discussions from Part 2. Whilst they can themselves usefully stimulate further discussions, they shouldn’t be thoughts of as answers to the discussions in Part 2, rather current and likely useful themes and concerns for theory and practice.

Part 3, therefore, charts the following course:

- Deepening dialogue through consultation work (3.1)
- Learning from the three strands of the overarching working assumption (3.2)

### Overarching working assumption regarding the current frontier of collaborative and participatory governance: putting ‘Christie into action’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Overarching working assumption regarding the current frontier of collaborative and participatory governance: putting ‘Christie into action’</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this complex, ‘messy’ public service landscape, those seeking to develop collaborative and participatory governance will be concerned to integrate the following <strong>three elements:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) <strong>pragmatic preventative partnership and participation</strong>: as a rich, complex emerging body of creative, evidence-informed and politically-astute public service policy and practice – broadly built on local partnership working, participation and a public service ethos – that seeks to improve the capacities of public services (performance) to engage in preventative approaches focused on tackling over-the-longer-term complex (‘wicked’) social problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) <strong>a social vision</strong>: concerned for a more equitable society built on the dynamic and mutually dependent relationships between a financially sustainable state, a balanced (inclusive) economy, and empowered citizens and communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) <strong>public service learning culture</strong>: concerned to explore the use of – amongst other social and evidence-informed processes – systems-focused action research with which to engage with complex social problems and to seek both practical (problem-solving) knowledge and reflexive (problem-framing) knowledge.</td>
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3.1 Deepening dialogue through consultation work

Summary of 3.1

Consultation participants reflected on key topics from a variety of perspectives to offer understanding of some of their current challenges, including:

- how to sustain a practical action-planning approach (problem-solving) whilst also keeping a focus on the bigger policy context and issues (problem-framing)?
- how to development effective empowerment of local participation, deliberation and partnerships within the wider strategic workings of CPPs (central, local)?
- how to develop a matrix of informed leadership across the complex layers of public service partnerships to working on similarly complex policy issues?
- how to build effective working (partnership and participation) between different types of democratic practice – participatory, deliberative and representative?
- what role is there for locally-led and developed preventative approaches in creating wider change? Is this an alternative to a grand plan?
- how to sustain commitment and resourcing for longer-term local community planning and local economic development at a time of public spending constraint – and to prioritise low income communities and anti-poverty measures?

These can be thought of as current but likely changing responses and discussion regarding the rich picture of policy and practice generated through the eight key discussions, and so illustrative of ongoing further dialogue and research.

The consultation work with local participants was not extensive. If the researcher had still been in the field and the action research process still ‘live’ (as in the researcher was directly working with the CPP partners for further action and change) then a very different and more participatory strategy – including workshops – would have been pursued. It would likely have seemed more directly relevant and a higher priority to a wider number of research participants and CPP partners. Coming at the end of the What Works Scotland programme, it proved to be less of a priority – although the researcher will be discussing some of the key themes with CPP Board members.

Nevertheless, four local practitioners generously took the time to read the full report and offered feedback on a particular area(s) of interest or concern. The resulting reflections, whilst not claiming to represent the wider body of CPP practitioners, raised crucial and current issues of relevance to all those want to develop a collaborative and participatory

69 The researcher suggested focusing on one of the (draft) Discussions or the draft Policy and Practice Briefing; each consultee pursued the course that made most sense to them.
governance. In so doing, this section (3.1) can support ‘us’ in imagining how a variety of engagement and discussions with a wider body of stakeholders – practitioners, policy-makers, citizens, communities and politicians – within any CPP or across several can help to provide a focus on current opportunities, challenges, dilemmas and ‘gaps’ in the development of local policy and practice and a related research agenda - an ongoing process of further dialogue and research.

Key emerging reflective themes from this consultation work are highlighted below and two particular reflections given as reflections 1 and 2 in the text boxes help to give further context to these reflective themes:

**Key themes**

**Balancing practical problem-solving and the wider problem-framing**

The feedback from the consultees was broadly supportive of the content of the draft report but there were concerns as to its length. Whilst one enjoyed the range of discussion generated re. bigger picture, another felt a degree of frustration that it doesn’t give a clearer, straightforward sense of where ‘things’ are at and what is needed next. Another enjoyed both the ongoing narrative across the whole and the individual discussions but found it difficult to maintain a focus on both. Together they raise the crucial question, particularly for practitioners who have the very practical task of continuing ‘to make things work’, as to how to juggle and have suitable spaces for both practical planning and actioning (problem-solving) and wider reflexive thinking on the direction-of-travel (problem-framing).

Comments included:

“I did read through the whole report but I don’t have time to comment on everything so have limited myself to the specific discussion point although I have referred to other insights as well. ... Good luck with the final report – it is a mighty tome and there are some significant questions and insights for people to wrestle with up here.”

“... Overall, I felt it was a good piece of work [and] partners appreciated the participation. I prefer short sharp reports but that’s just personal preference. ... I don’t think anyone would disagree with the findings but maybe the report requires to be more focused on: this is what we have found out: we were told this is positive; this is what can be built on; and, this is what requires changed.”

“You’ve pulled together a really comprehensive report, inter-relating the What Works Scotland methodology, all the field work, and brought it all back into focus on the original purpose of the work, implementing Christie – all in a logical and readable form. No mean feat. ... I actually read all of the report, even section 1.3 despite the instruction that that wasn’t required! I found this to be a really helpful section, setting out the three broad sweeps of Christie (i.e. collaborative and participatory...
One solution discussed with one consultee was to offer the report online as both a whole and as Part 1 and 3 and the individual discussions in Part 2 – thus potentially making each element more accessible. It was also noted as important to make clear the interviewing and so ‘Reflections-from-the-field’ date largely from 2017 ... so in some cases these were out of date, with policy and discussions having developed further. The key insight here remains that need to both have practical discussions regarding actions and wider reflexive discussions regarding ‘the bigger picture’ in order to sustain a focus on wicked social problems; as per Argyris’ (2003) notion of implementable knowledge and Bartels & Wittmayer’s (2014) actionable knowledge – see Discussion 5 (2.5).

**Emphasis on developing ‘the local’**

For many of the consultees, a key focus was on ‘the how’ of continuing to develop effective local participation and leadership and building suitable relationships with the ‘centre’ and/or the strategic (that might be both central and local area) of community planning. One consultees pointed strongly to the crucial relationships with local politicians (councillors) with their own legitimacy built through the representative democratic process – see text boxes below and reflections 1 and 2.

Key themes emerging here – and pointing towards the ‘new’ frontier (next steps) but without currently being able to resolve them – were concerns about how:

- to empower local participation, deliberation and partnerships in relation to wider centralised CPP workings and other strategic planning and developments?
- to develop a matrix of informed leadership across public service partnerships and communities to working on complex policy issues e.g. inequalities, wellbeing – so both public service leadership and community leadership?
- to build partnership and participation effectively across participatory, deliberative and representative forms of democracy. For instance, in building local community and citizen discussions, e.g. through citizen juries, and alongside these seeking to generate constructive working relationships with local councillors, further research was suggested.

Potential was recognised, too, for local agreed actions, drawing on resources managed by local management, services and organisations that could take forward preventative approaches in smaller ways without the need for a grand strategic plan built centrally across key CPP partners.

**Sustaining a local policy and practice agenda concerned for inequalities:**

A third broad theme from the feedback related to how to sustain a complex agenda over the longer-term that can:
• do justice to community leadership – so involving communities, community organisations and community councils early enough in formal and informal discussions so that they can bring their knowledge, creativity and resources to work effectively for change – rather than, for instance, via a rubber-stamping exercise.

• engage effectively with social, economic and health inequalities as they are lived by people in local communities and places – particularly by considering how to focus on and prioritise local economic and social development in low-income communities and wider anti-poverty measures.

• sustain energy and commitment for working actively on LOIP priorities across all the relevant partners and stakeholders – services, communities and other sectors; what is possible through incremental change and how will support from all senior managers be maintained?

• commit to good quality research as part of a longer-term strategy – sounds good but how to maintain this commitment given public spending constraints and the need to sustain statutory services and commitments? (good quality research is not cheap)

• the value of actively pooling local knowledge and ideas collectively – some of which may prove useful later rather than immediately.

At a time of continued public spending constraint (‘austerity’), if more recently a certain sense of fiscal change in the air, these are challenging questions indeed and would need creativity, ‘space’ and commitment to properly engage with.

