Introduction

This report seeks to evidence how North Ayrshire Council is developing new ways of working by providing examples of relevant projects and by responding to the remaining lines of enquiry directly. The projects and programmes detailed are:

1. Supporting Services Options Appraisal
2. Street Scene Redesign
3. Transport Hub
4. Community & Culture Redesign
5. Learning Community Cluster
6. Early Intervention & Prevention Programme
7. Social Work Standby Service
8. Co-location of Social Work and Social Care staff
9. Improving the Social Care Service User Journey
10. Housing Options Model

1. Supporting Services Options Appraisal

This project set out to identify and assess the alternative delivery models available for the provision of 11 supporting services: ICT, Human Resources, Accounting and Budgeting, Risk and Audit, Payroll, Procurement, Communications, Legal Services, Facilities Management, Asset Management, and Revenues and Benefits. The models evaluated covered business process outsourcing, strategic partnerships (such as arm’s length organisations and joint ventures), and a number of specific opportunities including Clyde Valley Shared Services, and Social Enterprises (including mutuals).

Objectives

1. To identify which models the market has a credible offering for around each service.
2. To assess the potential for each of the models to meet the Council’s criteria around financial benefits, quality, staff, risk, & strategic fit, on a service by service basis.
3. To understand the extent of the opportunity which these models represent and the specific considerations around each.

Drivers

This project is driven by the need to operate more efficiently and effectively, primarily looking for opportunities to achieve greater value by delivering at least equivalent levels of service at lower cost. That being said, the evaluation criteria developed gives considerable emphasis to

- The impact on the Local Economy and Communities.
- The investment in and opportunities for staff in these services.
- The extent to which the models would encourage innovation and use of technology to improve performance.

**Approach**

The key stages to this project have been:

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<td>Soft Market Test</td>
<td>Engaging with more than 20 prospective suppliers to understand the market's appetite and credibility to offer alternative models for each service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Market Research</td>
<td>Developing case studies to illustrate how each of the models has been adopted elsewhere in the public sector and identifying key learnings that can be taken.</td>
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<td>Base Lining</td>
<td>A detailed analysis, carried out with each of the services, to set a financial baseline factoring in planned efficiencies for coming years.</td>
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<td>Outcome Specifications</td>
<td>Producing outcome based specification for each service, setting out what they deliver to their stakeholders.</td>
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<td>Options Appraisal</td>
<td>Developing evaluation criteria and applying these to the respective models and services, to assess the extent of each opportunity benchmarked against the future state of an internal service.</td>
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<td>Procurement Overview</td>
<td>Reviewing the procurement implications should the Council choose to progress this initiative further.</td>
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**Impact**

The extent of the opportunity available to the Council is anticipated to be in the range £2m-£4.5m, assuming a cost base in excess of £22m and dependent upon: which, if any, services were considered; the model(s) adopted; and requirements stipulated around jobs and community benefit.

The development of the outcome specifications and financial base lines has run alongside the Council's service planning and budgeting and will contribute to the effective and efficient delivery of services regardless of the outcome of the project. Similarly this process will help the Council better understand what value these services currently deliver in contrast to the market.

**Additional Learnings**

Not all efficiencies have been viewed as equal and models have been scored far more favourably where savings are derived from capability rather than reliant on staff terms and conditions, for example where the living wage has been seen as a factor.

Health and Social Care integration was seen as a significant dependency, however not as a reason to delay the project. This has been somewhat mitigated by the detailed financial baselines, which would allow for assumptions to be reconfigured appropriately.

The uncertainty around Welfare Reform was considered as a further reason not to keep Revenues & Benefits in scope; however a view was taken that any subsequent market engagement would offer the opportunity to tap into the expertise of large organisations focusing on this area.
2. Street Scene Redesign

Creation of a new service delivery model for Street Cleansing and maintenance of the public realm.

Objectives

The project has successfully completed its objectives which were to

1. Transform and modernise the culture within the service, to be more dynamic, collaborative, & innovative.
2. Improve employee relations.
3. Increase the skill base of the workforce.
4. Deliver efficiency savings of £1.4m

Drivers

This project was initiated to drive performance improvement built upon innovation and the use of technology. However the success of the project was itself driven by investment in the people delivering the services, and effective leadership.

Approach

A strategic review of Environment & Related Services was completed and a new management structure implemented to enable delivery of the agreed vision.

