The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations. It brings together over 1,800 members, including a large network of national and local third sector organisations, associates in the statutory and private sectors and individuals.

Our vision is for a Scotland where people of all ages who are disabled or living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers, have a strong voice and enjoy their right to live well, as equal and active citizens, free from discrimination, with support and services that put them at the centre.

Effective engagement is necessary to ensure that the redesign and delivery of health and social care services works to the benefit of communities and individuals. We would, however, welcome a Health and Sport Committee inquiry that looks beyond “consultation” and engagement to consider to what extent the processes that foster new ways of working alongside people who use support and services are being enabled by the new systems and structures. These were, after all, the principles that were intimated in the Policy Memorandum underpinning the Scottish Government’s initial Bill; are espoused in the guidance that has supported implementation; and are an essential element of enabling the transformative service reform that is required.

“This is consistent with principles of co-production, which underpin the Government’s vision for mutual and person-centred public services, which encourage the utilisation of the talents, capacities and potential of all of Scotland’s people and communities in designing and delivering health and social services. In addition, it will be important, and is intended through secondary legislation, to involve and consult carers and users of health and social care services in all aspects of the integrated arrangements.” Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill, Policy Memorandum, May 2013

Do you know how and when you can get involved with the Integration Authorities to influence decision making?

Between March and July 2016 the ALLIANCE’s Third Sector Health and Social Care Support Team scoped the third sector experience of integration\(^1\). Many of the barriers and frustrations reported then persist, although there are early signs that things are beginning to improve.

In general terms, the sector who do not serve on local governance and planning groups still find it difficult to source information and do not feel they are able to influence the outcome. Communication mechanisms have a significant impact on this, as even public facing documents can be difficult to find online. However, some Partnerships also appear reluctant to share information about their intentions and short-term priorities. Most Partnerships have also not invested in local support to enable the third sector’s contribution. Feedback indicates that the sector feel significantly more empowered, and initiate more action, when it is easy to access appropriately detailed information and they have support to use it.

At governance and planning group level, most third sector advocates are still not fully embedded in decision-making processes and many report that their statutory partners view implementation plans and decision-making as operational processes. As a result, some advocates report that they do not have access to relevant data and information and many groups do not make decisions. When third sector advocates are engaged in ongoing dialogue and have access to the operational detail or are kept abreast of developments they generally feel they can contribute and have information to discuss with the sector.

Were you consulted in the preparation of the strategic plans or involved with the work of the Strategic Planning Group?

Our research suggests that in most areas, there was extensive engagement regarding the strategic plan, much of it facilitated by Third Sector Interfaces. For most, however, the process used to develop Strategic Plans felt consultative rather than co-productive and finished when the initial high-level plan was drafted. Many also expressed concerns that the suggestions made by individuals and organisations were not incorporated into the final plans and that participants received little or no feedback about why.

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership

Representatives from the third and independent sectors, along with statutory sector colleagues formed a group to write the initial draft of the plan before moving to engage with a diverse local audience. The group drew on the expertise of some local peer researchers, who had been trained by the local Alcohol and Drug Partnership and regularly supported their work, to formulate an engagement plan. This included: process design, question development, data collection and analysis.

During February 2015, 6 peer researchers based themselves in three sites across North Ayrshire. They interviewed 279 members of the public about North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnerships Strategic Priorities. The strategic plan was altered to reflect the feedback received through these interactions. The Partnership then held a number of public engagement events in communities across North
Ayrshire to gather views on the revised Plan and again, updated the Plan to reflect the feedback captured.

In many areas there continues to be a perceived lack of clarity about the role and purpose of Strategic Planning Groups (SPGs), and in several areas it is still seen by the sector as ‘only there to fulfil the requirements of the legislation’. In several areas, the SPG was concerned solely with the formulation and review of the Strategic Plan, and not with its ongoing monitoring and implementation and hence did not meet regularly. Furthermore, in many areas the Strategic Planning Group does not contain the diversity of voices that would accurately reflect the ethos of the legislation.

**Have you been involved with the work of the Integration Authority following the publication of the strategic plan?**

In some areas, the third sector is firmly embedded and woven through the work of the SPG and Integration Authority and the vast majority of areas evidence a wish to increase the sector’s level of involvement. There is third sector involvement in the evaluation and monitoring of the Integrated Care Fund, Public Social Partnership work, and there are also a few areas where the third sector is linked into operational process.

However, many third sector organisations are still struggling to connect in, and do not know, for example, who to contact when their Single Level Agreement is reaching the end of its contract period, and find it difficult to find information that would enable them to enhance their contribution. In the vast majority of areas where there is higher engagement with the third sector, this is supported by investment in an enabling resource.