Reflection 1: Current challenge: linking the local and the strategic

Policies and partnerships need to be streamlined to ensure a greater focus on collective outcomes and action. I think that policies are being developed using knowledge of trends and local people’s feedback rather than just workers’ or partners’ views. There has been a shift over the last couple of years to co-production rather than individual organisations and services moving forward on their own. This is due to not just reduction in public services and budgets, but the work what has been carried out to look at new ways of working which is just joining up the agendas with the resources available.

The third sector is proactive at all levels of decision making, however, as the sector is so diverse it is important to engage with the correct third sector organisation at the correct time, and around not just in policy development but co-production of services. Public sector structures do not always take into consideration of the consternates felt within the third sector who can’t always engage during office hours at face to face meetings.

The landscape of community planning has changed over the last 12-24 months and partners are feeling that it is difficult to engage with the process and the links from local to strategic require some additional work.
Reflection 2: Empowering bottom-up deliberative working with citizens and councillors

The insight into the twin role of public participation professionals in ‘front stage (public performance) and back stage (private negotiations)’ – in Discussion 4 – is a significant one and my main reflective ‘take-away’ Within the context of my own local partnership-working and wider CPP decision-making such as the LOIP, my observation would be that the identification of local priorities is directly linked to who is around the table. Sectoral and professional interests are arguably bigger factors in deciding priorities than any truly objective analysis of information and data.

Bringing the full diversity of citizens into local policymaking

This does not mean that the local priorities that have been agreed and worked on by partners are not of value – they are and they will lead to improved outcomes – but rather a recognition that back stage organisational interests do play a significant role in whatever ends up being prioritised. Rather, the ongoing challenge is to keep increasing the quality of engagement and involvement of as diverse a group of citizens as possible so that being asked to take part in meaningful discussions is a normal part of everyday life. Most people will know someone who has been involved in a process even if they themselves haven’t – just like jury service. If we are genuine about wanting to involve a wider cross-section of citizens in decision making we need to communicate how big a conceptual shift this is.

Integrating citizen deliberations with local representative democracy

The intention is not to usurp the role of elected members but instead to give them more feedback from local people that helps them in their role as the final decision makers. There are examples as noted in the report where local people have been involved in deliberative processes in things such as Citizen Juries and participatory budgeting [see for instance Discussion 4 (2.4)]. In a time of shrinking budgets, where there is little in the way of discretionary spending, it is perhaps unsurprising that some councillors will struggle with more decision-making being devolved to local communities through things such as PB.

Perhaps the next phase of research can explore elected members views more as well. Again, this is directly linked back to their views and behaviours in both the front and back stage arenas.
3.2 Current themes and concerns at the frontier – building theory and practice

This section outlines a series of more particular ‘themes and concerns’ in response to the overarching working assumption generated in Part 1 and informed by the discussions in Part 2 and 3.1. These illustrate the potential for ongoing dialogue and research to deepen engagement with the discussions from Part 2. Whilst they can themselves usefully stimulate further discussions, they shouldn’t be thought of as answers to the discussions in Part 2 rather current and likely useful themes and concerns for theory and practice.

The three individual strands within the overarching working assumption (see 1.4/3.0) provide the structure for outlining this learning; whilst a final brief reflection across the whole is given in 3.2.4.

3.2.1 Supporting pragmatic preventative partnership and participation

**Developing collaborative and participatory governance: overarching working assumption – element (1)**

**Pragmatic preventative partnership and participation**: a rich, complex emerging body of creative, evidence-informed and politically-astute public service policy and practice – broadly built on local partnership working, participation and a public service ethos – that seeks to improve the capacities of public services (performance) to engage in preventative approaches focused on tackling over-the-longer-term complex (‘wicked’) social problems.

**In summary**: the Report points to these current and emerging learning narratives as supportive of further ongoing dialogue and research:

1) **Coordinating public services through collaboration remains hugely challenging**: generating momentum across public service partners and communities and citizens for public service and social change will require a committed and active intentionality to create the significant levels of challenge needed for such an approach. Partnership and participation doesn’t automatically result in change and existing service systems and partners will inevitably create barriers to such change. It cannot simply be assumed that collaboration will prove to be a sufficiently powerful process to create the social vision aspired to – rather that it needs to be worked at as ‘ongoing’ dialogue and research ... to develop theory and practice

2) **Incremental change as a realistic pace of reform for collaborative partnerships**: both the evidence-base and the reflections-from-the-field make the case for the value of locally-led longer-term incremental change for developing complex public service
partnerships and participation – rather than a more dramatic ‘transformational’ change. This points to the value of long-term action or social research processes – or related – to support creating the necessary levels of challenge to support such change whilst holding a realistic perspective on the pace of change.

3) A rich picture of theory and practice to inform and build facilitative leadership: the report points to the development of networks of collective and facilitative leadership across layers, services and sectors as crucial to creating change. Here a range of inclusive, deliberative, learning, political (broadly-speaking) and facilitative practices and ideas can be actively integrated as theory and practice (what are ‘we’ doing and why) to seek generate to challenge to engage with wicked social issues.

4) The third sector/civil society role in championing public service and social change: the research argues for local democratically-run civil society organisations – e.g. community organisations of place/interest; citizens and service-user groups; local trades union branches – as crucial to advocating for preventing inequalities (social justice) and service change. Long-term relationship-building and investment is needed to create networks of these independent bodies.

5) Local leadership as a current priority for ongoing dialogue and research: feedback from local consultees on Part 2 of the report highlights this as a crucial area of current and complex development – including strategic and preventative working; local democratic practices – participatory, deliberative and representative; and working in low-incomes communities and other anti-poverty and inequalities work.

1) Coordinating public service provision through collaboration remains hugely challenging

“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”.

(From Discussion 1: see section 2.1.2 (3) above)

The notion that ‘partnership and participation’ will naturally or automatically build a collaborative ethos across partners and participants (workforce, citizens, communities) continues to be frustrated by the reflections from-the-field (see Discussions 1,2,3,4,6,7) – remembering that this is 2017 data. Whilst there are clearly both partners – organisations and individuals – who see value in looking to cooperate and collaborate, there are clearly parts of the system where some struggle to collaborate or have other priorities; or may be sitting at ‘the table’ and seeking to collaborate but lacking the authority or finance to make the decisions to do so.
The existing evidence base is mixed as to the value of public service partnership working in creating effective or meaningful change – depending potentially on what your aspirations for change are (see 1.3.1 re. optimists and pessimists). There is recognition that in these complex environments concerned for wicked social problems there is considerable difficulty in producing evidence to show either way (for or against) whether partnership working is achieving or improving particular outcomes (Cook, 2015). Whilst the complexity of change aspired to in relation to preventative partnership-working across the layers of public service partnership-working (central, local area/district, local community), different organisations and sectors, and varieties of political leadership is deeply challenging (see Discussion 7).

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 – Discussion 1 highlights the crucial need therefore to continue to make explicit these challenges over-the-longer-term ... And to actively and intentionally create the necessary levels of constructive challenge – a sufficiently powerful vehicle(s) – within and through the shift to partnership and participation to create both culture change (process) and achieve aspirations (outcomes).

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

“... the value of that collaborative approach to working ... underpinned by things like the Community Empowerment Act, (and) health and social care integrating. There is a direction of travel that we’re moving in underpinned by the legislative agenda as well, which is perhaps what was required to move things forward. I’m generally positive about it, but we’re probably ten years away from actually getting to a point where we think, yes, this is really working... So, there is a lot of work to do.”

(From Discussion 1: see section 2.1.2 (3) above)

Reflections in-the-field recognise that public services can respond rapidly and collaboratively to emergencies and disasters but were more realistic as to the pace of change more generally. Given sufficiently powerful challenge(s) – as Narrative 1 – and committed local leadership, the existing evidence base on public service partnerships and collaboration (Petch, 2011; Sinclair, 2011; Cook, 2015) points strongly towards the incremental nature of service change rather than dramatic or ‘suddenly’ transformational change.

In part, of course, this depends on expectations as to what counts as incremental change and transformational change: and what types of collaborative partnership and participation are practical and legitimised in particular contexts. For instance, Discussion 1 highlights examples of health and social care integration – building a shared management system – in Torbay (Thistlethwaite, 2011), and back-office/IT systems change within Newcastle City Council in collaboration with local trades union branches (Wainwright & Little, 2009), were both considered over the course of a decade. The extent and type of change possible in any particular context will then be variable. CPPs, for instance, are significantly different vehicles
or systems to the public services bodies in these two examples – and with different aspirations and expectations placed on them.

However, what this does suggest is the need for an ongoing process over (say) a decade that – and in parallel to management and political structures – seeks to sustain a focus on incremental change, emerging barriers to it, and what can help take the process forward constructively. Argyris (2003), in Discussion 5, sees such barriers as inevitable and needing to be challenged and highlights action research as one such approach to working for long-term change. Doubtless other forms of social research and/or approaches to organisational change can play similar roles: see, for instance, WWS' work on evaluability assessments (Brunner, Craig & Watson, 2017) and on outcomes-focused approaches (Cook, 2017).

