

Commission on the future Delivery of Public Services (Christie Commission) 2011: Key Points
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/06/27154527/0>

1. Public services are important for social and economic

Public services are:

- important to achieving a fair and just society by supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable people; and
- crucial to helping people develop skills for the workforce and so improving economic performance

‘Many public services are social investments.’ They educate people, keep people and the workforce healthy, bring people together, support quality in the business environment, invest in research and innovation, house people, enable transport and communications. They contribute to the economy and provide direct and indirect employment and private sector demand. Economic growth needs effective public services and effective public services need economic growth.

2. Challenges for public services

Public services are faced with serious challenges through:

- demographic change;
- widening inequalities (worst in Europe) that have a cost to public services; and
- fiscal austerity.

There are shortcomings in public services that undermine the capacity to produce better outcomes. These are:

- Fragmentation and complexity in how they are organised – and duplication is rife
- Producer dominance – top down services and organisational interests coming before those of the public
- Outdated attitudes and approaches – professional dominance, disempowering, scaled up rather than person-centred services
- Poor transparency and accountability for outcomes – poor understanding of performance, lack of user experience
- Short-termism – economic, professional and political

3. Reform based on budget reductions is insufficient – services have to become preventative to be more effective

Reform is needed because of fiscal necessity and to improve the quality of services to meet needs better.

- ‘As much as 40% of all spending on public services is on interventions that could have been avoided by prioritising a preventative approach.’ This is described as failure demand. A good example is half of all young people in Scottish prisons have been in care. Of violent offenders in prisons, 80% have been in care.
- Also studies show that as much as 80% of transactions handled in traditional call centres relate to failure demand.

‘It is essential that maximum value is wrought from every pound of public money spent in Scotland, and furthermore, that the public can be assured that this is so’.

Reform means:

- Engagement, empowerment and enablement. So empowering individuals and communities receiving public services by involving them in the design and delivery of them;
- Better coordination and integration. So public service providers working closer in partnership to integrate service provision and improve outcomes;
- Reducing persistent problems and demand. So prioritising expenditure on public services which prevent negative outcomes arising and tackle inequalities;
- Whole system of public services in public, third and private sectors must be more efficient, reducing duplication and sharing services. Performance improvement and transparency are key.

So the key objectives of reform are:

- Public services are built around people and communities, their needs, aspirations, capacities and skills and work to build up their autonomy and resilience
- Public service organisations work together effectively to achieve outcomes
- Public service organisations prioritise prevention, reducing inequalities and promoting equality
- All public services constantly seek to improve performance and reduce costs and are transparent and accountable

‘It would be wrong to let the financial situation dominate our thinking. The issues are not confined solely to operational questions of efficiency, effectiveness and value for money. We believe the debate must be broader encompassing deeper questions about the design and delivery of public services, their values and ethos. We need to consider the responsibilities of individuals and communities alongside organisational cultures. We need to embed openness and democratic accountability and examine the means of control and authority.’ ‘We need to design and deliver services with and for people, rather than forcing people into pre-determined systems.’

4. Better prevention and reducing inequalities

Social and financial costs of negative outcomes such as excessive alcohol consumption, drug addiction, violence, antisocial behaviour, criminality, obesity, smoking related diseases and educational failure are substantial. Responding to them consumes increasing sums of public money but we do not have growth in budgets. Public services need to work to reduce demand. To be a force for social change public services must have a more preventative approach.

A combination of negative outcomes can be concentrated in particular localities and can be experienced by people with particular characteristics. This needs to be addressed holistically and preventatively and across all public service providers. The Commission recommends:

- Pooling budgets to achieve outcomes with prevention prioritised;
- Better local partnerships to coordinate prevention;
- Empowering front line staff to promote prevention;
- Helping communities to achieve their own ambitions;
- A focus on employability – helping people move into training and work;
- Community-led solutions in areas that need regeneration and not short term projects.

5. On community empowerment

Communities must decide the level of empowerment they want and how to achieve it. Empowerment cannot be imposed and some communities may be more interested in taking action than others. We need to support communities to be able to take the action that they want, recognising poorer communities are likely to need more support, otherwise it will just be the 'trained voice' that is heard.

