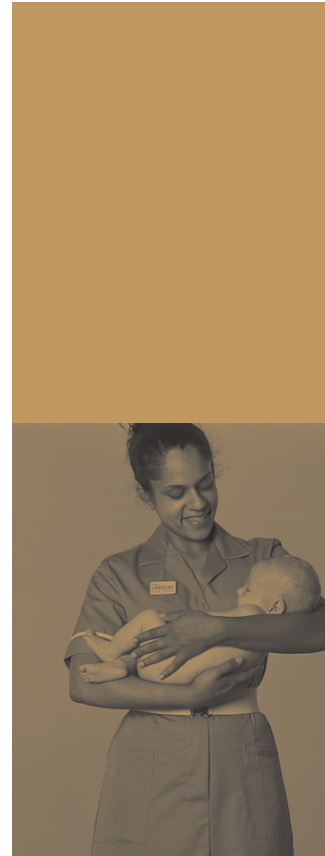


# revitalising our public services

UNISON's manifesto  
for Scotland's  
public services



We've been  
revitalising  
our public  
services





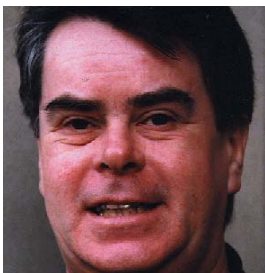
# revitalise our public services

## Foreword

We are pleased to lay out UNISON Scotland's views on the future of public service delivery. Approaching the end of the second term of the Scottish Parliament seems a good time to take stock of progress and to look forward to the next steps towards world class public services. UNISON members are in a unique position to do this: they are both providers and users of services.

In Scotland we can continue to develop our own public service model suited to the needs of a small country and to the ethos of fairness so central to Scottish culture. We know that the public want well-funded convenient services: they are not interested in competition. We believe that Scotland can become a model, demonstrating that fairness and social cohesion can be combined with economic strength. Here we review past progress and set out the principles we believe can deliver the services Scotland needs and deserves.

We look forward to seeing these ideas put into action and welcome comments from all interested parties.

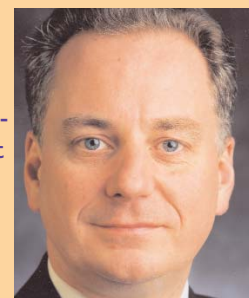


Mike Kirby, Scottish Convenor



Matt Smith, Scottish Secretary

First class, responsive and efficient public services are critical for the Scotland we need to build. These are the services that bind us together as communities, the services that directly impact on the lives of each and every one of us - every day. It is public services that provide education opportunities for our children sweep our streets and take away our rubbish. It is public services that help us when we are sick, provide the swimming pool, fix the street light and repair the road. Public services are there for us when times are good - and we all look for their support when times are hard. It is the public service that helps us find a home when we most need it, offers practical support when our relationships break down, tracks down the thief and the drug dealer, protects us from the spread of disease and responds in times of emergency. In every part of your life and mine - public service makes a difference.



Jack  
McConnell MSP  
First Minister

speech at East Kilbride Police Training Facility 14 Jan 2003

# Introduction

High quality public services are central to Scotland's economy and the quality of life of its citizens. In this paper UNISONScotland sets out its vision for the future of Scotland's public services.

Scotland has begun to develop a public service model specific to the needs of a relatively small country with particular culture, geography and ideology. We must continue to develop by internationalising our outlook, seeking best practice, not just in England and the USA, but from other small countries. We have much to learn from Nordic countries.

The debate over public services has all too often focused on differences between Scotland and England. We need to build a consensus about what we want, not what we don't want. Here, UNISONScotland lays out the principles we believe will revitalise public services in Scotland

# Background

We launched our First Scottish Manifesto - *Serving Scotland* - in 1999. This marked a significant change away from a standard trade union approach to political life, reflecting the difference that was happening with the creation of a Scottish Parliament, and new ways of working.

In April 2003 UNISON launched its manifesto for Scotland's Public Services, *Revitalise our Public Services*. Our aim was to create a positive agenda for the future of Scotland's public services. Three years on we are refreshing that manifesto to take account of progress made and the new challenges which face Scotland.

