

April—May

2017





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Report Introduction

In total over 150 participants took part in the sessions with many of them representing one or more community or Third Sector organisation. The workshops themselves were conducted throughout April and May 2017 with members from the Highland Third Sector Interface, The Highland Community Justice Partnership, Police Scotland, The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Highland Council and Public Health all supporting the events as part of their role within the CPP and as individual organisations.

All of the workshops agreed that the general themes identified were appropriate to be included within the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP). Some areas suggested additional themes though none of those suggestions were consistent across the sessions. They have been recorded where put forward in the individual plans and feedback on a local basis to the Community Partnerships. The need to focus on inequality and tackling root causes was emphasised in several places.

Other common themes of discussions arguably occurred around digital connectivity and infrastructure, with most areas recognising issues with this. It may be that this is a potential cross cutting consideration for consideration across all or most of the identified themes. A need to consider any increase in digital technology use or investment however has to go hand in hand with training and confidence building for some people within communities.

The need to ensure that considerations around employment and employability as it relates to all of these themes was also recurring across several workshops. The CPP may consider ensuring that this is also a cross cutting theme for each of these thematic areas.

Generally the suggestions contained within this summary combine the opportunity for the CPP to take a direct role in leadership of an identified area of interest to the people of Highland or to lobby elsewhere on their behalf. The role of a representative voice for Highland is something which hasn't necessarily been fully exploited by the CPP to date and may be an area for debate and consideration within the Board. It is clear that the participants felt there are

opportunities for the CPP to support greater input to national policies and approaches by the people of Highland by acting as their figurative 'megaphone'.

There were a number of suggestions that came up which focus around activity arguably already in place or underway but of which the participants had little or no knowledge. This underlined the lack of communication which exists around the activities of both the public and third sectors and the average citizens within Highland. There is a significant opportunity within the CPP to join those gaps in communication as part of an ongoing engagement and participative approach. A sub group or equivalent specifically for the purpose of driving communication, relationship building and participation with communities, on behalf of the CPP, is something the CPP should give consideration to. This approach has been adopted in other areas of Scotland.

We should be conscious of the high levels of cynicism which do exist within communities around the likelihood and appetite for change in how the relationships are managed between our Public Sector organisations and communities. Although the feedback was very positive in every area there were participants who observed they 'had been there before' at every session; whether in the evaluation forms or verbally. In the next stages of planning and thereafter in the initial implementation it is critical for the CPP to consider how that experience will be different for people in Highland or risk further damaging the quality and quantity of public participation.

It is encouraging however, when you review the feedback provided at the workshop sessions— specifically the words circled. People are energised at the idea we are changing the approach. That needs to be capitalised upon in the course of the next few months and into the next few years of the initial 10 year vision for the CPP.

Workshop Synopsis

The workshop sessions were primarily intended to feed into the development of the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan but during the course of each event there were opportunities to feed into a number of public planning processes:

Highland Outcome Improvement Plan: Under the new Community Empowerment Act, section 2, the Highland Community Planning Partnership (CPP) are required to write a Local Outcome Improvement Plan; local refers to a Local Authority area hence the reference to a Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP). The HOIP is an outcome focused plan for delivering the CPP vision over the course of the next ten years, which will result in a reduction in the socioeconomic deprivation in Highland and will increase the positive outcomes and destinations for those individuals and communities who, historically, are more likely to be disadvantaged by their socio-economic circumstances.

Initial review of evidence submitted by members of the CPP identified some consistent themes for engagement as part of this process:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Transport
- Poverty
- Community Safety and Resilience
- Community Engagement and participation in decision making

Policing 2026 Strategy/Local Policing Plan: Police Scotland had open until the 8th of May, a consultation on the national Policing Strategy for the period until 2026. Participants were informed of the strategy components and encouraged to participate in the online survey. Additionally local officers were also participating to gather information in relation to the local policing plan for Highland which will be published later in 2017.

Local Fire Plans: SFRS are currently in the process of writing the local Fire Plan following the adoption of their new national strategy. They were particularly interested in hearing about where they could work closely with the communities, where communities saw opportunities to develop the SFRS role and for information on where they felt the SFRS could do better.

