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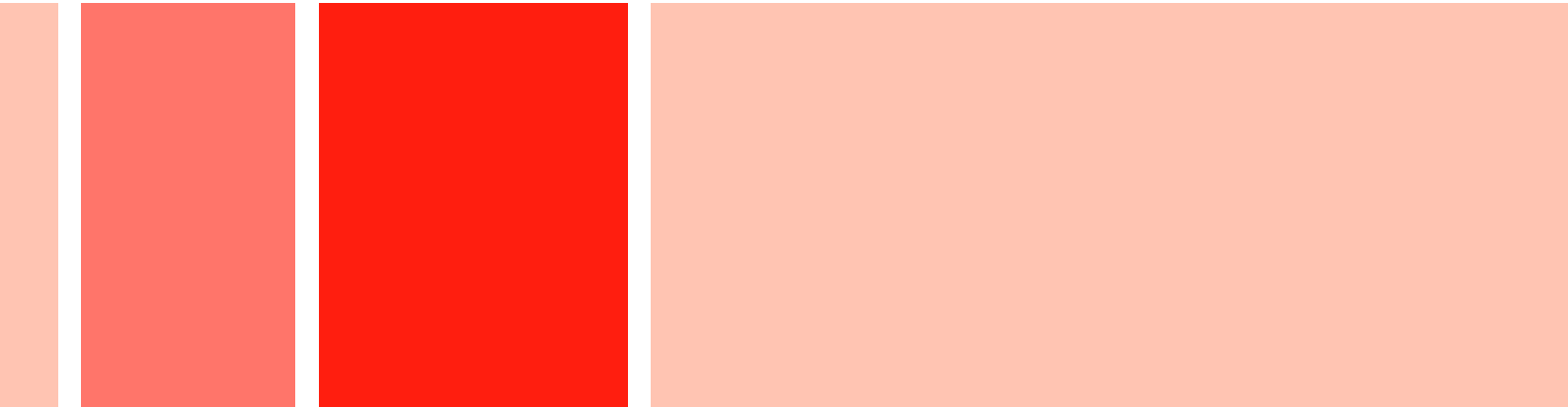
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Learning to Improve: An Independent Assessment of the Welsh Government's Policies for Local Government, 2007-2011

Final report: Part 1



Learning to Improve: an Independent Assessment of the Welsh Government's Policies for Local Government, 2007-2011

**Steve Martin, James Downe, Tom Entwistle and
Valeria Guarneros-Meza**

Centre for Local & Regional Government Research,
Cardiff Business School

with Carol Hayden and John Houghton
Shared Intelligence

For further information please contact:

Jamie Smith

Knowledge and Analytical Services

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Tel: 029 2082 6850

Email: Jamie.Smith@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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The views expressed in this report are those of the research team. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Welsh Government or the project steering group.

Summary

Introduction

1. This is the final report of a longitudinal study that examined the Welsh Government's policies for local government. It provides an assessment of local government performance in the period covered by the third term of the National Assembly for Wales (i.e. 2006/2007 to 2010/2011) and examines the development, implementation and impact of the three guiding principles that underpinned the 2007 Local Government Policy Statement: collaboration, citizen engagement and a partnership between the Welsh Government and local authorities.

Evidence

2. The report is based on in-depth analysis of existing data and a large volume of new evidence that we collected in the course of the study. The data include:
 - Policy documents, national performance indicators, inspection reports, and the results of the Living in Wales survey
 - Two comprehensive surveys of senior local authority officers and councillors from all 22 unitary authorities
 - Interviews with 24 senior civil servants and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) officers with oversight of the main local government services
 - Eight case studies of the impact in key policy areas of the three themes which underpinned the Government's policies for local government.

Local Government Performance

3. Evaluating local government performance is a complex task because councils provide a wide range of services and have multiple objectives. It is difficult to compare authorities' performance because local priorities and levels of need vary. Tracking performance over time is problematic because of a lack of reliable longitudinal data.
4. Our study used three main sets of evidence:
 - Strategic and core indicators
 - Surveys of local authority officers and senior councillors
 - Inspection and audit reports.
5. Local government spending per head increased significantly between 2006/2007 and 2010/2011, particularly in education and social services. Most of the strategic and core performance indicators registered improvements, but there was considerable variation between services. Performance in road maintenance, regeneration and fuel poverty reduction all declined, but there were marked improvements in housing provision; the number of recreational/physical activities for older people; and enforcement activity associated with fly tipping.
6. The state of the local economy aside, the local authority officers who we surveyed were upbeat about the quality of life in their areas. Most believed that their councils provided high quality services, though levels of public awareness and scrutiny of their performance were low.
7. The annual reports published by Estyn, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales and the Wales Audit Office between 2006 and 2011 highlight improvements. However, four local authorities have been subject to intervention since 2009 and inspection reports highlighted persistent weaknesses in several others. Recurrent themes included concerns about the provision for vulnerable groups, levels of

public involvement, the robustness of performance management systems, and whether the collaborative agenda is being embraced with the alacrity demanded by the challenges facing local government.

Collaboration

8. Collaboration is at the heart of the Welsh Government's approach to public service delivery and has been actively promoted through a series of high profile policy initiatives from *Making the Connections* to the Simpson Review.
9. The level and type of partnership working in Welsh local government varies considerably. It is most evident in those services where it has been given a strong push by the Welsh Government (including waste, transport, education and housing).
10. Local authorities report that collaboration adds value, particularly when it comes to service improvement. However, partnerships focused on joining up or engaging communities have been more common than those which are designed to improve efficiency. Reflecting this focus, our data suggest that historically councils have given higher priority to networking and information exchange than to pooling resources and reducing costs. As a result, the overall impact of collaboration, in terms of delivering economies of scale, has been modest.
11. There has, however, been a growing focus on partnerships that improve efficiency and an increase in partnership working with the private sector, albeit from a low base.
12. There are formidable practical and cultural barriers to collaboration and mounting evidence that an entirely voluntary approach will not succeed. Equally though, effective and sustainable collaboration requires leadership and commitment on the part of local partners. So attempts

to force it on unwilling councils will inevitably run into difficulties. The Welsh Government has had some success in encouraging collaboration by providing additional funding to local partnerships, but the current financial climate is likely to make this approach difficult to sustain. Ministers may, therefore, need to look to different policy instruments to encourage collaboration. Local authorities meanwhile need to drop the 'shall we or shan't we?' debates of the last decade and focus on decisions about which services are in fact best delivered by regional and sub-regional partnerships and what governance frameworks and service delivery models they need to put in place to facilitate this.

Citizen Engagement

13. The Welsh Government has consistently maintained a commitment to put the citizen at the centre of public service delivery. Key policy documents emphasise the importance of information provision, access to services and effective complaints systems. The Government has supported a number of initiatives to improve scrutiny by councillors and encourage broader participation in local democratic processes. However, these activities come across as piecemeal efforts which have lacked a clear and coherent strategy for encouraging citizen engagement with local services.

14. The local authority officers we surveyed reported that the most common reason for engaging with the public was to improve services. Two-thirds believed that they do a good job of informing citizens how they can engage with services and almost 60% believed that they consult effectively. But not many employ deliberative approaches and fewer than a quarter believed that their services had the capacity to engage properly with citizens. Only a third had worked with other organisations to develop a co-ordinated approach to engagement, and fewer than half monitored the effectiveness of their engagement

activities. Meanwhile, the evidence from sources such as the *Living in Wales* surveys suggests that there is little public appetite for engagement.

15. It is impossible to assess the overall impact of citizen engagement. However, fewer than four in ten of local authority officers said that citizens were closely engaged in decisions about their service, and some examples of 'successful engagement' that we studied seem to have been conducted on the council's terms. Case studies of schools reorganisation showed that it is possible to gain public support for significant changes in the way a service is provided, and the Communities First Partnerships we studied had boosted local people's confidence. However, neither had enabled the public to have much of a say in the delivery of mainstream council services.

Central-Local Relationship

16. The 2007 Local Government Policy Statement emphasised the importance of a strong partnership between the Welsh Government and local government. Most of the civil servants we interviewed expressed a preference for a partnership approach, as did the local authority officers we surveyed. However, experiences 'on the ground' seem to be at odds with these aspirations.
17. The relationship with the Welsh Government matters to local authorities. More than half of the officers we surveyed believed that its policies had a significant impact on their services. However, only four in ten believed that the Government is willing to collaborate. Most described their interactions with government in terms of command and competition, with partnership coming in a distant third. The once close relationship between the Government and the WLGA is seen as having cooled in recent years. Ministers have been concerned about the pace

and perceived patchiness of improvement and some have adopted what is seen as a more assertive stance.

18. While there may be good reasons for departments to pursue different approaches in their dealings with local authorities, there is a danger – which is borne out by responses to our survey – that these will be perceived as signs of conflict and confusion within government. The current mix of approaches does not appear to be based on a rational analysis of what works best. Survey respondents reported, for example, that the Government has adopted a partnership approach to performance management, when a strong steer from the centre to encourage comparisons between authorities might work better. By contrast, when it comes to policy-making and implementation - which on the face of it might be strengthened by involving councils - our survey responses characterised the Government's approach as being based on top-down command and encouraging competition between councils.

Conclusions

19. Our research shows that overall local government performance did improve between 2007 and 2011. But changes in services were, for the most part, incremental. The themes which underpinned the Welsh Government's policies for local government did have some traction. Local authorities are collaborating – with each other and with other agencies - however, partnership working has not yet transformed the ways in which services are designed and delivered. Councils do engage with citizens, but not in ways which really strengthen local accountability or ensure that services are sufficiently responsive to their needs. Some parts of the Welsh Government have worked in partnership with local authorities, but others have taken a more prescriptive, top-down approach. Moreover, it does not always get the balance between these different ways of working right.

