

Colleges and Community Planning

Maximising the contribution of Scotland's colleges to
improving outcomes for learners through community
planning, in a regional context

A thematic-based aspect report on provision in Scotland's
Colleges by HM Inspectors on behalf of the Scottish Funding
Council

17 May 2013

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1. Introduction

This task is situated within the context of college sector reform, specifically regionalisation and the implementation of regional *outcome agreements* (ROA)¹, and, within the wider context of public service reform, the refreshed guidance on Single Outcome Agreements (SOA)² for Community Planning Partnerships (CPP).³

It sets out to explore the current nature and impact of college contributions to community planning, identify existing good practice and explore the implications for this aspect of colleges' work of both regionalisation and the recommendations resulting from the review of community planning.

The aims of the task are to: promote dialogue and help inform planning as colleges are reformed in regional models and respond to the review of community planning and SOAs; identify and disseminate examples of effective practice in colleges contributing to outcomes for communities through their work with CPPs; make recommendations to help ensure colleges deliver high-quality outcomes and experiences for learners by contributing more effectively to community planning processes and SOAs in a regional context and against the background of wider public service reform and; inform the ongoing work of Education Scotland under the updated quality framework for the external review of Scotland's colleges.

Methodology

The task was informed by a review of relevant literature and reports, including reports of external reviews of Scotland's colleges carried out between 2008-2012. The task team also engaged with relevant Education Scotland and Scottish Government colleagues and other agencies to keep abreast of parallel and fast-paced developments in college regionalisation and the review of community planning.

Fieldwork for the task involved discussions with representatives from 38 of the 39 publicly-funded colleges operating in Scotland at the time the task was being undertaken, covering all 13 college regions. The college representatives included principals, senior managers and college staff with remits relating to community and partnership work. The task team held parallel discussions with representatives from almost all 32 CPPs. Both sets of discussions took place on a regional basis, as defined by the new college regions (see p. 11)

¹ Regional outcome agreements set out what colleges and universities plan to deliver in return for their funding from the Scottish Funding Council (this report uses the abbreviation ROA for ease of reference) <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/OutcomeAgreements/OutcomeAgreementsOverview.aspx>

² Each CPP enters into a SOA with Scottish Government, setting out the local outcome they will deliver aligned to national priorities.

³ CPPs are the key overarching frameworks that link together partnerships and initiatives at regional and local levels to coordinate the delivery of national priorities in a way that reflects local needs and circumstances. Local authorities have a statutory duty to facilitate CPP processes.

2. Summary of key findings

Strengths

- Colleges have made a positive contribution, over several years, to outcomes for learners in their communities through working with community partners. This is reflected in high levels of satisfaction from community partners about the way colleges work with them and respond to identified needs. Community partnership working has also been subject to consistently positive evaluation by Education Scotland during the 2008-2012 review cycle.
- Almost all colleges participate positively within their respective CPP(s) structure, either at strategic board level or through thematic or operational groups. Colleges also have good links with local community planning groups that operate within overarching CPP structures. In the best examples of colleges working well within CPPs, very close partnership working has continuously developed and matured over years, leading to productive working relationships.
- Almost all colleges have built up good links over time with local authorities, either at strategic level or within various departments, to develop and deliver programmes which meet the needs of people in their communities well. Colleges also work well with a range of external partners, many of whom operate outwith the CPP, to deliver outcomes for learners in their communities.
- Overall, colleges across Scotland have developed effective working relationships with their CPPs and a good understanding of CPP structures. All colleges engage positively with their respective CPP structures, either at strategic board level and/or through thematic groups.
- There are good examples of colleges taking the lead within CPP thematic groups on themes such as employability and skills. This has increased understanding by CPPs about the range and nature of college provision and resources. It has also ensured that college programmes and services are aligned well to identified needs.
- All colleges take account within their strategic or corporate plans of the needs of their communities and/or the CPPs to which they align, regardless of the nature of and mechanisms for their engagement with community planning processes.
- Colleges have particular strengths in provision for specific groups of learners within communities. These include young people taking part in school-college programmes, learners aiming to develop employability skills, learners of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), disengaged young people needing help to move into positive destinations and people in the community with learning difficulties. Most partnerships with local community learning and

development (CLD) providers also work well, delivering a range of programmes including adult literacies and computing skills.

Areas for development

- Where colleges are not represented on strategic CPP groups, this restricts their contribution to community planning. A few of these CPPs are, however, actively planning to include colleges and other non-statutory partners at strategic level in the future.
- Where colleges are not involved in CPP strategic planning, there is evidence of duplication of effort and unnecessary competition between colleges and other partners, particularly around the delivery of employability initiatives and community-based adult learning.
- While mutual understanding between colleges and their community partners within CPPs is strong in some regions and improving generally, it is not yet consistently effective.
- Not all college plans and targets routinely take account of or map to specific, appropriate CPP priorities.
- Although there are a few good examples of colleges and their community partners sharing data and intelligence to inform planning and monitor outcomes, partners recognise that this needs to be done more effectively.
- The different funding mechanisms and planning cycles across the partnerships present additional challenges to colleges engaging effectively with their partners, although these issues have been mitigated in some areas.

3. Overview of Community Planning Partnerships

Summary

Community planning is a process which supports public bodies to work together, and with the community, to jointly plan and deliver services for local people. CPPs are the key, overarching frameworks that aim to coordinate initiatives, ensure organisations work together and ensure communities are genuinely engaged in decisions about public services that affect their lives. They also aim to improve the links between local, regional and national priorities.

The *Local Government in Scotland Act 2003* contained a package of measures intended to support local ownership of decision making and to deliver better, more responsive, public services. The Act gave community planning a statutory basis, placing duties on local authorities to facilitate community planning and on core partners (health boards, the enterprise networks, police, fire and rescue services and regional transport partnerships) to participate in it. Each CPP enters into a SOA with the Scottish Government, setting out the local outcomes that the CPP aims to deliver. The CPP identifies and prioritises these outcomes according to local needs and is expected to align them to the sixteen *National Outcomes* set out in the *National Performance Framework* which underpins Scottish Government's approach to outcomes-based performance.