Highland Community Justice Plan 2018+: On the 1st of April 2017 the Highland CPP took responsibility for the delivery of Community Justice throughout Highland. A one year plan has been put in place but the Highland Community Justice

Partnership (HCJP) are building toward a more ambitious three year plan for April 2018 and were collecting views on what support can be put in place to support people with an offending history to be rehabilitated in community settings.

Active Highland Framework: The Active Highland Group are finalising a plan for physical activity which is targeted to reduce health inequalities and participants were asked to complete a short survey on the proposed framework.

The workshop session was divided into five component parts:

Introductory presentation: Each session was provided with a contextual presentation, taking them through the individual planning processed they would be feeding into.

The good, the bad & the ugly: As a warm up to the session and a way to capture initial impressions people have about their communities they were asked to record a couple of observations for each of the last three questions:

The Good; what is good about your community

The Bad: things that you feel aren't available within your community

The Ugly: things that are in your community but don't necessarily work well or meet your needs.

Thematic Questions: participants were asked to work in groups, identifying four main ideas or areas for improvement around each of the following themes:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Poverty
- Dialogue and participation with communities
- Transport
- Keeping people safe, particularly the most vulnerable
- Support for people who commit offending behaviour

Sense checking: the groups were asked whether they agreed with the proposed thematic areas of the HOIP and other suggestions were asked.

Police and Fire Input: Police Scotland and the SFRS then provided an overview of their planning process, current areas of activity and invited questions from within the groups.

Each event was individually evaluated and a separate report recording the feedback provided for that event was produced. These reports and individually available on the Highland Third Sector Interface and Highland CPP websites.

The Good: What is good about our communities:

There were some very clear consistencies about what people identified as being 'good' about their communities.

The physical environment, particularly in the more rural areas of Highland, was a recurring point of pride. It is clear that participants value their geographical areas and how they are able to interact with them.

Volunteering and the general sense of civic participation and pride was again a consistent observation provided by the workshops. Community members who participated in the workshops place a significant value on the local activism and engagement that they see happening within the community. Though at times the context of the discussions highlighted that this was a self care for communities which happened sometimes in the absence of support from out with that community.

Connectedness and identify as a community was highlighted at all the workshops, though to a lesser extent in the more urban areas. It is worth observing though that the lack of connectedness also arose as something missing within the community, though to a far lesser extent, but its inclusion does emphasise that experience within and views of our communities are subject to our individual experience of them and this varies.

Other areas of feedback included recognition for the amount of community activities and groups that they, as members of a community, would have access to.

The sense of feeling safe and recognising that the community they live within was safe was again a consistent observation for most of the workshops.

Fewer people included feedback on things like access to elected members or the experience of elected members. Business support for the community and the involvement of young people were also included.

In general there was less feedback which was peculiar to a specific area of Highland than in comparison with aspects of the other two questions under *The Good,* The Bad & The Ugly.

The Bad: What is missing in our communities:

Although feedback took in a broader spectrum of themes within the context of things that were 'missing', there were still some prominent consistencies.

Transportation, road infrastructure, patient transport, public transport and evening or out of hours services were consistently part of all of the conversations and fed back to a greater or lesser extent at all of the workshops. There is a recognition that no simple or individual solution exists around these transport related problems but a clear indication has been given that the CPP need to include action related to addressing them within the HOIP.

Other areas of notable consistency include;

Centralisation: the more distant you were from Inverness the more concerns about the loss of public sector jobs, local knowledge and provision of public sector services were raised. However there was also a concern raised about centralising into the city centre when at the Smithton workshop too.

Health services: some concerns were raised about services that aren't in place but groups felt should be. Notably within Caithness but not restricted to this area.

Funding cuts & preventative spend: there were regular observations around the affect of cuts on community and third sector activity particularly as this pertains to preventative activity.

Young people: there is a sense that the lack of services, activity and entertainment for young people is having multiple negative impacts on communities, their ability to retain young people in the area and particularly on the young people themselves.

Mental Health: in most workshops they highlighted the need for more support for people who have mental ill health and the lack of support for community services around this area.

Relationships: cohesion within communities, dialogue within them and between them and public decision making bodies also occurred as something that people

identified as missing in some areas within Highland.