## Report Card

- ✓ Voting reform
- ✗ Democratic culture
- ✓ Record funding levels
- ✓ Ending the two-tier workforce
- ✗ PPP still subsidised
- ✗ Local government underfunded
- ✓ Staffing levels increased
- ✓ Lifelong learning initiatives
- ✓ Violence against
  - emergency workers
  - other public service staff
- ✗ Equal pay
- ✗ Public service pensions
- ✓ Efficient government
- ✓ Public service networks
- ✓ Partnership

## Scotland's Approach to Public Services

Scotland has achieved much in recent years, but much still needs to be tackled.

There is high employment and high economic activity, but many people are still unable to find work. There are still problems of low pay particularly for women.

Poverty and inequality are still high, the population is ageing, many people have no pension provision and racism and sectarianism blight the life of too many Scots. Public services are the key to overcoming these problems both as a provider of services and as a major employer.

Scotland's approach to public services is different from England's. It is an approach that reflects Scotland's geography, scale, and culture. The aim has been to deliver improvement and value for money through collaboration and co-ordination not competition. We believe that the ethos of public service is different from the market's.

Gordon Brown MP articulated this difference:

*... at their best, public services are founded on values greater than material, they are founded on the ethics of compassion, duty and service. I have seen this ethic of public service at work. I have seen doctors and nurses who show not only exceptional skills and professionalism but*

*also extraordinary care and friendship. Carers whose unbelievable compassion and support can transform despair into hope, home helps and support staff whose dedication, commitment and humanity show that there are values far beyond those of contracts, markets and exchange, showing that public services can be a calling and not just a career. So we are not isolated individuals, we depend on each other not out of weakness but because it is by the strength of common endeavour that we achieve more.”* in Scotland in UNISON no 54 - April 2005

It is this public service ethos that underpins our approach to revitalising Scotland’s public services. Public services run on ethical lines based on the principles laid down by Lord Nolan: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, openness, accountability, competence and equality.

To build on this ethos UNISONScotland believes these five principles can form the basis for a public sector that will be the envy of the world.

UNISON’s Revitalise principles are:

**Democracy**

**Fairness**

**Partnership**

**Investment**

**Excellence**

## **Progress in applying the Principles**

These principles have gained welcome support across the political spectrum and there have been many examples of their application in practice.

Democracy has been strengthened by voting reform and new methods of user involvement. But we do not have the total culture change the democratic accountability principle implies.

On investment we have record funding levels and an extra £4billion in this financial year alone. The end of the two tier workforce for new PPP schemes; prudential borrowing and three year service funding have been positive developments. However, we don’t have a level playing field for PPP, and some services, notably local government, have done less well in funding terms.

There have been positive efforts to improve the recruitment and retention of public service staff. Significant increases in staffing levels in many services, pay reform, lifelong learning initiatives and action on assaults on staff have all played an important role in building staff confidence. However, there is still more to do in many of these fields including pressures to achieve equal pay and finance past discrimination settlements. Discriminatory attacks on public service pensions puts at risk many of these gains.

There has been some improvement in the co-ordination of scrutiny regimes and less rigidity in performance monitoring than elsewhere in the UK. Whilst the efficient government approach is more appropriate to Scotland than its English counterpart there remain real challenges in its implementation.

Public service networks have been adopted in many contexts. Most notably as an alternative to a criminal justice quango but also through joint future, common services and clinical networks as recommended in the Kerr report. However, joint working remains a challenge as organisations break out of the silo working mentality encouraged during the Tory years.

Partnership not competition has been the positive approach in the developing Scottish public service model. This has been supported by partnership working within many public services and between the Scottish Executive and the trade unions through the Memorandum of Understanding.

# Democracy

The defining difference between public and private services is democracy. It is democracy that makes public services responsive to the needs of those who pay for and use them. UNISON believes that democracy is about more than elections and a Scottish Parliament, it is about ensuring that the public can meaningfully participate in the decision-making processes about the areas in which they live.