20. Recent developments suggest that the overriding objective of the Government's current policies for local government is to encourage collaboration between local authorities. Small councils in Wales are seen as lacking capacity. Ministers have expended significant amounts of funding and political capital to encourage the formation of consortia to develop strategies and deliver services at the regional level. We agree that if this kind of collaboration is to happen it requires this strong push from the centre. However, this will inevitably be seen as being at odds with the notion of a central-local partnership. It may also mean that services become more remote from users, making it even more difficult to secure meaningful citizen engagement.
21. So the evidence from our study suggests that the Welsh Government needs to choose which policy instruments it believes offer the best hope of securing more effective and efficient local services. If citizen engagement is going to be the main driver of these changes, it follows that powers and funding need to be devolved down to neighbourhoods. This might imply retaining existing unitary authorities but encouraging a much stronger role for neighbourhood teams, community groups and community councils. If, on the other hand, the best way to improve services and make better use of the available resources is through regional or even national consortia, then Government needs to continue to encourage partnership working between authorities, or to reorganise local government in order to create larger councils and, perhaps, consider whether the current division of responsibilities between local and central government is right.
22. None of this implies that ministers should jettison the three imperatives that currently underpin its policies for local government. Given the multitude of functions that local authorities have responsibility for, it is extremely unlikely that there will be a one-size-fits-all solution that suits all services and all parts of the country. Some services may need to be delivered at community level, others by individual local authorities,

others may be provided most efficiently by regional consortia, and still others on an all-Wales basis. Approaches to service delivery that work well in rural areas in Mid and North Wales may be non-starters in the Valleys of South East Wales or the large, metropolitan areas along the south coast (and vice versa).

23. So, in our view, the Welsh Government needs to make clear decisions about what really matters most in the current very difficult financial climate. It should then put in place mechanisms to ensure its own policies are co-ordinated effectively so that all departments are pulling in the same direction. Working closely with local government, it needs to determine the best ways to deliver the different kinds of services for which local government is currently responsible, and then ensure that the size, form and financing of the local authorities of the future is commensurate with the tasks that they are expected to fulfil.

Chapter 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report assesses the implementation of the Welsh Government's policies for local government. It tracks local government performance between 2006/7 and 2010/11 and examines the three guiding principles that underpinned the 2007 Local Government Policy Statement: collaboration, citizen engagement and the partnership between the Welsh Government and local authorities.
- 1.2 The Welsh Government has developed what it claims is a distinctive approach to public service delivery that is best suited to the particular challenges facing Wales. First set out in a milestone document entitled *Making the Connections* (WAG, 2004), this approach rejects the use of choice and competition to improve public services, and puts the case for a more integrated public service where agencies share common goals and work together across functional and organisational boundaries.
- 1.3 An independent review of local public services in 2006 (WAG, 2006a) endorsed this approach, but argued that collaboration and citizen engagement would need to develop much faster and go much deeper. Its recommendations were accepted by the Welsh Government and underpinned the policies for local government set out in the 2007 document *A Shared Responsibility – Local Government's Contribution to Improving People's Lives*. These same basic principles are reflected in the current administration's Programme for Government.
- 1.4 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:
 - Chapter two explains the objectives of the research and the methods and evidence that we have used.
 - Chapter three analyses local government performance between 2006/7 and 2010/11.
 - Chapter four presents our findings on collaboration between local authorities and with other service providers.

- Chapter five presents our findings on citizen engagement.
- Chapter six analyses the ways in which the Welsh Government works in partnership with local authorities.
- Chapter seven presents our conclusions and what we see as the implications for future policy.

Chapter 2 Evidence

Introduction

2.1 This chapter explains the objectives of the study before describing our research methods and the evidence base which underpins our analysis.

The feasibility study

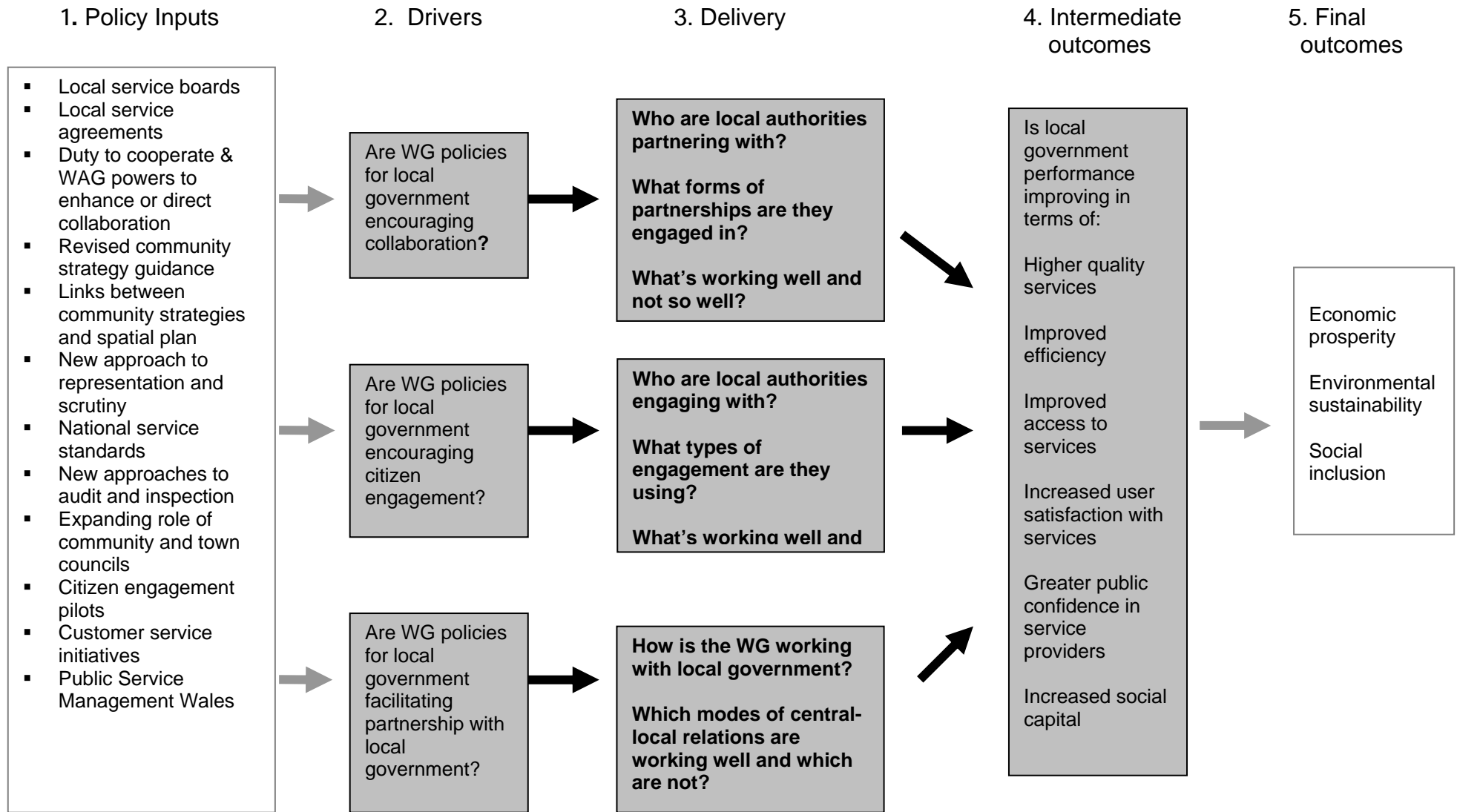
2.2 In 2007 the (then) Welsh Assembly Government commissioned the Centre for Local and Regional Government Research at Cardiff Business School to consider the feasibility of an independent assessment of local government policy. The specification for the feasibility study explained that since devolution ‘the Welsh Assembly Government has introduced a substantial and distinctive programme for the modernisation of local government’ (WAG 2007c, p.1). Ministers wanted an assessment of the impacts of local government policies over the next four years to provide ‘a comprehensive and systematic picture of long-term progress against stated objectives, to inform the future direction of the Assembly Government’s local government policy’ (WAG 2007c, p.3).

2.3 Based on evidence from a variety of sources the study found that there was widespread support for an independent assessment, but some concerns about its scope and focus and whether there would be sufficient evidence available to the researchers. We recommended that the study should focus on local government, rather than the whole of the public services reform agenda. We also concluded that it would be impractical to evaluate all of the Welsh Government’s policies which might have an impact on councils. Instead we suggested that the study should focus on the implementation and impact of the three key themes which underpinned the 2007 Local Government Policy Statement:

collaboration, citizen engagement and the development of a strong partnership between the Welsh Government and local government (Figure 2.1).

- 2.4 We recommended that the study combine qualitative and quantitative analysis and draw on evidence from government reports, national performance indicators, inspection reports, and the *Living in Wales* surveys. But we recognised that these secondary sources would not be sufficient and therefore also recommended that the research should gather first hand evidence through surveys of local authority officers and councillors (conducted at the beginning and towards the end of the study), a series of case studies and interviews with national 'stakeholders'. These recommendations formed the basis for the Welsh Government's research specification for the *Learning to Improve* project and the research that we then undertook.

Figure 2.1 Recommended focus of the study



Secondary data

- 2.5 At the outset of the study, we undertook a comprehensive assessment of relevant secondary data that were already available or might become available in the course of the research. We updated this at intervals through the study.
- 2.6 We drew on government reports and policy statements, statutory performance indicators and inspection reports. Some of this material has proved very useful but the evidence about council performance is scattered, fragmentary and incomplete. Many statutory performance indicators are focused on activities and outputs rather than outcomes. They are often narrowly focused and some of the measures used have changed over time, making longitudinal comparisons difficult. Another notable gap has been data about citizen satisfaction with services. The *Living in Wales* survey was suspended shortly after our study began and its successor has only recently been launched.

Local authority surveys

- 2.7 To help fill some of the gaps in the secondary data, we conducted a large scale survey at the outset of the research in 2008. This provided a 'baseline' which underpinned much of our subsequent analysis. We then repeated the survey three years later in order to assess the extent of change in local government during the course of the study. The surveys were sent to senior local authority officers and councillors in all 22 unitary councils. In 2008, we sent councillors a shortened version of the officers' survey. In 2011 we used identical surveys for both groups.

The case for surveys

- 2.8 The results of these surveys need to be interpreted carefully since their reliability depends on the accuracy of respondents' perceptions and the extent to which they can be considered to be representative. However,

similar surveys of managers are widely used to study performance in both the private and public sectors and offer a number of advantages over other types of data. In particular:

- respondents have a detailed knowledge of the services they manage, so they are well placed to evaluate performance;
- survey data enable a more rounded assessment of overall performance than do specific indicators which are usually focused on a small range of activities and outputs; and
- survey data allow assessments of a range of different dimensions of performance including the quality, efficiency and accessibility of services, together with broader outcomes such as quality of life and wellbeing.

2.9 In the past, researchers have often relied on the views of just one respondent per organisation (in local government research this has typically been the chief executive). But there is mounting evidence that surveys involving multiple respondents from different parts of the organisation are more robust (Walker and Enticott, 2004). Our previous research on local government has shown that managers from different services often have different perspectives. There are also differences between officers and councillors and between respondents with corporate roles and those who are responsible for service departments. For this reason, we surveyed multiple respondents from each council including councillors, officers working in corporate roles and managers of services.