Housing: specifically the access to affordable housing, including renting, within rural areas specifically but not exclusively.

Lack of community facilities: specifically social points such as a café or a pub were noted as disappearing and concerns over the impact on community cohesion as a result of not having those central social points.

Finally it is worth reflecting on the role of local business within communities, which does come up throughout the three opening questions and in this instance there is concern that its absence or a lack of support for business in communities could lead to and impact on job loss and a reduction in sustainable local economy.

The Ugly: Things that are in your community but don't necessarily work well or meet your needs:

Much of this area replicated the themes of the 'bad' feedback where people recognised that there were services or activity in place but in fact it wasn't functioning in the way they felt it should. To that end it isn't surprising that Transport again was a consistent theme but focused this time on access to information on timetable, road signs and public transport provision at the times people want them, specifically in commuting hours or in the evening and weekends; where it was felt there is insufficient provision currently in place.

Employment opportunities and recruiting into specific professions were highlighted in some areas. Likewise mental health provision was also highlighted in most areas with GP services particularly noted within the Nairn workshop.

Broadband and phone signal were concerns for most of the areas outside of Inverness and likewise facilities for young people.

North West Sutherland picked up on issues related to tourism more prominently than other areas, specifically the increased traffic, litter, lack of toilet facilities and overnight camping/caravanning at the side of the road and the mess that leaves.

Additional Support Needs for young people and child care came up as under met in several of the workshops. As did the ability to have an active influence over decision makers.

Several workshops noted a negative impact from high street shops being unused or boarded up.

The Thematic Questions:

Participants were asked to work in groups, identifying four main ideas or areas for improvement around each of the following themes below.

Some of the suggestions are particular to one or more of the individual public partners on the CPP and where they are very specific they have been fed back to those agencies but won't necessarily be the focus of these recommendations on the basis that the HOIP is by nature a partnership approach.

Equally there are aspects which are specifically relevant to a local area and these have been highlighted in the individual report and fed back to the Local Community Partnerships for consideration, inclusion and where appropriate inclusion in their local plans.

The following is an attempt to consolidate the proposals and ideas from across the eleven workshops into possible areas of inclusion into a relevant subsection of the HOIP which could focus each of these themes.

Mental Health & Wellbeing:

Groups were given a questions around how more people in Highland could be supported to have and maintain good mental health and wellbeing.

part of the opening activities that many of the participants do feel the current provision of mental health services does not meet the needs of individuals in communities; particularly in terms of preventing the escalation of mental ill health when it occurs.

The groups did, however, identify areas of possible activity which would start to support a shift in the experience of mental ill health within Highland; with the intention of increasing the number of people who have and are able to maintain good mental health and wellbeing.

Awareness raising, tackling stigma and improving public understanding : The Highland CPP is well placed to co-ordinate an ongoing campaign to raise awareness of mental health, tackle the stigma which can exist around mental ill health and educate the

general public at large about mental health and personal resilience.

Cohesive and partnership approach with collaborative planning: There is an opportunity for the Highland CPP to take a leading role in strengthening collaboration across public, third and independent services in relation to mental health provision specifically to reduce the gaps in provision that communities are identifying; in addition to meeting the needs for more cohesion in supporting people with mental ill health.

Social Isolation: The Highland CPP has already acknowledge the negative impact that social isolation, and all the contributing factors associated with that, can have on individual and community health and wellbeing. A specific and strengthened focus on reducing social isolation as part of a preventative strategy have been identified as a necessary component to reducing mental ill health.

Peer support, lived experience and supporting existing community activity: The CPP, individually and collectively, could improve how it supports the inclusion of lived experience in their planning and service development. The need to support and grow peer based activity alongside community based and led solutions, again particularly around the preventative approach, is an identified priority from the workshop sessions.

It is apparent within the conversations and feedback as **Employment and mental health:** the CPP should look for opportunities to work with employers to improve their willingness and approach to recruiting people who have a history of mental ill health and to better support people in work to maintain their mental health and wellbeing. Additionally work should undertaken to consider supporting the employability of individuals with mental ill health or recovering from mental ill health.