An integrated approach to the management of the public realm was adopted, through the creation of a Streetscene Service, consisting of the previously separate Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleansing and Cemeteries Services.

A resource activity analysis was undertaken to benchmark inputs across the three services and to assess the resources required to deliver a high quality maintenance regime.

A training matrix was devised and skills assessment completed, backed by funding to deliver the required training.

The new service now.

Makes increased use of digital mapping technology for scheduling and planning services.

Has multi-skilled staff, making it easier to service remote locations more efficiently and also to maintain service levels when there is sickness absence or holiday.

Impact

To date the project has...

- Delivered revenue savings of £1.4M.
- Improved employee engagement, evidenced by a 35% reduction in sickness absence and a marked reduction in workplace grievances.
- Opened communication lines between staff, management, and Trade Unions, contributing to significantly improved Employee Relations despite the scale and nature of the change.
- Reduced the number of operational depots from 27 to 4.
- Maintained service levels, with Local Environment Audit scores improved during and after the re-organisation.
• A proportion of overtime savings have been reinvested in training and staff development

**Additional Learnings**
Stakeholder management was fundamental to the success of this project, involving early engagement with Staff, Trade Unions, & Political Leadership.

**3. Transport Hub**
The Council is progressing with the development of a corporate transport hub, tasked with managing transport assets across the Council.

**Objectives**
1. Implementation of a telematics (vehicle tracking) system: facilitating improved planning, budgeting, scheduling, and compliance, both regulatory and health and safety.
2. A reduction in future requirements for transport assets.
3. Implementation of a procurement framework for the provision of taxi services.

**Drivers**
This focus of this project is primarily around leveraging digital technology and transparency to deliver improved performance. There is also an element of services across the Council collaborating to the full, to maximise the utilisation of transport assets and to achieve best value in procurement.

**Approach**
A comprehensive review was undertaken of the Council’s transport activity, spend, and resources, informing a business case developed to introduce a telematics systems and establish a corporate transport function.

Upon acceptance of the Business Case, tenders were invited for the provision of the telematics system and detailed design work was carried out for the corporate Transport Hub, including staffing, budgets, & service levels.

Work is now underway to realise this Business Case and the associated benefits.

**Impact**
The project is budgeted to deliver net revenue savings of £846k per year, whilst supporting a new post within the Council.

The anticipated reduction in transport assets has also informed the Council’s capital plan, enabling a reduction in investment in this area.

The anticipated reduction in journeys will result in a similar reduction in carbon emissions and pollution within the area.

**Additional Learnings**
There is a recognition that realising the savings will be somewhat dependent upon being able to influence drive behaviour, which is potentially an issue where individuals are not dedicated drivers but rather drive in order to carry out their primary responsibility and so will sit in another service. This is felt to be manageable but will be monitored.

As a side issue, the project flagged difficulties in addressing driving duties within employment contracts, to the extent that ‘driving’ is only currently being included as
an essential skill if it is the primary function of the post. This can become problematic when there is a strong case for some staff to drive but not all, for example to visit remote locations not served well by public transport or occasional use of a minibus in a care centre, but where this can't form part of the recruitment process.

4. Community & Culture Redesign

Community and Cultural Services provide the following range of services: Arts & Cultural Services, Community Capacity Building, Adult Learning, Youth Work, Library & Information Service, Museums & Heritage, Halls and Community Facilities, Sport/Physical Activity, Leisure Provision, Children’s Services and Country Parks & Outdoor Education.

Service redesign has been on-going for several years and is being further refined as described below.

Objectives

Community and Cultural Services in North Ayrshire is undergoing on-going review in order to complete and implement a thematic/problem solving approach to service delivery, focusing on outcomes and neighbourhoods, and ensuring complementarity of planning and service delivery across the wide-ranging department.

The purpose is to ensure that communities and individuals are better supported to:

- Learn
- Be engaged in a range of cultural, physical activity and community opportunities
- Build their own capacity
- Become empowered to develop and achieve their individual or community aspirations.

Drivers

In June 2011, the Christie Commission published its conclusions stating that one of the four key objectives of a public service reform programme must be to ensure that public services are built around people and communities, their needs and aspirations, capacities and skills, and work to build up their autonomy and resilience.

The proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill will support communities to achieve their own goals and aspirations through taking independent action and by having their voices heard in the decisions that affect their area.

Service redesign will continue to be driven by the need for economic efficiencies and developed through service specifications based on the following outcomes:

- Educational attainment and achievement
- Employability
- Community empowerment
- Cultural participation
- Participation in sports and physical activity
- Citizenship and participation.