Survey design

2.10 The topics covered in the survey were informed by our analysis of the key themes emerging from the policy and academic literatures and by discussions with the project steering group. Both surveys asked a series of questions about:

- Respondents' roles and responsibilities
- The state of the local area served by their authorities
- The performance of the services that they managed
- The Influences on their services
- The Scale and effectiveness of partnership working
- The Extent of citizen engagement, and
- And their relationship with the Welsh Government.

2.11 Almost all questions were phrased as statements; respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with them on a seven point Likert scale where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 7 indicated strong agreement. We included a space for 'open' comments which gave an opportunity for respondents to provide more details if they wished to.

Samples and response rate

2.12 The survey was sent to cabinet members and chairs of scrutiny plus the chief executives and heads of the main services. Each council nominated a contact officer who assisted us by providing contact details and issuing reminders to non-respondents

2.13 Surveys were piloted in advance¹ to test the clarity of the questions¹. They were administered electronically using methods that we have developed in previous studies. In 2008, survey forms were sent in Excel files as email attachments to named local authority officers and

¹ Copies of the survey are available at: www.clgr.cardiff.ac.uk

councillors in all 22 authorities. In 2011, we sent emails asking respondents to complete an on-line survey which we designed and managed through the *Qualtrics* online software package

2.14 In 2008, the survey was sent to a total of 308 people which included chief executives and heads of a range of ‘frontline’ and ‘back office’ functions, manual and white collar services, and statutory and discretionary activities (see Table 2.1). We received 144 replies (a 46% response rate). The survey of councillors was sent to all 323 cabinet members and scrutiny committee chairs. We received 72 replies (a response rate of 22%) which included councillors from all of the main political parties and 21 councils.

Table 2.1: Officer Survey Sample (responses by service area)

	2008	2011		2008	2011		2008	2011
Benefits and tax*		8	Finance	9	7	Regeneration	9	9
Corporate	20	22	Human resources*	5	15	Social care adults	9	20
Democratic services*	7	11	Libraries	11	3	Social care children	8	19
Education	7	19	Planning	9	12	Sport and recreation	10	13
Housing	12	10	Public Protection	8	16	Transport	10	15
						Waste	10	11

(*) In 2011, democratic services included legal services; human resource included information and communication, and benefits and tax was added as a new category.

2.15 In 2011, we increased the size of our sample of officers to 632 and received 211 replies (a response rate of 33%). The same survey was sent to all 314 cabinet members and scrutiny committee chairs in Wales; we received 53 replies (a response rate of 17% from 19 councils).

2.16 In both years, Cardiff and Isle of Anglesey were underrepresented in the survey responses, but there were no other obvious biases in the pattern of responses (see Annex 1). We are therefore confident that

the findings offer a reasonably representative picture of the views of local authority officers and senior councillors across the country and over time. Indeed, as we note in the chapters which follow, the results between 2008 and 2011 indicate remarkable stability, registering only a small number of statistically significant changes between the two surveys.

Survey analysis

- 2.17 Findings from surveys can be used and reported in a number of ways. The simplest way of reporting the results of individual questions is the mean Likert score. This allows us to communicate results in a very economical fashion and has the further advantage of facilitating rigorous comparison between services and over time. Treating Likert scales in this way is justified when respondents are asked to indicate their shades of agreement (or disagreement) between two poles without categorical distinctions. The disadvantage of this form of reporting is that mean scores do not capture differences in distribution (i.e. whether answers are spread out across the scale or clustered). For this reason we sometimes report the percentage of respondents agreeing or disagreeing with the statements listed in the survey. To arrive at these figures we grouped the percentages of respondents into two broader sets: those in agreement (including all respondents who clicked above the midpoint of the scale) and those who disagreed (all respondents below the midpoint). Neutral responses and missing values were disregarded. Annex 2 shows the details on range and standard deviations.
- 2.18 We have also aggregated mean scores for a series of questions to produce indexes that provide an overview of specific issue like the nature of the central-local relationship. These can be used to compare between services and different stages of the policy process, and to map change over time.

2.19 Third, we used a range of different types of statistical tests to assess whether changes over time or differences between groups of respondents were statistically significant. We indicate at relevant points in the report which tests were used and what levels of significance were set. We only report associations with confidence levels that are at least 90% and in most cases we focus on results with confidence levels of 95% or more.

National interviews

2.20 Following the first survey in 2008, we conducted a series of 24 interviews with senior civil servants and their counterparts at the WLGA with responsibility for policy in respect of key services covered by the survey (some WLGA officials covered more than one area). Interviews were conducted in March and April 2009. Questions were set out in a topic guide, responses were recorded and transcribed, and transcripts were analysed according to the three main themes of the study.

2.21 There is a strong tradition of ‘actor-centred’ research which uses interviews with senior officials to gather data about policy-making and implementation in Wales, other parts of the UK and further afield (see for example Laffin et al. 2002; McAteer and Bennett, 2005; Wood and Klassen, 2008). Because interviewees have often worked in the same or similar roles for some time they are well placed to comment on institutional legacies and changes in the governing context. They also provide specialist technical and professional knowledge which informs political decisions.

2.22 The interviews gave important insights into the priorities and practices of national policy-makers which complemented the evidence from the ‘frontline’ provided by the surveys. This helped to explain, and in some cases to reinforce, the key messages from the surveys. In particular, it highlighted the importance of variations between services and over

time. We also used the interviews to begin to identify potential case studies that would enable us to explore the three themes in more detail.

Case studies

2.23 Our third source of primary data was provided by a series of case studies. These analysed the ways in which particular policies, or specific initiatives, were developed and implemented. We identified what we believed to be the most relevant case studies on the basis of our secondary sources and interviews. The steering group provided helpful observations on our proposals but we were given a free hand in terms of the final selection. Our selection criteria were threefold.

Cases had to:

- Have potential to shed light on one or more of the three themes which underpin the Welsh Government's policies for local government
- Be high profile initiatives that were of sufficient scale and scope to be relevant to other parts of the country
- Be capable of providing evidence and insight because they had been up and running for sufficient time to have had some discernible effect.

2.23 The case studies were not designed as evaluations in their own right, but as exemplars of the ways in which collaboration, citizen engagement and central-local relations are being interpreted and implemented on the ground. They included studies of:

- Regional transport consortia and inter-authority collaboration in North Wales – examples of the Welsh Government's policy of attempting to encourage collaboration between neighbouring local authorities on a regional basis;
- Local Service Board projects in Cardiff, Carmarthenshire and Rhondda Cynon Taf – examples of the government's policy of

encouraging collaboration between public services operating at local level;

- Communities First Partnerships in Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf – examples of the attempt to promote citizen engagement and collaboration between services at community level;
- Schools reorganisation in Powys and Ceredigion – examples of citizen engagement in service re-design;
- The Welsh Government representatives on Local Service Boards – an example of the attempt by the government to work in partnership with councils and other local services; and
- Part 1 of the 2009 Local Government Measure – an example of the way in which the Welsh Government has worked with councils, the WLGA and the Wales Audit Office to manage local government performance.

2.24 The research methods were tailored to each case study but included a combination of: the analysis of national and local policy documents, strategies and reports, surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and non-participant observation of meetings. In total, we conducted 107 interviews in the case studies, drawn from a range of different organisations including: local government, health trusts, police, voluntary sector, Welsh Government, schools and members of the public. We also gathered evidence from over 240 survey respondents.

Chapter 3 Local Government Performance

Introduction

- 3.1 Measuring local government performance is difficult. Councils provide a wide range of services, serve many different groups and have multiple, sometimes conflicting, priorities. The concept of performance is therefore multi-dimensional, inherently political and frequently contested (Boschken, 1994; Boyne, 2003). Users are often most interested in the accessibility, quality and responsiveness of the services they need; while tax-payers who do not use services may be more concerned with questions of efficiency, value for money and productivity. Policy-makers frequently introduce additional considerations – such as equality and sustainability – into the equation, and the problem is compounded by the fact that performance measures are frequently adjusted over time in response to changes in economic circumstances and policy priorities (Campbell-Smith, 2008).
- 3.2 Performance needs, therefore, to be a socially constructed concept (Brewer, 2006; Andrews et al., 2006) in which all measures are partial and subjective to some degree. No method of assessment can be regarded as ‘best’ or ‘objectively’ right or wrong. The picture you get depends on who, how and when you ask (Cowell et al., 2012). To complicate matters further, what constitutes an acceptable level of performance or improvement is also contested. Comparisons can be made against targets or minimum standards; between councils; between countries; or over time.
- 3.3 In this chapter, we have used the latter method where possible, and focused primarily on the basic national performance indicators used by the government and local authorities. These are useful because they are collected by all councils and subject to independent audit, but they

also have drawbacks. Individual indicators provide only a narrow picture because they focus on particular aspects of service delivery. They also tend to measure activities and outputs rather than the outcomes that really matter to citizens and to policy-makers. A third constraint is that although Stats Wales and the Local Government Data Unit produce a multiplicity of performance data, there were some discontinuities in the indicators used between 2007 and 2011.

- 3.4 In order to try to provide a rounded assessment of performance indicators, we also used evidence from inspection and audit reports, statutory plans, and citizen satisfaction surveys. All of these types of evidence have strengths and weaknesses. Inspection reports have the benefit of being independent of local government, but they often focus on managerial processes and corporate capacity rather than ‘frontline’ services. Information from statutory plans is often authority-specific and difficult to access. Data on citizen satisfaction with services exist (e.g. *Living in Wales* and the *National Survey for Wales*), but the timescale for these surveys did not fit well with our research. So, as explained in chapter two, to help address some of these problems we supplemented existing performance data with primary data collected from local authority officers and senior councillors.