> **Early intervention and personal resilience:** There was a recognition that community activities are a key part of preventing an escalation in mental ill health. Concerns were expressed about the impact of funding cuts on this provision or the growth of it. The CPP should consider what role it might have in supporting community early intervention and enhancing an individual's personal resilience, especially focusing on education and working with young people.

Young people & Schools: There was a general sense that more could be done in schools to support young people to understand and increase their ability to access support for mental ill health.

Innovation, Digital inclusion and connectedness:

Although not universally agreed several areas felt more could be done to enhance the accessibility of support through better use of digital technology. Arguably this transcends this particular area and it might be worth the CPP considering how the use of technology could support the delivery of the HOIP across all themes.

Volunteering, social prescribing & physical activity:

Again acknowledging that all of the above contribute to resilience and early intervention the Highland CPP should consider what activity they could undertake to support these activities; all of which contribute to the other themes below and some consideration across all would strengthen the overall impact.

Poverty:

Groups were given a questions around how more people in Highland could be supported to reduce the difficulties they have in meeting all their basic needs because of a lack of income.

There were concerns raised generally that a focus on the use of formulas such as SEP or SIMD didn't take account of poverty which exists within more affluent communities. Although there wasn't disagreement about the focus of the areas identified for localities plan where people were aware of those areas, it was felt that account needs to be taken of individuals who experience poverty not within an identified deprived area. The CPP and Community Partnerships should be conscious of not negatively impacting on families and individuals who struggle financially in more affluent less deprived communities by refocusing resource and services into other areas without impact assessing those decisions.

Financial Advice, Access and Budgeting Education:

The CPP and its component agencies are in a position to identify families and individuals who could benefit from financial advice and support and as such could consider strengthening referral pathways to existing providers. Equally as commissioners of services through organisations like the CAB they could consider the implications of funding to those services in relation to supporting and advising the most vulnerable households in Highland. Finally in over half of the workshops there was a sense and feedback provided that budgeting and financial management were skills no longer taught in school and that this was failing to provide people with necessary life skills. The Highland CPP might consider how to work with existing activities and to generate a new focus on budgeting and money management education either within schools and/or other settings which might reach those most in need of that support.

Benefit Reform: It was widely recognised that the current budget system was failing to meet the needs of those most vulnerable as a result of low incomes. Although the ability of the CPP to intervene in national and UK national policy and practice will be limited there is a role to potentially advocate on behalf of the citizens in Highland, lending a weight to their voice; which some feel has no power at the moment.

Rural living wage and the living wage: The Highland CPP may want to consider promoting the concept of the need for a rural living wage which would reflect the cost of living in remote and rural areas. As a minimum the CPP should champion the introduction of living wage throughout Highland.

Seasonal employment, job prospects: Rural areas identified that there are insufficient employment options in their area with lower income or seasonal jobs being the prominent choice available. The Highland CPP should consider a focus on attracting in a variety of new business and employment options throughout the whole of Highland where possible. Though based on feedback a specific focus on the north and north west of Highland might be welcome. Given than seasonal employment derives in significant part from tourism or agriculture, activity could be considered in how to sustain the tourism season longer or support diversity of economy within areas of Highland where they are currently dependant on those industries for jobs.

Affordable Housing: The need for affordable housing recurs throughout the feedback and links to various areas. In this instance the need to ensure that people

have safe affordable places to stay is critical in ensuring they have the opportunity to manage their budgets and meet their basic needs. Although housing is a problem throughout the region there are some particular areas where the lack of any type of housing restricts inward migration at a time when the communities sustainability depends on that inward migration. The CPP should consider the impacts and activity necessary to address the negative aspects of housing shortage to our more fragile rural communities and work with those communities to find solutions where possible.

Childcare and transport provision: For some people the lack of ability to secure affordable or indeed any form of childcare is a barrier to securing or maintaining employment. Equally the ability to access transportation to and from work is a significant barrier to securing or maintaining employment. In worst case scenarios individual may put their benefit entitlement at risk because of their in ability to comply with the need to secure employment in the face of these barriers. The CPP should consider what activity it can undertake to ensure that lack of childcare or transport are not barriers to employment.

Collaborative working and information sharing: The CPP could consider exploring possibilities to improve agency to agency referral pathways that would support a more holistic support structure round households where they are or are likely to experience poverty.