Approach

The integrated service is being designed on a capacity building model and is based on the following outcomes…
- Children, young people and families
- Learning and digital participation
- Sports and cultural participation and
- Community empowerment.

The underpinning principles include...
- Service specialisms, delivering responsively and strategically to all localities.
- Locality based planning with resources allocated and devolved on the basis of community profiles and partnership arrangements.
- Community and Culture Lead Officers identified as the named contact per cluster in order to provide coherent planning and service delivery.

**Impact**

Impact will continue to be measured through rigorous self-evaluation, using a variety of mechanisms such as validated self-evaluation, How Good is our Learning Community, the Public Library Quality Improvement Framework, How Good is our Culture and Sport, EFQM and PSIF.

Impact measures will include...
- Increased empowerment of communities through capacity building and use of community facilities and civic buildings;
- Greater numbers of people engaging in cultural and physical activity;
- Increased use of country parks and outdoor learning;
- Greater participation in digital learning to increase involvement and participation in education and employability.

**Additional Learnings**

Additional challenges will be provided by...
- Welfare Reform and
- Diminishing Local Government Resources.

**5. Learning Community Cluster**

The development of learning community cluster working is an integral part of the Neighbourhood Approach Project being developed by the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership. It is a pilot project within the Education Scotland “Making Shift Happen” initiative.

**Objectives**

The key objectives of this cluster working initiative are to engage with all stakeholders to...
1. Establish the potential to move forward with a shared improvement agenda
2. Identify ways of providing services which meet the specific needs of communities in a more efficient and effective way
3. Develop and implement an action plan which will test resource sharing and allocation.
Drivers
The direction of travel of the Scottish Government, both in terms of Devolved School Management and the wider Public Sector Reform Agenda is supportive of the further extension and exploration of the devolution of resources and decision making to school clusters, schools and localities.

Principles of devolution include…
- Moving the balance of power in favour of schools and school clusters
- Increasing funding and autonomy for head teachers and learning communities
- Devolving decision making to the lowest level appropriate
- Empowering schools and school clusters to tailor resources to meet local need.

Approach
Through the learning community cluster work we will improve the integration, co-ordination and collaboration of the broad range of services that impact, both directly and indirectly, on learning outcomes within a community. This approach includes collaboration across public, third sector, private and community sectors.

Key priority themes identified during the process include
- Heritage and sense of place, leading to civic pride
- Young people and the development of a youth strategy
- Early intervention and asset based approaches, involving partnership working
- Health and physical activity, using enterprise skills to deliver activities.

Impact
Savings and efficiencies will be delivered through the implementation of a more streamlined and cross-cutting approach to the planning, co-ordination and management of Education and Skills services.

Improvements in community engagement to agree the evidenced priorities in a community, combined with improved integrated planning and delivery of services are already determining priorities and will improve outcomes and deliver targeted outcome focused services.

An integral part of taking this initiative forward is monitoring the effectiveness of partnership planning and joint working, building on key relationships developed during the process and identifying more effective ways to structure and deliver services.

Impact will be evidenced through survey questionnaires and focus group meetings with all stakeholders, as well as utilising appropriate statistical data to measure the progress of the projects objectives.

Impact measures will include:
- Greater participation in community and school-led initiatives amongst young people.
- Improved statistics for school leavers moving to sustained, positive destinations.
- Improved achievement and attainment through increased aspirations and expectations of children and young people.
- Increased sense of pride and ownership amongst young people of their town.
Additional Learnings
All managers involved in the Pilot Project received Three Horizons Training facilitated by Education Scotland. The Three Horizons methodology was adapted to meet the needs of project and used to facilitate workshops with managers and stakeholders to define project objectives.

6. Early Intervention & Prevention Programme
This programme focuses on prevention and early intervention work with children and families aimed at improving the outcomes and life chances of children, young people and families at risk.

The programme has been created because of the diverse and dispersed nature of the various projects involved which are led and funded by various Council Services and Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Partners. The programme should assist in ensuring that they are delivered in a coherent and integrated way.

Measuring the outcomes of the programme will be challenging as its benefits will be in the longer term, possibly in 10 years. Short term measures are being developed to show progress in the meantime.