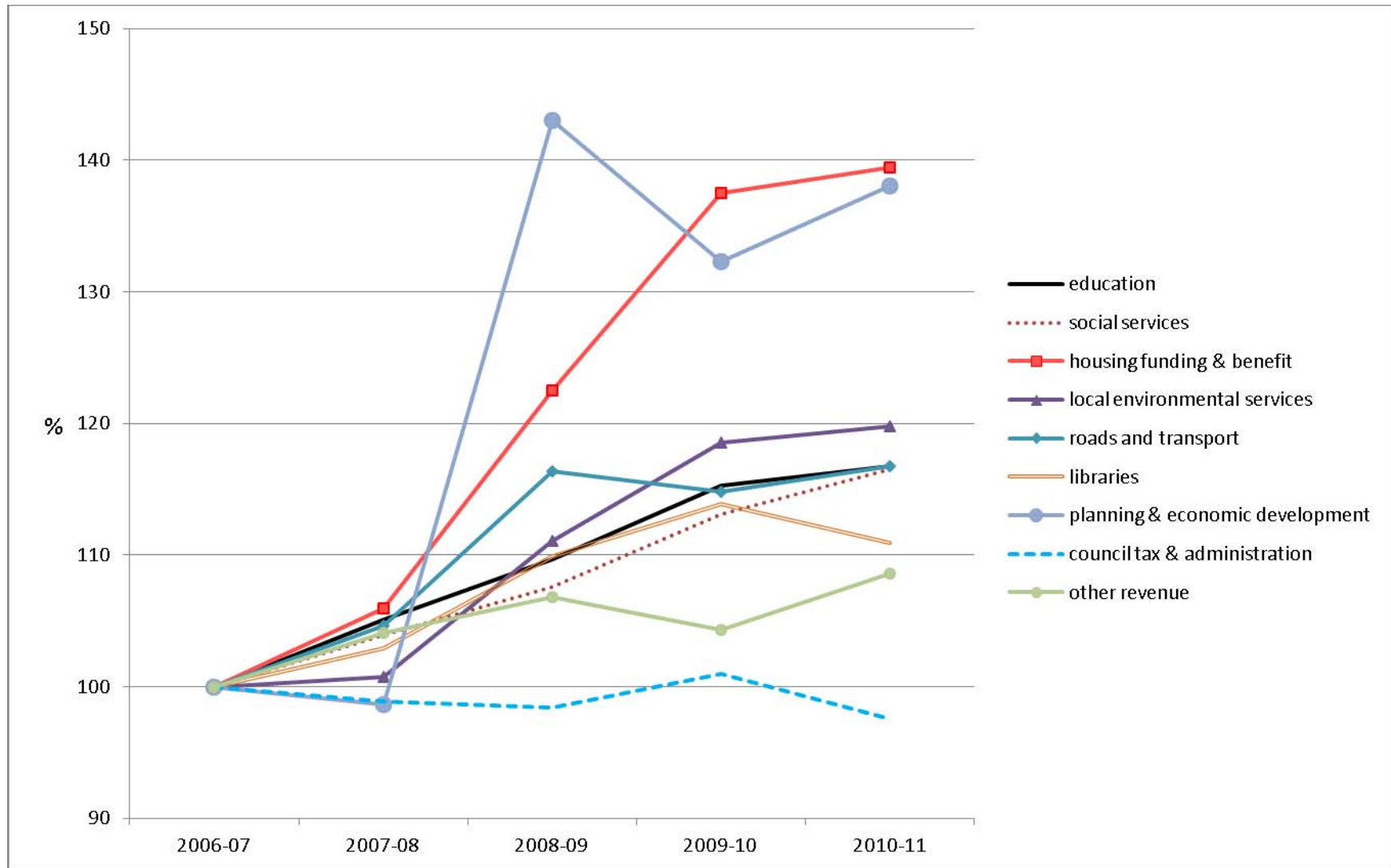
Local government spending

- 3.5 Academic research from the last ten years has shown that the performance of public services is strongly influenced by the external environment in which they operate. There is a demonstrable link with deprivation - local authorities serving relatively affluent and homogeneous populations consistently outperform those serving deprived communities - other studies have found a strong association between performance and funding (Andrews 2009; 2010). So any assessment of the performance of Welsh local authorities needs to be made against the backdrop of changes in spending allocations, which

is of course one of the major ways in which the Welsh Government's policies affect councils.

3.6 Welsh local authorities have not had to contend with the large cuts in government grants experienced by their English counterparts and in the period covered by our study, revenue outturn expenditure per head increased (Figure 3.1). Given this, it might be argued that councils should have been able to achieve significant improvements in services. However, additional spending does not automatically result in improvement. It may be absorbed by increased costs, particularly pay increases. Moreover, as shown on Figure 3.1, there were variations between services with relatively large increases in spending on planning, economic development, council housing and housing benefits and more modest growth in education, social services and local environmental services.

Figure 3.1: Increases in Outturn Expenditure by Service



Source: StatsWales

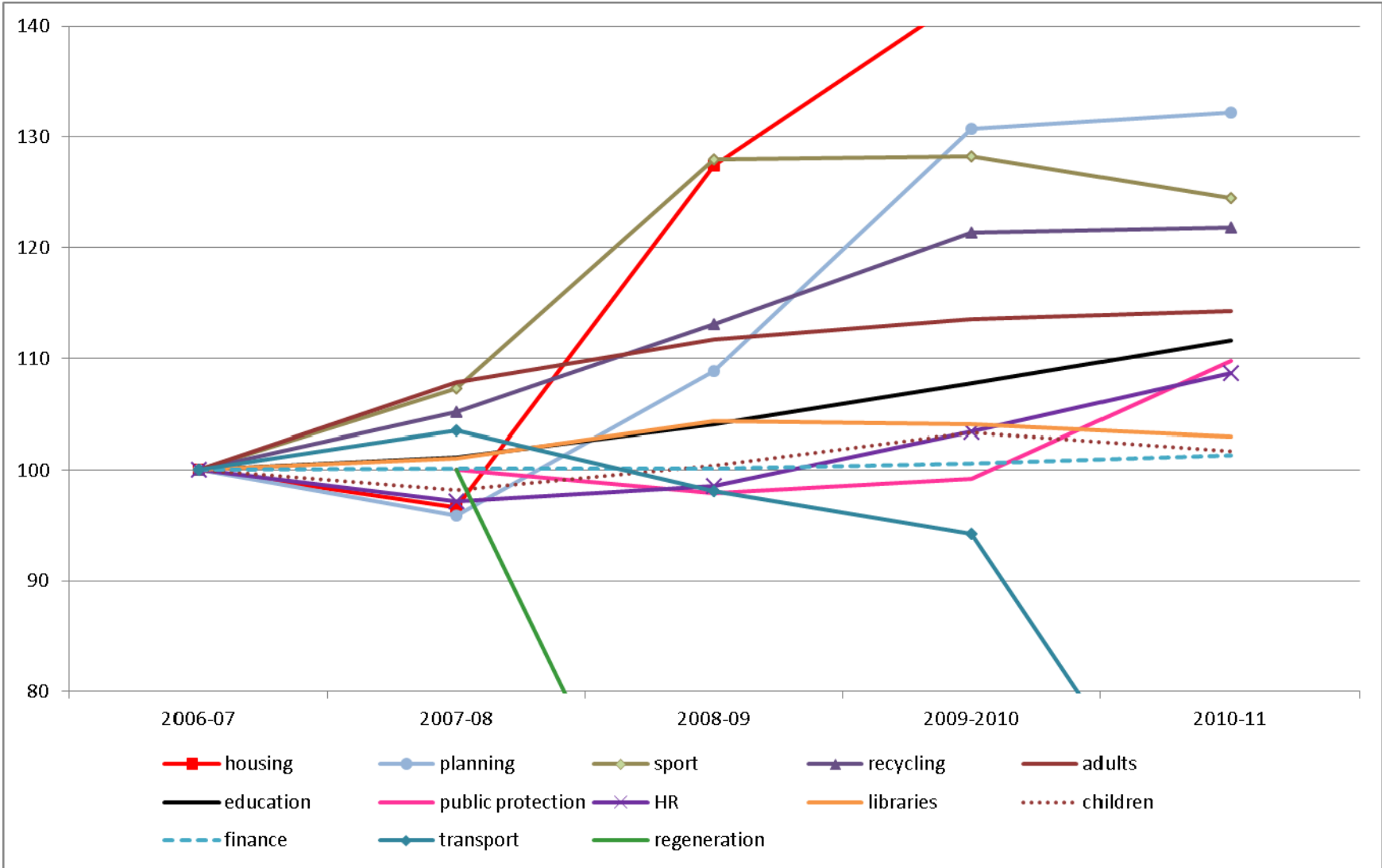
Strategic and core performance indicators

- 3.7 National performance indicators provide service level evidence about the performance of local government. The Welsh Government and local authorities have agreed a set of strategic and core indicators that are reported by all councils on a consistent basis (Annex 3), and there is a range of other statistics which authorities report to the Welsh Government annually relating to particular services. Working with the government's Knowledge and Analytical Services staff, we undertook a systematic analysis of these data to determine which could be used to analyse performance over time. We excluded those where definitions had changed between 2007 and 2011 and prioritised indicators that focused on outcomes rather than inputs and outputs. We then asked service specialists within the Welsh Government to confirm which of these indicators were most relevant.
- 3.8 This provided a set of indicators for 13 key local government services which had been collected on a consistent basis during the period covered by our analysis. The list includes indicators for some local services that are not entirely dependent on local government performance (e.g. regeneration and some indicators in housing and planning). However, we decided to include them in order to provide as complete a picture of local government performance as possible.
- 3.9 We took 2007 as a base year equivalent to 100 and calculated the percentage change in the score for each indicator every year thereafter. Unless otherwise specified, our analysis compares change over time between 2006/7 and 2010/11 (the most recent year for which data were available by the end of our study). The results are shown in full in Annex 3.
- 3.10 Most indicators showed improvement over time. The exceptions related to regeneration, the condition of roads and levels of fuel poverty, all of which declined. In regeneration the end of EU funding in

2007 had a significant effect. Road conditions and fuel poverty in housing are influenced by weather conditions and fluctuations in gas and electricity prices respectively. At the other end of the spectrum, there were big increases in the numbers of vacant private sector dwellings returned to occupation through direct action by the local authority; the number of additional affordable housing units as a percentage of all additional housing units; free structured recreational/physical activities for 60 years old and over; and the percentage of reported fly tipping incidents leading to enforcement activity.

- 3.11 Figure 3.2 shows the overall level of change in performance service by service as measured by the strategic and core performance indicators recommended to us by service specialists. In truth though, this is not a useful guide to overall performance because, as we have found in previous research in England, it is rare for all of the indicators in a service to move in the same direction and rate. As a result, the conclusions reached about performance may depend on which indicators are used and which year is chosen as the baseline. For this reason we also undertook an indicator-by-indicator analysis of performance in each service.
- 3.12 Education - indicators of pupil attainment at key stage 2 and 3 and at age 15 all showed modest improvements. Issuing of special needs statements and recording of absenteeism also improved slightly over time. The largest improvement was in respect of the percentage of all pupils who leave education, training or work based learning without an approved external qualification. However, as discussed below, comparison with other UK countries helps to put these improvements into perspective.

