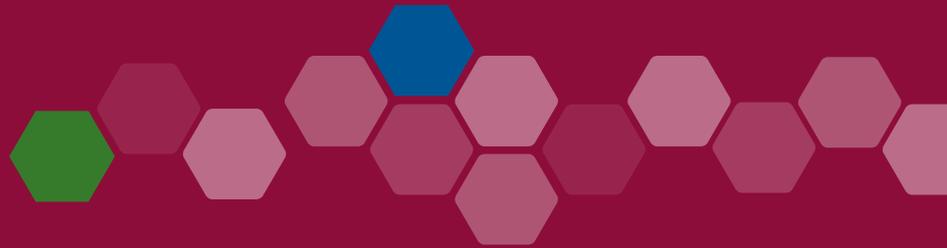




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# Evaluation of the Realigning Children's Services Programme



**CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS**



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# Executive Summary

## Background

On behalf of the Scottish Government, CELCIS (the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland) commissioned Blake Stevenson to evaluate the multifaceted Realigning Children's Services (RCS) programme.

RCS is a two-stranded programme. The evidence strand gathers data on the experiences of children and young people and maps expenditure on children and family services. The second strand provides development and facilitation to Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) to improve their joint strategic decision making in relation to children's services.

The evaluation aimed to improve the effectiveness of RCS by identifying lessons learned, determine the impact of the programme and provide recommendations for its future delivery. While RCS now works with a third tranche of CPPs, this evaluation only relates to the five CPPs in Tranches 1 and 2.

The evaluation approach included a secondary analysis of RCS documents and primary research through fact-finding telephone calls, visits and interviews with local stakeholders in each area, and interviews with the RCS programme team and their line manager.

## Experiences of the Realigning Children's Services Programme

The evaluation showed that the RCS programme has engaged, encouraged and enabled CPP partners and local stakeholders to gather and use data for local service planning and improvement.

CPP stakeholders were knowledgeable about RCS programme principles and whilst there was an understanding of, and commitment to, RCS at a senior level, there was sometimes a disconnect between those tasked with delivering elements of the programmes.

In order to clarify the purpose and fully reflect the programme, the emphasis of RCS shifted from supporting CPPs to improve joint strategic commissioning to supporting CPPs to make better joint strategic decisions about improving outcomes for children and families. There is now a description of RCS and its five elements that is used consistently in communications with all three tranches.

## The evidence programme

The data and evidence to map current need, services and expenditure is drawn from the Child Wellbeing Survey Programme, the data linkage and the mapping exercise.

Undertaking the school survey and securing the involvement of the majority of primary and secondary school head teachers was a significant task successfully achieved in all CPPs with assistance from the RCS team. However, the parent

survey was a costly and resource-intensive element of the survey programme. The RCS team recognised that the data was limited by its sampling method and size, so it was removed from Tranche 3 and the resources were reinvested.

The self-reported data from each survey response were linked to a set of additional fields drawn from Social Work and Education records in each area. This created a single data set that contained information about child wellbeing and need, and the receipt of children's services.

The mapping exercise aimed to comprehensively map children's services in each CPP and the amount of expenditure on statutory services across education, social work, health, leisure and culture, as well as funding to voluntary organisations to deliver projects focused on children and families. While there were some examples of successful contributions, CPPs struggled with the mapping exercise. The RCS team recognised that making stronger links to how CPPs could invest in preventative work and make long term savings would be more useful for those bringing the information together.

The outputs from the survey programme included a set of school reports, cluster reports for groupings of schools and an overview report for each CPP containing a summary that identified key themes and messages of service use and need to inform decision making. Each CPP received a fully anonymised dataset and a visualisation tool to further analyse the data.

### **The development and facilitation programme**

As part of the RCS programme, development support and facilitation helped CPPs to create the environment and conditions to effect the change needed for improved and more targeted children's services.

The content and delivery of the three development days were described as high quality and they provided the rare opportunity to learn about and discuss a wide range of issues with local colleagues. Interviewees felt that the timing of the three days could change so that they occurred at a point in the programme when the learning could be applied; this has been adjusted for Tranche 3.

Each CPP received tailored support from the RCS team. CPP stakeholders appreciated the engaging and knowledgeable support that the team provided and this helped to maintain local momentum and guide them on how to use the new evidence to inform decision-making.

The workshops and learning exchanges were enjoyed by all interviewees and they would welcome more opportunities to connect with others and share learning.

The RCS national team were perceived as responsive and adaptable, and they worked in a less conventional way to support and challenge the CPPs. Whilst there was some frustration about the personnel changes within the team and the current vacancies, all CPPs were keen to see the RCS team being involved over a longer period of time. Some CPP stakeholders also felt that the RCS team and its work

could feed in better to other Scottish Government programmes to maximise learning and inform policy.

## **The impact of the Realigning Children's Services Programme**

By engaging in the RCS programme, stakeholders in all five CPPs reported to having improved their:

- collaboration and multi-agency working;
- understanding of local need and how that aligns with service provision;
- use of evidence to inform decision-making;
- collective understanding of local priorities; and
- knowledge and skills about ways of bringing about change.

Undertaking the survey programme and mapping exercise has shown local stakeholders that they can collect data on this scale across their CPP, work across agencies to bring information together in one place, produce valuable information and use locally held information to build a more insightful picture.

Although challenging to undertake, many contributors saw the value of the mapping exercise in bringing together information about, and increased awareness of, children's services and the investment in services across various sectors in the CPP.

With respect to the survey data, schools used it in several ways, such as informing their school improvement plans and making decisions about the use of their Pupil Equity Fund. At area and CPP levels, cluster reports and full datasets were used for various purposes, such as creating school profiles, informing local outcome improvement plans and identifying new priorities. One CPP amended its Children's Services Plan and in another they used the data and evidence in a successful bid to the Big Lottery Fund.

Outputs from the survey programme, alongside locally held data, helped CPP stakeholders to review their services and to encourage discussions about how services could better meet children's needs.

The experience of collecting information from local stakeholders has increased knowledge of how to engage particular organisations and professionals and improved understanding of individual agency structures and processes. This will aid CPPs when communicating and conducting joint work in the future. It also raised awareness amongst local stakeholders of the need to take an evidence-based approach to planning and delivering services.

The development days, learning events and support from the RCS team has increased CPPs' knowledge and awareness of methodologies for improvement and implementation, developed a shared understanding of local issues, led to more meaningful partnership working and created a readiness for a changed approach to meeting children's and families' needs.

Facilitated meetings, learning exchanges and discussions have resulted in increased joint working and improved relationships between agencies, which has in turn led to increased collaboration at the local level. This will continue beyond the RCS programme.

Having a Scottish Government team flexing their role to address individual needs added value to the programme. Their knowledge and provision of practical help enabled CPP stakeholders to maintain focus and momentum.

### **Lessons learnt**

There are key lessons about the factors that enable CPPs to engage in and progress through RCS:

- **Leadership** – visibility and involvement at senior level helped to maintain momentum and then lead or secure joint strategic decision making;
- **History of partnership working** – areas with a strong history of collaboration had more established relationships and greater mutual understanding of each other, leading to a common understanding;
- **Motivations for participation** – commitment to the programme was maintained when there was a greater perceived need for change;
- **Response to austerity** – this had both positive and negative effects on CPPs' abilities to work collaboratively with local partners;
- **Effective local engagement** – often aided by existing structures and established local relationships, and sometimes by geographical factors;
- **Top-level stability** – administrative changes and changes in senior leadership during RCS had a negative effect on programme activities.

Evidence from RCS is beginning to shape local policy and there is now a desire for evidence-based decision making and a confidence that local partners can work together to reach decisions and take action. As well as building capacity within the CPPs, the RCS team members developed their own skills and knowledge which can also benefit other policy colleagues and inform the policy cycle.