Reduce Fuel Poverty: Highlands has some unique challenges for the whole of Scotland and the CPP should consider taking a more active focus on what it can do to reduce fuel poverty throughout the region.

Dialogue and participation with and within Communities:

Participating groups were asked to think about how relationships, communication and participation between communities and public sector decision makers could be improved and how that might be improved within and between communities too.

Ban the boardroom: Several of the workshops highlighted the need to approach consultation and engagement in a different, at times more creative, way. They highlighted the need for fun, to reach different audiences by using different methods. Some highlighted the need for drop-in days at the Fire Stations, Police Stations and Council buildings.

Use different mediums, quality not quantity: It was recognised that any good dialogue will have to consist of various channels of communication, taking advantage of local printed and social media platforms. The point was made that ensuring the participation of the right representation was critical and more important than the number or frequency of instances of engagement.

Social Media: Better use of Social Media would support the CPP to reach a new type of audience in many instances. Though this shouldn't be used as the only platform as that would in turn exclude a significant number of Highland citizens, failure to use Social Media in the current environment is arguably also excluding a large proportion of the Highland population.

Local Decisions, Local Power, Local Accountability:

Where possible decisions about public sector resources should be made as local to the consumers of those resources as possible. In these and in other circumstances where that isn't possible every effort should be made to ensure that those interacting with communities have the ability to react to their feedback and requests, they should have some decision making capacity. Equally they should also have some accountability for how that power is exercised. The CPP should consider what opportunities they have to support local decision making.

Listen and Act: There was cynicism about the impact from the workshops because some, arguably the majority, of the participants felt that they had been through this process before and no one took account of what they said to implement change. Almost all the workshops highlighted the need to act or to see action as a result of that engagement. They were clear that this isn't something they have come to expect from public sector consultation. In part this results from not clarifying the expectations and being honest about the reach of the impact expected from a single instance of

engagement or consultation. It isn't clear that the CPP nor any of the member public sector agencies has clarified the routes and processes information goes through once provided by a community member as part of a consultative process. The relationship between the act of listening within the engagement process and instigating action needs to be clearer and more transparent.

Honest, plain language, lip service: Similarly those conducting engagement on behalf of the CPP need to be able to do so in a way that is honest and transparent, clear about the limitations of the consultation and the impact it would have. The language and approach are important to the integrity of the process and the quality of relationship that develops as a result.

Relationship building: Finding opportunities to build relationships with members of the communities should be constant and not just at times of the year or planning cycles where engagement is required. It was suggested that agency staff getting engaged or involved in community projects would be a good way to build on those relationships and foster trust and dialogue. Using existing partnerships and building on those would also support increasing the quality of relationships which exists with communities.

Create opportunities to form networks between communities: To support sustainable community development the CPP could consider supporting inter community networking to foster peer support and the sharing of good practice.

Transport:

Without a doubt the subject of transport was the issue raised at the workshops with the most support across all sessions. There was an acceptance that it is complex and finding solutions to these issues would be difficult and potentially long term. The animation around the topic at each of the sessions was evidence through that this is a universal concern, though local areas have specific characteristics within that.

Timetabling and information sharing: There is a sense that information on travel options can be difficult to find. Timetables can be hard to follow or to access at

all, especially if you have literacy or numeracy problems. There are also problems with scheduling transport options so they link to one another more effectively, for example a bus service gets you to a train or ferry point in time to take the train or ferry rather than either a little after or bang on the same time. The CPP may be able to work with transport providers to co-ordinate planning for transport provision and information sharing better within Highland.

Community Transport: a lot of workshops felt that more investment and support for community transport would help to support the most vulnerable and in places it would be the only sustainable transport option. Collaborative work within the CPP and between members could look at strengthening the current provision and growing this to a universal level across Highland.

Supermarket sponsorship: As part of the development and working with community and private transport providers the CPP could consider brokerage for supermarket sponsorship for transport in some areas. This would potentially be attractive to the supermarkets as they would benefit from the custom while individuals get access to regular trips into a designated centre or connection point to other transport services.

Developing the transport market: Some groups felt that the lack of competition within the transport market was keeping the options available to individuals limited. The CPP might be able to consider public funds which are used to subsidise transportation, including hospital appointment reimbursements, and other leverage they have to develop and diversify the providers market in some areas of Highland.