The importance of this approach was highlighted by Gordon Brown when he said: *That through richer forms of engagement, we will deepen community support; that together we will energise local democracy; that we will make undemocratic institutions democratic.... This is what our opponents worry about most.*

Democracy requires government at all levels to ensure adequate opportunities for the general public to participate in and influence the policy making process. This should be more than being asked to comment on plans that have been made in private. It should mean involvement in developing desired outcomes and the methods to achieve them. To facilitate this, organisational structures need to be decentralised to the appropriate level for each function.

The fragmentation caused by privatisation and the growth of unelected bodies hinders this process.

Because of the Tories' decision to relocate dry dock facilities from Rosyth dockyard to Devonport, Rosyth dockyard



reduced its manpower and the area has seen a huge change in its economy.

The local community council, local Labour elected members and Fife Council fought for the new ferry link to Zeebrugge which is regenerating the area. There is still a lot to do, however it does bring civic pride back to the local community. This has been achieved through local democratic involvement and the hard work of the local Labour administration.

Eleanor Haggett, UNISON member and income monitoring officer.

## Democratising the quango state

Democratic structures create public bodies which are open and transparent in their dealings with the public. Government at all levels must explain and accept responsibility for its actions. However, weak mechanisms and the rise of the quango state have devalued many of our democratic structures. We currently have 144 quangos in Scotland spending nearly £10 billion. UNISON believes that public bodies should as far as possible be directly elected. An important step forward would be direct elections to health boards and UNISON Scotland strongly supports the Non-Executive Bill on this issue which is currently under consideration by the Scottish Parliament. For some quangos direct elections may not be practicable. Those organisations should become an amalgam of elected representatives, appointed laypersons and professionals with a statutory duty to engage with service users and the public. Others could be incorporated into existing democratic structures.

## Subsidiarity

Establishing the Scottish Parliament is an excellent example of how devolving decision making has seen a different approach to public services. The Parliament's openness, innovative committee system, pre-legislative scrutiny and petitions are all models of public service reform that we should be proud of. Devolution is a process - not an event, and consideration should be given of other functions that could effectively be devolved. Subsidiarity also requires the Scottish Executive to resist the temptation to centralise services and recognise the importance of local government. Decision making at the appropriate level leads to more responsive services for users.

As Menzies Campbell MP said: *the source of the problem is the same: public services run over the heads of the people they are supposed to serve, public bureaucracies dancing to the tune of targets set by central government, local government prevented from doing what's best for local people.* On Menzies Campbell's campaign website

## Involving users and staff

All public bodies should have a statutory duty to meaningfully involve users as partners in the decision making process, not as customers. This involves a high degree of transparency and the provision of capacity for users to fully participate. We need to celebrate public services as benefiting the whole community. They are not just a safety net. In Scandinavian countries there is a broad consensus about public services as a public good for all and this ensures support for good services and greater social cohesion.

Genuine involvement is more than just consultation. It means involving users and staff in defining the problems as well as the future direction of their public services. The best public service organisations are developing a range of such mechanisms and there should be a forum to provide guidance and disseminate best practice. As Alex Salmond MP states on the SNP website:

*Public services must be run for the benefit of the communities and individuals they serve, not private concerns, and there should be transparency and accountability to those local communities in the delivery of these services.*

## Capacity to participate

UNISON Scotland is supportive of an increased role for voluntary and community organisations, and staff representative bodies in working with elected representatives to influence planning and delivery of local services. This cannot be achieved without appropriate resources. These are not just financial, although clearly crucial, it also means politicians and public service workers developing listening skills, the skills to get people together to discuss issues, and to ensure that all voices are heard, not just the best educated, wealthiest or the loudest. All PSOs should be required to produce a corporate strategy on participation and involvement which demonstrates how users, community organisations, staff and their trade unions can be involved in the planning, design, monitoring and review of services.

## Equality of access & social justice

Democracy is for everyone living in Scotland not just the wealthy, the articulate or the well connected. Donald Dewar said:

*Too many Scots are excluded, by virtue of unemployment, low skills levels, poverty, bad health, poor housing or other factors, from full participation in society. Those of us who benefit from the opportunities of life in modern Scotland have a duty to seek to extend similar opportunities to those who do not. Social exclusion is unacceptable in human terms; it is also wasteful, costly and carries risks in the long term for our social cohesion and well-being. This government is determined to take action to tackle exclusion, and to develop policies, which will promote a more inclusive, cohesive and ultimately sustainable society.* in *The Herald* 3 Feb 1998

If Scotland aspires to be a nation built on principles of social justice then public services must allow people to participate, providing forums for people to meet both to discuss issues and also for day to day contact. They support the vulnerable in society but also those community services we all enjoy such as leisure services, shared public spaces and education. Public services have a key role, as both employer and provider of services, in ensuring that gender, race or religion should not determine life chances.