### **Recommendations and future considerations**

Based on the evaluation findings there are immediate and short term recommendations that could improve the programme's impact, some\* of which have already been made for Tranche 3:

- **Recommendation 1:** The RCS team should be cognisant of the factors that affect CPP progress, in particular the top level commitment and this should translate and be maintained amongst the senior and middle managers tasked with implementing the programme. Some consideration should be given as to how the executive sponsors can be more visible and active throughout the lifetime of the programme.

- **Recommendation 2\*:** The sample survey of parents of 0-8 years olds was limited in the extent to which the evidence it produced could be used CPP wide and it was expensive to administer and this should be, and has been removed from the programme.
- **Recommendation 3:** The mapping exercise needs to have more immediate benefits for those completing it and a better understanding of how it will be used. Specialist support to analyse the information and model changes and their short to long term cost savings is likely to encourage completion of the map and provide more use of it by the CPPs.
- **Recommendation 4\*:** The three development days would have an even greater impact if they delivered at times that relate to the CPPs' stage within the programme. This is a change that will benefit Tranche 3.
- **Recommendation 5:** The workshops and learning exchanges provide opportunities for CPP representatives to share learning and offer mutual support were particularly useful to CPPs. There could be more frequent opportunities for the tranches to come together and learn from each other.
- **Recommendation 6:** Once a CPP has completed the programme, the RCS team should continue to maintain a level of engagement with the team. This could involve an annual visit to discuss progress, or remaining as a consultancy resource (capacity permitting) available to CPPs engaged in repeating aspects of the initial programme themselves. This engagement between RCS and CPPs will also assist in the ongoing evaluation of the programme.
- **Recommendation 7:** The RCS team play a critical role in the programme and the current vacancies need to be filled as quickly as possible with the appropriate staff, particularly the RCS manager post, to avoid a loss of momentum and progress with Tranches 2 and 3.
- **Recommendation 8:** Scottish Government should maximise the knowledge gain within the team so that it can inform the policy cycle within other areas of the Children and Families Directorate.
- **Recommendation 9:** Scottish Government should consider how to strengthen the links between the Children's Service Planning and the key messages and evidence arising from the RCS programme.

In thinking about the future direction of the RCS programme and links with the wider health and wellbeing policy agenda, there will be future developments that could impact on the need for all RCS elements.

The roll out of the national school health and wellbeing census will provide CPPs with access to the school population data. If CPPs are given the appropriate support to analyse, interpret and act on the census data then the Child Wellbeing Survey Programme element of RCS may not be required.

In the future Children's Services Planning should be more established and the plans should be built on robust information about needs, costs and services. To do

this CPPs will need to undertake some form of mapping, therefore the mapping exercise within the RCS programme would become unnecessary.

However, the much valued and key element that has helped the CPP stakeholders to drive change is the programme support which includes the bespoke offering from the RCS team. There will still be a need for these elements and the facilitative, supportive but challenging approach that brings partners together. The model for this delivery of a programme of events and the operation of a 'nimble' consultancy team could then be reviewed to see if Scottish Government is best placed to deliver and learn from the programme or if another agency could fulfil this role.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Blake Stevenson was commissioned by the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS), on behalf of the Scottish Government, to evaluate the Realigning Children's Services (RCS) programme.

RCS is a multi-faceted programme which aims to provide support and challenge to a number of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) to drive improvement in their joint strategic decision-making in relation to children's services. RCS is now working with a third tranche of CPPs, but this evaluation focussed on the support provided to CPPs in Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 of the programme.

## Policy context

The RCS programme was established to support the Scottish Government's wider agenda of improving the wellbeing of children in Scotland through early intervention and preventative service delivery.

This policy agenda was given a legislative basis through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which provides wide-ranging provisions aimed at delivering better outcomes for children and young people in Scotland. These provisions, which have not yet commenced, include duties on local authorities and NHS health boards to provide a 'Named Person' service for every child and family in Scotland, and to develop a Child's Plan for any child where there are concerns about their wellbeing.

In particular, Part 3 (Children's Services Planning) of the Act aims to improve outcomes for children and young people by requiring local authorities and health boards to take a joint strategic approach to the planning and delivery of services. As a result, legal responsibility for the planning of children's services and related services is now held jointly by local authorities and health boards.

Part 3 of the Act places a duty on every local authority and its relevant health board to jointly prepare a three-year Children's Services Plan (CSP) for the area of the local authority which, according to the Scottish Government's Statutory Guidance on Part 3, should:

- articulate how various services will work together to best safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of all children in the area concerned;
- ensure that any action to meet needs is taken at the earliest appropriate time and that, where appropriate, action is taken to prevent needs arising;
- be most integrated from the point of view of recipients; and
- constitute the best use of available resources.

Although RCS was not established as a direct result of the Statutory Guidance (which was published later), the approach and objectives of the Statutory Guidance

resonate closely with the resulting requirements on CPPs and provides direction on the processes that need to be implemented for effective children's services planning. These include:

- undertaking a joint strategic assessment;
- identifying and agreeing a manageable number of priorities;
- creating a shared vision of what will be achieved;
- developing outcome indicators;
- agreeing which activities will be delivered in order to realise the vision, on the basis of detailed cost-benefit analysis;
- deciding how those activities will be resourced;
- consulting on and publishing a CSP detailing the actions to be taken, by whom, and when;
- holding persons to account for delivery of activities identified in the CSP through appropriate governance arrangements; and
- monitoring progress against the CSP<sup>1</sup>.

## Programme background

RCS built on the experience of Evidence for Success: a programme developed and run by the Dartington Social Research Unit and trialled by the Scottish Government. This programme identified the evidence needs for informing each stage of the policy cycle. The RCS programme was tasked with building an approach, drawing on several of the key elements of the Dartington<sup>2</sup> model, which could help CPPs to improve the joint strategic commissioning of their services for children and young people.

The RCS team began working with the first tranche of CPPs in 2015 with the aim of:

- enabling effective local planning partnerships;
- increasing the use of evidence; and
- increasing investment in preventative and early intervention approaches.

The RCS logic model (Appendix 1) details the short, medium and long term outcomes for the programme. As the logic model shows, the short term outcomes are centred on commitment to the programme, meaningful participation, evidence of use of the data and evidence that knowledge and learning is being shared. All of which, in the medium term, should lead to local infrastructures that enable evidence-informed joint strategic decision-making.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government, *Statutory Guidance on Part 3*, p9.

<sup>2</sup> Dartington Social Research Unit designed an approach that involved a comprehensive portfolio of work to collect and use data on children's well-being and service use to inform needs-led commissioning.

The RCS programme has worked with five CPPs in the first two tranches; Clackmannanshire, West Lothian and South Lanarkshire (Tranche 1), and North Lanarkshire and Falkirk (Tranche 2).

