



COSLA's Consultation Response to, *Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland: The Future of Mental Health Improvement in Scotland 2008-11*

COSLA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation *Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland: The Future of Mental Health Improvement in Scotland 2008-11*. COSLA's response has been informed by a limited number of individual Council responses, and by Council Leaders' discussions on health inequalities. Please refer to Councils' individual responses which highlight their shared objectives and actions for local delivery.

Local authorities have a significant contribution to make towards promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, both in its duty as an employer, and in terms of the significant role and impact that Council services have, in areas such as in housing, economic development and regeneration, social care and culture and leisure. Positive mental health helps people become stronger and more confident, and builds resilience and capacity in individuals, families and communities.

This response focuses on the key issues for COSLA and Local Government. These key issues are:

1. The Scottish Government – COSLA Concordat
2. Tackling Health Inequalities
3. Single Outcome Agreements
4. Monitoring and Evaluation
5. National Support
6. Resources
7. Timescale
8. Future Engagement

The Scottish Government- COSLA Concordat

The Concordat sets out the terms of a new relationship between the Scottish Government and Local Government, based on mutual respect and partnership. There is a shared commitment by the Scottish Government and Local Government to achieve national and local priorities. At a local level Councils with their Community Planning Partners (CPPs) will identify priorities and local outcomes. It is expected that these local outcomes will fit with the national outcomes.

This consultation document signals a shift in emphasis from the focus being on national activity to local activity, with local activity being supported at a national level. This shift in emphasis fits with the Scottish Government-COSLA Concordat, which committed the Scottish Government to, 'stand[ing] back from micro-managing service delivery'. By moving to a locally driven agenda, which focuses on promotion, prevention and support, it is anticipated that ownership and responsibility for a community's mental health and wellbeing will extend to a wider, more comprehensive network of stakeholders.

Tackling Health Inequalities

COSLA is a member of the Joint Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities (the Task Force). The Task Force has identified health inequalities as a priority for both Local Government and Scottish Government. It considers the most effective way to tackle health inequalities is to focus on the physical, emotional and mental development of a child during its early years. It is therefore expected that mental health improvement policy will be influenced and led by the Scottish Government and Local Government's health inequalities agenda.

Whilst the consultation takes a population approach to tackle the issues that are known to contribute to poor mental health, it also focuses on prevention, early intervention and the early years. The emphasis on prevention and early years chimes with the Task Force's policy agenda. It will be vital to focus on those people most at risk, as poor mental health is concentrated in communities facing the greatest disadvantage. This focus will need to be consistently messaged to all the partners in a Community Planning Partnership.

Single Outcome Agreements/Monitoring/ Action Plan/National Support

A Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) sets out the outcomes which each Council is seeking to achieve with its CPP. A SOA will reflect local needs, circumstances and priorities, and will be related to the relevant national outcomes agreed in the Concordat. SOAs will assist in harnessing corporate leadership in promoting positive mental health and wellbeing and preventing mental ill health. A SOA should ensure that planning for mental health improvement is more upstream and crosscutting in terms of promotion, prevention and early intervention, and should enable better strategic planning across CPPs.

The consultation proposes that an Action Plan, from April 2008 until March 2011, will be developed by the Scottish Government for national and local implementation. The consultation document indicates that the Action Plan will contain specific actions, objectives and commitments. Any Action Plan would have to be structured to allow for local flexibility and be compatible with SOAs.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Performance should be tracked according to the performance management framework as directed by local priorities set out in individual Council's SOA. Any measures to assess and track progress should assist Councils and not result in a burdensome data gathering exercise.

National Support

It is noted there will be national support to help local implementation by providing more funding to develop a preventative approach, whilst continuing to invest in treatment and care. Any national functions and support activities should be developed in conjunction with all the members of a Community Planning Partnership. National support should include dissemination of research, the promotion of good practice through seminars and workshops and enabling CPPs to build their capacity.

Resources

Obviously there are staffing issues and costs attached to improving the population's mental health. We are currently operating within a tight spending review period. Therefore, in the short term we should focus our efforts in engaging, involving and

building upon existing good practice and the capacity of the CPPs to progressing this policy agenda. CPPs will need to align their budgets. In the longer term, the promotion and prevention of mental health improvement and wellbeing, as part of the health inequalities policy agenda, will have be considered for identification as a strategic priority in future spending reviews.

Timescale

The consultation sets our proposals for the future direction for the next three years. Alongside this 3 year proposal a longer term more sustained approach towards mental health improvement and wellbeing is required.

Future Engagement

We note that the Scottish Government plans to set up a National Reference Group to take forward the responses to this consultation. COSLA welcomes this opportunity to discuss the development and implementation of the mental health improvement policy agenda.

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