Objectives
The purpose of the programme is to improve the outcomes for vulnerable children in North Ayrshire by shifting towards early intervention and prevention. This includes ensuring that children are nurtured and cared for and that they can take advantage of educational opportunities to improve their educational, Health and Employment outcomes in later life.

Drivers
The programme has been developed because of the growing recognition of the need to take preventative action in the early years because this period is vital in shaping children’s life chances. Evidence on brain formation, communication and language development show the significant impact of relationships formed at this very young age on mental health and on wellbeing.

The Christie Commission report on the Future Delivery of Public Services highlighted the need to take preventative action to reduce the inequalities and disadvantage being experienced in communities across Scotland. As a result the Scottish Government has set out as its first of four Pillars of Public Service Reform - “a decisive shift towards prevention”.

The Scottish Government’s recent consultation on the Children and Young People Bill indicates that “a more rapid shift to the early years and early intervention is essential if we are to improve the outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people”. It also contains the case surrounding the need for early intervention.

Approach
The programme is made up of the following elements:
• Parenting Programmes - to improve the co-ordination and roll out of the Solihull Approach and of parenting programmes consistently across North Ayrshire so that all parents who wish access to a parenting programme can do so in their local area. This should improve the nurturing and attachment between children and their parents and help parents to deal with their children's behaviour.
• Early Years Centres - to develop five community nurseries into Early Years Centres to assist in offering a range of childcare, activities, services and support for parents. This should ensure vulnerable families are less isolated and more connected to the wider community.

• Family Support Service - an intensive support service for vulnerable families to help with household organisation and ways of creating a more structured family environment at home. This should allow children to live in a nurturing, stable and more supportive environment.

• Multi Agency Domestic Abuse Response Team - to respond to domestic violence incidents as soon as they are reported, offering support and services for victims, including children. This should meet the needs of victims as quickly as possible.

• Permanent Care for Children - to speed up the arrangements for children who cannot live with their parents so that they are placed in a permanent new family more quickly. This should ensure young children are with parents who care for them.
  • Family Nurse Partnership - to provide support to vulnerable first time mothers aged under 19 during pregnancy and throughout the first two years of their baby's life offering advice on child development, parenting skills, healthy eating and employment opportunities. This should allow young children to grow up in a safe, nurturing environment.
  • Asset Based Community Development - to work with people in the Ardrossan Central and Castlepark areas to map community assets for early years, identify areas or services that can be improved and respond to the identified needs. This should improve children's health outcomes.

Impact
The early interventions planned should improve children’s social and emotional development in the earliest years, including their use of speech and language, which has longer term benefits for educational attainment and achievement. Intervening in the early years should over time reduce the need for crisis interventions in later life which are costly to many services such as social services, health, police and criminal justice services. The Early Years Framework refers to creating a “virtuous cycle” whereby increasing savings should support more investment in early years and early intervention which in turn reduces the need for crisis intervention. This programme should therefore bring savings to Public Services in the longer term.

Additional Learnings
Identifying interim and proxy measures of success was always going to be a challenge for this programme but this will be further complicated by other socio-economic factors such as
  • The impact of welfare reform in potentially increasing child poverty and levels of deprivation which are the key factors affecting children’s life chances.
  • The impact of the economic recession in affecting levels of unemployment and of deprivation.
  • The imminent integration of Health and Social Care in Scotland and the potential disruption to services caused by this integration.
7. Social Work Standby Service

As part of a continuous improvement agenda and in response to consistent adverse comment in scrutiny reports in respect of out of hour’s Social Work Services, the three Ayrshire Local Authorities carried out an evaluation of the contractual arrangement in place with the West of Scotland Standby Service. This evaluation was carried out during late 2010 / early 2011. The outcome of the evaluation was that it would be more efficient and effective to develop a local service to meet the needs of the community of Ayrshire.

As well as being a shared service across the three Ayrshire Councils, this service is co-located with the NHS Ayrshire and Arran Crisis Mental Health Team based in Crosshouse Hospital, Kilmarnock.

Objectives

The Ayrshire Standby Service was designed to operate within the existing budget. While it was not envisaged that this new model would deliver savings, it was anticipated that this Ayrshire wide service should deliver a more efficient and effective out of hour’s social work service.

Drivers

Although replacing a shared service, this approach is more consistent with the principles set out in the Christie Report, delivering better services through greater integration and collaboration at a local level. The new service also supports and responds to the early intervention agenda.

Approach

The recruitment process succeeded in delivering an establishment of experienced registered social work practitioners. Consequently they are able to practice with a high level of competence and autonomy in line with the aspirations and recommendations from Changing Lives – the 21st Century Review.