## Freedom of Information

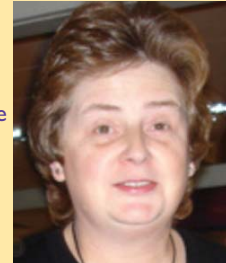
Meaningful involvement requires equal access to information. The Freedom of Information Act has begun to change the culture of secrecy but we must build on this provision to remove so-called commercial confidentiality and ensure all appropriate organisations are covered by the legislation.

The decline of heavy industry in Linthouse took the heart out of our community.

The Linthouse Urban Village

Project has transformed both the look of the area and the spirit and hopes of local people. LUV is a success not just because of the money invested but because local people were in control from the start.

Sheila McGeoch  
UNISON worker and activist in Linthouse.



# Investment

Sustained long term investment is essential if we are to revitalise Scotland's public services. This must include the revenue to run day-to-day services and the capital to rebuild the infrastructure.

## Adequate funding

The recent increase in public sector funding has begun to tackle the problems caused by years of under investment. Adequate funding is necessary to provide the infrastructure, proper staffing levels and to fund fair employment standards and training. Modernising public services effectively is not a one-off task but an ongoing process. Adequate funding also encourages staff to develop innovative solutions to service delivery rather than cope with service cuts.

Whilst recent funding increases have been welcome there remain serious funding problems. In particular, local government has received less favourable treatment than other public services despite significant new responsibilities and funding challenges including the cost of past pay discrimination.

Careers Scotland members ensure the workforce of today and tomorrow develop employable skills and qualities to allow them to be effective career planners.



This makes sure they and the Scottish economy benefit from a flexible and motivated workforce. Co-ordination is important in delivering this service, so it is worrying that we are no longer accepting and administering vacancies for jobs, employed status Skillseekers and modern apprenticeships programmes. This will damage that overall service.

James Corry  
UNISON member and careers officer

## Long term investment

Secure long-term funding is crucial if public services are to plan for the future. As public services involve users in making decisions about future services it is even more important that information is available about the future level of resources. This equally applies to the funding of community and voluntary organisations in order to assist them in raising their standards of provision.

## Level playing field between public & private finance

The drive to rebuild Scotland's ageing infrastructure has involved the extensive use of Public Private Partnerships and the Private Finance Initiative (PPP/PFI). Billions of pounds of public money have been wasted. The Executive claims that this is only one of several procurement options for public bodies. It is not even the preferred option. However, for many capital schemes it is 'the only game in town' as the Executive subsidises PFI and not conventional

procurement. If we are to translate the Executive's claim into practice, much more needs to be done on the alternatives to PPP/PFI in Scotland.

Some of the alternatives require amendments to Treasury rules including new definitions of public expenditure in line with European models. 'Off balance sheet' incentives inherent in the current block grant system and Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) also need reform. Enron economics is no way to finance our public services.

Progress could be made within Scotland by providing capital grants on a basis that gives public authorities a real choice between funding sources: A 'level playing field'. There needs to be a substantial increase in capital funds and the freedom for all public authorities to borrow to fund investment. The Executive has made progress on this by giving local authorities prudential borrowing powers. But these powers are limited if grants are only available to those local authorities who use PFI.



Other claimed alternatives to PPP, such as 'Not-for-profit trusts' are still PPP schemes with a different form of company structure. In the main this is simply window dressing.

Conventional borrowing remains the most cost effective and flexible method of financing public services. It retains accountability and enables public authorities to engage in genuine consultation with service users without the smokescreen of commercial confidentiality.