Figure 3.2: Improvement Measured by Core and Strategic Performance Indicators



Source: Own calculation based on performance indicators – 2006-07 base year

- 3.13 Adult social care – the indicators were encouraging, with significant decreases in delayed transfers of care, the time taken to review care plans and an increase in the number of older people receiving support to live in their own homes.
- 3.14 Social care for children – showed little improvement except for the average of external qualification point score for looked after children aged 16.
- 3.15 Housing - all of the indicators improved with the exception of the percentage of households in fuel poverty (which is not within the control of local authorities). The time taken to process Disabled Facilities Grants and to fit adaptations in homes decreased while performance in reducing homelessness improved. There was a very significant increase in vacant private sector dwellings brought back into use.
- 3.16 Planning - There was a substantial increase in the number of additional affordable housing units as a percentage of all additional housing. The percentage of householder planning applications increased, but the percentage of major planning applications went down. The percentage of applications for development and the percentage of enforcement cases resolved hardly changed, though they relate to factors outside local government's control such as fluctuations in the property market and fiscal climate.
- 3.17 Libraries - The number of library visits increased as did the number of computing facilities. However, the percentage of available computers per hour and the number of library materials issued both decreased.
- 3.18 Sport and recreation – As a result of the Free Swimming initiative, there were large increases in the numbers of free structured swims and others activities for the 60+ and under 16s and a more modest increase

in paid swims for other adults. Other indicators, including visits to local authority owned sport and leisure centres, were almost unchanged.

- 3.19 Transport and highways – The condition of principal and non-principal roads declined, but there was an increase in the number of people holding concessionary bus passes and the speed with which street lights were repaired.
- 3.20 Waste management – There were improvements in the level of waste reuse, recycling or composting, although the rate of improvement has tailed off in the last two years. As noted above, there was a large increase in the percentage of reported fly tipping incidents leading to enforcement activity.
- 3.21 Human resources – There were only two measures of performance in HR: one registered little change; the other (the rate of sickness absence) showed a modest improvement.
- 3.22 Regeneration – All of the indicators relating to regeneration showed a decrease in performance. However, as explained above, these need to be interpreted with extreme caution because the data are derived from European Structural Fund indicators and reflect the changes in these programmes from 2007 onwards.
- 3.23 Finance indicators, including the level of undisputed invoices, council tax and non-domestic rates, showed almost no change over the five year period.
- 3.24 Public Protection – There was little change in performance in public protection services except for an increase in the percentage of significant trading standards breaches rectified by intervention.

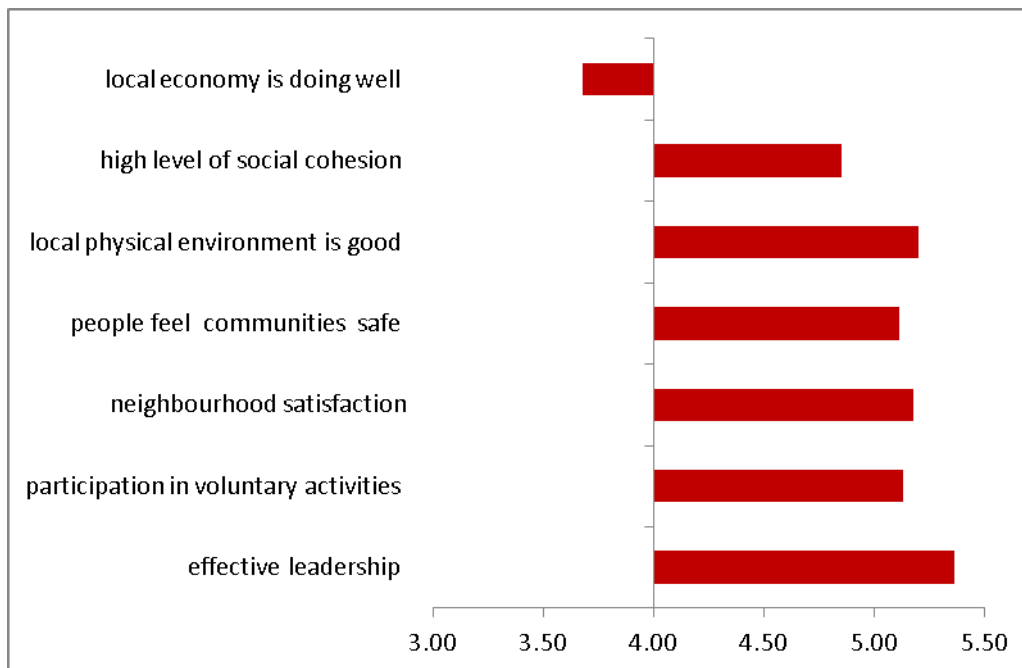
Surveys

- 3.25 The second source of evidence that we used to assess local government performance was the responses to the surveys of local authority officers and senior councillors undertaken in 2008 and 2011. Surveys have the advantage that respondents have a detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their own services and can provide more holistic assessments than those represented by narrowly defined statutory performance indicators. For example, the surveys included a series of questions about the economic and social wellbeing of their local areas, as well the performance of the services they managed.
- 3.26 Like all measures of performance, these data have limitations. In particular respondents may be over-optimistic about conditions in their local area and the quality of the services they manage. Although it is noteworthy that the 2012 National Survey for Wales presented a similar pattern of results.

The local area

- 3.27 We asked local authority officers and senior councillors a series of questions about the state of the areas which they served. Their responses pointed to a largely upbeat assessment (Figure 3.3). The only issue in 2011 about which they expressed significant concerns was, not surprisingly, the local economy. Less than a third reported that their local economy was doing well. By contrast respondents were particularly confident about the effectiveness of local leadership (82% agreed) and a majority believed that the local physical environment was good (80% agreed).

Figure 3.3: Perceptions of the Local Area



Source: LTI survey 2011

Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

3.28 Comparison of the results of the 2008 and 2011 surveys showed very little change in respondents' perceptions of their local areas over the three-year period.

3.29 Comparing these results with similar questions from the National Survey for Wales shows that, generally, public perceptions were higher than those of the local authority officers who responded to our survey. The exception was in the quality of the environment and neighbourhood satisfaction about which local authority officers and councillors were both more positive than the public (Table 3.1).

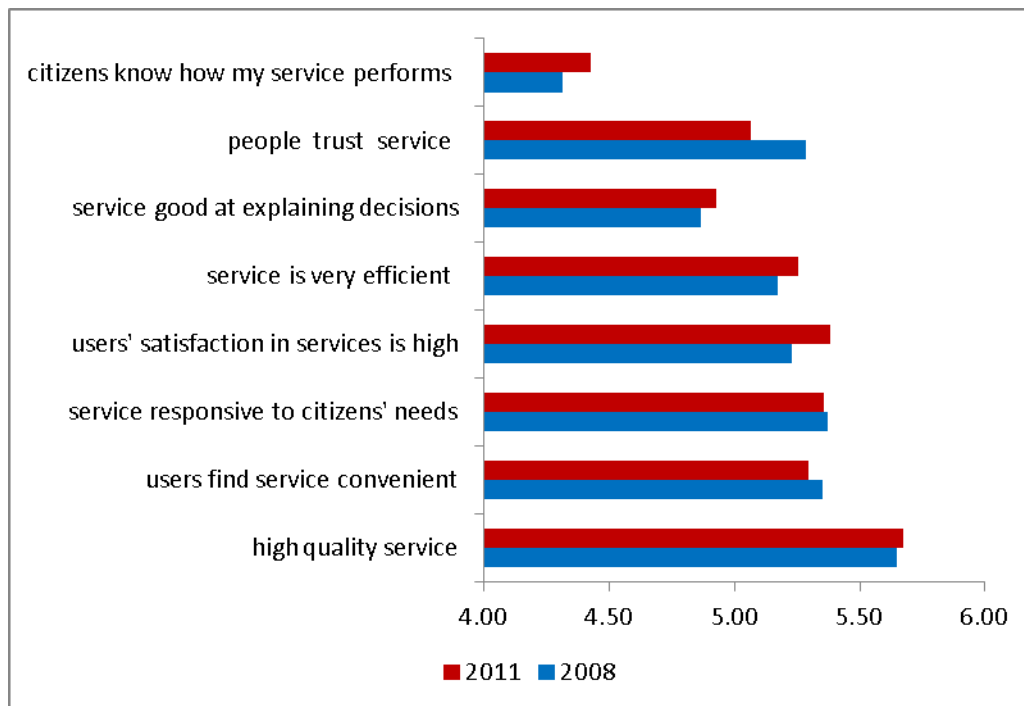
Table 3.1: Local Authority Officers'/Councillors' and Citizens' Views about their Local Areas

Learning to Improve 2011	% of agreement	National Survey for Wales 2012	% of agreement
The local economy is doing well	31	Keeping up with all bills and commitments without any difficulties	48%
There is high level of social cohesion in the local area	68	People in this neighbourhood are willing to help their neighbours	74
		People in my local area treat each other with respect and consideration	73
The overall quality of the local physical environment is good	80	The quality of my local area is well maintained	67
Most local people are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	76		
Most local people feel that their communities are safe	76	I feel safe walking in my local area in daylight / after dark	98 / 78
		Source: StatsWales 2012	

Local services

3.30 We also asked officers and councillors a series of questions about different dimensions of the performance of their services (Figure 3.4). In 2011, large majorities (over 81%) believed that they provided high quality services with good levels of user satisfaction. Reflecting our analysis of the state of citizen engagement in Welsh local government (see chapter 5), fewer believed that services performed well when it came to citizens knowing about targets (52% agreed) and securing the trust of local people (71% agreed).

Figure 3.4: Perceptions of Local Services



Source: LTI survey 2008 and 2011

Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

- 3.31 Overall, as with perceptions of the local area, the survey results suggest there was little change in performance from 2008 to 2011, a finding that is consistent with the overall picture suggested by our analysis of the strategic and core indicators discussed above. Interestingly, comparisons of the 2008 and 2011 survey results showed an increase over time in the percentage of respondents who believed their services engaged with citizens and in user satisfaction, but a decrease in public trust.
- 3.32 A comparison of these results with the perceptions of citizens reported in the National Survey for Wales, showed that officers and councillors were more positive than citizens about the quality of services and the level of information provided about service performance. But both surveys suggest more needs to be done to inform citizens about performance (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Comparing Perceptions of Local Services: Local Authority Officers/Councillors and Citizens

Learning to Improve 2011	% of agreement	National Survey for Wales 2012	% of agreement
We provide very high quality service	81	My local authority provides high quality services	57
Levels of user satisfaction with my service are very high	89		
Citizens know how my service performs against the targets we set ourselves	52	I would like more information on how my local authority is performing	60
		My local authority is good at letting local people know how well it is performing	40
		Source: StatsWales 2012	

Inspection and audit reports

3.33 Inspection and audit reports provide valuable external assessments of local government performance. However, an analysis of the Wales Programme for Improvement and the changes introduced by the 2009 Local Government Measure, which we undertook as part of this evaluation, suggests they have sometimes missed warning signs, and the lack of 'joining up' - between their activities and with other sources of evidence - has made it difficult for the Welsh Government to determine when councils require additional support or intervention.