Structures

CPP structures are broadly similar across Scotland's 32 local authorities, although there is significant variation in the membership, size and nature of the various groups within the structures. CPPs commonly have a strategic board, containing elected councillors, local authority representatives and other statutory partners. The board may also contain some non-statutory partners, for example, colleges and/or universities are represented on 23 CPP boards.⁴ There is usually a group, sometimes called an *Implementation Group*, containing senior representatives from the partners, which will implement the board's decisions and report back to it. Below this group there is a range of operational or thematic groups, addressing specific priorities and issues such as safety, health, economic development, education and alcohol and drugs. Twenty CPPs also have localised community planning arrangements⁵, often also known as *local community planning partnerships*. There is considerable variation in how these local groups are arranged and how they engage with the overarching CPP.

⁴ *Survey of community planning partnerships structures and arrangements 2012: summary report*, Improvement Service, May 2012.

⁵ *Ibid*

4. Background and context

Scotland's colleges provide a significant proportion of the education and training delivered in Scotland. At the time of publication of this report, 39 Colleges, located across the country, provide programmes for approximately 260,000 learners, roughly one in 12 of the adult working population. They vary greatly in size and provide a range of programmes and services for learners, most of whom come from their local or 'travel to work' area. Many colleges also provide specialist programmes and attract learners from all over the country and further afield. They are complex institutions, subject to a wide range of influences and responding to a range of demands.

In 1993 almost all colleges became incorporated bodies, and were removed from direct local authority control.⁶ Funding for most of colleges' provision comes in the form of grant-in-aid from the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC). Most colleges provide commercial training programmes alongside publicly-funded ones and many offer degree-level programmes in partnership with universities. Quality assurance in relation to college provision is commissioned by SFC from HM Inspectors within Education Scotland.⁷

Colleges in Scotland have a history, including prior to incorporation, of working constructively with community partners to develop and deliver programmes which meet the needs of people in their local communities. Many of these programmes involve community-based provision for adults and school-college vocational programmes for pupils in local secondary schools. Building on these partnerships, many colleges have continued to develop and deliver a wide range of full and part-time programmes to meet local needs. As a consequence, over time, almost all colleges have built up good links with local authorities, either at strategic level or within various departments. They also work well with other partners, including employers, higher education providers, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), local schools, health and social care agencies and others. Colleges have become flexible and quick to respond to changes in their operating environments, which may include national developments beyond their local area.

Until 2008, the then HM Inspectorate of Education⁸ (HMIE) evaluated the effectiveness of college partnerships under the heading *Access and Inclusion* in college review reports. These reports provided a largely positive account of local authority and community partnership working with many clear illustrations of impact on learners in the local area. Since 2008, this aspect of college activity has been evaluated under *Impact on learners and other users of college services* and *Educational leadership and direction*. The evaluations have remained largely positive.

As publicly-funded bodies, colleges have been subject to the same policy drivers as other areas of public service in recent years and the sector is

⁶ Orkney College UHI and Shetland College UHI remain within the control of their respective local authorities. Newbattle Abbey College, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI, West Highland College UHI and Argyll College UHI are not incorporated bodies.

⁷ Education Scotland inspectors review further education provision only, within partner colleges of the University of the Highland and Islands (UHI) and within Scotland's Rural College (SRuC).

⁸ Now incorporated within Education Scotland.

currently undergoing a period of significant restructure. As part of Scottish Government's drive to reform post-16 education and training to support jobs and growth more effectively, colleges are being restructured into 13 regions. Each region is entering into a regional *outcome agreement* (ROA)⁹ with the SFC that will realign the funding for colleges to better support these aims. This includes a greater emphasis on the provision of full-time programmes for the 16 to 19 year-old age group. The SFC has appointed *Outcome Managers* to work alongside colleges and their local partners with the aim of ensuring that ROAs meet local, regional and national needs.

At the same time, there is a renewed focus and enhanced expectation for CPPs to deliver better outcomes for the communities they serve. This increased expectation sits within an overarching Scottish Government requirement for increased efficiency and a more effective approach across all public services to identifying and responding to the needs of communities.

Review of Community Planning

The Scottish Government launched the Christie Commission in November 2010 to provide recommendations on how public services must change to meet the medium and long term financial challenges and the expectations of the people of Scotland. In its final report (June 2011) the Commission proposed that public services should, first and foremost, be seen to support the achievement of outcomes, defined as, '*real-life improvements in the social and economic wellbeing of the people and communities of Scotland.*' The report urged Scottish Government, local government, partners and stakeholders to work together to reform and improve Scotland's public services, by '*Maximising scarce resources by utilising all available resources from the public, private and third sectors, individuals, groups and communities.*' The key objectives of reform include ensuring that public services are built around people and communities, and that public service organisations work together to achieve outcomes. The Commission state that, '*Public service organisations should work to extend and deepen a local partnership approach, building on but going well beyond the current community planning partnership model.*'¹⁰

Acting on the Commission's findings, the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities conducted a joint review early in 2012 of community planning and SOAs. The review culminated in a *Statement of Ambition* (March 2012) setting out the vision and principles for the future of community planning to enable better outcomes for communities. Included among the *conditions for success* identified in the statement was the need for all public services to play a full and active role in community planning whether acting nationally, regionally or locally, and the requirement of CPPs to influence and drive investment decisions by partners towards achieving the outcomes in SOAs. This specifically included ensuring the effective involvement of colleges. The review also proposed a new statutory duty on all relevant partners to work together to improve outcomes for local communities,

⁹ Newbattle Abbey College, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI and the recently formed SRuC all have separate outcome agreements due to their specialist provision.

¹⁰ *Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services*, APS Group Scotland, 2011, p.6

whether acting nationally, regionally or locally, through participation in community planning partnerships and the provision of resources to deliver SOAs

A set of proposals was published in May 2012 and two strategic groups, a *National Community Planning and SOAs Group* and a *Community Planning Project Board*, were set up to oversee and implement the vision and proposals arising from the review. With this clear sense of direction laid out, the *National Community Planning and SOAs Group* drew up a set of principles and propositions which reinforced messages in relation to:

- a decisive shift towards prevention;
- greater integration at a local level driven by better partnership;
- workforce development; and
- a sharper, more transparent focus on performance.