There is representation in the staff group from across the three Councils. While the majority of experience is within Children’s Services, all employees are qualified to work across service user groups. As the service has continued, workers have gained extensive generic experience. This is in line with the professional development opportunities which were anticipated for this group of staff.

Systems are fully in place in terms of telephony arrangements. These include joint arrangements with NHS Ayrshire and Arran for cover through their out of hours service when required.

Impact

All three Ayrshire Authorities have seen a considerable increase in the number of referrals being received and responded to. There has also been a substantial increase in the number of home visits being undertaken. This more responsive service should impact on the need to escalate some of the out of hours work to more extensive and costly services by providing a timeous response.

Additional Learnings

The HR Arrangements for employees on full secondments have posed few significant challenges however, staff undertaking sessional work and the Mental Health Officer’s (MHO) call out rotas have generated continued consideration of some payroll processes across the Councils.
An area of particular challenge has been the operation of three different Social Work information systems and linking these to a reporting framework. Significant support has been required from all three Councils, Resources and IT sections to achieve this and some areas remain problematic. Operationally the use of three IT systems is time consuming in terms of systems access and recording checking.

8. Co-location of Social Work and Social Care Staff

North Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire & Arran have a strong record of collaboration, going back years, and this relationship and the level of partnership working continues to grow as the integration of health and social care looms. Ahead of this, a joint working group has been established to look at the uses of Council and NHS property in North Ayrshire, driving a strategic approach to co-location.

Objectives

The common objectives across this programme are to

1. Provide joined up services, delivering improved outcomes for service users.
2. Make best use of the combined property estates of the two organisations.
3. Improve readiness for the formal integration of Health and Social Care Services.

Drivers

The move towards co-location of health and social care services is in line with the Government's plans to legislate for the integration of adult health and social care. It recognises that people's needs often require intervention from both health and social care practitioners and that better outcomes for service users/patients can be achieved if the practitioners providing health and social care services are located where they can easily share care planning activity.

Approach

Social Services and NHS staff have been successfully co-located at two sites, Brooksby Medical & Resource Centre, Largs, and Caley Court Resource Centre, Stevenston, and there are plans underway to co-locate further services in the Council’s Bridgegate offices.

**Brooksby Medical & Resource Centre**

Opened in 2009 and in addition to NHS and Social Work services it accommodates Housing Services, Registration Services, and local office services. NHS provision includes GP services, occupational therapy, mental health, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy. People using services at Brooksby are able to deal with a number of issues in a single visit. Co-location has enabled health and social care practitioners to work together more effectively on care planning, particularly in respect of services for older people.

**Caley Court Resource Centre**

Initially developed as a base for Adult Social Work services, including mental health, learning disability, and addictions, replacing existing accommodation that was no longer fit for purpose, this site now accommodates NHS addictions services, who did not previously have a base in the area. NHS and NAC addictions staffs are able to work together more effectively on care planning for service users.
Impact
This primary impact in each instance has been improved care planning for service users, whilst at the same time allowing each organisation to continue developing and rationalising their property estates to meet not just current but future needs, benefiting both staff and service users.
Such close partnership working, at both the operational and strategic levels, will also act as a good foundation upon which to build the future success of the combined organisation.

Additional Learnings
Specific learning’s & experience have been made at each location, around access to ICT assets and agile and flexible working practises, which have then informed subsequent accommodation projects and strategy.

9. Improving the Social Care Service User Journey
Social Services are developing a new model for the service user journey, building upon a new approach to assessment and care management, which ensures that early intervention and prevention are paramount. The changes are designed to be the blueprint that will take social care services forward to integration with the NHS.

- The Council’s focus for social services is on the most vulnerable people in the community, rather than a universal service.
- Traditional methods of service delivery no longer meet the aspirations of service users.
- Demand for services from demographic changes are increasing financial constraints continue.

Objectives
This approach is intended to maximise independence and offer service users choice and control.

A key element of the new model is promoting the enablement of service users, ensuring only those most in need maintain long-term involvement with the service.

In addition to delivering improved outcomes for service users, this service change will deliver financial savings.

Further to which the work will develop capacity and capability in the third sector, allowing service users to remain in their community.

Drivers
This new model is in-keeping with the principles of the Scottish Government’s Self Directed Support Bill as well as expected future legislation on the Integration of Health and Social Care.