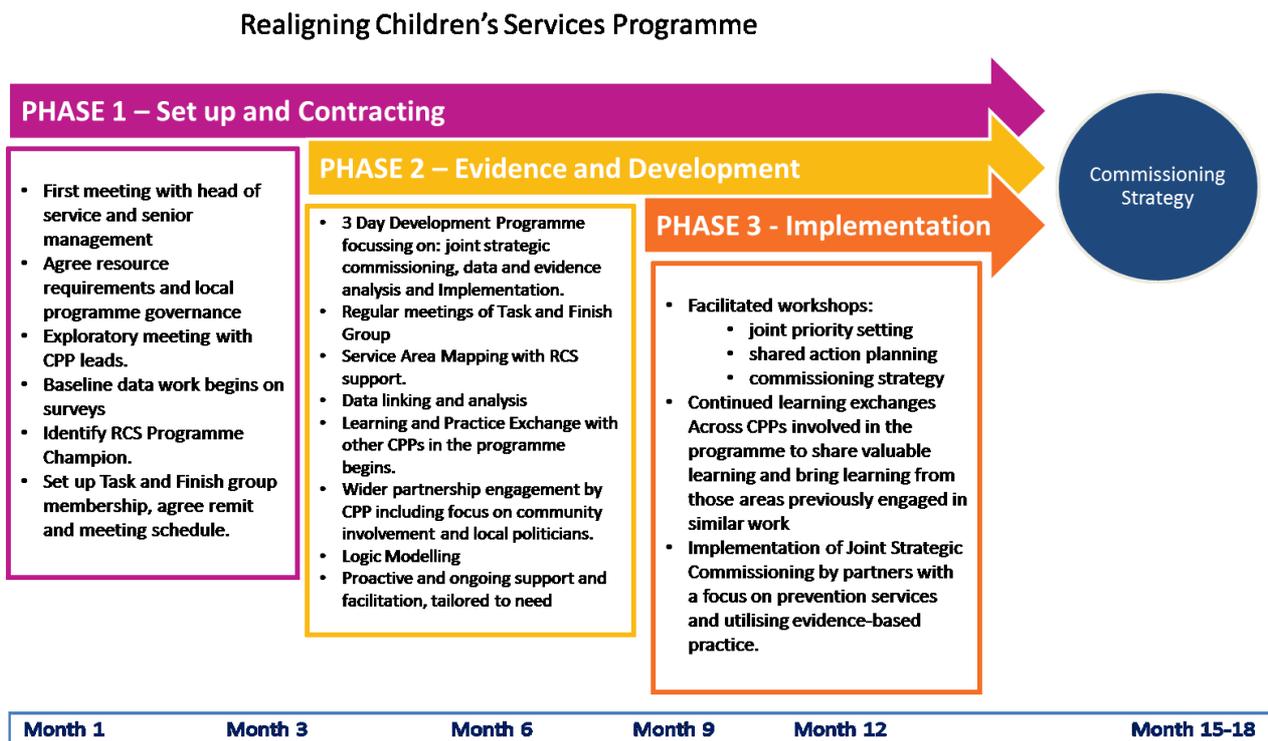
The programme has supported the CPPs through two distinct strands:

An **evidence programme** that involves gathering data on the experiences of children and young people and the mapping of children and family services expenditure, to support joint strategic commissioning and improve service delivery at a community level. This includes the Child Wellbeing Survey Programme, three health and wellbeing surveys: one with pupils in primary school, one with secondary school pupils, and face-to-face interviews with parents with younger children. The primary and secondary schools responses are linked to local administrative data through a data sharing exercise to get a fuller picture of the respondents' demographics and involvement with children and family services. The evidence programme also includes the mapping of children and family services and their expenditure in each participating CPP area.

A **development and facilitation programme** to establish governance structures in local CPPs that support the implementation of joint strategic commissioning practice through a three-day training programme, as well as learning and practice events. The facilitation aspect of the programme involves a wide range of support provided by the team to help local stakeholders to progress discussions, understanding and implementation of evidence based policy making for their children's services.

The two strands of the RCS programme are delivered through a three-phased, nominally 18-month delivery model.

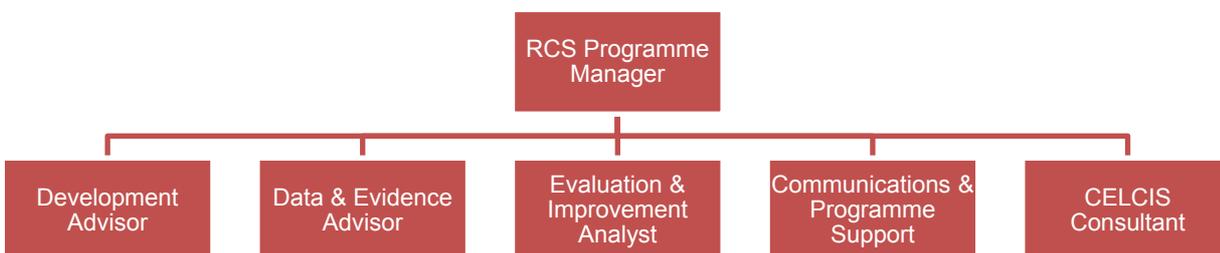
Figure 1.1 RCS programme delivery model (Scottish Government (2016), Realigning Children’s Services Programme Overview)



The RCS programme has been delivered through a core team based in the Scottish Government Children and Families Directorate, and is overseen by the RCS Programme Board chaired by the Scottish Government’s Director of Children and Families. The Board is also supported by the RCS Strategic Partnership Group (which provides information and advice) and the RCS Research Advisory Group (which provides guidance on survey work).

The team is led by the RCS Programme Manager, and the team structure is summarised below.

Figure 1.2 RCS Programme Team structure



## Evaluation approach

The overall aim of this evaluation was to improve the effectiveness of the RCS programme. It will achieve this by identifying lesson learned by the RCS core team and CPPs, determining the impact of the programme including whether the programme has supported CPPs to implement joint strategic commissioning for

children's services, and by providing recommendations for the future direction of the RCS programme.

To do this, a set of key research questions were used that explored the following themes:

- communication and engagement with RCS programme principles;
- value of the data and evidence gathered;
- effectiveness of the support provided to CPPs;
- achievement of short term outcomes; and
- the lessons learned through the delivery of the RCS programme.

The full list of the evaluation questions is included in Appendix 2.

The Blake Stevenson evaluation team carried out the evaluation over three stages which is summarised in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3 Evaluation approach



In the first stage, a detailed inception meeting with RCS team members provided a valuable insight into the delivery of the programme in each CPP and a discussion of the evaluation approach. This helped to refine the methodology and timetable and made the team aware of potential issues or sensitivities that could impact on the evaluation.

Following the meeting, an inception report summarised the agreed evaluation activity. Then, RCS documents were reviewed, including RCS programme monitoring documents and reports, materials used as part of the evidence and development strands, governance and financial data, and updates on activities and progress across each CPP.

This review helped to inform the fact finding calls conducted during the planning phase. These telephone discussions, alongside the reviewed documents, shaped the area visits and follow up interviews with stakeholders in the five CPPs.

In total, 35 CPP stakeholders were interviewed during the evaluation, including head teachers, social work and health practitioners, senior staff in children and families services, public health and health improvement. By CPP area, there were:

- 4 interviewees from Clackmannanshire;
- 7 interviewees from Falkirk;
- 10 interviewees from North Lanarkshire;
- 10 interviewees from South Lanarkshire; and
- 4 interviewees from West Lothian.

In addition, four members of the RCS programme team and their line manager were also interviewed.

A list of relevant questions and topics to be discussed with interviewees were prepared in advance of the interviews, which were semi-structured in nature, to guide both the interviewer and interviewee. This ensured that a range of key evaluation topics were covered whilst allowing flexibility to cover other relevant issues. Upon completion of the interviews, a thematic analysis of all primary and secondary data was carried out.

## **Report structure**

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 details stakeholders' experiences of the RCS programme;
- Chapter 3 explores the impact of the RCS programme, including identifying the short term outcomes of the programme and examples of change; and
- Chapter 4 provides a summary of the key findings from the evaluation, including considerations for the future delivery and direction of the programme.

# Chapter 2: Experiences of the Realigning Children's Services Programme

## Introduction

In this chapter we discuss the interviewees' experiences of the different elements of the RCS programme and explore the themes that emerged about the implementation and delivery. We also identify how the programme has evolved over the course of two tranches and in the current support to CPPs in Tranche 3.

