Local Government and Communities Committee

Consultation of the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish Government’s Revised National Outcomes

Submission from Alasdair Mathers

First comment, the timescale is very short to allow for feedback (29 March to 11 April including Easter holiday period makes this less than a meaningful exercise).

On the 3 new outcomes:

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We grow up loved, safe and respected, so that we realise our full potential

It would be hard to disagree with these broad aspirational statements as principles of the kind of society we would wish to live in. The issue is where the responsibility for delivery of these rests. It is easy to say that this is a shared responsibility for all, but some outcomes will be politically contested and are not shared by all. For example tackling poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally involves those who currently have wealth power and opportunity giving up some of this and there is little evidence historically of that being willingly done without intervention by the state.

For all of us to grow up loved is on the other hand not a matter fundamentally led on by the state, but primarily a matter of human behaviour towards one another within and beyond the family. Interventions by the state in ensuring all of us grow up loved have traditionally been to seek to prevent the worst opposites of this experience using social work intervention in families and through the positive socialisation of children in schooling.

The challenge with the use of ‘national outcomes’ is to agree how such outcomes are best achieved and how to share responsibility fairly and appropriately between individuals, families, communities of place and interest, private and state agencies. It is not yet clear that Scotland has a shared sense of how responsibility is shared and is more commonly engaged in allocating responsibility (and often blame for failings) to others both within and outside Scotland.