### **Public spending and the economy**

Recent debates in the Scottish media have been highly critical of the scale of public spending in Scotland. Research commissioned by UNISONScotland demonstrates that there is little or no evidence over the long term, of a negative relationship between public spending and private investment. In fact public investment is crucial to the success of the Scottish economy. UNISON believes that Scotland can afford to invest in its public sector to create world class public services for all.

At an international level, there is no significant link between countries with high economic growth rates over the 1990s and levels of government spending and personal taxation.

Equally significant is the relationship between tax receipts and income equality. Countries with higher state involvement generally have lower levels of income inequality, suggesting that government intervention remains important in ensuring wealth is fairly distributed.

Claims that Scotland's public sector has crowded out the private sector in recent years are largely unsubstantiated. Other sectors have shown more rapid rates of employment growth. Scotland's public sector employment – at around one quarter of total employment – is less than the third claimed by critics.

Scottish public sector institutions are critical to the success of the Scottish economy through providing basic infrastructure as well as key human and technological resources for emergent sectors such as biotechnology. Public debate needs to move beyond a simple dichotomy of public sector 'bad', private sector 'good', to develop a more sophisticated understanding of how the two inter-relate in successful and balanced economies.

Fairness in the delivery of services and at work is a crucial part of achieving a fair society. If the public sector is to continue to attract high calibre staff then it must be a model employer. The public sector also has a role in setting best practice for other sectors.

## Fair pay & conditions

In an opinion poll conducted for UNISON, nearly 90% of respondents agreed that public services cannot be delivered successfully unless the people providing them are paid a fair wage and are treated fairly. No amount of job satisfaction is enough to keep someone in a public sector job where there are other (often private sector) local employers paying more. Family-friendly employment practices and promoting work-life balance will help retain staff in the public sector, ensuring that their skills and experience are not lost when their life circumstances change.

By delivering forensic specialisms, I and my colleagues make sure the police have the detailed information available to make the difference between solving a crime and it being repeated.



Raymond Brown, UNISON member and senior fingerprint expert.

We have to reward all members of the public service team, including support staff, appropriately. Too often, the media and politicians focus on professional staff, like teachers and doctors, and forget that they are part of a team that provides the service. For example, police officers are not the only staff involved in crime fighting. A whole range of professional, technical and administrative staff ensure that the justice system can effectively fight crime. Support staff in all parts of the public sector tend to be the lowest paid and least valued, and many of them are women.

## Fair pensions

A proper pension from your employer is important for very many reasons: People need a decent standard of living upon retirement when the cost of living is likely to be very expensive; Provision is needed for a person's partner/dependants in the event of a death or early retirement due to ill-health; Pensions are a form of deferred pay; State provision on its own is not enough. Adequate occupational pension provision is vital and public sector employees need to be protected.

Their pensions are part of the contract that they signed in taking the job and go some way to compensate for lower levels of pay prevalent in public services. Public sector pension scheme members contribute to their pension scheme. Changes to pension conditions need to be negotiated and agreed. Not imposed.

## Tackling discrimination

UNISON Scotland recognises that equality legislation is a reserved matter although the Scotland Act provides powers to encourage the development of equal opportunities. The introduction of the Equality Strategy was an innovative and radical initiative for which the Executive and Parliament deserve congratulations. UNISON will use the strategy to work with and put pressure on employers to implement improved equal rights in the workplace. The public sector is both an employer and provider of services and in both those areas must tackle discrimination in all its forms.

Taking part in UNISON's Refugee Mentoring project has given Farida the chance to get a worthwhile job in the NHS, has helped me and my work colleagues realise how much we all share our humanity, and provided a valuable new colleague to help our public services.



Margaret Bean, UNISON member, medical records clerk and mentor

Racism has no place in Scotland; workers must be protected from racial harassment while carrying out their duties. All recruitment and promotion procedures should be monitored to prevent discrimination in line with the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000).

Urgent work needs to be done to address equal pay issues in the public sector. Thirty years after the Equal Pay Act, it is not acceptable that women only earn 81p to every male £1 earned for full-time work. However, if these historic imbalances are to be corrected then the Scottish Executive needs to recognise its responsibilities to fund Equal Pay.