The discussion about the experience of the programme is framed around the following key themes:

- Communication and engagement with RCS programme principles;
- Data and evidence: collecting and processing;
- Data and evidence: key outputs;
- Programme support;
- Workshops and learning exchanges; and
- RCS national team

## Communication and engagement with RCS programme principles:

The programme aims to provide support and challenge to CPPs to drive improvement in their joint strategic commissioning of children's services. The CPPs selected in Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 were aware of the Dartington model used in other CPP areas, understood the key elements of the programme and were motivated, for different reasons, to be a part of RCS. For some, this was in response to Children's Services inspections and the need for change. Others wanted and recognised the value of having whole school population data to help inform decisions.

At a senior level, there was an understanding of and commitment to the RCS programme across all the CPPs, and the local decision structures were adapted or created to ensure that the work and evidence it produced could influence the local policy and practice landscape.

The extent to which that understanding and commitment was retained at middle management or with certain stakeholders, e.g. education or health, varied. The RCS team recognised that senior and middle managers were tasked with delivering the main elements of the programme and that there was sometimes a disconnect between the two layers of management. For local stakeholders, like head teachers in schools or third sector organisations funded to deliver services, they were often focused on one element of the programme, (e.g. the survey element or the mapping exercise) without fully appreciating how it fitted into a much wider programme.

## Clarifying the message

The RCS team members explained that, in order to provide clarity and fully reflect the work, the original programme emphasis on **joint strategic commissioning** of children's services has been adjusted. The team recognised that many CPPs were and are not currently in a position to undertake joint strategic commissioning; that there seemed to be a heavy focus on the survey element, because it was a complex activity to coordinate and deliver, and; that this resulted in local stakeholders concentrating their attention and effort on the surveys rather than all aspects of RCS. Therefore the programme and key messages were flexed.

The adjustment in the messaging and communication about RCS has helped to clarify and emphasise the aim of the programme, which is now described as supporting CPPs to make better **joint strategic decisions** about how to improve outcomes for children and families.

As identified by local stakeholders and the RCS team, CPPs are supported and challenged to do this by:

- **Bringing together organisational stakeholders** to share information, build collective understanding, agree priorities and develop joint plans of action.
- **Using data and evidence to map current need, services and expenditure;** identify priority outcomes and ways of addressing those, and evaluate subsequent changes to policy and practice.
- **Identifying ways to shift investment 'upstream'** to allow prevention and early intervention and reduce the need for high intensity, high cost services.
- Finding meaningful and effective ways of **involving children, families and frontline practitioners** in the process of service redesign.
- Using the lessons of implementation science and improvement methodology to bring about effective, sustainable and scalable change.

Latterly, this description about the programme and the five elements has been used consistently in communications with all three tranches. Not only should this help to increase the general understanding across all stakeholders but it should also assist in establishing the links between the key activities and the other aspects of the programme.

## Data and evidence: collection and processing

The data and evidence to map current need, services and expenditure is drawn from the Child Wellbeing Survey Programme, the data linkage and the mapping exercise.

### The Child Wellbeing Survey Programme

The survey programme involved the primary school survey of P4-6 pupils, the secondary school survey of S1-4 pupils and a face to face survey of parents of 0-8 year olds. Both school surveys were web-based. The primary school survey was designed for the RCS programme and the secondary survey was based on the

Scottish Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS), with a wellbeing boost which asked additional questions related to, for example, healthy living and physical activity. All aspects of the programme regarding data collection, analysis and reporting were contracted to ScotCen, with the exception of the data collection in secondary schools during Tranche 1.

Securing the involvement of the majority of primary and secondary school head teachers to participate in the survey was a significant task, although this was successfully achieved in all CPPs with assistance from the RCS team. Each CPP approached the awareness raising and engagement of the survey programme in a different way. In one area, they worked closely with colleagues in education to communicate with head teachers about the process through various means including area briefings and written summary guides and information. Whilst this helped to engage many head teachers, the CPP still felt they needed to build in more time and more face to face communication to ensure buy-in.

Another area, in contrast, struggled to get their head teachers on board with the survey. It came at a time when the message from government was about reducing bureaucracy and emphasising autonomy. Their involvement was eventually secured with support from the RCS team, who attended a meeting with head teachers, discussed and addressed their concerns, and helped them understand the benefits to their school in having detailed wellbeing data from several year groups.

The process of undertaking the survey showed what was possible to do on that scale, and while it went quite smoothly in most areas, interviewees in CPPs reported some minor challenges. These included:

- the timing of the survey in the school calendar year (summer term) for some of the primary schools in Tranche 2;
- a minor challenge in the generated unique identifiers for the surveys in one school that had the same/similar name to another school, and this issue was quickly resolved; and
- the focus of surveying pupils in mainstream schools.

Building on this point, some local stakeholders were disappointed that pupils in special schools and/or some pupils with disabilities or special needs did not take part in the survey. The RCS team was clear that, as a group of pupils with additional support needs, there would be a greater range of existing data about these pupils compared with the whole school population. It was also felt that as a standardised tool, the survey would need to be adapted or the pupils would need additional support to complete it. The CPPs could opt to do this but they needed to find the time and resources to administer it in that way.

The parents of 0-8 year olds were selected using a tightly-controlled form of quota sampling and a small sample of 400-500 were surveyed face to face within their homes. This was a resource intensive and costly element of the survey programme and one CPP opted out of the parent survey, preferring instead for the resource to

contribute to three strategic needs assessments. The RCS team recognised the limitations of the parent survey; its small sample size meant the data were less robust than data from the school surveys. In addition, it was relatively costly to administer. The parent survey has been removed for Tranche 3 and the resource is redirected to the school surveys and a part-time evidence officer in the CPP.

Where wider strategic needs assessments were carried out, these involved survey work, desk based reviews, focus groups and interviews with a range of stakeholders, including practitioners and frontline staff. This aimed to gather their views on the themes of community justice, looked after children and early intervention and prevention. The RCS team then facilitated consideration and discussion of the broader picture of need alongside the survey data.

### **Data Linkage**

The self-reported data from each survey response were linked to a set of additional fields<sup>3</sup> drawn from Social Work and Education records in each area. This process was conducted securely and anonymously by the electronic Data Research and Innovation Service (eDRIS) and the National Records of Scotland (NRS). This created a single data set that contained information about child wellbeing and need, and the receipt of children's services.

### **Mapping exercise**

The mapping exercise aimed to comprehensively map children's services in each CPP and the amount of expenditure on statutory services across education, social work, health, leisure and culture, as well as funding to voluntary organisations to deliver projects focused on children and families.

The information collected as part of the mapping included: the age group(s) that the services provided for, the total number of children provided for, the percentage of the budget associated with different tiers of intervention and; third sector services and the origin of the funding.

Whilst some CPPs did eventually complete the exercise, all the CPPs reported that they had struggled to prioritise or to undertake the mapping. This appears to be as a result of a number of factors:

- the perceived overemphasis on the survey programme;
- understanding the purpose and value of such an exercise for those contributing the information;
- difficulties engaging the local stakeholders or partners that needed to have an input;
- challenges for health colleagues in sharing budgetary information and unpicking NHS Board level budgets to align with the CPP area; and

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<sup>3</sup> These fields included in receipt of children's services, looked after status, child protection register, complex support plan, education plan, Additional Support Need, Free School Meals, in receipt of through care and after care, SIMD decile, urban/rural 8 point classification, School

- for third sector organisations delivering services were not always comfortable divulging commercially sensitive information about their contracts.

Despite the challenges, there are a few examples of successful contributions to the exercise. In one area, they had a contact in their NHS board who was able to progress the financial unpicking of services and identify what was delivered in their CPP. In another, the Third Sector Interface (TSI) worked with the voluntary sector organisations to capture the information, which, as an activity, they found helpful to understand what funded work was being carried out.