A very clear overarching theme of the group's work was that public services needed to be better aligned and more clearly focused on the delivery of improved outcomes. This included collective accountability for their delivery, with implications for the sharing of data and for joint planning of provision.

In December 2012, in response to the work of the *National Community Planning and SOAs Group* the Scottish Government published *Single Outcome Agreements: Guidance to Community Planning Partnerships*. The guidance reinforces the importance of all relevant local agencies in contributing to planning and delivery of outcomes in relation to key priority areas:

- Economic recovery and growth;
- Employment;
- Early years;
- Safer and stronger communities, and reducing offending;
- Health inequalities and physical activity; and
- Outcomes for older people.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning brought the guidance and *Statement of Ambition* to the attention of college principals and chairs and to regional leads¹¹ in a letter in January 2013. In it, he recognised the contribution that colleges can make to community planning, and highlighted that the *Statement of Ambition* identified that CPPs need to ensure that colleges are involved effectively in community planning. He also highlighted that there will be opportunities to align the priorities above with ROAs, to help demonstrate and strengthen the contribution colleges are making to meeting the needs of learners and businesses in their communities.

¹¹ Appointed to lead the implementation of regionalisation in each region.

Regionalisation of the college sector

The reform of the college sector began with the publication by the Scottish Government in September 2011 of the consultation document, *Putting Learners at the Centre*. This document proposed that the college sector was generally too orientated towards individual institutional drivers and not sufficiently focused on outcomes for learners. It also suggested that there were too many colleges located in close proximity to each other in parts of Scotland and therefore too much scope for duplication or even competition.

In its response to the consultation (March 2012), the Scottish Government stated its intention to establish regional college groupings. It proposed that this would enhance opportunities for learners, provide much clearer and more joined-up pathways for learning, and provide opportunities for reduction of costs. Importantly, reform would enhance the regional strategic role of colleges, building on existing partnerships, including CPPs. The Government also undertook to consider the implications of making colleges statutory members of CPPs¹², taking due account of the outcomes of the review of community planning. In its response to the *Report of the Review of Further Education Governance in Scotland (The Griggs Review, June 2012)*, Scottish Government emphasised that any legislative changes would be expected to focus on the extent to which each partner contributed substantively to the delivery of local outcomes through community planning, rather than whether it is a statutory partner.

Scottish Government consultation and proposals have now been followed through by the publication of the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill. The college sector is currently responding to this emerging legislation on post-16 provision, mostly through merger or federalisation and thus forming regional institutions, governed by a regional board or a strategic regional body. It is anticipated that by the end of academic year 2013-2014 there will be 27 colleges within 13 regions. Each region is required to draw up ROAs reflecting local, regional and national needs and priorities, focused on jobs and growth and improving life chances.

In October 2012, The SFC published *College Outcome Agreement Guidance for AY 2013-14* which provides guidance to colleges on the formulation of ROAs based on 5 strategic priorities:

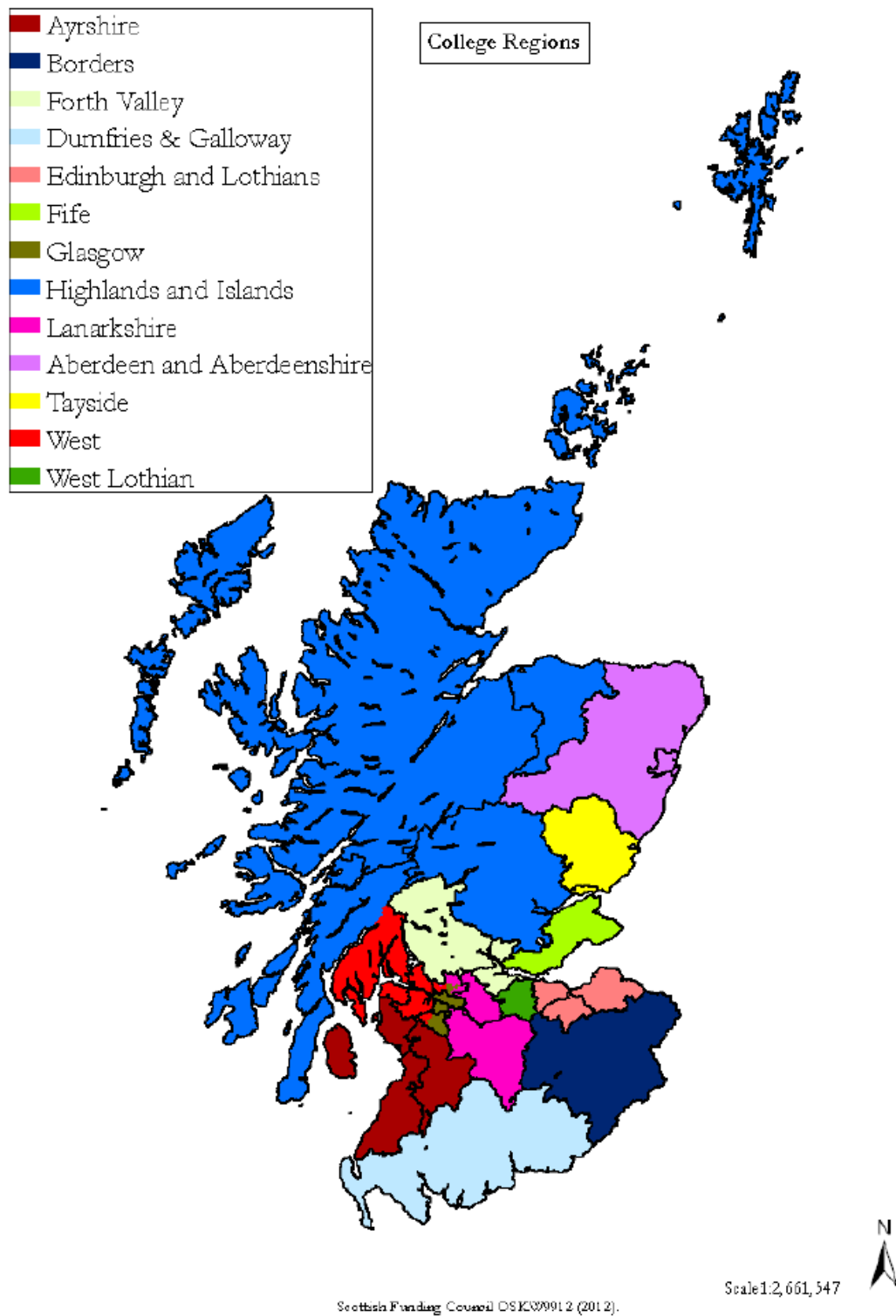
- Efficient regional structures;
- Right learning in the right place;
- High quality and efficient learning;
- A developed workforce; and
- A sustainable institution

Each region is required to set targets for each of the five strategic priorities. The document provides clear guidance to colleges about positioning themselves to meet identified local and regional needs.