3.34 This section summarises the key findings of annual reports published by Estyn, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and the Wales Audit Office (WAO) between 2006 and 2011.

Estyn reports

3.35 Estyn's annual reports confirm that levels of pupil attainment have improved over time, though at a decreasing rate. The inspectors have consistently expressed concerns about patchy performance,

manifested in marked differences in standards across schools. From 2007 onwards, they have highlighted specific concerns about gaps between the performance of students from disadvantaged and more affluent backgrounds. From 2008 onwards, they express concerns about levels of attainment in writing, reading and numeracy among those from more deprived backgrounds.

- 3.36 Estyn reports suggest that local authorities have been good at establishing school improvement programmes and that these have led to measurable improvement in standards. But they criticise some councils for failing to provide effective support for school leadership and management and for being slow to challenge and intervene in schools that have obvious problems.
- 3.37 One of the main failings highlighted by inspectors and auditors is the limited use of performance data to monitor and assess outcomes. Data are not being used to examine differences in performance by ethnic minority groups and socio-economic backgrounds. Authorities are also criticised for failing to give timely and relevant data to councillors and parents, which is reflected in weaknesses in scrutiny of underperforming schools. In Blaenau Gwent, for example, a lack of leadership by senior officers and councillors is said to have led to unsatisfactory prospects for improvements (WAO, 2012e:20).
- 3.38 Estyn reports also highlight problems relating to provision of education and training for learners in the judicial system both during and after custody, young people with disabilities and those over 19 who lack formal qualifications.
- 3.39 They note increased partnership working in education, though in some cases partnerships for post-16 provision and networks for both pre and post-16 provision have not been good at measuring outcomes at a partnership level.

3.40 Finally, Estyn has consistently highlighted problems with school reorganisation, with little sign of any improvement until its 2010 annual report, which noted encouraging signs at the primary level. These findings reflect the findings of our case studies of school reorganisation.

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales reports

3.41 CSSIW chief inspector reports note overall improvements in social services. However, the rate of improvement has been slower than expected given the level of investment that local authorities received (CSSIW 2009a). Reports point to four recurring concerns: the lack of a sustained use of performance data to assess improvement of services; staffing issues (high turnover of social workers) which affected the quality of service provided to users; an incomplete understanding about the quality of services commissioned; and marked variations in service provision across local authorities. There has also been concern about an increasing gap between bottom and top performers.

3.42 The CSSIW found that overall local authorities got better at implementing schemes which trained staff across adult and children services. Corporate leadership and communication between senior and front-line officers also improved. However, its 2010 report highlights concerns about the quality of leadership provided by councillors.

3.43 There have also been improvements in both the number and effectiveness of partnerships (CSSIW 2009a). The significant decrease in delayed transfers of care is recognised as an exemplar of joint working between social services and health; but also with other public service providers. The Welsh Government's intervention in Swansea is said to have prompted better collaboration between the council's social services and the police (Lewis, 2011); and intervention in Pembrokeshire is cited as evidence of the close link existing between education and children's social services and need for them to

collaborate to overcome problems in the management of allegations of abuse in schools.

- 3.44 Throughout the five-year period we reviewed, variations between the different sectors providing services for adults and children were identified. Day care for children was recognised as doing extremely well. Fostering services presented some concerns with regard to staffing and quality of care. Adult care, especially for adults with dementia, also presented concerns. Across all sectors and at different points in time, concerns were raised with regard to risk assessment and management, implementation of care plans and timeliness of case reviews.
- 3.45 Reports have highlighted concerns about the provision of information to users and the limited role of users' voice in strengthening the quality of services. Finally, the decrease in the numbers of older people supported by the community has been a concern.

Wales Audit Office reports

- 3.46 Like the CSSIW reports, the WAO (2010a) recognises improvements in social services through training and development of staff, in the provision of information to users and in partnership working with the third sector. But it has also highlighted a lack of provision for carers and problems with risk assessments for vulnerable adults and children.
- 3.47 Between 2006 and 2008, the WAO's annual reports highlighted concerns about the robustness of the local government performance framework. One of the key weaknesses was the lack of comparable data across Wales and the inability of the public to know how well their local services are performing.
- 3.48 It has also consistently warned that the 2012 Welsh Housing Quality Standards would not be met (WAO 2012b). It attributed this to

weaknesses in national leadership and monitoring by the Welsh Government, but argued that local authorities could have alleviated some of these difficulties by adopting common processes and working more closely with housing associations in order to increase the opportunities for collaboration.

- 3.49 The difficult financial climate has, in the WAO's view, put some school modernisation, regeneration and waste management services at risk. Since 2006, waste management has been considered as an area presenting high risk due to the ambitious targets set in reducing and recycling solid waste. A recent report (WAO 2012a), notes that local authorities have increased their range of recycling services, but that the rate of improvement has decreased, and that there will need to be greater engagement with citizens if authorities are to reach the 2017 targets. The WAO also argues that, as in the case of housing quality standards, waste recycling needs clearer national monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- 3.50 Reports since 2006 have noted that the equal status and pay agendas present a significant risk to human resource functions. More recently (WAO 2011) auditors have suggested that while most councils have reduced costs to cope with limited budgets, little progress has been made in terms of workforce planning and minimisation of the impact of cuts on service delivery.
- 3.51 In 2010, the adoption of the International Financial Reporting Standards by local authorities presented a challenge for finance departments since these new procedures did not allow councils to report their accounts by the deadline. This change broke with the continuous improvement trend that local finance services had established since 2005. It is envisaged that this problem will be overcome in the future across the majority of councils in Wales (WAO 2012a).

- 3.52 The WAO reports suggest that the quality of local authority scrutiny has improved since 2005, but has rarely been a real driver of change or improvement. WAO (2010a) reports the lack of understanding on the full range of scrutiny functions and their timeliness as a continuing challenge for local authorities. In all four local authorities in which the Welsh Government has intervened since 2009 (and in Anglesey in particular) the conflict and lack of communication among political and managerial leaderships has caused problems, and it has been acknowledged (Lewis, 2011) that local leadership has a key role to play in promoting improvement.
- 3.53 WAO reports suggest that In general, there has been good progress in corporate management arrangements promoting collaboration. However, a few local authorities have continued to struggle and the challenges facing them have been accentuated by the difficult financial situation. More recently it (WAO 2010b) auditors found that councils do not have information to understand and manage the impact of reduced funding on citizens.
- 3.54 The WAO reports that although changes to improve national performance measurement have been introduced by the Welsh Government, local councils are not creating a robust performance framework that assesses quality and outcomes. Most councils rely on national performance indicators and are not creating their own measures that could be more helpful to tackle local priorities. There are, however, isolated pockets where councils measure outcomes for service users; while the more frequent use of Results-Based Accountability and the creation of Single Integrated Plans are noted as positive developments.
- 3.55 Recent WAO annual reports consider collaboration between authorities. They conclude that thus far it has not been clear whether collaboration is delivering cost savings or benefits for citizens (WAO 2010b) indeed it may actually be increasing costs (WAO 2011).The

WAO recommends that authorities need to consider other approaches to re-designing services to complement collaboration.

International comparators

- 3.56 As noted above, in addition to measuring performance over time and comparing it between councils, it is sometimes useful to make comparisons with other countries. Robust comparisons are often difficult because of a lack of consistent measures of performance. However, international comparisons are often salutary. Some have had an impact on the political and policy agenda in Wales in recent years and this kind of analysis could become a useful tool for assessing rates of improvement.
- 3.57 Comparisons with other parts of the UK are potentially useful because of similarities in their local government systems. A comparative study based on statistical analysis of statutory performance indicators found that, after allowing for differences in deprivation, demography and the level of spending on services, the rate of improvement in local government was broadly similar in England, Scotland and Wales between 2001 and 2006. The exceptions were the number of older people enabled to live at home, where Wales outperformed England and Scotland, and the rate of improvement in the number of pupils attaining A* to C at GCSE and the time taken to issue SEN statements, where the other two countries performed significantly better over time (Andrews and Martin, 2010). Research on school performance (Burgess et al., 2010) has confirmed the disparity in the rate of improvement in levels of attainment at GCSE, and research on hospital waiting times has shown that they improved more slowly in Wales than England (Bevan and Wilson, 2013).
- 3.58 There are a range of problems with this kind of benchmarking of performance, not least that comparative data are increasingly difficult to come by. However, comparisons outside of the UK have proved powerful. In particular, the most recent PISA results (OECD 2009;

Bradshaw et al., 2010) have been seen as a defining moment in education policy and arguably had much greater impact than the national performance indicators and inspection reports which we have considered in previous sections.

- 3.59 Similarly, performance in increasing the proportion of waste that is diverted away from landfill through recycling and composting are increasingly seen in the wider European context. The Welsh Government has invested considerable political capital in the improvement of recycling and composting performance, imposing statutory targets on local authorities and ploughing considerable resources into recycling infra-structure. This has already borne fruit, with the Welsh diversion rate – of 48% – now outstripping England's. However, the benchmarks for waste performance are increasingly set by EU targets and the best of the European class – Germany, Austria and the Netherlands in this case – which report diversion rates in excess of 60% (Eurostat 2013).

Conclusions

- 3.60 The ways in which local government performance was reported during the period covered by our study did not do enough to enhance public understanding or encourage accountability to citizens. Nor did it seem to support effective scrutiny and challenge by councillors and Welsh Ministers or provide a strong enough driver of improvement. As we have found, evidence has to be pieced together from a variety of different sources. (Annex 4 provides a summary of the sources consulted in each service area relevant to local government), it is difficult to make comparisons over time, and many indicators measure processes rather than outcomes.
- 3.61 Most local authority officers believe that they provide high quality services. However, our analysis of the strategic and core indicators suggests that, against a backdrop of increased spending, most

services achieved only modest improvements in performance between 2007 and 2011. Inspection and audit reports have noted improvements in some areas, but raise questions about local government's capacity to achieve results through collaboration and cope with resource constraints without compromising on service quality. They also highlight a lack of public engagement in monitoring local authority performance.