Reducing the need for transport or recognising the challenges transportation created: The CPP may be able to leverage support for those people in communities who are bound to travel for public sector appointments so that those appointments take place at a time which is physically possible to make and grouping appointments to reduce the need for multiple journeys; that's to include job centre appointments as well as benefit assessments and hospital appointments etc.

Where possible alternative to travel such as digital appointments should be considered, at the agreement of the individual.

Generally the CPP should consider an ongoing programme for reviewing transport provision and barriers the lack of transport causes, specifically because the families and households who are affected by the lack of personal transportation are likely to be those who are inherently more vulnerable due to a reduce household income, health or social care needs and/or age.

Keeping people safe:

Considerations around this issue were wide ranging and below is a summary of the more recurring themes; but referring to each of the individual reports would give a rounder picture of the breadth of ideas.

Civic participation: A lot of suggestions around keeping people safe focused around activities that community members and groups could lead on themselves. Many of these related to neighbourliness or the concept of sharing activities/spaces across generations. The CPP may consider what role they could have in fostering and supporting the growth of community activity which promotes citizenship. This activity was particularly highlighted in areas where they felt they had 'lost' that feeling and activity.

Information sharing and collaborative approach:

Many groups felt that it would be useful to strengthen the information sharing between public agencies so that a 'map' of vulnerability could be created; helping to focus resources and support.

First Responders: The CPP could consider what role it might have in developing first responder systems which support people to stay safely at home. It was noted that not everyone has access to the required number of responders to maintain a helpcall service.

Digital Safety: Consideration needs to be given to maintaining everyone's digital/online safety. Increasing awareness needs to be managed with the support and offer of training and education on how to use the internet and other digital tools safely.

Social Inclusion: It has been observed that reducing social isolation would support better connectedness within the community and in keeping people safe. The

CPP can consider its activity in relation to supporting more social inclusion.

Joint innovation within and with communities: The CPP should consider how it it can support innovative ways to reduce vulnerability and increase awareness while improving cohesion in joint delivery and planning. Examples were given in the individual reports where public sector agencies are using resources in different way and these should be used to inspire ongoing change.

Training and referral pathways: Opportunities for sharing and collaborating on training across agencies and sectors would help to strengthen organisational support, delivery and co-operation. Supporting more effective and frequent interagency/sector referrals would likewise strengthen likelihood of positive outcomes.

Knowledge and awareness of existing services: It was recognised that a number of activity, organisations and projects already have a role in supporting people within communities but that perhaps there is a lack of awareness of the services on offer, how people can access them and where to refer people to. The CPP should look for opportunities to improve understanding, knowledge and inter-agency/ organisation referrals to maximise the existing resources already in place in communities.

Additionally as commissioners of community services the CPP partners may consider implementing an assessment which measure the disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable as a result of cuts to community activity as part of a responsible commissioning framework.

Community Justice:

Information was collected with a view to developing and growing the Community Justice Plan for April 2018 and beyond. The responses to this question will be more fully analyses by the HCJP but as a summary feedback tended to include the following:

Restorative justice

Person centred approach, with individual needs met

Early intervention

Rehabilitative volunteering and community work

Less custodial sentences, where possible and appropriate.

Peer support and networks

Employability and recruitment of people with offending history

Tackling alcohol and drug dependency

Diversionary activities—for all ages

The full input will be reported to the Highland Community Justice Partnership in June 2017 and will be considered for action in the development of the next three year Community Justice Plan for Highland.

What Next:

The Highland CPP is also undertaking an open survey to capture additional views on the same themed areas. This survey is due to close mid June 2017 and will be collated into its own individual report.

Consideration of these evidence bases, activity undertaken through individual partners and pre-existing consultative evidence will all feed into a draft Highland Outcome Improvement Plan which will be widely circulated for comment and feedback over the summer of 2017.

A final draft of the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan will take account of that feedback and will be submitted by the Highland Community Planning Partnership to the citizens of Highland, the Scottish Government and the governing structures of the CPP Partner agencies as the 10 year vision for the Highland CPP.

Reports and interim information will be available through the new Highland CPP website:

www.highlandcpp.org.uk