“... It's not even so much that it's slow ... as a (body), we've not said this is how we've worked over the last 10, 15 years, this is what the future looks like, and this is how we're going to have to work in the future, and how do we get from A to B?”

(From Discussion 1. See section 2.1.2 (3) above)

What feels important is to intentionally put in place an initial process and plan – it will need to be flexible and shift around significant over time as per the Beyond Action Learning report.

What is also strongly suggested by the action research in Aberdeenshire, and across the three other case sites (Brunner, Bennett, Bynner & Henderson, 2018), is the need for a reasonable level of job security across all employed in public services – public, third and private sector. Effective collaboration and participation requires sufficient continuity across staff, managers and other stakeholders to build the necessary levels of trust to share learning on both ‘successes’ and ‘failures’ and to explore alternatives together. Public spending constraint, fiscal austerity and related job losses, therefore, present significant challenges for collaborative, participative and democratic change.

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

“...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.”

(From Discussion 2: see section 2.2.2 (1) above)

Discussions 2 and 4 make the case for a facilitative leadership that is concerned for:

- collective working across different layers of partnership and participation (central, local area/district, local community); roles and types of leadership (frontline,
management, senior management, political, community, citizen); and types of
organisation and sector.

- **crossing organisational and other boundaries and cultures**: and so needing skills of
  communication, coordination, innovation and creativity, and interpreting context
  (Williams, 2013)
- ‘**process politics**’: as the front- and back-stage working necessary to create change
  and the 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)

One consultee (3.1) suggested this as a *matrix of leadership* across services and
communities through which shared coordination of public service provision can emerge.

The rich mixture of knowledge, skills and abilities above point towards the need for a
complex understanding of interacting theories, policies and practices – or theory and
practice ... what we are doing and why. This is not a final listing of such capacities for
facilitative leadership – rather a starting point to which others will emerge and can be
added. Further, given this complexity there can be no simple formula for success in
facilitative leadership: instead a need to continue to think and talk through what seems to
work currently in this context and for whom. Indeed, Busso and Bartels (2014: 2258)
describe a facilitative and collective leadership as follows:

“... there is a widespread consensus that typologies, theoretical frameworks and best
practices should not be taken as a recipe for success but rather as handles for
reflective practice. Facilitative leadership should be understood as skilful, situated
performance: i.e. it comprises fine-grained practices that can only flourish under
certain conditions.”

Given the fundamental role of such facilitative leadership in collaborative and participatory
governance, the Discussions in Part 2 – particularly Discussions 2-6 – provide a summary of
key elements of current and emerging theory and practice for such a Governance too – as is
illustrated in the text box below.

If so, then it is the development of this body of theory and practice – creatively and
intentionally – that can sustain and enrich the crucial ongoing dialogue and research on
which the generation of the necessary levels of change for service and social change would
seem to rest.
Emerging key and current elements of ‘theory and practice’ for facilitative leadership and collaborative and participative governance

Discussions 2 to 6 in Part 2 (2.2–2.6) developing thinking for theory and practice for Collaborative and Participatory Governance that could create the necessary level of ‘challenge’ for both service and related social change – and as follows:

- **networks of facilitative leadership** – for complex ‘partnership and participation’ working across different layers (central, local area (district), local community) of public services/community planning and different sectors (public, third, private). There is potential here to design locally-led training to support the development of such leadership, for instance: to support ‘dialogue and deliberation’ (Bynner, Escobar & Faulkner, 2017); and cross-sector change-agent programmes (Henderson, Revell & Escobar, 2018) – see Discussion 2

- **building and funding long-term working relationships** (‘relational contracting’ and ‘relational commissioning’) with a third sector/civil society committed to local inclusive democratic practice e.g. organisations working within local communities of place and interest, local trades union branches – Discussion 3

- **further developing deliberative practices** that can create spaces that bring together varieties of stakeholders with different political interests for more reflective and evidence-informed dialogue that can build common purpose and/or recognise on-going (currently unresolved) differences e.g. as local democratic practices such as citizens juries, as collaborative spaces across partners and stakeholders – see Discussion 4

- **action research/collaborative learning and action** – local and central inquiries that provide spaces over the medium-term to build: participation, collaboration and cooperation across all relevant stakeholders; deepening inquiries – that provide spaces for data collection, evidence-use, shared analysis and reflection; and offer shared opportunities to test out actions, develop practice and consider ‘how’ to create change – see Discussion 5

- **Independent, external facilitation for constructive disruptions**: that offer spaces to build trust over-the-medium-term, deepen sharing understandings of context, all stakeholder views and options for change ... and crucially to be challenged as a group as to how to create change – see Discussion 6

- **Working across hybrid thinking**: collaborative top-down working and processes of focused, planned improvement continue to be active alongside development of ‘partnership and participation’. *The Beyond Action Learning report* offers a longer-term example of a more bottom-up process in which top-down collaboration across different partners, improvement tools and action learning sets (collaboration) are integrated and continue to develop: and provide elements of problem-solving and problem-framing (policy development).
4) The third sector/civil society role in championing public service and social change

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.

(From discussion 3: see section 2.3.2 (2) above)

Section 1.3.1 builds the case for the importance of civil society organisations in creating the necessary levels of challenge for change over the longer-term. Ansell et al. (2017) emphasise the importance to collaborative governance of both a strong local and regional state and strong civil organisations to counter-balance this. Whilst Fung (2015) puts emphasis on the necessity for a participatory governance concerned for social justice of the political championing of such a focus through both political parties and civil society.

Discussion 3 takes this discussion further by recognising the crucial role of the community sector – as local organisations committed to local communities of place and of interest/identity – other local citizens and service-user groups and local trades union branches can play in building:

- inclusive and democratic approaches to public service reform and related social change; and
- creative approaches for service delivery and change by using the spaces that complex partnership and participation offer (Sinclair, 2011).

In Discussion 7 on preventative partnership working, and Discussion 8 on local economic and social development, the particular relevance of the community sector continues to emerge. Whilst in Discussion 1 the potential for local trades union branches in supporting the development of public service reform that can generate savings for preventative spend/re-investment likewise is illustrated (Wainwright & Little, 2009).

None of this is accidental but involves the local and central state in committing to long-term relationships – sometimes termed ‘relational contracting’ (Weaver, 2009) with key local democratic partners from civil society, for instance, by:

- investing for the long-term through ‘relational commissioning’ (Discussion 3)
- using public procurement and varieties of local and regional planning – spatial, community, local place – to collaborative advantage (Discussion 8)
- investing in community ownership and enterprise (Discussion 8)
By supporting the potential of local democratic civil society organisations – particularly those concerned for poverty and inequality— that can challenge constructively and offer practical actions the local and central state, there is an opportunity to create the necessary levels of challenge needed within Collaborative and Participatory Governance to pursue service and social change … and a more equitable and compassionate society.

5) Local leadership as a current priority for ongoing dialogue and research

“We’ve got things like community councils and we’ve just done our review of a [scheme of establishment] for them. We’ve some way to go on participation to get truly great participation from all areas within our communities. We have very active people but we also have … the majority who are reasonably inactive. … The Community Empowerment Act has helped in that to a degree, though I’m not convinced that it’s made a difference to those who really go to work every day and come home and don’t really have a voice in the democracy of this area. … I think the PB [participatory budgeting] side of it is one facet … things like community asset transfers, obviously that’s ongoing … the impact is on those who are active within a community anyway. I’m not sure we’ve activated the majority who are, at present, inactive.”

(From discussion 4: see section 2.4.2 (2) above)

Part 2 offers a wealth of examples of local, central, operational and strategic partnership working – and related opportunities, challenges and dilemmas. It also has strength – in terms of depth and variety – in terms of participation and engagement with communities and citizens. Yet is less extensive and developed in terms of the role of local community and political leadership and limited in terms of the development of deliberative practices – both across services and with communities. In part, this is because of the nature of the interviewing process – with its central concern as partnership-working and collaborative learning and action.

However, the responses from the local consultees highlight their current concern for the role of ‘the local’ including:

- Relations between local partnership and participation and strategic partnership working (central)
- The importance of local service and community leadership in relation to tackling poverty and inequalities expressed through local places (uneven development)
- The potential to bring together local democratic practices across citizens and communities, services and politicians through a rich mix of participatory, deliberative and representative working.
- The current value of local cross-sector development of preventative working through locally-controlled budgets and resources – offering creative, forward looking approaches
Reflection 2 (3.1) argues for the importance of further research re. local democratic development and the roles of local councillors. This suggests, more generally, the potential for action research across this complex interweaving of local service provision and local democracy. And, it helps ‘us’ to imagine local or wider networks of ongoing dialogue and research which can both generate discussions of key areas of theory and practice and give valuable direction to further research on key current or emerging concerns – such as local democratic leadership.

