

Some key recurring national and regional messages that may be useful in anticipating the culture expected over the next few years

- Further emphasis on overall context of 'rights and responsibilities'/'something for something'; tackling both surface symptoms and deep causes; 'better lives' ... etc.
- Government role is about promoting change in terms of improved outcomes (which implies better processes), as an enabler via robust frameworks. This contrasts with current features of the approach which relies upon micro-managing/micro-accounting small segregated budgets and fragmented planning regimes.
- More focus is being put on the quality of the planning processes than on the detailed content of plans; plans are seen as active frameworks rather than as 'handed in' documents – i.e. used more to drive performance at the delivery organisation end, rather than filed at the funder end.
- National strategy implementation is being shifted from 'initiative' to 'structural embedding'. Specific interventions reducing; major delivery services expanded. (No more new materials – making better use of what's there already).
- Performance against real world outcomes is paramount to government's policy. Relies on having real-time, robust data; a can-do culture with strong realistic leadership; clear lines of individual accountability within and across agencies (to whom/for what ...); clear review processes that appropriately incorporate challenge, support, flexibility and accountabilities; transparent framework of what counts as success; some reasonable system of rewards/sanctions.
- Ambitious national standards/aspirational local shifts in real outcomes for people = a challenging, modernisation agenda. Most public services will need to be thinking in terms of change; managerial flexibility; front-end accountability; focus on securing range of priority outcomes at once; reducing bureaucratic burdens; clarity of role and purpose; local aspirations; commissioning change; diversification of processes etc.
- Mindset needs to shift from 'managing empires/services/managing projects' to 'managing changes; managing improvements in people's conditions'. (Less 'head of ...'; 'leading on ...'; more 'ensuring delivery of ...'; 'accountable for ...').
- Different policy areas are moving closer together – forcing cross-agency working. Need to be clearer about how to do partnership working which doesn't remove skills/responsibilities from separate partners, but which adds an extra quantifiable/tangible set of benefits beyond what they can do separately. Some models of working together have generated sets of procedures that are exhausting the system; there are other models that can be followed (may need to argue against national restrictions that are creating barriers to change).

- Most 'higher level' work should be taking the longer-term view (7 year; 5 year; 3 year ...). Planning is still annual at the wrong level. Top down priorities are known and need to be worked with. Issue for next few years is matching strategic intention with local flexibility; local solutions to national expectations; short term pushes on long term permanent changes; performance management that maintains enthusiasm around longer term objectives. Leadership/management skills are key, with new ways of working being needed. (Nationally – leadership and management are widespread weaknesses).
- Equity, closing performance gaps, and ensuring minimum levels of service imply commitment (internally as well as externally, via Public Service Agreements) to challenging but achievable minimum and universal standards.
- Localisation/regionalisation puts more emphasis on making sense of complexity; making all the bits work together for best effect in that changing context; requires disaggregated data used actively within planning and management. Less initiative-driven; more differentiation within coherence – responsive to the variable features of each context, but always embedding strategy more deeply.
- Learning insights are expected to be shared within and between collaborating organisations; more 'sharing across' than 'reporting up'.
- There are expectations of more joint support for each other's target outcomes rather than solely focusing on benefits for own organisation. Moving beyond silo-working means offering specialisms to the whole not an opportunity to colonise each other's areas of work.
- Prioritisation of resources onto development; aligning varied resources clearly behind changes expected to be made. 'Funding programmes, not programming funds'. Few meetings linked to funding regimes. Meetings focus on developments, whatever the source of funding. Make change the story (work to prevent money always becoming the story).
- Less of the 'bidding' approach and more of the 'commissioning change' approach. This implies a clearer up-front specification of expected changes, and a more robust reporting of the shifts really made. Emphasis on 'getting there' rather than on processes. More reality reporting, within the rhetoric.
- Structures being more 'fleet of foot'; faster moving i.e. implies more of a focus on 'function' with structures having a 'temporary' feel about them. More emphasis on simply getting on with the job. We understand much of the terrain, we now have to focus on 'distance still to be travelled' and on being seen to succeed (compared with more meetings about how to go about it or with concerns about 'ownership').
- External intervention is increasingly expected to be in inverse proportion to success – light touch/higher level with more successful organisations/processes; more hands-on support and challenge for organisations not performing well.
- There is value in de-junking the system from time to time. Groups are set up as standing groups, outliving their original purpose. Need more use of think tank, focus meeting, expert seminar – less of routine team meeting. Annual review of why things exist/what things are for? Shift

from structures (organisational charts; line management; fixed job descriptions ...) to functions (current network; directed by ...; tasks accountable for ...).

- Less being momentarily dazzled by flashes of feel-good activity; more respect given to those making progress on the long-haul issues. Value put on professional wisdom and delivering substantial, permanent improvements. (Learning from what is known plus researching new knowledge).
- Frontline organisations are becoming more accountable for delivering real change/real outcomes, but with greater freedoms and flexibilities as to how these outcomes are met (having due regard to financial probity and to standards of service etc).

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