In one area, now in receipt of the survey data, they are undertaking the mapping exercise. With a clearer picture of the wide range of funded services, they now know what is being delivered as well as how and to what extent it is meeting needs. They can use this information to inform decisions about funding services.

The RCS team has reflected on the mapping exercise and recognise that making clearer links to how CPPs could invest in preventative work and make long term savings would be more useful and worthwhile for those bringing the information together. To do this, there would need to be support from an economist who could carry out some financial modelling.

## **Data and evidence: Key outputs**

There were several outputs from the data and evidence element of the programme.

### **Survey reports**

The reports included a set of bespoke school reports, cluster reports for groupings of schools and an overview report for each CPP. For Tranche 2, these were produced within six months of the surveys being completed, which was the earliest possible timeframe to undertake the analysis, link the data and create the reports. A summary at the start of each CPP report was written by a member of the RCS team to help identify themes and messages within it. With this survey data several local stakeholders acknowledged that it was the first time that their CPP had detailed, linked information on the characteristics, needs and perceptions of the wider population of children and young people.

All of the stakeholders in CPPs who were interviewed commented on the quality of the summaries in the reports in distilling key messages and found that the survey responses, linked to existing local evidence, had created a picture of service use and need that was hugely helpful for informing decision making at a local, area and CPP level.

### **Data set and visualisation tool**

The data from all of the surveys is collated and given to each CPP as a full anonymised dataset. A visualisation tool, created within Tableau software, is provided to help interrogate the data. This means that the data is an ongoing resource that can be explored and presented in a user friendly way.

At the time of the evaluation, CPPs in Tranche 1 had access to the full anonymised dataset and had been brought together for a learning and practice exchange to go

through the functionality of the tool. These CPPs were beginning to conduct further ad hoc analysis and create visuals of the data.

## **Programme support**

Alongside the collection of new evidence, to inform joint strategic decision making, the development programme works with CPP stakeholders to create the environment and conditions to effect the change needed for improved and more targeted children services.

### **Development days**

The three development days were important elements of the programme support. They brought together key stakeholders to:

- learn about the use of data and evidence to inform decision-making;
- be inspired by experts on improvement methodology and implementation; and
- understand how to lead effective change management.

The development days were described as high quality in their content and delivery. The participants enjoyed and welcomed the rare opportunity to learn about and discuss a wide range of issues with local colleagues. Interviewees highlighted that the exercises provided challenges stimulated debate and helped them to understand how aspects of joint strategic decision making and/or commissioning could work in practice.

Many of the interviewees involved in the development days felt that the timing of the three days needed to change slightly so that they occurred at a point in the programme when the participants could apply the learning. This is something that the RCS team had acknowledged and, in Tranche 3, the days are spread over a longer period and will be held within a timeframe that is most relevant to the stages of the programme.

### **Support and facilitation**

Each CPP received support from the RCS team and this was tailored to their needs. The support could range from facilitating a meeting with local partners to move forward discussions, or inputting into children services planning sessions, or engaging with senior leaders to challenge inactivity within the CPP. The RCS team members fulfilled this fluid role and, as a team, were described as engaging, knowledgeable, flexible, hands-on and responsive. The CPPs appreciated the support that the team provided and considered it to be essential in maintaining the momentum locally, helping them to get to the point of having local data but also assisting them to understand how to use the new evidence to shape the decision making about children's services.

The one slight frustration with the RCS team was the changing personnel and the need to build new working relationships as new team members joined. Nevertheless, these regular changes did not detract from the widely held view that

it was a high quality and effective team. At the time of the evaluation, the loss of so many of the team members-particularly exacerbated by the vacant RCS manager post had led to a temporary reduction in the support provided by the team.

Once back to full strength, all CPPs in both tranches were keen to see the RCS team involved over a longer period to maintain a connection, even if this was limited to six monthly contact and annual updates. They also would welcome more joining up of the RCS work with other Scottish Government teams, like those involved in Children's Service Planning.

## **Workshops and learning exchanges**

These meetings occurred twice a year and brought together the key local stakeholders involved in the RCS programme, as well as experts and speakers, like Dartington Social Research Unit, to explore and discuss relevant issues. These events were enjoyed by the CPP representatives and they are keen for more opportunities to connect with each other and the CPPs in other tranches, so they can regularly share learning and offer mutual support.

## **RCS national team**

Initially, the RCS team was located alongside the looked after team within the Children's & Families Directorate. They were later moved to be with the Better Life Chances team, where the policy fit seemed more relevant. The RCS team was described as 'nimble' with a level of freedom that enabled them to be responsive and adapt to the needs of the CPPs and the programme. The RCS manager had a leadership style that was engaging and open to challenge and encouraged a culture of learning and reflection which led to a regular refinement of the approach and to adjusting some elements of the programme.

As a team not only involved in policy design but also policy implementation, most of the team members needed to adapt their approach and work in a less conventional way so that they could provide the proactive and reactive support, challenge and encouragement to the CPPs.

This way of working was a steep learning curve for some of the team, but on the basis of their testimony and wider evidence, they adjusted well. This gave them an insight and understanding that benefitted the RCS programme but also that could support the work of other teams. Several interviewees mentioned the potentially important role that the RCS team could play in feeding into other Scottish Government programmes and agendas, for example those responsible for Children's Services Planning, to maximise the learning and inform ongoing policy development and implementation. Stakeholders were unsure as to whether this was happening.

## **Team changes**

As noted above, over the last three years, several members have left the team and moved into new roles. This turnover had not, until this point, impacted on the support provided to the CPPs. Whilst the posts have been advertised, with the RCS manager role vacant, the team is staffed with an analyst, an intern and a consultant working one day per week. The team appears vulnerable in its ability to continue to support Tranche 2 and the new CPPs in Tranche 3 in the responsive and engaged way that has been a trademark of its approach.

## **Summary**

In this chapter we have described the different elements of the RCS programme and how they successfully engaged, encouraged and enabled CPP partners and local stakeholders to gather and use data for local service planning and improvement. In Chapter 3, we explore the changes and outcomes that have resulted from the new knowledge, skills and understanding of local evidence, and the learning from the RCS programme.

# Chapter 3: The impact of the Realigning Children's Services programme

This chapter considers the changes that interviewees thought had occurred as a result of the RCS programme; how each programme element has supported these changes and the factors that helped CPPs to engage in and achieve the short and medium term outcomes.

## Short term outcomes

The RCS programme, delivered over an 18 month period, aims to bring about changes that enable local planning partnerships to use evidence in their joint strategic decision making. By engaging in the RCS programme, stakeholders across all five CPPs in Tranche 1 and 2 of the RCS programme reported to having improved their:

- collaboration and multi-agency working;
- understanding of local need and how that aligns with service provision;
- use of evidence to inform decision making;
- collective understanding of what the local priorities should be; and
- knowledge and skills about approaches that can bring about change.

The extent to which these improvements have taken place relies on many local factors that will be explored later in this chapter. However, the local stakeholders in CPPs identified that changes that had taken place in their CPP areas were linked to the combination of the elements of the RCS programme.

## The impact of the data and evidence element of the programme

Notably, the CPPs reported that the experience of undertaking the key activities of the survey programme and the mapping exercise has shown local stakeholders that they can:

- gather data on this scale across their CPP;
- work across agencies to draw information together in one place;
- produce valuable information; and
- build a more insightful picture by using existing locally held information.

Whilst the mapping exercise was a challenge for all CPPs, many contributors could see the value of the activity. For the first time it brought together information about children's services delivered across different sectors in the CPP. This alone increased awareness and knowledge of the services, particularly those being delivered by other agencies. For example, a third sector organisation in one CPP found the mapping very helpful in understanding what was available, where the gaps were in local provision and where they could maximise the impact of their

work. Other stakeholders used the map to look more closely at finances, to fully understand where core and discretionary funding was being invested.

