



National Assembly for Wales Communities, Equality and Local Government
Committee CELG(4) LGC (14)

Inquiry into Progress with local government collaboration

Response from : Solace

National Assembly for Wales Inquiry into progress with Local Government collaboration

Thank you for the opportunity for Solace to make a submission to the Committee as evidence for its review.

SOLACE Wales is the Welsh branch of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE). It is the professional society for senior strategic managers working in local government in Wales. SOLACE is a UK wide organisation with over 1700 members representing the most senior managers in local authorities.

Our response is a strategic, apolitical and professional collective view. The response is complementary to the more detailed written response of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and we have avoided replicating the content of that response which we broadly support. The evidence provided by WLGA and the closing report of ODSI on the Compact, together give a comprehensive overview of the state of play of collaboration across the region. It should be noted that there is considerable evidence of local and sub-regional collaboration which may not be listed in those reports.

We make 9 key points and as a Society are very willing to provide further detail or evidence on request.

1. There has been significant progress in strategic, public service reform and macro service planning in regional collaboration which supports cost avoidance and will yield longer term preventive type efficiencies e.g. community health care models, social services commissioning, e.g. integrated family support, residual and food waste.
2. there has been less progress in functional integration at a regional level where the more immediate efficiency savings in service overheads exist, e.g. corporate services.

3. there has been significant progress in market management e.g. procurement and commissioning.
4. the (limited) scale of regional level collaboration should not overshadow the increasing amount of sub-regional and more opportunistic as well as planned collaboration, nor the specific sectoral collaboration e.g. across fire and rescue authorities.
5. the closing Organisational Development and Simpson Implementation (ODSI) report shows national agreement and commitment, with supporting structure and investment where needed, and is a demonstration of acceptable progress.
6. expectations over the scope for, and impact of, collaboration have been unrealistic at some levels including Welsh Government circles.
7. most efficiencies - as a prime objective of collaboration - continue to be sourced locally/internally and will continue to do so given the imminence of the changing budget situation and the control local authorities need to exercise, with certainty, over their own budget planning. This is borne out by local authority medium term financial plans where collaboration efficiencies are a small minority of total efficiencies.
8. the national 'air' of disappointment over the impact of collaboration devalues the success made and the potential for further public service reform in big areas such as prevention, demand management and citizen centred service change.
9. collaboration cannot be a substitute for wider organisational change and major institutional cost overhead reduction if that is the/an objective, as per point 7 above.

Yours sincerely



Colin Everett
Honorary Secretary and
Chief Executive Portfolio Lead on Finance and Corporate
SOLACE Cymru