- 3.62 Although many of these problems are attributed to a lack of leadership within local government (Simpson, 2011), they also reflect badly on Welsh Government policy. While the annual report on the Programme for Government is a step forward, approaches to performance measurement and reporting have not been sufficiently transparent or citizen-centred. Policy has been focused on reducing the burdens that performance management places on service providers, rather than ensuring that the public, and its elected representatives, are sufficiently well informed to be able to hold central and local government to account. This timidity in the design and implementation of performance management systems, combined with a lack of joining up between the different components of the current performance management framework (national performance indicators, the activities of the various inspectorates, and data about citizen satisfaction), increases the risk that early warning signs are missed. Evidence from our analysis of the Wales Programme for Improvement and the implementation of the 2009 Local Government Measure suggest that, because of this, the Government sometimes lacked the evidence to know when councils were in need of additional support.

Chapter 4 Collaboration

Introduction

- 4.1 Governments across the world have adopted collaborative approaches to public management in a bid to improve services and contain costs. Partnership has assumed particular prominence in Welsh local government policy. It is at the heart of the Welsh Government's overarching framework for public service reform as set out in *Making the Connections* and the *2007 Local Government Policy Statement*; and it has been actively promoted through a series of high profile policy initiatives (Welsh Government 2009b; 2011; 2012d) and Ministerial speeches (Sargeant 2012).
- 4.2 This chapter draws together our work on the collaboration theme to provide an assessment of local authority partnership working in Wales. It is focused on inter-organisational collaboration at the mid-level: between local authorities, and between local authorities and other agencies within the same region. Alongside an extensive review of the academic and policy literature, we draw on three sources of evidence: surveys of senior local officers and councillors conducted in 2008 and 2011; four case studies (Regional Transport Consortia, partnership working in North Wales and two on Local Service Boards), and a range of secondary data sources and documents.
- 4.3 After a brief description of the background to the collaboration theme, this chapter considers four key issues:
- the focus of partnership activity
 - change over time in partnership working
 - the performance of partnerships
 - the scale of partnership working.

A final section suggests some conclusions and recommendations.

Background

- 4.4 Researchers point to three distinct ways in which collaboration can improve public services. First, it is argued that collaboration between public service providers can increase efficiency through economies of scale (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998; Hardy 2003; Warner 2006). The scale rationale is particularly relevant to partnerships between agencies traditionally divided by geographical boundaries (Warner 2006). It focuses attention on the size of collaborations and the resources they unlock. Success is measured in terms of improvements in efficiency (defined as the ratio of inputs to outputs).
- 4.5 Second, research suggests that collaboration can enable public service providers to increase effectiveness by joining-up policies and programmes. Collaboration between agencies - such as police, fire and housing – may allow them to plug holes in statutory mandates and ameliorate the unintended consequences of policies delivered through narrowly defined departments or programmes (6 2004; Lowndes and Skelcher 1998). Joining up is particularly associated with attempts to address so called ‘wicked issues’ that cut across public sector jurisdictions. In this case performance is measured in terms of the effectiveness or outcomes of service delivery.
- 4.6 Finally, partnership promises better decision-making by engaging with, and learning from, different groups and sectors. In this way, partnership promises deeper and broader participation than can be realised through the traditional institutions of representative democracy (Leach et al. 2002; Klijn and Skelcher 2007). The learning and engaging rationale emphasises the number of collaborative ties and diversity of partners (Hardy et al. 2003) and is particularly associated with equity dimensions of performance in terms of the extent to which policies and

programmes fulfil the needs of different, sometimes marginalised groups.

- 4.7 Although these three rationales provide reason enough for governments to embrace collaborative forms of public management, partnership has assumed particular prominence in local government in Wales. For more than a decade, the Welsh Government has consistently backed collaboration over other potential drivers of improvement, such as local government reorganisation or competitive marketisation. Three pieces of contextual information – focused in essence on the impracticality and/or unpalatability of the alternative modes of management – are key to understanding this predilection for collaboration.
- 4.8 First, and perhaps the most important of these, is that the newly formed Welsh Government inherited a local government structure which had only just been reorganised in 1996. With very limited powers and a fragile popular mandate, the Welsh Government simply could not have reorganised in the first few years of its existence. The commitment to collaboration, explicit in its response to the Beecham review, had been implicit in the creation of such a small unitary authorities. Second, having inherited local authorities operating below what might be regarded as a minimum efficient scale for some key local services such as education, social services and waste management (Andrews and Boyne 2009; Andrews et al. 2006), the ‘do nothing’ option of allowing councils to operate in splendid isolation from their neighbours would have meant accepting some relatively expensive, inconsistent and in some cases relatively poor quality services (Pearson 2011; Simpson 2011; Thomas 2011). Third, although there is a free market case for small and fragmented local governments – which are encouraged to compete with each other and other providers (Tullock 1969) – ideologically, the Welsh Government has been reluctant to contemplate the use of markets and quasi-market mechanisms of the kind favoured by the Blair/Brown and Coalition Governments in London.

- 4.9 Although the alternatives to partnership working were, and still are, off the policy agenda, they nevertheless provide the benchmarks against which the Welsh Government’s enthusiasm for collaboration will inevitably be judged. In essence the question asked both by this chapter, and by practitioners on the ground, is: Does collaboration deliver the benefits promised or would it be better to embrace an alternative approach (such as local government reorganisation)?
- 4.10 Before answering this question, we consider the ways in which the Welsh Government has sought to deliver its vision of a collaborative local government.

Policy

- 4.11 The Welsh Government has sought to push the collaboration agenda in a number of ways. A range of different instruments are readily identifiable in policies pursued by the Local Government and Public Services directorate in recent years (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Examples of Policy Instruments to Promote Collaboration

Policy instrument	Example
Legislation	<i>Local Government Measures 2009 and 2011</i>
Voluntary Agreements	<i>The New Understanding</i> (Welsh Government 2009) and <i>A Compact for Change between the Welsh Government and Welsh local government</i> (Welsh Government 2011)
Institution building	LSBs; Regional footprint; Public Service Leadership Group
Guidance	<i>Working Together</i> (under Local Government Measure 2009); <i>Shared Purpose: Shared Delivery</i> (Welsh Government 2012)
Grants	Outcome Agreements.
Speeches	Numerous, most recently, Carl Sargeant “4 corners speech”

- 4.12 Extended across all directorates to include policy areas as diverse as education, health, social care, transport and waste, a full catalogue of the initiatives promoting partnership would be formidable. But their number and profile belies their efficacy. Even with the power to direct local authorities to collaborate (granted by the 2009 Local Government Measure), delivering the Government's vision of a Wales "recognised across the world for its passion and commitment to effective partnership working" (Sargeant 2012) remains a very significant challenge.
- 4.13 Collaboration is hard to deliver because in essence it is a voluntary undertaking. Although organisations can be forced or incentivised to enter into partnership agreements, it is difficult to command 'the spirit of goodwill' which underwrites true partnership (Dore 1983). Rather than being seen as directives which should be implemented, it is perhaps more helpful to think of the Welsh Government's interventions – even the power to direct – as attempts to persuade local government leaders, within the terms of their democratic mandate, to do what ministers believe to be the right thing.
- 4.14 Accordingly, and consistent with the intention of the overarching focus of this study, we do not follow the implementation of any of these individual policies in depth. Rather we ask whether – in the round – the various initiatives launched by the Welsh Government have fostered, in the words of the former Minister of Local Government and Communities, "effective partnership working which delivers high quality, effective and efficient public services" (Sargeant 2012).

The focus of partnership activity

- 4.15 Although collaborative approaches to public management promise considerable dividends, we have argued elsewhere that it would be unreasonable to expect any one collaboration to deliver more than one

(let alone all three) of these benefits at any one time (Bristow et al. 2009). A partnership intended to deliver economies of scale would have to be very different – in terms of its priorities, membership and structures – to one focused on stakeholder engagement. Indeed, we argue that agreement on the function (goal or focus) of a collaboration carried through into its form (the design of membership, structures and processes) is a necessary but clearly not sufficient condition for good performance. Conversely, we take a lack of focus and differentiation – where respondents claim that their partnership is doing all things with all people – as a cause for concern.

- 4.16 Our first question then is how differentiated are these agendas in Welsh partnership working? Do partnerships focused on economies of scale have the attributes we would associate with a scale type partnership? We answered this question through an analysis of responses to our 2011 survey.
- 4.17 The survey asked respondents to nominate the ‘most significant partnership’ operating in their service area and then answer a series of questions about its focus, operation and performance. As in our 2008 survey, the vast majority of nominated partnerships – including the Children’s framework, Local Service Boards, Health and Wellbeing, Community Safety, Regional Waste and Transport Consortia – are quasi-statutory bodies created in response to guidance from the Welsh and UK Governments.
- 4.18 Consistent with the analysis of the 2008 data, the 2011 analysis, suggests a high level of differentiation between the focus, members and characteristics of the different partnerships which lends support to our form and function hypothesis.
- 4.19 While some of the correlations are relatively weak, the pattern of results reported in Figure 4.1 (and in more detail in Annex 4), suggest

that respondents had in mind two distinct types of partnership: some focused on improving efficiency, others on effectiveness.

Figure 4.1: Matching Partnership Form to Function

Efficiency Partnerships	
Key partners	other local authorities but not voluntary sector
Focus	reducing cost
Functions	fair distribution of risks and rewards; pooling resources; communication
Performance	efficiency savings
Engagement Partnerships	
Key partners	Other public sector, voluntary sector and to a lesser extent private sector organisations
Focus	Engaging a wide variety of stakeholders; delivering more joined-up services; securing funding from government; meeting the requirements of government
Functions	formalisation; vision and leadership
Performance	added value and service improvement

4.20 The more survey respondents rated other local authorities as key partners, the more they described their partnership as focused on reducing costs and the more likely they were to report that there was a fair distribution of risks and rewards, pooling of resources and good communications. Partnerships with other local authorities exhibited a weak positive correlation with perceived efficiency savings, but a negative one with the involvement of the voluntary sector.

4.21 By contrast, those respondents who rated the public, voluntary and, to a lesser extent, private sector organisations as key partners, also gave high ratings to the joining up and engaging agendas. These kinds of partnerships were characterised by a high degree of formalisation. Respondents describing these partnerships, also rated vision and leadership highly. The identification of the private and voluntary sectors as key partners is positively correlated with a focus on winning money

from Government and meeting Government's requirements. The more authorities were working with the private and voluntary sectors, the more likely they were to report that partnerships added value and improved services.