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

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<tr>
<th>Developing collaborative and participatory governance: overarching working assumption – element 2</th>
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<td><strong>a social vision</strong>: concerned for a more equitable society built on the dynamic and mutually-dependent relationships between a financially-sustainable state, a balanced (inclusive) economy, and empowered citizens and communities.</td>
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**In summary**: the report points to these current learning narratives as supportive of ongoing dialogue and research:

6) **Preventative partnership and participation is in the early stages of development**: the Report and earlier reports continue to point to this as a fundamental area of developing theory and practice that is in its infancy. Whilst there is a developing broad evidence-base as to direction-of-travel, e.g. public health and upstream, whole population approaches (Craig, 2014), the how to-do-it in local policy and practice needs to be worked out and through actual collaborative action – rather than in advance. The LOIP is seen as creating shared space and focus across partners ... but would seem to require a patient longer-term approach and the necessary investment to support transitions to multi-layered preventative partnership-working.

7) **Incremental change or urgent action? seeking wider options for change**: the urgency of stubborn inequalities, an ageing population and the need to act ‘now’ to improve lives, create a fairer society and more sustainable (future) state finances highlights that incremental public service reform will be insufficient by itself. The Report points to one of the other options as a range of direct and indirect investments in preventative approaches through community and public enterprise, public investment and public procurement and a related focus on furthering collaboration across different types of planning (spatial, community, local places). CPPs have the opportunity to lead in exploring and developing these approaches.
8) Varieties of local hub: local service coordination and local place-making: the state, the market economy and social economy offer opportunities for generating investment in local economic and social development and supporting local partnership-working – and in support of more urgent change. Local hubs in various guises offers ‘models’ for leading and supporting these strategies e.g. as public service hubs, third sector hubs, enterprise hubs, community anchor organisations.

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

“People absolutely get the recommendations that come from the Christie commission. ... You see some modest changes ... and Government since the Christie Commission reported, they have come back and said their observation has been that the pace of change [Scotland-wide] has been slower than they expected ... It’s not been as quick as we would have liked. Why is that? Again, from (our) perspective, it is about taking things to that next stage, (going) from those good partnership working links and relationships, and that shared understanding and shared commitment, to re-jigging the financial figures a bit to ensure that we are investing much more on prevention, earlier prevention.”

(From discussion 7: see section 2.7.2 (3) above)

Discussion 7 – and indeed the earlier reports with Aberdeenshire CPP: Scoping report; Community Links Worker report; the Multi-layered preventative partnership working report – continue to point to this as an area of practice (and theory and practice) in its infancy.

The current 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. For instance, through improving income (employment, benefits); accessing services – target groups including early years; environmental improvements; and tax and regulation. As is currently highlighted by the Scottish Government’s and COSLA’s (2018) Public health priorities for Scotland policy document.70

But the how of doing this multi-layered preventative partnership and participation through actual policy and practice development is hugely complex. Discussion 7 illustrates some of the current opportunities, challenges and dilemmas – with a CPP needing to bring together:

• evidence: such as ‘local’, ‘national’, inclusive stakeholder views and shared analysis – and this may be strong on broad direction-of-travel but less clear as to what can usefully be done and achieved locally and by whom.
• partners: who have existing activities, agendas and commitments – and may have limited understanding or commitment to upstream, whole population approaches.
• resources: that can support existing services and preventative approaches during a period of transition – likely to be in the longer-term until service demand may fall away and may release additional (cashable) resources to other services.

The work on the LOIP Priorities recorded in this Report (data to summer 2017) shows the patient working needed to build a collaborative, most likely centrally-led, agenda – and in which the full breadth of partners then begins to put some of their resources into such a preventative agenda. Although, the statutory duties to build a shared agenda via LOIPs and Locality Plans was/is providing a valued space to support the development of such an approach and agenda.

Local preventative approaches to building partnership and participation – across local partners and sectors – are providing an alternative (if potentially complementary) approach to these centrally-led, collaborative strategies. For instance, through building shared initiatives via local community action planning across local public services and local community sector; development of local participatory budgeting initiatives (PB); and local action research.

The Health and Social Care Partnership’s integrated management structure across a wide range of adult services is helping build preventative initiatives, too - e.g. virtual wards through locality teams - and so offers a further option for consideration in relation to preventative partnership and participation.

These tensions and the context of public spending constraint - and so limited finance to support investment in preventative approaches through public service partnerships - continue to point to the incremental, longer-term nature of such development of policy and practice. This then is an area of focus for working which is in its infancy and in which (1) top-down collaboration, (2) bottom-up locally-led development, and (3) integrated management systems each offer options – and there will be other approaches too. The extent to which these options are complementary and/or challenging of each other in terms of prioritising the use of resources (opportunity costs, for instance) can be explored and worked through in developing actual policy and practice.
7) Incremental change or urgent action? Seeking wider opportunities for change

“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...”

(From discussion 7: see section 2.7.2 (3) ‘Emerging challenges for a preventative Local Outcomes Improvement Plan’ box)

The Christie Commission was realistic as to the likely pace of public service change (reform) – recognising that collaboration, partnership and participation are time-consuming; and that there are limits to what change the Scottish Government might be able to finance in the shorter-term, given UK Government fiscal austerity. However, the Commission also indicated a strong-sense of urgency due to:

- The deeply bleak picture (social disaster) of sustained stubborn inequalities and poverty – and related consequences for state finances and society’s wellbeing both currently and for the longer-term (early years) – and that action on inequalities is needed ‘now’ to have the necessary future impacts for people, society and state.
- The potential for a demographic timebomb and the poor health and wellbeing of older people (years of lifespan spent in poor health) – both those currently older and those soon to be older – pushing state finances over a ‘fiscal cliff’ and again needing action ‘now’ to have the necessary future impacts for people, society and state.

The incremental nature of change of public service partnership working may not then be ‘good enough’? Yet is more urgent action in any sense realistic? Discussions 1, 7 and 8 bring to life these tensions and highlight the potential for seeking wider direct or indirect investment in preventative approaches – and potentially a modest redistribution of resources, income and assets – including:

- the role of community ownership and enterprise, e.g. housing, property, renewables, in investing in shared community assets and social capital
- the potential of public ownership and enterprise to similarly invest in local employment, procurement and shared public assets (Jackson & McInroy, 2017; Watson, 2018)
- wider forms of raising public investment e.g. borrowing, municipal and social bonds, local banking, local taxation
- supporting long-term approaches to public sector investment in prevention e.g. accountancy procedures linked with predictive analytics to locate ‘high risk groups’
In which case, there is space for CPPs to take a wider leadership role and to seek practical ways to work towards and advocate for wider change in the workings of the state in pursuit of a fairer society. For instance:

- to bring together different types and layers of planning and increasing democratic participation e.g. spatial planning, local action planning, democratic structures – as per Discussion 8
- to expand the roles and resourcing for local civil society – third sector bodies; community sector organisations; citizen and service-user groups; local trades union branches, and so on – as per Discussion 3
- to hold and work with the tensions between ‘big picture’ working and practical ‘next steps’ planning and action – as per Discussion 5 and the Reflections in 3.1.

8) Varieties of local hub – local services coordination and local place-making

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.

(From discussion 8: see section 2.8.2, 'Boyndie Trust – Social enterprise for community of interest' box)

Given the argument in (7) (above) for CPPs to seek wider avenues across the state, economy and society/community to invest in preventative approaches to inequalities and push for more rapid change, the material in discussion 8 (2.8) re. local economic and social development is particularly pertinent. These examples of (currently) developing practice are focused on small scale developments of community ownership, community enterprise and community anchor organisations. But the wider variety of creative responses from the state and public sector, the social economy and third sector/civil society, the wider economy and private sector is also recognised within that section. As is the emerging potential of local hubs to coordinate, support and facilitate this complex working across public service partnership, local (community-led) place-making and the local economy. These are varied and include hubs of different sizes and scales of action, and different concerns and priorities such as the following:
• public service hubs (Watson, 2016) and virtual hubs
• 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 – locally-led development (communities of place)

Doubtless there are other variations of hub that can be explored and each has its own particular strengths and foci. Community anchor organisations have a particular relevance to local economic and social development because of their community-led, multi-faceted (holistic) approach to community-led place-making that seeks links across local economic, social, democratic and sustainable development (Henderson, Revell & Escobar).