¹² NHS boards, the police, the fire and rescue services, and the enterprise agencies (Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise) have a duty to participate in community planning. This duty was later extended to Regional Transport Partnerships.

Although this guidance makes few direct references to CPPs, there is reference to aligning ROAs and SOAs more closely over time, and there is a clear underlying intention that colleges and local authorities should work more productively together. Though originating from separate reform processes, college sector reform and the review of community planning are both focusing on the same imperatives: better partnership working, more coherent provision and evaluation of services and an integrated focus on improving outcomes for communities.

Fig 1: map of new college regions¹³



¹³ Scottish Funding Council, 2012

Table 1: alignment of colleges with CPPs within new college regions

Region	Colleges (as at May 2013)	CPP(s) in alignment, wholly or in part.
Ayrshire	Ayr College, Kilmarnock College and the North Ayrshire campuses of James Watt College	East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire
Borders	Borders College	Scottish Borders
Dumfries and Galloway	Dumfries and Galloway College	Dumfries and Galloway
Edinburgh	Edinburgh College	City of Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian
Fife	Adam Smith College and Carnegie College (Elmwood College is now part of SRuC)	Fife
Forth Valley	Forth Valley College	Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling
Glasgow	Anniesland College, Cardonald College, City of Glasgow College, John Wheatley College, Langside College, North Glasgow College and Stow College	Glasgow City, East Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire
Highlands and Islands	Argyll College UHI, Inverness College UHI, Lews Castle College UHI, Moray College UHI, North Highland College UHI, Orkney College UHI, Perth College UHI, Shetland College UHI and West Highland College UHI	Argyll and Bute, Eilean Siar, Highland, Moray, Orkney, Perth & Kinross and Shetland
Lanarkshire	Coatbridge College, Cumbernauld College, Motherwell College and South Lanarkshire College	North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire
North East	Aberdeen College and Banff and Buchan College	Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire
Tayside	Angus College and Dundee College	Angus and Dundee City
West	Reid Kerr College, Clydebank College and the Inverclyde campuses of James Watt College	Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire
West Lothian	West Lothian College	West Lothian

NB:

- Regional boundaries and CPP/local authority areas are not coterminous in all cases and some colleges engage with CPPs additional to those shown above. Newbattle Abbey College and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI both have separate outcome agreements with SFC due to the specialist nature of their provision, and are not included above.

5. Main report

Overview of college engagement with CPPs

Almost all colleges participate positively within their respective CPP(s) structure, either at strategic/executive board level and/or through thematic groups. The nature of the engagement is determined by several factors, including: the number of colleges in a local authority area and the relationships between them; the number of CPPs in a geographical area served by one college; the population, geography and complexity of local authority areas; the strategic direction and planning mechanisms of the CPP and the historical relationship(s) between the college(s) and the CPP(s) at a strategic level.

In many local authority areas, colleges also have good links with the local community planning groups that operate within the overarching CPP structure. This is particularly apparent in local authority areas that cover extensive geographical areas, such as Angus and Fife, or areas of high population, such as Edinburgh and Glasgow. In Glasgow, for example, each of the seven colleges¹⁴ operating within the Glasgow CPP area engage primarily with their local community groups. In Angus, staff from Angus College represent the college on local partnerships throughout the Angus CPP area.

At the time of writing this report, colleges are represented on the strategic/executive boards of about two-thirds of CPPs in Scotland. Where colleges are not represented at this level, most are represented on thematic groups that take forward identified CPP priorities, such as learning and skills, adult learning, employability, youth employability, literacies, and ESOL. College staff chair these thematic groups in some cases.

Most of the colleges that are not represented on the strategic/executive boards of CPPs consider that this lack of engagement at the highest level of planning and decision making restricts their contribution to community planning. By contrast most of the CPPs to which these colleges align do not regard the omission of colleges from the strategic group as detrimental. However, a few of these CPPs are actively planning to include their partner college(s), and other non-statutory partners, in the strategic group. This disparity is symptomatic of the impact of the statutory duty for facilitating CPPs being placed on local authorities, and the duty to engage in CPPs being placed on only a few other organisations. Some local authorities have remained committed to discharging their statutory duty in a focussed way. As colleges have grown in confidence and become more responsive and effective in the two decades since incorporation, they consider they have much to contribute, and many are actively seeking greater and more effective involvement with CPPs at all levels.

¹⁴ Mergers planned for 1 August 2013 (at the time of publication) will create three colleges in Glasgow from the current seven.

Understanding and working relationships between colleges and CPPs

Overall, colleges across Scotland have developed effective working relationships with their CPPs. They have a good understanding of CPP structures and contribute well to priorities, particularly through thematic groups and working groups. They also work well with local partners outwith the CPP framework to deliver outcomes for learners in their communities. However, in some cases the college role is more one of provider of services to the CPP than as active partner in the community planning process. This is, again, symptomatic of the approach to community planning based only on the core of statutory partners. Where CPPs have embraced a wider partnership and colleges are involved at board level, relationships are generally stronger and mutual understanding is generally deeper.