The key drivers for change are…

- Traditional models of service no longer meet the aspirations of those who receive them. For some years, now there has been a move to shift the balance of care from institutions, to community-based services. This applies equally to older and to younger people who now look for a wider range of provision in order to enable them to access opportunities for support, including work and leisure, within the community.
• Social Services are currently facing unprecedented levels of demand, particularly for services for older people and for children. The growth in demand, coupled with the current financial constraints on public sector expenditure, cannot be met using a traditional model of service provision.

• Scottish Government's Self Directed Support Bill was given Royal Assent in January 2013. It will impose duties on Local Authorities to provide citizens with choice and control over the services they receive. The development of North Ayrshire Council's personalisation strategy will ensure that the Council is in a position to meet the demands of the legislation.

• Legislation is expected early in 2013 to bring about the integration of Adult Health and Social Care

• The work on the service user journey aims to increase the use of digital technology to improve performance. The telecare technology supports the principles of early intervention and prevention.

Approach
Work is on-going to reconfigure structures and teams to better meet the needs of service users. All adults and older people requiring an assessment will be engaged in the creation of their own outcome focused plan as part of an enablement approach. It is anticipated that for many, an intensive period of support through an enablement-based assessment process will extend the length of time they can remain independent of longer-term social work supports.

The new model and the team structures designed to implement the changes have been shared with directors of the NHS and are seen as fit for purpose in furthering the integration agenda as it develops.

Self-assessment for OT equipment, assistive technology, including community alert, and meals at home services is being designed, allowing citizens easier access. It is anticipated that in the longer-term, this provision will prevent the need for more intensive supports and keep people independent for longer.

For those who are assessed as requiring longer-term support, more choice and control will be available for individuals through the offer of direct payments. This will ensure that individualised needs can be more flexibly met.

Impact
There are a number of anticipated benefits to the implementation of the new model, including greater ease of access to lower level supports, the maintenance of service user independence for longer and greater choice and control for service users in relation to their own support plans.

A performance framework is being developed to ensure that the impact of the redesigned service model can be closely monitored in terms of its impact on achieving better outcomes for citizens in North Ayrshire.

The Social Services change programme is designed to realise substantial revenue savings totalling £4.211m by 2014.

In addition to those cashable savings, cost avoidance could be achieved through effective early intervention and prevention. The Council will continue to face expenditure pressures for Social Services unless the current models of care are successfully transformed.

Additional Learnings
The pathfinder identified the large scale cultural change for both staff and service users that is needed to ensure a successful transition to the service user journey. A communications and training plan is being developed to meet this requirement.

The development of the CareFirst system to meet the changing Service User journey will allow for an improved and more tailored monitoring and reporting process.

10. The North Ayrshire Homelessness Housing Options Model

As part of our drive to deliver a more customer focussed, performance led service North Ayrshire Council recognised the requirement to transform both the culture of the Homelessness Service, and the relationship with our customers. In conjunction with our partners we undertook a service evaluation and options appraisal exercise which informed a restructuring of our service provision moving to a centralised specialised Housing Options & Advice Service.

Objectives

By delivering timely intervention and personalised housing options advice, we aim to provide a service that empowers people to make informed housing decisions based on need and aspiration. The purpose of this approach is to put the customer at the centre and ensure that they are provided with sufficient information, in a clear and transparent way, which empowers them to make decisions with regard to the housing which best meets their household needs.

Drivers

NAC experienced a 140% increase in homeless presentations between 1996 and 2003, compared to a national average of 27%.

This resulted in...

- Increased pressure on temporary provision and social rented housing, resulting in an over reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation
- The quality of service deteriorating as resources were stretched to capacity;
- An increased length of time to complete homeless assessments and
- Losing contact with 28% of our customers during the homeless process.

We therefore recognised the need to shift resources from crisis response to early intervention.

Approach

All households presenting to the Council looking for homelessness advice are now provided with a housing options appraisal based on their individual needs and aspirations.

This appraisal considers issues of

- Affordability.
- Employment.
- Social networks.
- Education.

