

SDS Submission to inquiry into Community Planning

1. How a national body such as SDS engages with CPPs at a local level and works in partnership with other members.

SDS engages with local partners by sharing our knowledge and information to enable partners to best support individuals and businesses at a local level. SDS is a 'data rich' organisation and we use this data to support our customers and steer how we deliver our services to them. We also share this data with partners at a local level. Whether that is our Labour Market Intelligence which we share with partners to highlight the skills challenges in the local area both present and in the future. Or the data we collect on school pupils either through our Data Hub or as part of our in-school delivery.

As an organisation we are able to identify the needs of local, regional and national employers while also having an understanding of what careers or training senior-phase school pupils are looking to move into. As a national agency our ability to share this knowledge allows us to work in a partnership approach with local authorities, third sector organisations and the enterprise agencies to cater to the needs of local communities. Through engagement with local CPP groups and links with wider, regional partnerships, SDS is able to support alignment between the aims and ambitions of the local outcome improvement plans and regional economic strategies.

Additionally, SDS plays a statutory role in the community justice boards and leads on partnership development of employability provision for those citizens with offending backgrounds. Through our role as a corporate parent SDS provides strategic leadership through our CPPs. SDS Chairs/Vice Chairs local employability partnerships across several local authority areas and are key strategic partners in developing No One Left Behind delivery plans. These groups play an active role in setting out the agenda and area of direction for CPPs.

2. Whether there are any challenges or barriers to that engagement being effective.

As a national agency which sits across all 32 CPPs it can be a challenge to understand how we can contribute effectively to meeting the different needs and goals of each CPP. Although CPPs need to have a local focus, they all operate differently when it comes to setting agendas, recording actions, and involving the wider partnerships. This can be challenging for national partners to coordinate and contribute effectively. A more uniform approach to some of those challenges would also help to create a better system for measuring the performance and outcomes of CPPs moving forward.

3. Your views on the whether the Act is meeting its objective of reducing inequalities, and the effectiveness of Local Outcome Improvement Plans and locality plans.

In terms of a national picture, we have been able to see positive progress across many of the CPPs. Working with community partners to drive and influence change has had a range of positive outcomes across Scotland and the focus that CPPs have on sharing data and learning across partners has allowed for improved service delivery in local areas. The challenge for CPP (Community Planning Partnership) is evidencing improvement and sharing good practice across the different groups. SDS and other national partners have a role to play in sharing this good practice across all the CPPs but creating a uniformed approach would support this.

4. Whether the statutory partners as set out in Schedule 1 of the Act needs revisiting.

The partners who attend CPP have the local and national intelligence to support and influence change. The statutory partners should always be reviewed to allow the flexibility to bring in the appropriate expertise to support discussions and influence change. The membership of statutory partners set out in Schedule 1 of the Act are not present/included at all CPPs.

5. Whether there is sufficient leadership at a local or national level to support community planning.

CPPs are led and managed by local authorities due to the resource required to administer the meetings, plans and subgroups. There are many benefits to sharing the leadership across the partnership. The challenge is the national partners do not have the resource to support, since in some instances specific individuals can be responsible for sitting across more than 6 or 7 CPPs. This is already an extensive workload and to add responsibility for administering a CPP to one of these individuals would likely be unsustainable and result in poor delivery.

6. Whether the Scottish Government's Letters of Guidance to SDS include requirements to engage in community planning.

As part of the [Skills Development Scotland Letter of Guidance 2022/23](#), the Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, Youth Employment and Training outlined the requirement for SDS to continue *'to play an active role in Local Employability Partnerships to support those requiring employability interventions. I also look to SDS to continue to offer support to those furthest from the labour market through effective management of the National Third Sector Fund, for which we have extended access to the end of December 2022.'*

The letter of guidance outlines several opportunities to work with local partners through sharing Labour Market Information, delivering apprenticeships and providing Career Information, Advice and Guidance across all 32 local authorities. SDS will also continue to work with Local Authorities to help them deliver the Employability Fund following the transition from that being delivered by SDS to now being delivered by Local Authorities.