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

Developing collaborative and participatory governance: overarching working assumption – element 3

A public service learning culture: concerned to explore the use of – amongst other social and evidence-informed processes – systems-focused action research with which to engage with complex social problems and to seek both practical (problem-solving) knowledge and reflexive (problem-framing) knowledge.

In summary – 3.2.3: Public service learning culture and systems-focused action research: the Report points to these current narratives as supportive of ongoing dialogue and research:

9) Collaborative learning and action: diverse options for learning and change:
collaborative learning and action or action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2006) offers a flexible, pragmatic and diverse family of approaches: as illustrated in 1.2.1 and Discussion 5 … e.g. formal group-based inquiries and reviews; development workshops and informal inquiries; case-studies; and survey work. However, as with collaborative working more generally, effective change doesn’t automatically result from action but must be intentionally pursued and supported e.g. via independent facilitation; inclusion and deliberation; research expertise and evidence; facilitative networks and peer learning; and working with political dynamics.

10) Problem-solving knowledge and problem-framing knowledge: action research seeks to integrate workable (practical) and reflexive (bigger picture) knowledge to generate
actionable or implementable knowledge credible (useful) to diverse stakeholders – practitioners, policy-makers, the workforce, communities and citizens, and researchers. To achieve widespread relevance and usefulness, such knowledge cannot solely be ‘held’ in abstract forms e.g. reports and articles ... but accessed too via the people involved (embodied) and the wider networks with which they engage (embedded) – rich, dynamic inter-relating webs of knowledge.

11) Creative, unpredictable and safe spaces for learning and change: collaborative and deliberative inquiry work requires safe spaces to support creative and often contested discussions – that seek to explore, innovate and change culture rather than as solely-focused on targets, outputs and outcomes (improving). Such aspirations and their unpredictable implications fit uncomfortably with the expectations of ‘success’ (and related future funding) that co-produced research most likely carries (positivity bias). Rather they (too) offer an often incremental – occasionally sudden – pace of knowledge gain. This may be seen as ‘failure’ in itself yet alternatively as relevant to longer-term collaborative learning processes needed for public service partnerships to engage with wicked social issues. These processes require both ongoing active support from senior management across partners (sanction and sanctuary) and creative, flexible facilitation to sustain trust and adapt to changing challenges and contexts.

12) Systems-focused action research – scope for further focusing on this approach? The Report offers ‘fuel for the imagination’ as to the potential of systems-focused action research for longer-term engagement with wicked social problems – and supportive of a public service learning culture. An initial picture of key elements of this approach that could support further piloting is outlined, and includes: diverse local and central inquiries; networking across the whole; senior management buy-in; adaptive and creative collaborative inquiry and leadership processes; shared interpretation and analysis of evidence: pragmatic integration of practical, inclusive and reflexive; and reasonable level of stability and resourcing to sustain collaboration across the workforce (job security) and citizens, communities and third sector/civil society.

9) Collaborative learning and action – diverse options for learning and change

“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…”

(From discussion 6: see section 2.6.2 (1) above)

Collaborative learning and action – or the broad family of action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2006) – offers a wide, flexible and adaptable range of options for integrating the three key elements of collaboration/participation, research/inquiry and action/change (Henderson & Bynner, 2018). This is illustrated both through:

The work between Aberdeenshire and What Works Scotland – see 1.2.1 – that includes:

- a 15-month local inquiry and team
- development work with the Board and Executive
- an informal developing inquiry across CPP partners through workshops
- a participative case study

The wider range of collaborative learning and action across the CPP – see Discussion 5, e.g.:

- community-led survey work
- a local CPP and community council joint community survey
- interviews and dialogue with a local community and local services
- a CPP central review – including participatory activities.

The What Works Scotland cross-case site report similarly reflects a range of action research options (Brunner, Bennett, Bynner & Henderson, 2018).

There is considerable scope then for adapting to context and pursuing both formal and informal strategies to generate relevant knowledge for policy and practice. Crucially the Report also strongly suggests that collaboration (partnership and participation) must actively and intentionally focus on processes that support relevant change – as per Narratives 1 to 3. Aspirations for collaboration will not automatically create such change and this is as much true for (collaborative/participative) action research as for other forms of practice. Key elements for creating relevant learning and change will then be familiar – and very likely to include:

- continued 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

Further to this, and as becomes apparent in considering the development of preventative partnership-working in Narratives 6 and 7 above, simply trying to work with existing understandings of policy and practice problems will very likely be insufficient. NHS Health Scotland’s (Craig, 2014) exploration of the evidence base on preventative policy and practice points to the need to consider the direction-of-travel; to continue to consider and re-frame
these wicked social policy problems. This requires time for more critical and reflexive inquiry work.

10) Problem-solving knowledge and problem-framing knowledge

“(at) one level quite a bit of my work involves what you might describe as a collaborative learning approach and particularly around the health inequalities agenda ... where local actions and local interventions which might make a difference in terms of closing that gap in terms of outcomes. There aren’t necessarily always very easily defined solutions that you can take off the shelf. A lot of the work in that kind of territory by its nature involves a collaborative, enquiring, reflective research approach in order to try and better understand or define what the issue or the problem is. As well as ultimately trying to tease out what might be the solutions that would change some of that.”

(From discussion 5: see section 2.5.2 (2) above)

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

- workable knowledge – concerned to solve practical problems (single loop learning)
- reflexive knowledge: positioning development in contexts (double loop learning)
- credible knowledge – relevant to all stakeholders

Bartels & Wittmayer (2013) call the resulting integration of these three, actionable knowledge, whilst Argyris’ (2003) discussions of single and double loop learning similarly seek an implementable knowledge that goes beyond abstract learning and reports. This knowledge is of actual ‘use’ to varied stakeholders (i.e. credible). It must then support both practical problem-solving and discussions that can allow re-framing of complex social problems.

Cairney (2016) points to a range of different potential approaches to evidence use – emulation, story-telling, improvement (1.3.3) – that will be active and both ‘cooperating’ as hybrids whilst also competing for resources and credibility in the politicised, in the broadest sense, policymaking landscape(s). Action research enters this environment, then, as yet another option. If the actionable or implementable knowledge it aspires to is to seek to be credible to ‘all’ stakeholders’ then it must take, or be presented in, multiple forms and formats – and relevant to such a hybrid environment.

The Community Links Worker Inquiry and related work illustrates seeking to ‘hold’ and share such learning and knowledge through a variety of processes and outputs:
• **People (embodied):** an inquiry team with knowledge and experience to share.

• **Written outputs (abstract):** a final report, summary and web material; policy briefing a brief for further inquiry; case study material re. developments, a book chapter.

• **Engaging with wider networks (embedded):** a consultation process on the report, a workshop, dissemination work – including national processes, wider peer learning.

The focus of the inquiry work is very much on understanding and developing practice – and draws on both action research processes and improvement tools. But as the process continues to develop the inquiry begins to offer a space to reconsider (re-frame) the potential for practice in different contexts and in terms of contributions to mitigating local inequalities. Crucial to the ongoing process of knowledge generation (learning) here are the people and their engagement with wider networks. Abstract reporting alone, however credibly presented e.g. practitioner narratives, academic articles, will lack the vital qualities that an implementable or actionable knowledge need ... the richness, dynamics and complexities of practice and context.

11) **Creative, unpredictable and safe spaces for learning and 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...”

(From discussion 5: see Section 2.5.2 (2) above)

“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...”

(From discussion 6: see Section 2.6.2 (2) above)

Discussions 4 (deliberative practices), 5 (collaborative learning and action) and 6 (independent facilitation) provide a range of examples of inquiry work in which ‘safe spaces’ for in-depth and potentially creative discussions on complex and often political and
contested issues can be pursued. These are aspirations that ‘feel’ different (‘tone and texture’) to more long-standing approaches to improving services and performance – particularly those concerned solely for targets, outputs and outcomes.

They are also at odds, too, with those looking for dramatic new knowledge from coproduced research or social research more generally. As was noted through the positivity bias (Kothari & Wathen, 2012), expectations of ‘success’ are high for all stakeholders through co-production – and future work and funding will likely currently depend on such perceptions. Yet seemingly minor incremental gains are often the outcome and, although seen as ‘failure’, these will very likely result in sudden shifts forwards if sustained creatively. Such unpredictability as to progress relates to making conflicts, barriers and ‘stuck-ness’ visible – and so they provide potential ‘fuel’ for understanding and creating change in collaborative contexts. And yet, of course, these may be hard to ‘sell’ as useful learning in the shorter-term (Gibb, 2015).