An advisor will ensure that the household has a clear understanding of where they would be placed on social rented housing waiting lists dependant of their area and house type choices. Households are also advised of their rights under homeless legislation, the duration of homelessness and the likely outcome measured against both needs and aspiration. There will also be assistance offered by way of accessing
Private Sector Housing utilising the Council’s in House Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

**Impact**

By changing the service structure, shifting resources from crisis response to early intervention, we have reduced the levels of homeless presentations by 49% over a four year period; becoming the sector leader in this area. Some of the benefits of this approach are

- We have assisted the majority of households to remain within their current accommodation, circumventing the trauma, cost and upheaval of homelessness.
- Assisting the Council in meeting the abolition of priority need target 12 months early, one of only a handful of Councils to do so.
- Reducing pressure from the mainstream waiting list as fewer allocations are required for homeless people (previously 50% - now 25%), therefore reducing the length of time people need to wait for an offer of social rented housing. This in turn makes housing from the waiting list a realistic solution to people presenting for a housing options assessment, therefore reducing the risk of homelessness.
- The proactive, person centred approach has ensured that contact is maintained with customers through to conclusion of their application, again with performance exceeding the Scottish average. In addition the average length of time to assess homeless cases dropped from 17 days to 11 days.
- An actual reduction in the cost per case from £136 prior to the restructure, to £107 afterwards. In addition to this, due to reduced demand, 22 units of temporary accommodation have been returned for mainstream housing use and there is no longer a requirement to use bed and breakfast accommodation. This has resulted in reduced staffing costs of £80,500 and maintenance costs of £40,678. Bed and Breakfast has reduced from £51,000 in 08/09 to zero. This amounts to a saving of £172,178. In terms of achieving value for money we are therefore providing a better service at a reduced cost.

In addition to the positive outcomes detailed above it is important to note that the restructure to a centralised provision has not acted as a barrier to people accessing services as the levels of approaches to the team has increased with the majority of households accessing advice and alternative housing options.

**Additional Learnings**

The outcomes of this approach have attracted national recognition, with the Council being highlighted as an exemplary service by the Scottish Government and receiving a COSLA gold award during 2012. In addition to this we have hosted best practice visits from 25 organisations and attended numerous conferences and best practice events.

It should be noted that the proposed Welfare Reforms, in their current format, have the potential to undermine all the positive work noted above due to the significant impact they will have on Local Authorities homelessness budgets.

**Direct response to lines or enquiry**

The examples provided above are indicative of North Ayrshire Council’s culture and approach to developing new ways of working. Below are supplementary responses to the lines of enquiry included in the call for evidence.
1. **What are local authorities doing or considering doing in terms of alternative delivery methods?**

Outcome Based Specification is probably the most widely applied approach to promoting alternative delivery methods, gaining traction in both front line and supporting services.

Health and Social Care integration is also widely expected to promote alternative delivery methods, achieving greater alignment between control and accountability and across costs and benefits.

For Supporting Services considerations tend to be around Service Re-engineering, Special Purpose Vehicles (e.g. JV or ALEO...), and Outsourcing, with both risk and potential savings widely expected to increase through each of those steps.

2. **What has worked and what hasn’t?**

The extent of shared services being delivered isn’t reflective of the level of interest or resource invested in this area. The principal barrier most often being the lack of a common set of objectives, without which there are often too many factors which need to be aligned before Councils will consider the risk, compromise, and investment worthwhile. Without a burning platform, consensus needs to be achieved in the following areas.

**Political**

How do priorities differ from one Council to the next? What is the governance model and how would control be divided? Where would jobs be located? How would giving up any control impact on election commitments? Can the Elected members be seen to help one another?

**Fiscal**

How would budgets be set? What is the difference in historic investment levels? What savings are perceived to be available within each area? What value does each service deliver currently? How would subsequent efficiencies be allocated?

**Operational**

How does the scale of services compare? How does each Council view the performance levels across prospective partners? What are the differing pressures and demands in each area?

Many of these issues don’t apply to cross agency collaboration, which may be a factor in Council’s making more progress with other partners. Another key difference here is that cross agency collaboration tends to be Outcome focused, whereas much discussion between Council’s has been around efficiencies, and the trade off between savings, risk, and control isn’t compelling. Were there greater focus on how collaborative arrangements could deliver improved outcomes, directly or indirectly, that might encourage greater progress.

Another brake on greater adoption of shared services is the tension between savings, scale, complexity, and timing. Put simplistically, to offer the greatest savings, multiple partners are likely to be necessary but this complicates the design and implementation, requiring a time scale that isn’t responsive to current pressures. This together with the resulting demands on Council resources is likely to discourage adoption of this approach.

3. **What savings have been achieved from adopting alternative delivery methods?**
North Ayrshire Council has run an extensive change & reform programme for a number of years, contributing to the £32m taken out of Council Budgets over the same period.