## Lifelong learning

Taking part in UNISON'S Return 2 Learn course gave me the confidence to admit I have dyslexia which resulted in both my employer and trade union supporting me to develop my career and complete the various computer courses that my new job required.



Michelle Brankin,  
UNISON member and home care support worker

UNISON welcomes trade union learning funds that encourage the take-up of lifelong learning in the workplace. The Executive's commitment to continued joint working with trade unions on lifelong learning - The Executive Partnership Agreement is also a positive step. However, there is still much to be done both in ensuring that those who need such opportunities get them and that there are trainers and institutions available to provide the necessary resources. Education and training should be available to staff at all levels across the public sector to equip them to move into higher skilled jobs within public services. New learning opportunities should be targeted to areas with poor records of employment and social inclusion

## Recruitment and retention

UNISON advocates the recruitment and retention of high quality staff through: fair pay and conditions, genuine partnership working with trade unions, equal opportunities and life-long learning. The public sector needs to employ good people and it is still a popular choice with graduates but needs to remain so. In some key disciplines – eg social work, nursing, other medical professionals, we still see staff shortages. Family-friendly employment practices and promoting work-life balance will help retain staff in the public sector, ensuring that their skills and experience are not lost when their life circumstances change.

We believe that real investment in training and development of staff is the key to improved public services, leading to enhanced performance. It is essential that training and development for all employees is included in the guidance on Best Value.

## Model employer through procurement

UNISON welcomes the aim of the new European Public Sector Procurement Directive. Modernising, simplifying and clarifying the provisions of the previous Public Procurement Directives covering works, supplies and services is needed. However, it is also necessary to fully reflect the important changes that enable consideration of social and environmental criteria, including employment issues, to be taken into account in the evaluation and award of contracts.

## Partnership at work

Significant progress has been made in recent years to develop partnership working between employers and trade unions across Scotland's public services. The Scottish Executive has played an important role in this through the STUC Memorandum of Understanding and agreements such as the PPP protocol.

## Safety at work

Last year more than 22 000 assaults were carried out on NHS staff in Scotland. The

Working in primary care means we have a greater risk of violence than in acute services.

We are at particular risk when involved in lone working. Yet we are not covered by the Emergency Workers Act protection. We need to extend the cover to all public service workers.

Sofi Taylor  
UNISON member and nurse specialist for ethnicity and culture



Emergency Workers Act was welcome but a wider range of public service workers are regularly assaulted at work. More is needed to ensure that violence is not part of public sector workers job descriptions. Extending increased legal protection to all public service workers would be start.

The Executive could do much more to promote workplace health. Recent research indicates that work is a major cause of ill-health and occupational stress is a significant factor.

# Excellence

Under Labour, health spending has doubled, education spending has doubled, transport spending has doubled and social services spending has doubled. This was necessary to overcome the under investment during the Tory years. It's time for us to be a world leader in public service provision. This means not just funding, though this is crucial, but also implementing ways of working which allow best practice to flourish.

## National standards - local innovation

UNISON members are keen to play their part in revitalising Scotland's public services. This can and should be achieved with the full involvement of staff and trade unions as those with the knowledge and expertise of frontline service delivery. Complex services, "fair to all" and "personal to each of us" cannot be delivered by central mandate. There must be space for local innovation with broad standards set to disseminate best practice. Users of public services are not homogeneous. The needs and wants of differing groups need to be taken into account when designing efficient services.

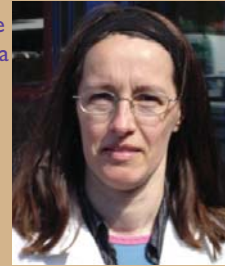
## Appropriate performance measures

Traditional methods of measuring the performance of organisations have concentrated on cost accounting methods that may not be entirely suitable to public services. There is also a concern that a costly, bureaucratic, scrutiny industry could develop to examine public services. The measurements used to assess performance are often subjective and fairly crude and do not take into account all the factors involved in providing a service. They are also often based on what data is already being collected.

This can lead to pressure on PSOs to concentrate on such indicators to the detriment of the services they provide: the recent furore about GPs appointment waiting time guarantees in England illustrates this.

Having spent three years working for a PhD and with several years experience I didn't want to stop working completely when I had children.