From this perspective, it is the commitment to longer-term collaborative learning and action that will more likely create the complex collaborative learning required for public service reform and work on wicked social issues ...where such inquiry work continues to be well-supported and creative and adaptive itself. The Beyond Action Learning report, for instance, illustrates a medium-term process over almost two years in which the facilitators adapted both collaborative action learning set processes and improvement tools to meet the needs of different local contexts ... and continued to change and extend this process. Alongside their skills and commitment, they point to the commit of senior management from across three key partner bodies in sustaining the process – offering safe spaces or ‘sanction and sanctuary’ in support of the work (Dickens & Watkins, 1999; Henderson & Bynner, 2018).

12) Systems-focused action research – scope for focusing on this approach

“What 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.”

(From discussion 1; see section 2.1.2 (3) above)

Finally, the Report offers ‘fuel for the imagination’ as to one (broad) approach to achieving a collaborative public service learning culture – namely as systems-focused action research for longer-term engagement with wicked social problems (as per 1.2.2). This is not the only potential approach to developing a learning culture or the only potential role for action research in doing so. Nor can it be claimed that ‘here’ is a tried-and-tested approach to pursuing collaborative and participatory governance.
It is not the case, for instance, that the CPP and What Works Scotland in this Report were seeking to pursue explicitly this in their work together. Nevertheless, the variety of collaborative learning and action in this Report – as per 1.2.1 and Discussion 5 – build a picture of the key elements of such a systems-focused action research approach, and these include:

- **Diverse local and central inquiries:** across layers of partnership and participation as per Discussion 5 and Narrative 9; and as illustrated through the *Community Links Worker inquiry report* and *Beyond Action Learning report*.
- **Networking activity across the whole that brings these inquiries and participants together:** as per the thinking re. facilitative leadership networks across layers of activity, services and leadership in Discussion 2; and as illustrated through the collaborative learning days and development workshops in the *Scoping Report* and *Multi-layered preventative partnership working report*.
- **Senior management buy-in across the CPP partners:** to provide safe spaces and a committed approach – as per 11 above.
- **Longer-term, adaptive and creative collaborative processes:** that sustain incremental change – as per 11 above and Discussion 1 – and which are suitably resourced, remembering that good quality research requires investment; and, which seek high levels of constructive challenge from civil society – community organisations, equalities groups, local trades union branches.
- **Shared interpretation and analysis of differing evidence:** for instance, drawing on both ‘story-telling as to good practices’ and ‘improvement methodology’ (Cairney, 2016 – see 1.3.3) as well as evidence reviews. But, crucially, as an action research concerned for reflexivity and re-framing that develops actionable knowledge in relation to wicked social problems – as per 10 above.
- **Pragmatic – practical, inclusive, creative and reflexive:** concerned both for problem-solving and problem-framing through inclusion of diverse (key) stakeholders, and a willingness to engage creatively with ‘failure’ over the longer-term – as per 10 above.
- **Reasonable levels of stability to sustain collaboration:** it cannot be overstated that all stakeholders need reasonable and suitable resourcing over the longer-term to sustain commitment. For instance, for the public service workforce, job security and time to pursue such working; for citizens, communities and other sectors, likewise suitable resourcing and valuing of their time and crucial roles – as per 3 above (see also Brunner et al., 2018)

### 3.2.4 Concluding thoughts: ‘testing out’ a rich picture of emerging theory and practice for collaborative and participatory governance

Finally, in seeking to conclude across the whole, we can return briefly to *the overarching working assumption in full* to consider what has emerged in relation to this imagined
frontier for collaborative and participatory governance. In a sense, the Report has sought to scope this territory – with its mix of familiar themes and practices – but pursued in new, complex combinations and in pursuit of a suitable social vision or direction-of-travel. In so doing, it offers a rich picture of developing theory, policy and practice... but one in which the focus seeks to return to actual practice and the experiences of practitioners – including those making policy – in order to sense-check the emerging understanding and suggested developments of practice. In this way, it seeks to reduce the risks of positivity bias in co-produced research (Kothari & Wathen, 2012).

In looking to build from this picture and present potential focus for next steps, two interrelating thoughts are offered here.

Firstly, the Report offers a ‘first shot’ at such a rich picture of theory and practice at this frontier through discussions across Parts 1, 2 and 3. This picture seeks to provide the necessary complexity of language through which to talk (dialogue) in more depth about what happens as Scotland pursues a pragmatic preventative partnership and participation that engages with a social vision – concerned for a more equitable society and sustainable state finances and the emerging opportunities, challenges and dilemmas, particularly given public spending constraint.

However, it remains a first attempt; there is considerable potential for ongoing dialogue and research and a need for:

- investment in safe and legitimised spaces to do this shared working
- further investment in multi-faceted forms of local knowledge ‘holding’ – people, stories and networks as well as abstract reporting.

Secondly, in exploring the potential role of collaborative learning and action in developing a public service learning culture, it points to one way of providing a focus for further development work: namely as constructing a more particular approach to a public service learning culture through emerging thinking on systems-focused action research.

Narrative (12) (above) in 3.2.3 outlines this option as one that could be developed and turned into further plans. There is the potential to pilot (‘test out’) this approach and create further learning and insights. This is not to claim that this is the only ‘model’ or approach for building such a learning culture, but rather that this is one option and there will be others that could be contrasted with it. Nevertheless, in suggesting a more focused and particular approach, it offers scope to build-in participatory and evaluation-orientated appraisal mechanisms that can deepen insights.

Perhaps the extent of these overall conclusions may be frustrating? No ‘how-to guide’ emerges: rather a renewed focus on ongoing learning through the development of actual relationships, action and strategies that can be used to support deepening local discussions of theory and practice. Yet, in presenting too, the initial outlines of a more particular option in Narrative 12 above for systems-focused action research, readers and stakeholders get to make more informed judgements as to whether to make the significant investment needed for such a project: ‘yes, no or maybe’?
Appendices

Appendix 1: Overview of Aberdeenshire CPP and What Works Scotland Collaborative Learning and Action joint-working (2015-2016; and related 2017-2018)

Initial discussions between the CPP and What Works Scotland in late 2014 identified three areas of potential development of collaborative action research – health and social care integration; partnership working within community planning; and road safety. Two of these projects were taken forward at the What Works Scotland CAR Retreat (national) in June 2015 and have been pursued through various activities.

(1) Community capacity-building for health and wellbeing (with HSCP, CPP, third sector):
- ‘Community Linking’ Inquiry Cycle 1 report and early development work for Cycle 2 on ‘Community Linking and inequality’ (2015-16)
- Beyond Action Learning report – action learning sets and improvement tools (2016)
- Scoping work and discussions with the HSCP health and wellbeing lead and with the Community Health in Partnership (CHIP) team
- Exploring a Strategic Approach to Community Capacity-building for Health and Wellbeing – workshop and case study.

(2) Partnership working within community planning – with CPP and partners:
- Early scoping discussions with central and local CPP officers (2015)
- Development days with CPP Board and executive, and ongoing discussions with the Board and CPP central policy and strategy team (2015-16)
- Collaborative learning days: Partnership and Participation (Dec 2015) and report; and Prevention and Preventative Spend (May 2016) and report.
- LOIP scoping process – discussion group on LOIP Priority on Changing Aberdeenshire’s relationship with alcohol: workshop and case study.
- Reflective interviewing and consultation work on this Final Learning Report (2017-18) 23 participants.

(3) Other related What Works Scotland work with the CPP and/or partners:
- What Works Scotland National Retreats (Dec 2014; June 2015; Feb 2016) – CPP participated in all three events
- What Works Scotland Training for Trainers (April 2017) – CPP sent four delegates
- Aberdeen CPP/NHS Grampian speakers at national What Works Scotland events: Chris Littlejohn (March 2016); George Howie (August 2017).
- Other engagement with What Works Scotland – advice and discussion; attending What Works Scotland national events
Timeline of Aberdeenshire CPP and What Works Scotland action research

**Autumn 2014:** CPP applies to What Works Scotland and is selected as one of four case study sites. The CPP identifies early broad themes of health & social care integration; local community planning; and community safety/road safety.

**Jan – June 2015:** early development work with CPP and HSCP leads to agreement of two action research projects at What Works Scotland National Retreat: ‘community links worker’ and ‘partnership working across central and local community planning’

**July 2015 – June 2016:**
- Community links worker action research cycle 1 runs
- Beyond Action Learning (on collaborative learning and improvement) co-produced report under development
- Two development days with CPP Board and then executive group
- Two learning days across CPP on putting Christie into action: ‘Partnership and Participation; ‘Preventing inequalities and preventative spend’
- Also: reporting back to second What Works Scotland National Retreat (Feb 2016)

**July – December 2016:**
- Community Links Worker report published
- Beyond Action Learning report to final draft
- Participatory discussion workshops on LOIP: Reducing Alcohol Consumption; and Community Capacity Building for Health and Wellbeing
- Support for CPP central review work including draft Interim Report (Appendix 2)

Main body of development work completed December 2016.