In the vast majority of cases the Strategic Plans are high level documents that provided little operational detail about how the change envisaged in them will be delivered. These are also often the only documents available to the sector, making it difficult for the sector to contribute to the ongoing implementation of the Plans.

**Perth and Kinross Health and Social Care Partnership**

Perth and Kinross Health and Social Care Partnership have formally recognised the Third Sector Health and Social Care Strategic Forum, facilitated and supported by the local TSI, as its main conduit to and from the Third Sector.

The third sector representative on the Integrated Joint Board produces a written precis of the Board papers in the period between the papers being published and the forum meeting. The forum meetings have been deliberately scheduled to fall
between the papers being published and the Integrated Joint Board meeting to allow for the representative to gather views and seek feedback. The representative also reissues the board paper precis with updates following the Integrated Joint Board meeting.

The seven third sector representatives who sit on the Strategic Planning Group (selected to ensure that a width of communities of interest were represented) attend the forum and provide regular feedback and updates.

**Have you been involved with the work of the localities/what involvement would you like to have?**

Although operational delivery structures have developed at locality level in most areas, most do not yet have fully operational locality planning groups (as described in the legislation and guidance). In the areas where locality planning is more advanced, the Groups are chaired or co-chaired by the Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs), leading to a welcome perception of being an equal partner. In most cases these Groups are however still in their infancy and require to be nurtured and developed as there have been instances where stakeholders have felt disenfranchised when their ideas have not been listened to or implemented, as they were not seen as aligning with the strategic priorities detailed in the strategic plan.

There are also continued concerns about how locality planning will work for services hosted by one locality that deliver across more than one locality or Integration Authority, as there is no clear information about how the wider population will influence the service shape and design of such services.

**Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership**

In Argyll and Bute, it is felt that the third sector has its most influence through the Locality Planning Groups (LPGs) and currently, the TSI co-chair two of the LPGs, and is involved in the Communication and Engagement Group of each. Each locality has its own devolved budget from the Integrated Care Fund.

The Partnership and the TSI held a series of workshops across each locality, Collaboration, Co-Production, and Communities, engaging with the third sector and the public around the HSCP’s strategic priorities, to consider how to develop innovative services that benefitted from partnership working. Reports from these events have now gone to each of the LPGs for consideration of how the work should be progressed.

**Do you think that your involvement with the IAs has had an impact on decision making?**
The experience of third sector advocates varied significantly across Scotland with some feeling excluded and others embedded. Where the sector advocates sat on this continuum appears to be largely a function of the history of the organisation, the previous experience of all partners, the stability of personnel and the strength of the sector’s connection with Integration Authority personnel.

In many areas, decision-making was still viewed as happening in operational meetings without input from the third sector or ‘outside the room’. Often this is because the statutory sector still viewed the third sector as sub-contractors who could draw competitive advantage from their involvement, rather than as partners in the process. Despite these barriers, some sector advocates and TSI staff were still able to contribute to the process and keep in the loop of what was happening by using their own knowledge of the system and connections within it. However, it is the ability to network with the wider sector, including sparing the resource necessary to enable 2-way information flow, that still proves challenging.

What could be done to improve the communication from the IAs?

- Provision of well-structured, regularly updated information online, including opportunities to get involved away from meetings (e.g. polls).
- Sharing ideas before fully formed and developed, to allow room for others input.
- Sharing of improvement plans.
- Signposting to priorities (including short, medium and long-term), and set out and publish planned activities for next 3 months.
- Provision of clear and regular information which outlines who is responsible for what in each partnership.
- Don’t focus solely on “big ticket” items (e.g. strategic plans or savings proposals) without prior engagement and contextual information about the challenges faced by the Partnership.
- Share good news stories and progress.

What could be done to ensure greater collaboration and engagement in the decision making process of Integration Authorities?

- More investment of time and energy in building the foundations of the new way of working and a shift away from a focus on traditional statutory services and system driven targets evidenced in strategic documents is required.
- The Review of Targets and Indicators enabling a more co-produced approach.
- Partnerships entering into early and frequent dialogue with the third sector about its priorities, alongside support that enables this.
- More emphasis should be placed on capacity building opportunities like the Our Voice programme which is developing peer networks across Scotland of the
carer, service user and third sector representatives who sit on Integration Joint Boards.

- Support Strategic Planning Groups to develop and clearly define their role in the implementation phase.
- Following the Council Elections in May, rapid and targeted induction process for new councillors who sit on Integration Joint Boards to strengthen their knowledge and skills in enabling co-productive ways of working.
- Investment in enabling support for the sector (e.g. capacity for ongoing outreach as well as to respond to enquiries).
- Support and training to design and implement new decision making processes.
- Support to increase understanding of strategic commissioning and co-production within partnerships.