However, after my second child was born I found I needed to spend more time with them. Being able to work part-time has meant that I can have more time with them while they are young and I will be able to pick up my daughter from school when she starts. The department hasn't lost an expensively-trained chemist, and has been able to put the money saved on my wages towards employing additional technicians, so after initial reservations they are pleased with this arrangement too



Dr Janet Moxley, UNISON member and trace organic chemist

Joint Planning Teams in the NHS and our Council are having an impact at a local level - working alongside local people through local community planning groups.



Together we are developing a local agenda for health improvement. The teams are helping to present a representative and balanced case for change to key decision makers in the NHS and Local Authority through surveys and focus groups. This will ensure better use of resources and a greater accountability from service providers.

Alan Cowan, UNISON member and public health capacity building officer.

Targets should be based on inputs, outputs and outcomes together with process measures. Financial systems will also need to be reviewed to be consistent with this approach. It should also be recognised that assessing outcomes is fraught with the difficulties of identifying cause and effect and the influence of other policies and organisations.

There is also a concern of how open and transparent any scrutiny regime would be, especially with the growth of quangos, and the increased use of private firms, in either the delivery of services or in their inspection.

## Transparency - sharing best practice

Revitalising public services requires innovation so new ideas and improvements to the way services meet the needs of people are developed. The public service organisation (PSO) must also have the capacity to allow innovation to occur; otherwise no amount of innovative thought will actually translate into better services at the frontline. Innovation requires challenging the assumption that public services are based on a

“one size fits all” approach. This process requires transparency and an element of risk taking, so it is necessary to end the blame culture to enable innovation to take place without recrimination. Giving staff the resources and freedom to develop networks to learn from the best practice that they encounter best does this. Again, relying on private firms who jealously guard innovations as commercial advantage does not.

### **Quality, not just price**

Efficiency and effectiveness in the public services are about more than price. This should be reflected in our procurement policy using the new flexibility in European law to ensure that the social dimension is properly reflected. The public has a right to expect high performance from public services. That performance should be rooted in a culture of citizenship not consumerism. The quality of services offered - not just the lowest cost - must be a crucial factor in any procurement decision. Any analysis of the performance of public services needs to take into account the often-variable funding levels that public services receive as well as their interaction with other public service organisations and the possible impact on their service provision.

### **Efficient Government**

UNISONScotland recognises that all public sector organisations should be aware of opportunities to work more efficiently and effectively. We also welcome the commitment to reinvest savings in services and the absence of crude job-cut targets. PSOs in Scotland already continuously review their operations and have a record of achieving efficiencies under the existing best value arrangements. They are also subject to a range of inspection and audit arrangements.

UNISON is concerned that in the past ‘efficiency savings’ have simply been a mask for real cuts in services or privatisation. We would be more impressed if the Executive tackled real waste such as the billions wasted on the additional cost of PFI schemes as compared to conventional procurement.

There are also concerns that efficient government could be a cover for the centralisation of services through shared services, streamlining bureaucracy or procurement initiatives. We need to develop local and virtual solutions as distinct from centralised ‘big shed’ arrangements or outsourcing. Early evidence would indicate that most efficiency savings are coming from front line services such as health and local government. Local authorities have also had their ‘savings’ top sliced from budget allocations.

The implementation of efficient government requires negotiations at local level to be based on a genuine partnership approach with early and meaningful involvement of staff and their trade unions with realistic timescales and objectives.

# Partnership

Partnership has been the cornerstone of Scottish public service reform. Co-operation rather than competition continues to offer the best route forward. Partnerships typically operate as self-organising, interagency networks. They have different degrees of autonomy from their parental bodies and the Scottish Executive. Examples include Joint Future, Clinically Managed Networks and the Criminal Justice Authorities. Partnerships create and benefit from joined up working; this is essential if the complex challenges facing Scotland are to be addressed.

## Reject hierarchies and markets

The solutions to the challenges facing the public sector are rarely deliverable by one agency working on its own. Crime, health and poverty all require multi-agency approaches. Education targets of, for example, 50% of pupils going to university will not be achieved without tackling Scotland's social problems. Hierarchical approaches where each agency sends out central plans are a thing of the past, and markets are often promoted as the only answer to delivering responsive local services. But, partnership working offers responsiveness, local delivery and the opportunity to set national guidelines without resorting to constant reorganisation. It also offers the opportunity for economies of scale, allowing in-house provision to be viable and cost effective.