Moray College UHI contributes effectively to outcomes for its community through a number of links and joint activities. The college and the local authority jointly plan, deliver and evaluate services for the community. The college principal chairs the CPP's *Lifelong Learning Forum*, through which provision for essential skills and ESOL is jointly planned and delivered. Joint arrangements for leisure-based classes have ensured the continuation of these options during a time of reducing resources. The college and the local authority jointly provide opportunities to support *16 plus learning choices*. Moray secondary schools have strong links with the college; a nominated staff member from each school meets regularly with the college manager responsible for school-link programmes. The college manager attends Head Teacher meetings as appropriate to ensure the school-college provision is sustainable, efficient and continues to meet the needs of young people in Moray. The partnerships have evolved and improved over a number of years. Discussions on enhancing senior phase provision, which now includes provision at SCQF level 7, are ongoing.

In the best examples of colleges working well within CPPs, very close partnership working has continuously developed and matured over years, leading to productive working relationships. In these instances, college staff often take lead roles on thematic or sub-groups, on themes such as employability and skills. Where this occurs, CPP managers and other key partners within the CPP are well informed about the range and nature of college provision and resources, and college programmes and services are aligned well to identified needs. Another feature of these effective partnerships is that the partners recognise the need to maintain continuity of understanding through effective succession planning in key roles.

Reid Kerr College has a dedicated post of *Community Planning Liaison Manager*. The post holder works with partners across the CPP and is often the first point of contact at both strategic and operational levels. The post ensures continuity and improves the focus of the college contribution to community planning. The links with key personnel in partner agencies and the awareness of community planning structures, processes and initiatives has supported the college to contribute effectively to the development and delivery of key Renfrewshire CPP outcomes.

In partnerships where the college is less well embedded, there is still some evidence of an improving understanding within the CPPs of college provision and expertise. Often, however, the understanding of college provision by local authority partners is limited to areas of traditional collaboration, such as school-college links or adult learning provision in partnership with CLD functions. This can constrain college contributions to CPP outcomes. The statutory partners in CPPs are relatively large and complex organisations. Local authorities and health boards have extensive remits and are faced with complex, long-term challenges. Where colleges are not involved in planning and decision making at a strategic level, the size and complexity of statutory partners can contribute to a sense by colleges that their contributions could potentially become marginalised.

Overall, senior college staff who engage with CPPs have developed a good knowledge of CPP policy drivers, the priorities of local authorities and other partners and the challenges faced by them. Some other college staff, usually those involved in work such as CLD and school-college partnerships, also have a good awareness of their college's role in the CPP and how the CPP framework applies to their own role in college. However, the depth of understanding is variable in colleges across the country.

A lack of understanding among partners about what each other does can lead to some duplication and/or unhelpful competition between the college and other partners at the delivery level, usually around employability initiatives and the provision of community-based adult learning. For example, the *New College Learning Programme*¹⁵ funded by SDS has, in some cases, resulted in competing demand for work placements.

College involvement in scoping challenges and agreeing priorities within CPPs

There are good examples of where colleges are involved in scoping the challenges and agreeing the priorities for action as part of their CPP, including the development of the SOA. Colleges involved at the strategic level contribute well to the collective purpose and have greater impact through planning in a more joined-up way. In the best examples, college principals work directly with chief executives or equivalents of the other partners within the CPP.

Borders College is fully involved in scoping and agreeing priorities in the SOA which ensures good alignment of college activity with CPP priorities and outcomes. This includes strategic economic development activity, the college curriculum and activities informed and shaped through working with the CPP, industry and local employers.

¹⁵ The programme, funded by SDS and delivered by colleges, aims to ensure young people seeking employment have the skills and experience required by employers. It combines work experience with an employer with time in college developing employability skills. The programme is targeted primarily on 16-24 year olds not in full time employment.

Where a college is involved at this level, its contribution to CPP priorities is more clearly identified and agreed by all partners. As a result, the college's engagement is better planned. Colleges will lead on themes where they are best placed to do so and agree a more supportive or secondary role in others.

However, there remain a number of key challenges in setting and agreeing priorities. There are a few instances where colleges are not on strategic boards, nor represented on relevant thematic groups. This has impacted negatively on these colleges' capacity to influence planning. In some cases where this has occurred, CPPs are taking steps to address this within an overall move to strengthen the effectiveness of their partnerships. Also, the diversity of college provision and the complexity of college funding have presented challenges to partners' understanding of colleges' potential contributions to local learning, and therefore restricted their involvement in planning. A common feature underpinning effective partnerships and joint planning is that these challenges have been largely overcome. This has taken time, persistence and commitment from all parties, particularly on the parts of the college and the local authority, even where the partnership works well. For example, in one such area, the college had to explain to their partners that the reduction in school-college places was a direct result of ministerial guidance to SFC ahead of that year's grant-in-aid allocation, and not a unilateral decision made by the college.

CPP priorities in college strategic planning

All colleges take account within their strategic or corporate plans of the needs of their communities and/or the CPPs to which they align, regardless of the nature of and mechanisms for their engagement with community planning processes. Relevant CPP priorities are often factored into college operational plans, for example: demand for and delivery of ESOL provision; the development of programmes and services to provide *More Choices, More Chances*; adult literacies provision and the alignment of college programmes with key areas of local employment and growth. However, though CPP priorities are generally addressed within college plans and targets, colleges do not routinely map their plans to specific, CPP priority.

Forth Valley College and West Lothian College, among others, provide good examples of how college planning processes take account of CPP priorities in different regional contexts: one in a region with multiple CPPs and the other in a single CPP region. John Wheatley College provides another good example, from the perspective of a college that engages primarily with the local community partnerships as one of (currently) seven colleges within the Glasgow CPP area.

Forth Valley College is a key contributor to all three CPPs within the region it serves: Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling. The college works closely with all three partnerships and has developed a strong track record of delivering outcomes. One senior manager is responsible for each of the three college sites (one in each local authority area) and is the primary college representative on the corresponding CPP. The senior management team work together to cross-reference CPP priorities and ensure they are incorporated effectively into college planning processes.

West Lothian College is an integral part of the West Lothian CPP. The principal sits on the CPP board and the college contributes well to increasing the positive destinations for young people, as well as to adult learning. The college's planning processes are well established and effective, and encompass their collaboration with the CPP and its *Economic Partnership*. The diagram in Annex I, from the college's *Corporate Plan 2012-2015*, illustrates how CPP priorities are embedded in the college planning process. The process reflects well the colleges response to national, regional and local priorities and demonstrates the link between the SOA and the ROA.