Although the visualisation tool had not been rolled out to Tranche 2, the survey data in all five CPPs was being used in various ways to support the development of children and families services.

In the schools, as identified by headteachers and education staff, there were examples of using it to:

- inform their school improvement plans;
- make decisions about the use of their Pupil Equity Fund;
- use of the questions for in-house pupil surveys; and
- explore some of the survey themes in more detail.

For example in one school where the perception of the area and sense of safety was highlighted in the data, the school is working with local stakeholders to use the Place Standard with pupils to explore the issues in more detail and identify actions that could improve perceptions.

At the area and CPP level, there was variety in the use of the cluster reports for school groupings and full datasets. This included using them to:

- inform local outcome improvement plans;
- improve knowledge of the population for other partnerships like the Community Justice Partnership;
- create school profiles that includes attainment and the RCS data for every school;
- inform school mini-inspections by including sample surveys based on questions from RCS and comparing the results;
- create a partnership dashboard of measures using live and RCS data for the CPP to access; and
- amend the Children's Services Plan and add new priorities based on the evidence from the RCS data, as one CPP had done.

There were also unintended outcomes from the data and evidence element of the programme. One CPP saw an increase in the uptake of the SALSUS survey and they attributed that to the work they had done, the previous year, with the schools to engage with the RCS survey. The same CPP had also used the RCS data in a successful £750k bid to the Big Lottery's Early Action System Change (EASC) Fund looking at a test of change at the early stages of youth justice.

The outputs from the survey programme, linked with locally held data, provided another lens through which CPP stakeholders could explore and review their services. The local stakeholders found this layering of data hugely helpful. For

example, in one CPP, the data was showing wellbeing gaps for girls, not just in relation to attainment and physical health but across all of the survey domains. This was powerful evidence to encourage discussion amongst partners about girls' mental health and the factors that were affecting it and how services could better meet those needs.

The experience of gathering information, or securing support to do that, from local stakeholders has also led to a greater understanding of how best to engage particular organisations and professionals, such as head teachers and third sector colleagues. It has also raised awareness of individual agency structures and processes. This knowledge will inform the approaches used by CPPs in future when communicating or carrying out joint work.

Underpinned by the programme support, the achievement of gathering whole school population data, undertaking the mapping exercise and data linkage to create the new evidence set, had convinced many stakeholders of the need to take an evidence based-approach to planning and the delivery of services. This is of particular relevance to the forthcoming Health and Wellbeing Census that will be piloted in 2019.

### **The impact of the programme support**

In order for the CPPs to make better joint strategic decisions about how to improve outcomes for children and families, the stakeholders needed support that would facilitate and strengthen partnership working lead to opportunities to explore and discuss changes that would best meet their local needs, and provide knowledge of how to bring about change. The development days, learning events and the support from the RCS team created the conditions for stakeholders to do this. As a result, amongst the CPPs, there is:

- an increase in knowledge and awareness of methodologies for improvement and implementation;
- a shared and common understanding of a range of local issues;
- more meaningful partnership working; and
- a readiness for a changed approach to meeting the needs of children and families.

As described in Chapter 2, the development days provided opportunities to learn about and discuss approaches that could bring about change, and the quality of this input encouraged and motivated participants to apply that learning. The CPP participants also benefitted from working alongside the RCS team members. The RCS team brought skills and expertise and several interviewees felt that they had been upskilled as a result of that regular engagement and opportunity to learn.

The RCS data and evidence was considered and discussed in various sessions. By exploring the themes together and reaching a common understanding of what the local priorities should be and how these could be addressed, there was a collective agreement and confidence about what was needed. This shared view amongst the

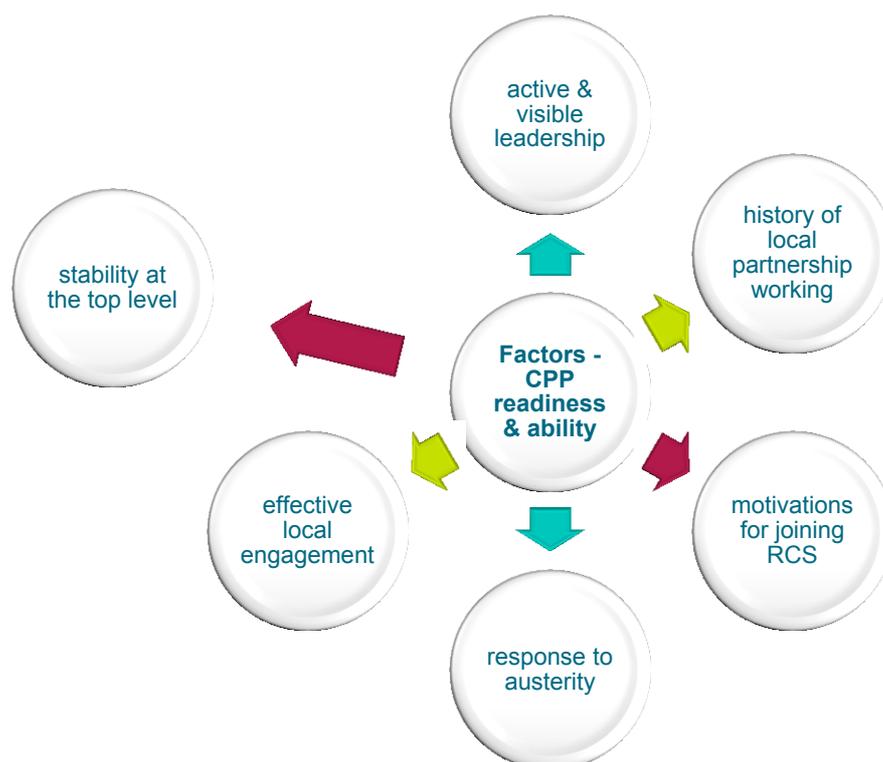
CPP stakeholders created a strong foundation to build on and make joint strategic decisions.

Although CPPs are well established and the integrated joint boards have brought together health and local authorities, there is still solo working. The programme's facilitated meetings, learning exchanges and discussions where partners learnt together has led to increased joint working. This fostered better relationships between agencies, for example between health and education colleagues, which led to increased local collaboration which stakeholders will continue to build beyond the lifetime of the RCS programme.

The added value of the RCS team in the programme of support was the ability of a Scottish Government team to flex their role to address the individual needs of the CPPs when necessary. The team shared their knowledge and expertise and provided practical assistance, from challenging stilted progress to facilitating honest discussions between stakeholders. The CPP stakeholders viewed this support as a unique element of the programme that maintained their focus and momentum, encouraged them to embrace the needed change, and helped to move them towards joint strategic decision making and eventually, commissioning.

### **Lessons learnt about the factors that helped CPPs to engage in and progress the programme**

The local context was a crucial element in the extent to which progress was made in each CPP. A number of factors heavily impacted of the CPPs' readiness to embrace the programmes principles and ability to undertake key programme activities and collaborate to achieve short term changes. These factors are summarised in the diagram below and discussed in turn.



**Leadership** – whilst all CPPs had top level commitment, the visibility and involvement in the programme was needed to help maintain momentum and then lead or secure joint strategic decision making. For those involved in operationalising RCS, without the direct link and support to the Executive sponsor, taking forward CPP level changes could be delayed or they could stall.

**History of partnership working** – in areas with a tradition of working well with their partners, e.g. health colleagues, the relationships were more established and agencies had a better understanding of each other. This helped in reaching a shared and common understanding.