It makes sense for all the staff working with people who need care in the community to work closely together.



Partnership in this working means we can identify and sort out any likely problems before they cause a problem in service delivery.

Carrie Bell, UNISON member and senior occupational therapist. A health service employee, working in a local government homeless unit.

Public services should offer their users a service based on their individual needs. We believe that markets are not the way to offer this choice. In fact they offer only an illusion of choice. The people of Scotland seem to agree. The Tories spent years trying to introduce markets to the health service, for example offering tax relief on private insurance. Where the private sector does offer an alternative to public provision such as in education and health, take up is far lower in Scotland than in England. People want good services where and when they need them not a complex shopping trip.

## Public Service Networks

PSNs are essentially an agreement between public service providers to work jointly on a project usually by pooling resources and working to a common action plan. In a changing environment networks are a more rapid and effective method of responding to change than constant boundary reviews and statutory reorganisation. PSNs can also bring together the fragmented services, disrupted by privatisation and the growth of un-elected public bodies. They offer co-operation not competition and the opportunity to make effective use of ICT and economies of scale without centralised control. While public bodies can engage in networks that involve various organisations, the prime focus should be in forging networks of Public Service Organisations (PSOs).

The overall aim is to encourage a spirit of co-operation, communication and mutual support across Scotland's public services. Public Service Organisations increasingly need to collaborate and work jointly to provide public services. This has already led to partnership working, recognising that many problems require a multi-agency solution. The new Criminal Justice Authority is an example where current groups have been networked under a chief executive.

In a small country like Scotland PSOs are often organised on a smaller scale to ensure local responsiveness and accountability. This means that they may lack the scale to effectively deliver some services. This in turn leads to calls for reorganisation into larger less responsive units, boundary changes or the privatisation of some services. The perceived need to respond to public policy concerns often leads governments to the conclusion that to be seen to be taking action requires the establishment of a new body or the centralisation of a service. This brings the service closer to the Minister responsible but further from the service user.

### **Developing public service structures**

As partnerships develop there is a risk that strategic direction can be lost in the patchwork of networks and statutory bodies. This leads to discussion around structural change to bring greater cohesion, efficiency and accountability to our public services.

Possible approaches include reorganising existing public services into larger units or joining up public services into all-purpose public authorities. Local government, health, local enterprise and other existing quango functions in large strategic authorities with either separate local delivery authorities or a devolved management scheme.

This might achieve a more strategic approach. quangos would be brought under democratic control with alternative structures of power, the checks and balances essential to a good constitution. The problem is that bigger is also more remote unless there are effective devolved democratic structures with meaningful deliberative involvement of users. A return to two-tier structures might also achieve this although that may just create new boundaries between local and strategic services that have to work together.

It may be that greater partnership working will lead to a demand for more formal structural change in the medium term but solutions should be developed in communities and not imposed from the centre.



## Conclusion

Scotland has begun the process of developing its own public service model. In continuing to develop we should aspire to excellence. We must look outward in our search for inspiration. Other small states have much to teach us but public services should be based on an ethos and principles that are embedded in Scottish culture not markets. The key to this approach is a belief that we should be treated as partners who have a real say in shaping our public services. If we are citizens not consumers exploited for private profit, then Scotland can be a world leader in public service provision.

UNISON's Revitalise principles are:

- Democracy** - accountability and the meaningful involvement of users and staff, rather than markets, will provide the services the public want.
- Investment** - essential not only to overcome past shortages but to fund ongoing innovation.
- Fairness** - essential to build a fairer society both in the delivery of services and as a model employer.
- Excellence** - should be the aim of all Scotland's public services. We should be the country others look to, to see what can be achieved.
- Partnership** - creating the joined up working essential to face up to the complex challenges Scotland faces with out costly and disruptive reorganisation.

Scotland's Parliament is judged on the delivery of Scotland's public services.  
We need our parliament to

*revitalize our*  
**public**  
**services**







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