**Jan 2017 – Dec 2018:**
- Further support for HSCP community capacity-building strategic approach
- Further smaller scale support for the LOIP priority, alcohol and culture change
- Multi-layered Preventative Partnership-working report completed ...
- Reflective web-page established – following early reflections and blog-pieces
- Reflective interviewing on partnership and collaborative learning research
- Analysis, writing and consultation on this Reflective Learning Report.

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Appendix 2: Emerging learning from the What Works Scotland/Aberdeenshire CPP collaboration: a summary of learning from the development work between CPP Board and Executive and What Works Scotland – Nick Bland & James Henderson (December 2016) … a draft Interim Learning Report

What Works Scotland is a research collaboration funded by the ESRC and the Scottish Government led by the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. What Works Scotland is working with key partners and stakeholders on a three-year programme (2014-2017)\(^7\) of research and development activity to identify and share learning about what is working in the operationalisation of Christie.

What Works Scotland works collaboratively to:

1. **Mobilise evidence** for public service reform
2. Implement **collaborative** public service reform
3. Support public service reform through **community empowerment**

In order to improve outcomes and life chances for the people of Scotland.

What Works Scotland is not a conventional research programme. It is working within a collaborative action research (CAR) framework to support change in the way local areas use evidence to make decisions about public service delivery and reform, and to examine how community planning partnerships ‘put Christie into action’. This is the first time such an approach has been used in such complex multi-agency partnerships. Across its programme, What Works Scotland is creating opportunities, facilitating learning, and providing support and space for a wide range of staff in CPPs to establish the relationships and knowledge they need to develop new working practices and a reflexive approach. We are seeking to explore, inform and reflect critically on this developing process as a method for supporting system-wide change in public services.

It is important to emphasise What Works Scotland is at a particular phase in this programme. We have been building relationships in our case sites and other areas, developing, piloting, and guiding local collaborative inquiries, seeking to inform the way that CPPs work. We are now moving into the next phase which will focus on consolidating our shared learning, analysing data, spreading and embedding findings and new ways of working, and looking to achieve sustained impact.

\(^7\) WHAT WORKS SCOTLAND funded extended to end of 2018 by Economic and Social Research Council and Scottish Government.
Introduction

This report has been produced to respond to a call from members of the CPP Board to share the learning that is emerging from the What Works Scotland/Aberdeenshire CPP collaboration at this point. At this stage of the What Works Scotland programme, the learning is provisional and not yet complete, but we have sought to be as specific and concrete as we can, and in identifying what we describe as ‘promising areas of practice’.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss, review and ‘sense-check’ this emerging picture at the December 2016 meeting of the Board.

The report draws learning across the three streams of collaborative action research (CAR) and inquiry which we have been supporting in Aberdeenshire – see appendix 1. They are:

- the CPP Board and Executive, on partnership development
- the HSCP, on community capacity-building
- the wider CPP and partners including third/community sector, on ‘putting Christie into practice’ and the transformational change that requires

We also draw from some of the other emerging learning across the wider What Works Scotland programme. It is not possible at this stage to speak to the consolidated evidence across What Works Scotland. But we point to some other What Works Scotland material that might be of particular interest and worthy of subsequent follow-up. We present the learning here under two broad themes:

1. strategic partnership and collaboration in the CPP
2. multi-layered partnership working across Aberdeenshire – and ‘putting Christie into practice’

A timeline summarising the key activities over the period of the What Works Scotland/Aberdeenshire collaboration are set out in Appendix 2, with current and planned outputs. A summary of activity across the other What Works Scotland case study sites is in Appendix 3.

1. Strategic partnership and collaboration in the CPP

In this section, we draw primarily from our work with the Board and Executive to support their ambition for improved CP partnership working in the context of the Community Empowerment Act (CEA), using the What Works Scotland evidence review of partnership working. This has involved telephone conversations with twelve Board members, two facilitated development days, and sessions at CPP Board meetings.

Partnership relationships:

73 Original Appendix 1 remove – now refers to updated material in Appendix 1 in this Report
74 Appendix 2 has been removed – the updated timeline is in Appendix 1 of this Report; Appendix 3 material has been removed – see the final WHAT WORKS SCOTLAND Cross-case site report for an overview here: https://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/collaborative-action-research-and-public-services-insights-into-methods-findings-and-implications-for-public-service-reform/
Board members speak to the quality of the relationships between them. But some members have identified the opportunity to strengthen those relationships further through a greater depth of understanding of the constraints and pressures felt by members in their different organisations, and how this effects the ability to commit to partnership working.

Board members have pointed the demands and pressures that come from their own organisations, and their parts of the system What Works Scotland. These include pressure on organisational finances, organisational reforms, organisationally specific priorities, requirements of scrutiny and accountability. These place limits (on time, staff resource, money, personal energy and resilience) and constraints on Board members’ ability to commit to the CP partnership. The Community Empowerment Act sets out a common agenda (a potential counter-pressure) around enhanced CP partnership working to tackle inequalities.

**Board role and purpose:**

Reflecting on its performance over the past few years, the Board’s achievements tended to be identified as relational and process improvements: better relationships, greater readiness to work together, improved sharing of information. There is ambition to a greater focus on the achievement of tangible CPP outcomes, and examples of thinking how to increase practical collaboration at Board level (e.g. integrating the local or ‘Shire-wide’ service plans of CPP partners).

Board members have consistently articulated an ambition to move to a focussed, sharp set of priorities about the ‘wicked issues’ on which the CP partnership can uniquely contribute. The priorities agreed by the Board for the first Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) next year signal that intention. There remains a question about what specific role the Board wishes to play to support the achievement of those priorities, and how that is put into practice. In particular, the Board may wish to consider how its considerable collective resources and capital (in the broadest sense) can best be brought to bear to help ‘create the conditions’ in Aberdeenshire that will best enable success. And how partnership structures can best be rationalised and focused on these priorities.

Partners have expressed different levels of engagement and commitment to the Board and its work. Some feel it has little relevance. This places at risk the aspirations for collaborative leadership we have heard articulated.

There are clear aspirations to develop a common understanding of the role and purpose of the CPP Board, and of the respective roles between Board and executive. But it was evident that there was not a shared view on this role. The following are examples:

- some members placed an emphasis on strong governance and accountability role for the Board, holding partners to account for their contribution to the work of the CPP. Some Board members expressed a desire to work more closely with local areas level, taking a role in assuring the achievement of local outcomes. Some Board members highlighted the importance of working more closely with communities. But this was not expressed as strongly and as consistently as one might have expected.
The benefits of a clearer and shared understanding of the expectations on Board members individually and as a group – and of induction for new members – were highlighted as an area needing development.

**Partnership and collaboration:**

The complexity of partnership working that is particular to CPPs is evident. It brings together a large number of organisations (widened under the CEA) with different geographies (covering Shire, regional, national), different accountabilities and from different sectors. Members work in organisations with very different professional cultures and working practices. The nature of this complexity and its impact on the quality and character of collaboration appears largely unexplored; and also what ‘investment’ is available to mediate these challenges.

Adding to that challenge, it is evident that there is not shared and equal power or equal responsibility across all the members of the partnership. This is inherent to the CPP structure in the CEA. The What Works Scotland evidence review identifies a lack of shared power as a significant risk to successful collaboration.

However, in considering the development of a shared common purpose across the Board, and in working with the CEA’s focus on LOIPs, Locality Plans, inequalities and the varied role of community bodies, there is an opportunity for the Board to actively engage with those organisations and their representative bodies that will be needed to take this agenda forward e.g. third/community sector and other bodies supporting economic and social development. And in so doing consider the pooling of resources and consensus-building to develop shared plans and agendas.

**Board process:**

The way Board meetings work was felt as overly bureaucratic, with lots of paperwork to read and note. Members are looking for better structuring of Board meetings that can then provide more value. We would suggest this should be seen as supporting changed working practice for the Board. Some suggestions were made:

- Fewer people round the table- the right people for the right discussion
- More focused meetings and more concise paperwork
- Agenda items being more thematically-focused- creating space for strategic discussion.

2. Multi-layered partnership working in Aberdeenshire and putting Christie into practice

In this section, we draw out learning from the inquiry work with both the wider CPP and third/community sector on multi-layered partnership working, and with the HSCP on community capacity-building (see outputs in appendix 1).