John Wheatley College's main catchment area in the east of Glasgow covers two local community planning partnerships: *East Centre and Calton*, and *Baillieston, Shettleston and Greater Easterhouse*. The area has a population of approximately 124,000. The college is represented on the boards of both local partnerships and college senior managers participate in a number of committees, focussing on issues such as lifelong learning, health and children's services. This level of engagement ensures local priorities are incorporated effectively into college planning processes and that the college contributes well to local outcomes.

However, whereas all colleges incorporate CPP priorities into their own planning processes, in some instances they have not contributed to setting these priorities. This means that they are reacting to the priorities of others, albeit successfully, rather than being part of the initial planning process. This limits the coherence of strategic planning across these partnerships and contributes to the few instances of duplication of effort and activity, including community learning and development activity and provision to support employability. This occurs most frequently where colleges and local authorities are providing similar services. This can result in inefficient use of resources and frustration, for example for employers being approached by both parties seeking work placement opportunities.

Evaluation and Monitoring of Outcomes

Where colleges are well embedded in their CPPs at a strategic level the partnerships have a clear understanding of where and how colleges can contribute to delivering outcomes, and where their resources and expertise can be deployed most effectively. There are a few good examples of where data and/or intelligence is shared to improve planning and to monitor progress on outcomes. However, collating and analysing the significant amount of intelligence across partnerships to inform effective decision making or monitor

impact on outcomes presents a range of challenges. For example; colleges that serve multiple CPPs have to disaggregate their data to report to each CPP. Some colleges, either due to their proximity to population centres or to the provision of specialisms, have significant numbers of learners from local authorities other than those to which the college aligns.¹⁶ In areas where a single college is aligned to more than one CPP the college has the added complexity of responding to different demands regarding the evaluation and monitoring of outcomes. However, many colleges have developed approaches to manage these different demands. Forth Valley College provides a useful model, as highlighted earlier: it was essentially the first regional college, formed in 2005 from the merger of Clackmannan College and Falkirk College, and is the only college serving directly the three local authorities the Forth Valley region.

Motherwell College works closely with partners in *North Lanarkshire Economic Development* and *Job Centre Plus* to determine the needs of the local community by sharing and disseminating current, relevant labour market intelligence and other data. Good understanding of local needs has meant that CPP funding has supported relevant training opportunities which have been accessed by the local community and led to positive outcomes.

Most colleges are involved in agreeing outcome targets with their CPP partners for delivery of specific activity, such as MCMC, ESOL or adult community-based learning provision. However, colleges targets, which have to respond to a range of external drivers as well as to local and national priorities, are not always understood by the CPP nor considered alongside CPP priorities.

Overall, college contributions to outcomes in their communities are becoming better understood by partners and this better understanding is being factored into CPP target setting and monitoring. However, the potential for colleges to contribute to issues such as health and wellbeing, equality and diversity and sustainability is often missed by other partners. Colleges find it difficult to gather consistent and robust destination statistics for learners leaving college programmes, although they are working towards a solution.¹⁷ This information would usefully inform the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes at a CPP level.

There are some good examples of joint self-evaluation and outcome monitoring at a local level, within CPPs. In Fife, self-evaluation of CLD provision in the Levenmouth partnership is undertaken jointly, led by Adam Smith College. John Wheatley College shares its evaluation of college learner attainment and progression with its local planning partnerships and jointly evaluates CLD provision, in terms of partnership working and impact. The college also analyses Education Scotland *Learning Communities*

¹⁶ Issues around data gathering and sharing are explored in detail in Education Scotland's aspect report *Making effective use of the extensive data sets which underpin evaluative activities in Scotland's colleges, in a regional context*, published in May 2013.

¹⁷ See the data task report for more detail.

inspection reports with local partners to inform improvements. There is also evidence of effective joint evaluation and monitoring at a strategic level, particularly in areas where a single college and a single CPP are aligned, such as Angus, Borders, Dundee and West Lothian. For example, college staff contribute to the West Lothian CPP's quarterly scrutiny of performance against SOA outcomes. In more complex areas, such as Glasgow City, joint evaluation and monitoring at the strategic CPP level is more commonly related to specific, funded projects where the responsibilities and activities of each partner (including colleges) are clearly identified.

Dumfries and Galloway College works with its community and employability partners through shared action plans to deliver outcomes for young people. The outcomes are agreed with the CPP's *Employability Partnership* and the *More Choices More Chances (MCMC) Partnership*. Progress against outcomes is monitored and challenges addressed jointly through the partnership groups. The college representative chairs the *MCMC Partnership* and reports directly into the *Employability Partnership* on progress against targets. Progress against outcomes is also reported to the strategic partnership group.

Colleges also have to respond to their sector-specific requirements in terms of monitoring and reporting outcomes and evaluating performance, as do other partners. For the college sector these requirements include those of SFC, Education Scotland, SDS and awarding bodies. The necessity to respond to external drivers and requirements as well as those of the CPP, within cycles of reporting that are often not aligned, can hamper a joined-up approach. There can also be perceived conflicts between the priorities as expressed to colleges by SFC and some local priorities identified by CPPs. For example, alongside regionalisation, there are concerns among some partners over the potential impact of reductions in college funding for learners and the shift in college priorities towards full-time provision for 16 to 19 year olds. This is seen by some to highlight a tension between national policy for college provision and national policy emphasising the focus on local need, particularly where CPPs have identified a need to support adult employability and see colleges as key players in adult community learning provision.

Delivering Outcomes for the Community

There are good examples from across the country of how colleges have made a positive contribution, over several years, to outcomes for learners in their communities through working with community partners. Almost all community partners consulted expressed a high level of satisfaction with the way colleges work with them and respond to identified needs. Across all regions, colleges continue to contribute well to positive outcomes for young people through school-college link programmes.

Other successful partnership activities include programmes aimed at developing employability skills, ESOL provision, programmes and initiatives to support disengaged young people into positive destinations and programmes aimed at people in the community with learning difficulties.

