

KEY MESSAGES

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1. The 'outcome focus' is the ambition to see Scotland's public services working together, and with private and voluntary sector partners, to improve the quality of life and opportunities in life for people across Scotland. The outcomes in an SOA should be expressed in terms of quality of life and opportunity, or in terms of the economic, social or environmental contexts that influence people's quality of life and opportunities in life.

"Our guiding principle in this fundamental change is that, both nationally and locally, we should be clear about the outcomes which our communities need and then review and align our arrangements to ensure that they are fit for purpose to support the delivery of those outcomes".
2. The 'national outcomes' agreed between national and local government in the Concordat address the improvements sought across Scotland as a whole in quality of life, opportunities in life and living context. Each local partnership needs to examine trends and issues in their own area, and establish local priorities within that context. In some areas, aspects of quality of life and opportunity may already significantly exceed national ambitions (e.g. life expectancy, East Renfrewshire or East Dunbartonshire): In other areas, the same aspects may fall well below any reasonable expectations (e.g. life expectancy in parts of Glasgow). Priorities need to be set accordingly.
3. SOA's should focus strategically on priority areas for improvement and on the end outcomes to be achieved in terms of quality of life, opportunity and the context in which people live. They are high level documents and should focus on a limited and manageable number of priorities.
4. Addressing inequalities, and improving equality, in quality of life and opportunities in life is a national outcome in its own right, but also a cross-cutting theme that should be considered across the SOA. General improvement that leaves some of our people living well below the standards of the majority will not meet either national or local ambitions for a fairer Scotland.
5. SOA's needs to be clear what success will look like and how we will know we are getting there. At minimum, we need to be clear how the end outcome is to be measured, and about how progress towards that will be monitored. The evidence of Phase I of developing SOA's is that a small number of highly focussed measures of end outcomes and progress targets is more useful than a larger number of less well focussed measures and targets.
6. The SOA does not replace all the underlying service planning and performance management arrangements already in place. It provides an outcome framework and focus for service planning, resource planning and performance management but these still have to be there in a robust and rigorous way. A 'golden thread' needs to run from the high level outcomes in the SOA through to the underlying planning, delivery and performance systems of all partners.
7. The partners to the joint SOA will continue to have full accountability for services and provision that is their distinct responsibility. Not everything could or should be included in the SOA! The key development step across the next period is to create effective mechanisms for joint accountability for SOA commitments, alongside the specific accountabilities agencies will continue to have for their own resources and services.

Where tensions are identified between new accountability arrangements for the SOA, and the pre-existing accountability frameworks each partner agency operates within, the Scottish Government has agreed to address and resolve these matters.

8. The Scottish approach to developing SOA's has been explicitly based on action learning. Rather than try to plan everything in advance, which often means nothing happens in practice, the approach has been to establish momentum and learn through practice. It is fair to say that our current arrangements for partnership governance and organisation are less than perfect. However, clear agreement between partners about priority outcomes provides a basis for reviewing and improving them in ways that build people and communities into the centre of our approach to redesigning the public sector.
9. Clearly, realism and ambition need linked in developing SOA's. Circumstances, like the current global financial crisis, may severely restrict our ability to deliver certain outcomes. Equally, some social issues, like intergenerational disadvantage/deprivation, are deeply embedded, complex and improvement may take time. The key is to start with ambition and let experience temper that rather than let 'realism' drive out ambition. If the whole approach is about learning, development and improvement, aiming high is a reasonable starting point.
10. Finally, SOA's are ultimately a partnership with the people and communities whose quality of life and opportunity we want to be improved. We cannot 'do' outcomes to people: We need to work with them to support positive outcomes in their lives. This goes beyond conventional community engagement and is about a fuller partnership with people in pursuing outcomes. This will take time, effort and commitment but key outcomes like improved health, economic opportunity etc can only be achieved this way.