The potential for a ‘collaborative change management’ approach: we have seen a rich pool of knowledge on the skills of partnership working, on co-production (between services and communities), and on community-led approaches across people in public services and community activists in strategic and operational roles in Aberdeenshire. This knowledge,
and examples of ‘good practice’, do not appear to be consistently known across the public service landscape in Aberdeenshire; and therefore points to the importance of increasing this ‘knowledge exchange’ as part of collaborative inquiry approaches.

Creating change across whole systems as envisaged by ‘Christie’ – public, third and community sectors, for instance – is reported to be proving complex in Aberdeenshire, with some noting little change. This is part of a broader picture across Scotland reported by Audit Scotland. We invite the Board to consider the opportunities for it to provide that ‘local system’ leadership.

Collaborative learning approaches offer one potential approach to partnership working and wrestling with the ‘wicked issues’ to which Christie points. We are aware of examples of the use of such approaches across Aberdeenshire; the experience of one such model illustrates the potential for supporting complex local partnership working through skilled facilitation of collaborative learning and data and evidence-use. This can empower staff teams to explore opportunities to rethink and reform conventional policy and practice, but crucially is seen to require ongoing senior management commitment across all partners if it is to do so.

*Focusing on preventing inequalities and working ‘upstream’*: There is an evidence-base for system-wide changes as most effective in preventing inequalities e.g. regulation, legislation, fiscal policies\(^7\). Further shifts to preventative spend are made difficult by: ‘silobased’ budgeting; competition between public services (and third sector organisations); and short-term complexities of investing savings in reactive demand to preventative investment. Again, whilst managers and staff can illustrate these problems, finding solutions is challenging. The early scoping work led by the ADP and public health into the LOIP priority on reducing alcohol consumption builds from a strong research evidence-base and ADP Forum network (partners and community); engaging with a range of relevant public and third sector partners – including police, ambulance, rural partnerships and AVA; and considering the potential for ‘upstream’, system-wide measures and strategies for building broader support to achieve such measures. It offers an example of ‘collaborative inquiring’ into preventative approaches to inequalities that others across the CPP can explore.

*Developing community capacity and community anchors*: Aberdeenshire CAR work and wider evidence What Works Scotland has reviewed present a case for a ‘networked local development’ approach to building the capacity of local community organisations and groups. This is where there is a focus on *both* local community developments and the wider structures that support it. This includes a network of community organisations – including a multi-purpose community anchor and community social enterprises – and supporting structures e.g. rural partnerships, AVA, community learning and development, and local

community planning groups, and suitable funding and investment. From this, the local community sector (staff, activists, volunteers) can generate a network of social and economic activities and to advocate on local inequalities e.g. fuel poverty, accessible transport, concerns of frail older peoples’ issues.

‘Community approaches’ and the building of informal community capacity and community sector organisations capacity require highly skilled and well-supported approaches. Multi-purpose community-led organisations, e.g. the Friends of Insch Hospital and Community and the growing body of community development trusts, and other community organisations (e.g. community associations and community councils) play crucial roles in the development and networking that builds and sustains community-capacity. The community linking approach, the community anchor model and, more widely, place-based approaches offer promising areas of practice for the CPP to consider in greater depth. 76

Integrating with local community planning structures and further local accountability: we have seen the role of community-based partnership working in integrating services and local activity across public and third/community sectors. The local Community Planning Group and Rural Partnership worked to build and take forward a local community action plan with the local community and community organisation. And in partnership and through a range of public sector partners – CLD, health and social care services, Community Economic Development, ADP; third sector partners – AVA and social care providers. Increasing levels of local accountability and generating complex actions and planning. Other local work and evidence review work have further illustrated the potential for creative solutions to community-building through third/community and public sector partnership working (networked development). The What Works Scotland report on the role of TSIs and third sector in re-imagining local community planning provides one such model of collaboration 77. This is a ‘promising area of practice’ for the Board to consider.

Empowering the workforce: ‘Christie’ emphasises the roles of workers across sectors being empowered to make change – and re-committing to a collective public service ethos of ‘the public good’. Our work with staff, managers, activists and volunteers, generates a picture of widespread commitment to improving public services ability to tackle inequalities. This is one of many growing examples of staff empowerment and leadership across Scotland. One example explored by What Works Scotland is Operation Modulus in Glasgow 78 where staff from the fire and rescue service led other agencies including community safety and a community housing association in preventative work with alienated young people in a disadvantaged area.

76 Role of community anchors in local community social and economic development, service provision and advocacy on inequality at: http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/WHAT WORKS SCOTLANDthinkpiece-Community-Anchors-Nov151.pdf; and Rationales for Place-based Approaches in Scotland.
78 Operation Modulus: putting Christie into practice in Gorbals

whatworksscotland.ac.uk
The What Works Scotland evidence review on partnership working emphasises the need for staff to be supported in terms of time, training and resourcing if they are to pursue collaborative partnership working. The public service landscape of change and reform, where public and third sector staff find their roles and posts changing, with many on fixed-term and temporary contracts, places at risk the potential for ‘growing’ collaborative approaches if relationships and skills are lost and staff motivation suffers.

3. Moving forward

In our work with the Board, we have sought to apply the CAR collaborative inquiry approach (appendix 1) to support self-assessment and review of the CPP’s ambitions in the context of the CEA. This has provided a range of material to explore questions such as ‘what are our concerns’ and ‘what would success look like’.

We anticipate the output of the CPP review – once completed – should provide additional material and proposals for the Board to implement change. A key challenge is for the Board to collaborate on developing a shared, mutual agenda.

We encourage the Board to think about the next phase in 2017 as an important opportunity to deepen its collaboration about how to lever and embed change, and to test how to achieve it.

There appear opportunities for increased visible leadership and ‘one voice’ from the CPP Board out to the public services, third and community sectors, and the communities in Aberdeenshire to advocate, champion, provide challenge, in the service of the ambitions for community planning and tackling inequalities in Aberdeenshire. In this report we have started to identify some areas where that leadership could be applied.

Equally, we encourage the Board to consider how to leverage the authority of the CPP outside Aberdeenshire: to influence the leadership of partner organisations working at regional and national levels.

For What Works Scotland in Aberdeenshire, the next phase in 2017 involves completing our collaborative work across the three streams over the first quarter of the year (including any further work with the Board); reporting on the learning from that work; and contributing to the consolidation of evidence across the What Works Scotland programme and the spreading of that learning more widely across CPPs. We would welcome the Board’s views on how to maximise the opportunities of this final phase in Aberdeenshire.
Appendix 3: Review of evidence-base on public service partnership working – a summary of key areas of consideration when developing local partnerships

From the *What Works Scotland Evidence Review on Partnership working* (Cook, 2015).

**Inputs / Resources for partnership:**
- adequate and secure funding
- effective IT systems that enable information sharing
- partnership specific management structure
- sufficient staff
- previous experience of joint working.

**Partnership activities:**
- develop and articulate shared aims and objectives
- clarify roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability at operational and strategic levels
- establish performance management systems that reflect complexity of partnership, capture range of activity and have focus on outcomes.

**Engagement / involvement / reach:**
- key staff working at operational and strategic levels are included
- local communities and voluntary and community sector organisations meaningfully involved
- relevant private sector organisations relate to the partnership in appropriate ways.

**Stakeholder reactions and awareness:**
- the need for the partnership is recognised
- there is commitment to the partnership at operational and strategic levels
- strategic managers/funders/central government are realistic about what partnership can achieve.

**Knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations for effective partnership:**
- different professional approaches and expertise are valued
- partners are trusted and respected
- partners feel that relationships are mutually beneficial
- partners take time to understand the contexts in which each other are working
- there is expertise in project and change management within the partnership
- staff believe other partners and the partnership as a whole will deliver on objectives.

**Practices and behaviours for effective partnerships:**
- a flexible approach to developing the work, using resources and determining roles and accountability.
- regular and effective communication and information sharing between partners at operational and strategic levels
- regular opportunities for joint working, including meetings, joint training and co-location
• effective and visible leadership at strategic and operational levels
• involvement of wider partners and staff in development of procedures and policies
• services/interventions are holistic and responsive, meeting broad needs of populations/clients
• services provide specialist support where required
• there are appropriate ways of achieving conflict resolution and consensus building
• the partnership engages in continual reassessment of processes and procedures.

Final outcomes of effective partnerships:

• improved health and wellbeing
• reduction in inequalities
• reduction in offending
• equitable access to services
• avoid inappropriate service use
• reduction in costs
• responsive service meeting needs and preferences of clients.

See the full evidence review\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{79} http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/creating-effective-partnerships-to-deliver-public-services/
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