Cardonald College's CLD programme, funded through CPP Integrated Grants and delivered in partnership with Glasgow Life and Glasgow Housing Association, supports the *SWAYED by Youth Work* programme (SWAYED: South West Area Youth Engagement Diversion). This year-long programme for young people aged 16 plus aims to build on the capacity of through activities which assist young people into employment or training opportunities in youth work, community arts, sports or childcare. Almost all of the young people on the programme in 2011-2012 progressed to programmes at Anniesland College, Cardonald College, James Watt, Langside College, John Wheatley and local Universities.

Dumfries and Galloway College works with its community partners to deliver the *New Horizons* transitions programme for young people. The partners provide talks, tours, visits, community projects, and work placements. This approach was agreed by the *Employability Partnership* with the aim of building stronger relationships between the College, Skills Development Scotland, Job Centre Plus, third sector agencies and community representatives to better support local outcomes.

Dundee College and **Angus College** have established an *academies* approach to employability with community partners. The approach is primarily aimed at people who were either deemed long-term unemployed or soon to be made redundant. Dundee College and Dundee City Council Social Work Department established the *Social Care Academy* as a solution to workforce development challenges in 2004. This success of the model led to the creation of a *Health Care Academy* for support roles in 2006 in partnership with NHS Tayside, Job Centre Plus, and Skills Development Scotland. The *Health Care Academy* has remained a key intervention within Tayside region and allows individuals to gain successful and sustainable employment within NHS Tayside. Angus College work with partners in Angus CPP's *Employability Group*, including Angus Council, the Federation of Small Businesses, Jobcentre Plus, Skills Development Scotland, and Volunteer Centre Angus to developing training for the unemployed in the Angus area.

Most partnerships with local CLD providers also work well, delivering a range of programmes including adult literacies and computing skills. There are also some good examples of colleges playing a role in community engagement, and colleges' potential for facilitating this aspect being recognised and realised by community planning partners.

John Wheatley College is regularly involved in community engagement events designed to elicit the views of local residents about public services. These *Community Reference Groups* were organised under auspices of the local community partnerships.

Forth Valley College's involvement in the Raploch Community Campus in Stirling has contributed well to increasing opportunities and improving outcomes for the community. Recently completed new college campuses in Alloa and Stirling are actively utilised by community partners, and are regarded by them as valuable community resources.

West Highland College UHI operates from ten college *Learning Centres* in Auchtertyre, Broadford, Fort William, Gairloch, Mallaig, Kilchoan, Kinlochleven, Portree, Strontian and Ullapool. The college has established *Community Engagement Groups* in each locality served by its learning centres. The aim of the groups is to enhance the college's engagement with a cross-section of the community in each location across the west highlands. *School Liaison Groups* help to ensure the college continues to provide an appropriate range of opportunities for school pupils across the region and contributes to the Highland Council's post-16 strategy.

Other activities include programmes to address alcohol and drugs misuse and support people with mental health issues. Where outcomes have not been achieved, or in instances where colleges have found difficulty in making a significant contribution, a number of recurring themes emerge across the country, most of which have already been discussed in this report. To summarise, these are:

- the complexities of 'place' where there are multiple colleges and/or multiple CPPs;
- poor understanding and communication between partners restricts impact on outcomes, as does the omission of colleges from priority and target setting or from strategic decision making;
- differences in funding mechanisms and associated requirements across partners can generate or compound misunderstanding;
- a lack of understanding and poor communications often result in a lack of coordination of resources, leading to duplication and unhelpful competition;
- different planning, decision making and funding cycles across partnerships can make it difficult for the partners to respond quickly to emerging needs and issues.

6. Colleges and CPPs in the Changing Environment

Community planning in a regional context

Regionalisation presents a number of opportunities and challenges to the way colleges engage with community planning processes and partnerships. The issues differ depending largely on the characteristics of the region, as outlined earlier in this report.

Partners consider that the main opportunities include:

- removing any remnants of competition between colleges;
- making strategic planning more coherent, and;
- larger colleges having greater influence and economies of scale.

Partners consider that the main challenges are around:

- maintaining college capacity to deliver as resources are reduced overall;
- maintaining existing local relationships when colleges merge;
- balancing increased diversity of priorities across more CPPs;
- the complexity of regional boundaries in some areas, and;
- the impact of revised college funding arrangements.

These are explored further below.

Opportunities for college engagement with CPPs and other partners

Although there is a degree of uncertainty amongst colleges and their community partners about how regionalisation will impact on college contributions to community planning, most are positive about the opportunities that regionalisation will afford for reshaping their joint work.

In areas with a single CPP and currently more than one college, and where the number of colleges will reduce through merger, planning and target-setting should in principle become better aligned and effective through regionalisation. Where the number of colleges reduces to one then dealing with one principal and the senior managers of one college may well increase the coherence and efficiency of partnership working at a strategic level. Where there will still be a number of colleges in a single CPP area, then partners anticipate that the strategic regional body will bring this coherence to enable better coordination of planning and delivery. There is also a recognition that greater coherence could improve joint reporting and monitoring and better reflect the extent and impact of activities. In areas where colleges have not been well represented at a strategic level in the CPP, there is a sense that the increased size and profile of merged colleges will enable them to influence and inform strategic thinking more effectively.

Additionally, single, merged colleges working across local authority boundaries will be better placed to share effective practice and elements of partnership working across CPPs.

There is a common view across all partners that the increased scale of colleges after merger, along with clearer mechanisms to link college ROAs with SOAs, is likely to lead to a better understanding of what colleges do and how they can contribute to community priorities and outcomes more effectively. This should lead to better coordination of the collective activities, for example, around employability, workforce development and adult learning, both regionally and nationally, and therefore reduce duplication of provision. It could also raise the profile of colleges' roles in community engagement and highlight the significance of vocational education and training as a preventative measure, in line with Scottish Government priorities. There is a hope among community partners that ROAs and the mechanisms associated with them will make it easier to understand college funding, and therefore support improved joint working. Even in regions where colleges are well embedded in their CPPs, there is a recognition that there are opportunities to coordinate budget-setting and financial planning more effectively to make more efficient use of increasingly constrained resources.