4. **What support is being provided by the Government in driving change?**

At the highest level, the government is providing clear leadership on the direction of travel, particularly with regard to work across agencies. At an operational and tactical level, considerable effort is going into sharing best practise and supporting opportunities for knowledge sharing, through conferences and events.

The establishment and development of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) has driven cross agency partnership working, however as they are coterminous with councils they have less opportunity to influence cross council collaboration, in their current form.

5. **In areas where moves to alternative service delivery models are not being pursued, what efforts are being made to standardise, streamline and simplify existing methods of delivery?**

The accompanying examples are indicative of the approaches taken by North Ayrshire Council.

6. **How are the tensions between potential savings and possible job losses being resolved?**

The options appraisal exercise carried out to evaluate alternative service delivery models, for our supporting services, addressed this tension through the evaluation matrix developed.

At a Council level, it has been important to balance the pace of right-sizing our workforce, to maintain momentum and deliver the required savings without undermining the organisation’s capability to be innovative and drive further transformation.

7. **What legislative barriers are there to developing shared and innovative service delivery models to their full potential?**

The requirement for accountable officers (e.g. Chief Social Work Officer) has previously been suggested as a barrier, however there are current examples of where this has successfully been overcome.

Typically the approach has been to investigate and address perceived barriers on a project by project basis. With many Councils taking the same approach and looking at the same issues, it is likely that this will continue to give rise to considerable duplication. In light of this, there could be value to undertaking a piece of work centrally, to address such legislative issues. With potential to go further and provide a ‘toolkit’ incorporating additional guidance and best practise around establishing shared services. This would also send out a very clear message.

8. **In what areas is there scope for national shared services along the lines of the shared recruitment portal for local authorities, ‘myjobscotland’? What has been learned from elsewhere, for example Nottingham Early Intervention City or Birmingham total place initiative?**

ICT may well offer the most substantial opportunity for a national shared service, not through national networks or systems but by building around national standards.
Such a model offers the potential to avoid huge amount of duplication which occurs across every authority and instead channel that effort into developing more functional and innovative solutions, whilst keeping pace with rapidly advancing technologies. Given the technology available today, it isn’t difficult to imagine a scenario where this could be achieved without a huge amount of centralisation.

An immediate opportunity, on a much more modest scale but with potential to impact directly on service provision and on growing the 3rd sector, is the development of a Personalisation portal, perhaps ‘mycarescotland’. Driven by the urgent need, a number of authorities seem to be developing their own portals and there are national initiatives in the same space. From a council perspective this is suboptimal on account of the duplication and the amount of development resource available, for service providers this will introduce problems maintaining a presence on multiple systems, and for service users this could potentially result in a postal code lottery.

This is probably an urgent issue as, although it is hard to imagine a future where the majority of these portals flourish, it is unlikely that those involved on the ground will stop investing at ‘good enough’, unless there is a clear national strategy outlining where we want to get to.

9. In what ways can innovative delivery methods and collaborative arrangements (as mentioned, for example, in the Christie Commission report) help to improve outcomes and tackle embedded social problems?

It is probably true to say that innovative delivery methods and collaborative arrangements should be the single biggest factors in improving outcomes and tackling embedded social problems.

Given the cumulative impact of sustained austerity over recent years, it is increasingly likely that further cost reduction will have some negative impact on service levels and by implication on outcomes. At a local level there are undoubtedly pockets of savings to be released in different areas and improved outcomes to be had by adopting best practice developed elsewhere but to significantly improve long term trends at a national level it will be necessary to…

1. Be genuinely innovative and deliver services differently to how we do so currently. This necessitates that we revisit the assumptions and constraints placed on councils around how they deliver their services, in particular requirements around inputs (e.g. teacher numbers) which should be replaced with output or ideally outcome based requirements.

2. Transform the national cost base, and there are few opportunities to do this other than to re-organise resources in unconventional ways.

10. In what ways are CPPs being involved in driving the move toward new service delivery methods? What is hampering their involvement and how can it be overcome?

CPPs have played an important part in the progress made in developing cross agency working, although perhaps act to enable this change rather than drive it. For CPPs to be even more influential they would have to become even more relevant, potentially by handing them more power or by increasing the stake that partners’ have in their success.

The opportunity for CPPs to influence collaborative working across Councils appears limited, as by definition their focus is on their own area.