6. On partnership working to achieve outcomes and locally integrated service provision

Working together at a local level should enable better integration of services and enable better involvement of people using or affected by the service. Community planning should be the vehicle but so far:

- currently the potential benefits of a local partnership approach are far from being fully realised;
- effectiveness at a local level is not consistent;
- energy is dispensed more on partnership working across agencies rather than with communities;
- different partners have different accountabilities with national targets and standards creating tensions with local outcomes.

The Commission recommends:

- Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) should develop and extend arrangements at a more local level (than a local authority area) which facilitate public engagement and participation in shaping priorities and in the design and delivery of services. For arrangements to be in place for all parties to account to the public for their contribution to achieving outcomes locally.
- Joint asset planning
- Total Place as an approach that:
 - maps the totality of public spending in a place (capital and revenue)
 - exposes gaps or duplication in service provision from the viewpoint of the citizen
 - helps identify what to change to achieve better outcomes and better value for money and efficiencies

(This was trialled in the Borders by the Council and NHS and we could find out what difference it made but its use seems very limited to date).

7. On improving performance and reducing cost

To improve performance, reduce cost and secure public confidence public service systems need redesign to:

- Improve transparency and consistency – budgeting and performance management are too distant from the public and competing providers. We need more openness around budget decisions, analysing costs of delivery (including benchmarking) and the extent to which outcomes are achieved.
- Improve oversight – with better data in use and audits of partnership outcomes

- Improve procurement and commissioning – with specifications of outcomes not activity and including social return on investment from third sector providers. Being aware of in-house comparable costs.
- Improve shared services – progress slow and success difficult to verify so far.
- Improve organisational structures – nationally the Commission identified (in 2011) 73 central govt. bodies, 23 NHS bodies, 32 councils and 45 joint boards and committees in the 200 covered by Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission. This fragmentation undermines effectiveness operationally and locally with complicated joint working arrangements and delays in getting things done. And with less local democratic oversight with low number of Councils compared to elsewhere in Europe. The Commission supported the ‘single public authority’ model that was being considered in the islands.
- Improve long-term strategic planning – Govt. to ensure all public service operating plans and budgets are directed towards outcomes, support integration, are made on the same multi-year basis and are based on evidence of sustainable future public finances.

Many of the recommendations on redesign require action by the Scottish Government.

8. On the public service workforce and its development

‘Experience tells us that all institutions and structures resist change, especially radical change.’

‘The development of the public service workforce must support the reform programme.’ The Commission recommends workforce development across the range of public services e.g. joint management development, a competency framework focusing on outcomes, collaboration with partners and people using services.

‘If we are to secure a sustainable future for public service delivery in Scotland at this time respecting staff and improving their experience at work is essential.’ Employee engagement drives innovation and business improvement. ‘The necessary ground shift in in public service delivery will only be successful if staff are empowered, trusted and supported to make the necessary change.’

‘Leaders alone cannot provide meaning for the workforce but in helping to clarify the purpose of the organisation they can help employees renew their own sense of purpose. Involving staff in designing their own role in providing an appropriate service and meeting organisational outcomes is a powerful way to improve their work experience and deliver organisational benefits.’

The Commission recommends that public service organisations develop and extend empowerment of front-line staff to support their engagement with people and communities to improve service provision.

Reform needs a culture that promotes:

- Front-line staff seeking solutions actively with a ‘can-do’ attitude empowered by managers and leaders.
- Public service workers to find innovative solutions and build personal and community capacity, resilience and autonomy.

- Appreciation that people's needs are better met when they are involved in an equal and reciprocal relationship with professionals and others, working together to get things done.
- Asset-based approaches – where people are treated as active agents in their own lives with skills and experience and not passive recipients of services. Recognising that people can take part in deciding how public services support them.
- We allow communities and individuals to take the lead where this will deliver better outcomes (good examples are the work of development trusts and self-directed support).
- A public service ethos needs to be supported that means
 - A respect for the autonomy and potential of people and communities and an ambition to maximise both
 - An ambition to improve the lives and opportunities of people and communities and a commitment to work with them to achieve their aspirations
 - A commitment to get maximum value and impact for public resources and to account openly to the public for what is done in their name
 - Building on the standards of public life including integrity, honesty and openness
- Where staff are:
 - supported to develop their skills, knowledge and expertise
 - able to reconnect with the purpose of their work
 - supported to express a public service ethos that is based on enabling, empowering and improving the lives of people and communities
 - involved in designing and improving their job
 - valued for what they do
 - trusted and empowered to do a good job
 - not bound by professional and sectoral boundaries.