**Motivations for participation** – the factors that triggered a CPPs' eagerness to be part of the programme varied slightly. For example, for some the driver was a poor inspection report and real need for change to address required actions. For another, who had considered the Darlington model, RCS was a more affordable alternative. When there was a greater perceived need for change, this helped maintain the commitment to the programme and to progress actions and decisions.

**Response to austerity** – all CPPs were working in an environment that required significant savings to meet the reduced budgets. For some, this meant that they were focused on core 'business' which impacted on their ability to respond to and work collaboratively with their local partners. Others saw that the RCS work could make collaborative gains that lead to efficiencies and savings.

**Effective engagement at a local level** – the scale of the involvement of local partners varied. In the CPPs covering smaller geographical areas it was generally easier to make contact (for example with the schools) but often the effectiveness of the engagement was a result of existing structures and systems for awareness raising and communicating and again, the established local relationships. Where these were in place and robust, securing the broader local commitment to the programme was a smoother journey.

**Stability at the top level** – a change of administration or the senior leadership team part way through the programme had an impact. The programme activities would pause whilst key personnel or local authority power dynamics changed. This meant they needed to be brought up to speed and interest needed to be reignited before real progress continued.

## **The medium to long term impact of the RCS programme**

The RCS logic model identifies the medium to long term outcomes as:

- an embedded local infrastructure and capacity across Scotland to enable evidence informed joint strategic decision-making;
- an established culture of evidence-informed joint strategic decision-making across Scotland; and
- Scotland being seen as a leader in how we plan and commission children's services

It is still early days in terms of the programme's impact on the evidence informing joint strategic decision making. However, as described in Chapter 2, there are several examples of how the evidence is shaping local policy, and one CPP has made the joint strategic decision to change its Children's Service Plan as a result of their RCS data.

As these examples highlight, in some CPPs there is now an appetite for evidence-informed decision making and a confidence that the local partners can use the tools they now have to work together to reach decisions and take action. The extent to which the programme has supported joint strategic commissioning will need to be determined over a longer period.

Whilst the logic model did not identify outcomes for the RCS team, as well as building capacity amongst local CPP partners and providing challenge and scrutiny, the team has developed skills and knowledge that can benefit other policy colleagues and inform the policy cycle.

# Chapter 4: Conclusions and recommendations

As the Tranche 3 CPPs begin their RCS journey, the programme has benefitted from a clearly defined remit with core elements that have proved to be realistic, achievable and effective in supporting CPPs to develop the skills to gather and use evidence to inform joint strategic decision making.

As a result of the RCS programme, the CPP stakeholders in Tranches 1 and 2 have improved their:

- collaboration and multi-agency working;
- understanding of local need and how that aligns with service provision;
- use of evidence to inform decision making;
- collective understanding of what the local priorities should be; and
- knowledge and skills about approaches that can bring about change.

This had led to several changes in approach to policy and practice, from head teachers using their data to inform PEF spending and school improvement plans, to local partners creating partnership data dashboards and amending their Children's Service Plan.

Each aspect of the programme reinforces the other and it is this combination of elements that makes RCS work. The CPPs need the local data to underpin the future decision making, but they need the support to interpret the evidence and then help them to take action to use it.

CPPs welcomed and needed the encouragement, practical support and challenge provided by the RCS team. They valued the knowledge and insight it provided and the way it worked in responding and meeting their needs so effectively.

The extent of the CPPs' ability to engage and embrace the programme was affected by several factors relating to visible leadership, the history of local partnership working, motivation for joining RCS, their response to austerity measures, effectiveness at engaging local partners and the stability at the top level of their organisations. These factors could help or hinder the progress that was made.

## RCS programme recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings, there are immediate to short term recommendations for the programme that would further enhance the impact of the programme, some\* of which have already been made for Tranche 3. These are:

**Recommendation 1:** The RCS team should be cognisant of the factors that affect CPP progress, in particular the top level commitment and this should translate and

be maintained amongst the senior and middle managers tasked with implementing the programme. Some consideration should be given as to how the Executive sponsors can be more visible and active throughout the lifetime of the programme.

**Recommendation 2\*:** The sample survey of parents of 0-8 years olds was limited in the extent to which the evidence it produced could be used CPP wide and it was expensive to administer and this should be, and has been removed from the programme.

**Recommendation 3:** The mapping exercise needs to have more immediate benefits for those completing it and a better understanding of how it will be used. Specialist support to analyse the information and model changes and their short to long term cost savings is likely to encourage completion of the map and provide more use of it by the CPPs.

**Recommendation 4\*:** The three development days would have an even greater impact if they delivered at times that relate to the CPPs' stage within the programme. This is a change that will benefit Tranche 3.

**Recommendation 5:** The workshops and learning exchanges provide opportunities for CPP representatives to share learning and offer mutual support were particularly useful to CPPs. There could be more frequent opportunities for the tranches to come together and learn from each other.

**Recommendation 6:** Once a CPP has completed the programme, the RCS team should continue to maintain a level of engagement with the team. This could involve an annual visit to discuss progress, or remaining as a consultancy resource (capacity permitting) available to CPPs engaged in repeating aspects of the initial programme themselves. This engagement between RCS and CPPs will also assist in the ongoing evaluation of the programme.

**Recommendation 7:** The RCS team play a critical role in the programme and the current vacancies need to be filled as quickly as possible with the appropriate staff, particularly the RCS manager post, to avoid a loss of momentum and progress with Tranches 2 and 3.

**Recommendation 8:** Scottish Government should maximise the knowledge gain within the team so that it can inform the policy cycle within other areas of the Children and Families Directorate.

**Recommendation 9:** Scottish Government should consider how to strengthen the links between the Children's Service Planning and the key messages and evidence arising from the RCS programme.

## **Future considerations for the programme**

The above recommendations relate to the immediate to short term delivery of the RCS programme but, in thinking about the future direction of the RCS programme

and links with the wider health and wellbeing policy agenda, there will be future developments that could impact on the need for all RCS elements.