Challenges for college engagement with CPPs and other partners

In most regions where colleges are merging and will align with more than one CPP there is some uncertainty, across colleges and their community partners, about how ROAs and SOAs will be coordinated effectively. The need to align better ROAs and SOAs is also recognised by SFC who have convened a *thematic outcome group* to consider the issues further and develop guidance to inform future outcome agreements.

Colleges undergoing merger which will serve multiple CPPs recognise a need to ensure they continue to meet the needs of all the CPPs in their region. Some community partners are concerned that the sheer scale of new multi-site colleges, and the removal of leadership from a local area could dilute the highly valued and effective relationships that colleges and CPPs have worked hard to develop at local level. This is perhaps most apparent in Glasgow, where colleges and their leaders have a stronger relationship with their local communities than with the overarching CPP. This is also impact of relationships where colleges will operate as part of a federation under a regional strategic body. The Highlands and Islands regions is perhaps the most complex example of this scenario, where one ROA will cover nine colleges serving seven diverse and geographically dispersed CPPs. The colleges' partnership in the University of the Highlands and Islands adds a further layer of complexity. However, there is also a recognition that lessons can be learned from the ways in which other organisations work across boundaries, such as NHS boards, police and SDS, and also from previous mergers, for example, from the experiences of Forth Valley College and City of Glasgow College.

There is also a concern, shared by colleges and partners, that the potential reduction in staffing, especially at manager level, associated with merger will impact on the staff resource available to engage effectively in partnership activity.

Review of community planning and the *Statement of Ambition*

Expectations for CPPs have been raised through the review of community planning, as expressed in the guidance to CPPs published in December 2012. Briefly, these are that CPPs should: strengthen their governance, accountability and operating arrangements; ensure a greater pace of change and decisiveness in impact; develop new and different ways of working and behaviour within and across partners; and take a more systematic and collaborative approach to performance improvement.¹⁸ Most colleges have only begun to factor these expectations into their work with community partners. However, a number of key issues are emerging from discussions between colleges and their partners about key priorities to ensure that colleges and CPPs work more effectively together, whatever the future holds. These concern, at local level: increased understanding of each partner's potential contributions, continuously improved communication and understanding of the drivers within each partner organisation, joint training for staff and managers in partnership working, better aligned planning, improved data sharing, and clearer engagement of employers.

¹⁸ *Single Outcome Agreements: Guidance to Community Planning Partnerships*, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)/Scottish Government, December 2012, p.1

7. Recommendations

Colleges should:

- continue to work with their community partners to implement the *Guidance to Community Planning Partnerships 2012*.
- as part of their plans for merger or federation under regionalisation, develop clear plans and approaches to engage with CPPs to which they will align and to local community planning groups in areas that they serve.
- engage with their community partners when developing their regional outcome agreements to ensure that the agreements reflect their contributions to CPP priorities and SOAs.

The Scottish Funding Council should:

- continue to work with colleges to ensure that the arrangements for regional outcome agreements align with SOAs to minimise bureaucracy and support outcomes for communities.

Education Scotland should:

- continue to monitor the effectiveness of colleges' contributions to community planning through their external quality arrangements for Scotland's colleges.
- better coordinate the evidence base collected through its inspection and review activities across colleges, schools and CLD to inform the emerging audit and inspection activity for CPPs.

Appendix 1

Colleges participating in the fieldwork

Education Scotland would like to thank all of the colleges and community planning partnerships (listed in Table 1 on page 11) who participated in the fieldwork for this report.

Appendix 2

Glossary of terms

CLD	Community Learning and Development
COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
CPP	Community Planning Partnerships
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other languages
HMIE	HM Inspectorate of Education
MCMC	More Choices More Chances
ROA	Regional Outcome Agreement
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SOA	Single Outcome Agreements
SRuC	Scotland's Rural College
SWAYED	South West Area Youth Engagement Diversion

Appendix 3

West Lothian College Corporate Plan 2012-2015

West Lothian College Corporate Plan Process

The Corporate Planning Process for 2012-2015

Contribution to all Scottish Government Consultations
"Review of Post 16 Sector", "Putting Learners at the Centre"
"Regionalisation", "Review of Governance"
December 2011- February 2012

Participation at Chair, Board and SMT level in Government Briefings on the
shape of the sector and in working groups with Scottish Funding Council on
future modelling for the provision of Further Education.
December 2011- March 2012

Collaborative work with Community Planning Partnership and Economic
Partnership on Skills Strategy and Outcome for West Lothian. External
stakeholder engagement with employers.
March – May 2012

Curriculum Portfolio drafted to meet employment needs and regional
priorities
April 2012

Strategic Collaborations with West Lothian Local Authority
February – July 2012

Engagement with staff, stakeholders and employers
May 2012

Regional Outcome Agreement with Scottish Funding Council Agreed
June 2012

Final Corporate Plan 2012-2015
June 2012

Corporate Plan Briefings
June 2013

Corporate Plan Briefings Approval
Board of Governors
September 2013

Appendix 4

Evaluation of CPPs

An initial review of CPPs, carried out by Audit Scotland in 2006¹⁹, found that there had been some progress with community planning since the 2003 Act, but that important issues needed to be addressed. These included that: the complexity of community planning structures and different accountabilities could be a barrier to effective working; performance management and monitoring processes were not well developed; coordination and integration of initiatives needed to be improved, and; different funding streams accessed by partnerships should be rationalised.

As part of the current review of community planning, the Scottish Government and COSLA asked the Accounts Commission to scope out an external audit and inspection framework for CPPs. The Commission worked with its scrutiny partners, including Education Scotland, to develop an audit framework designed to strengthen the accountability of CPPs and support improvement. The proposals were submitted to the Government in June 2012. The framework was piloted with three CPPs, Aberdeen City, North Ayrshire, and the Scottish Borders, in late 2012.²⁰ The pilots were the first audits to focus on the collective work of the CPPs, rather than the work of individual partners.

¹⁹ *Community Planning: an initial review*, Audit Scotland, June 2006.

²⁰ The audit reports were published in February 2013 and are available at: http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/work/central_national.php

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