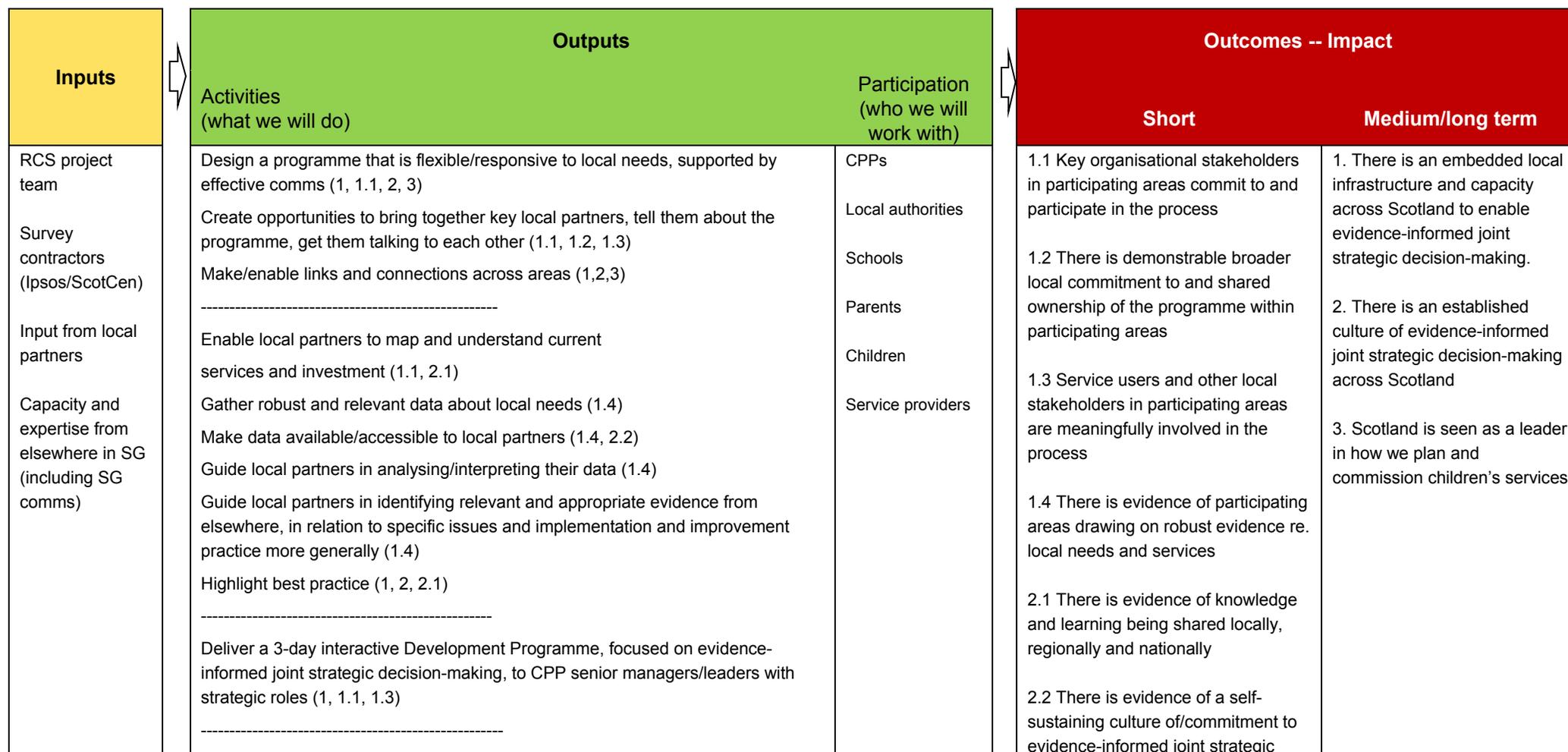
A national school health and wellbeing census is being piloted next year. Once this is rolled out, CPPs will have access to the school population data that has proved to be so useful. If CPPs are given the necessary support to analyse, interpret and act on it, with access to the data and a platform to use, the Child Wellbeing Survey Programme element of RCS may not be required.

By that point the Children's Services Planning process should be more established and monitoring will have ensured that Plans are increasingly built on robust information about needs, costs and services. To do this CPPs will need to undertake some form of mapping, therefore the mapping exercise within the RCS programme would become unnecessary.

However, the much valued and key element that has helped the CPP stakeholders to drive change is the programme support which includes the bespoke offering from the team. There will still be a need for these elements and the facilitative, supportive but challenging approach that brings partners together. The model for this delivery of a programme of events and the operation of a 'nimble' consultancy team could then be reviewed to see if Scottish Government is best placed to deliver and learn from the programme or if another agency could fulfil this role.

# APPENDIX 1: RCS logic model

**Purpose:** The RCS programme exists to help CPPs to make better joint strategic decisions about how to improve outcomes for children and families.



	<p>Provide a structured Facilitation Phase of on-going input to CPPs to support effective joint strategic decision making/commissioning (1, 1.4, 2.2)</p> <p>Support areas to jointly review and agree their priorities in the light of RCS evidence (1, 2.2)</p> <p>Support areas to conduct ongoing evaluation of their own services (1, 1.4, 2.2)</p> <p>Support areas to develop an effective and sustainable implementation plan (1, 1.3)</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Establish the extent to which CPPs have improved their commissioning children's services (in terms of outcomes for children/families, improved financial planning, decreased spend on ineffective interventions, shift towards preventative working) (1,2,3)</p> <p>Establish how effectively CPP's are able to use key learning from the Development Programme and embed it into their day to day work. (1.1, 1.2,1.3, 2.1, 2.2)</p> <p>Establish improvements (or otherwise) in a) multiagency working and b) use of data/evidence (1.4, 2.2, 2.2)</p>		<p>decision-making emerging within participating areas</p>	
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# APPENDIX 2: Evaluation questions

## Communication and Engagement with RCS Programme Principles

Do CPPs, schools, parents, children and other stakeholders have a clear and shared understanding of the RCS Programme principles and aims?

If not, what improvements could be made to define/communicate these principles and aims more clearly?

Is the RCS Programme sufficiently clear, detailed enough in its principles, approach, and associated guidance to allow it to be replicated by CPPs if required?

To what extent do CPPs feel engaged with, and motivated by the RCS Programme?

How could engagement with CPPs and schools be improved, if at all?

## Data and Evidence

How could the process for implementing the HWB survey and data linkage element of the survey be improved?

To what extent and how has the health and wellbeing survey data, linked to local authority administrative data, 'added value' and improved the JSC process for each CPP, in comparison with their previous use of evidence for JSC?

What impact, if any, has the HWB survey data had on school improvement planning?

To what extent does the 'added value' (if any) of the data and evidence programme outweigh the costs/resource implications of implementing a HWB survey of this nature?

To what extent has the survey raised concerns from parents, schools and what were the nature of these concerns? How could anticipating these and responding to them be improved?

To what extent has the data visualisation tool improved stakeholders understanding of the data and evidence? How has this been used within the JSC process? How could this be improved?

To what extent has, the RCS programme increased the skills and knowledge of CPPs in how to use data for local service planning, evaluation and improvement?

## Programme support

To what extent (and how) has the RCS programme support 'added value' and improved the JSC process for each CPP, in comparison with existing processes?

(e.g. greater shared responsibilities and dialogue, increased knowledge and skills, collaboration, multi-agency working)

Does this 'added value' (if any) outweigh the costs/resource implications of providing facilitation and development support for CPPs?

How could this support be improved? Are there any alternative models that should be considered?

Which particular element of the support provided has been considered most useful/effective/critical and why?

## **Short term outcomes**

To what extent, and how, has the overall RCS Programme resulted in improvements to the process and delivery of JSC within CPPs (for example increased collaboration, multi-agency working, improved skills)?

Are these improvements likely to be sustained beyond the RCS Programme support?

Have there been any unintended consequences (positive or negative) for CPPs, schools, parents, children taking part in the RCS Programme? How could these be mitigated for in future?

To what extent was the RCS programme new or a scale-up of existing programmes within each CPP?

To what extent did, the RCS Programme result in a re-focus of services targeted at looked after children, children with Additional Support Needs and children living in poverty.

## **Learning Lessons**

What are the key elements within each of the five CPPs, which have shown to be most successful in improving JSC (e.g. leadership approach, culture, skills, existing approach to JSC).

How have the different elements of the RCS Programme (linked data, facilitation support, data mapping, etc.) each contributed to improvements in JSC and which elements are considered 'critical' to achieving these outcomes for future support?

To what extent did CPPs consider the support received through the RCS Programme, adequate to meet their goals? Did they supplement this with other sources of funding/support, and why?

What did and did not work well in the national and local governance support as part of the RCS programme?



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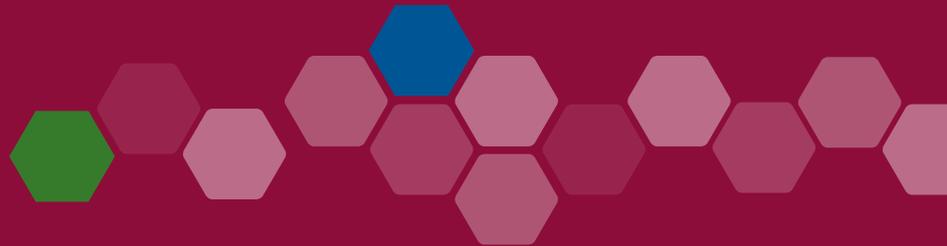
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