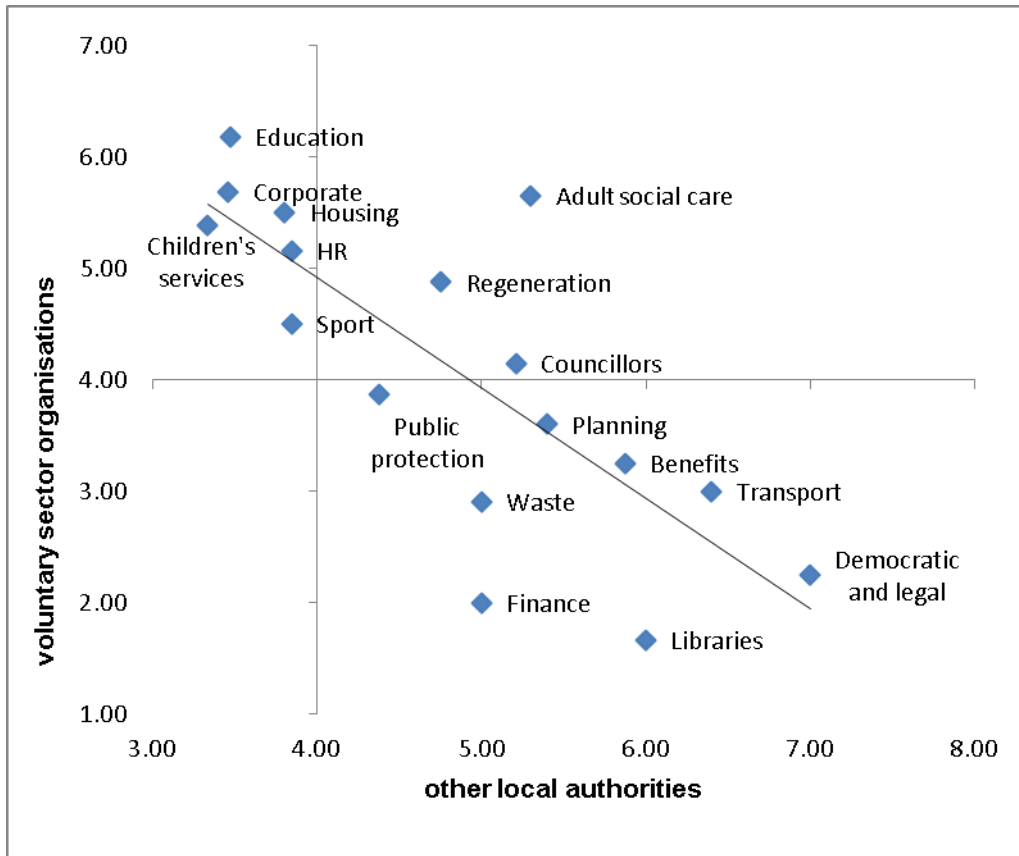
4.22 In summary, our surveys suggest a high degree of differentiation in the form and function of partnership working. Partnerships focused on reducing costs have exactly the kinds of partners (other local authorities), behaviours (sharing risks and rewards and pooling resources) and perceptions of performance (efficiency savings) that would be expected. Those focused on engagement and joining up have broader memberships, more formal structures and a stronger emphasis on vision and leadership.

4.23 Further analysis of the results suggests that different kinds of partnership working are found in different service areas. Figure 4.2 shows the average key partner rating (whether other local authority or the voluntary sector) disaggregated by service area. Although the small sample size in each service means that the data should be interpreted with caution, there is an inverse relationship between the two variables. Three groups of services can be distinguished. In the bottom right hand corner, seven services describe other local authorities as key partners but they give low scores to the voluntary sector. At the other extreme, in the top left hand corner, six services rate the voluntary sector as key partners, but give low scores to other local authorities. Only three groups of respondents (managers in adult social care and regeneration and councillors) described both other local authorities and the voluntary sector as key partners.

4.24 Again, this level of differentiation is a positive thing. Assuming, of course, that ministers and officials agree that each service is focused on the right agenda, we would expect partnerships in different services to have different goals and for them to require different partners. We would further expect some services to be more focused on the

engagement and improvement agendas while others focus on efficiency.

Figure 4.2: Key Partners



Source: LTI survey 2011

Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

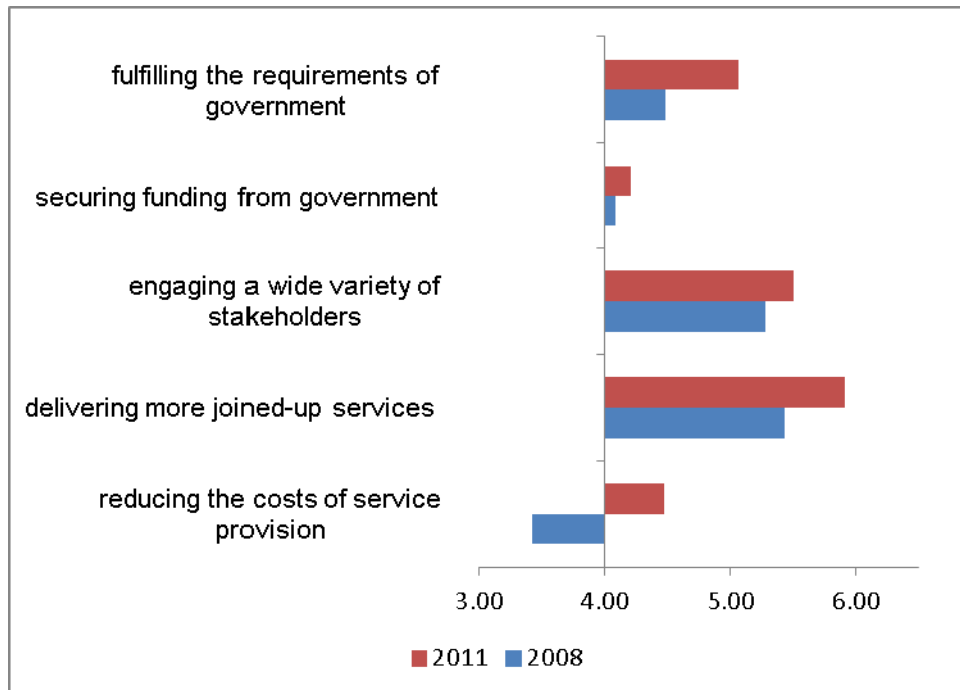
Changes over time

4.25 We used the 2008 survey of senior local authority officers to provide a snap shot of collaborative activity in Wales. This suggested that joining up and engagement were, at that time, seen as more of a priority than reducing cost. Whereas 89% and 83% agreed that their partnership was focused on joining up and engagement respectively, only 34% said they were focused on reducing cost. We noted that these priorities were a reflection of the strategic ambitions of governments at that time (both in London and Cardiff) which had emphasised service improvement rather than efficiency and economy. By comparing

responses to the same questions repeated in the 2011 survey, we were able to establish whether, and how, the pattern of partnership working changed over the intervening years.

- 4.26 The first key finding is that in marked contrast to citizen engagement – where ratings are unchanged or lower than the previous survey (Chapter 5) – partnership has assumed a higher priority in the minds of respondents (Figure 4.3).
- 4.27 Moreover, focusing on the statistically significant differences between 2008 and 2011, there is clear evidence of an important change in the perceived emphasis of partnership activity. Joining up and engagement remain as important as in 2008. However, presumably reflecting both the very different economic environment and the higher political profile of the partnership agenda, there is a marked increase in the percentage of respondents reporting a focus on reducing costs (57% in 2011, compared to 34% in 2008).

Figure 4.3: The Partnership is focused on:

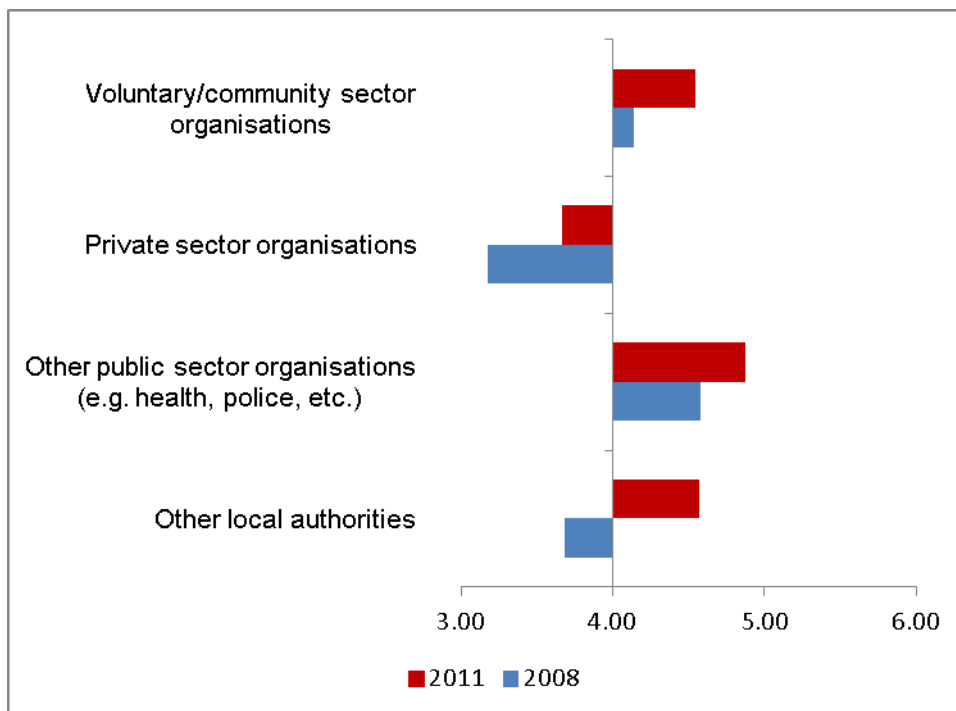


Source: LTI surveys 2008 and 2011

Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

4.28 Again, consistent with our form and function hypothesis, the change in the focus of partnership activity is matched by an increase in the proportion of respondents who mentioned local authorities as key partners (up from 45% to 60%). There was also a small but statistically significant increase in the proportion who said that they were working in partnership with the private sector. This too is consistent with a greater emphasis on cost reduction, since working with contractors is often seen as a strategy for improving efficiency (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: Key Members of the Partnership



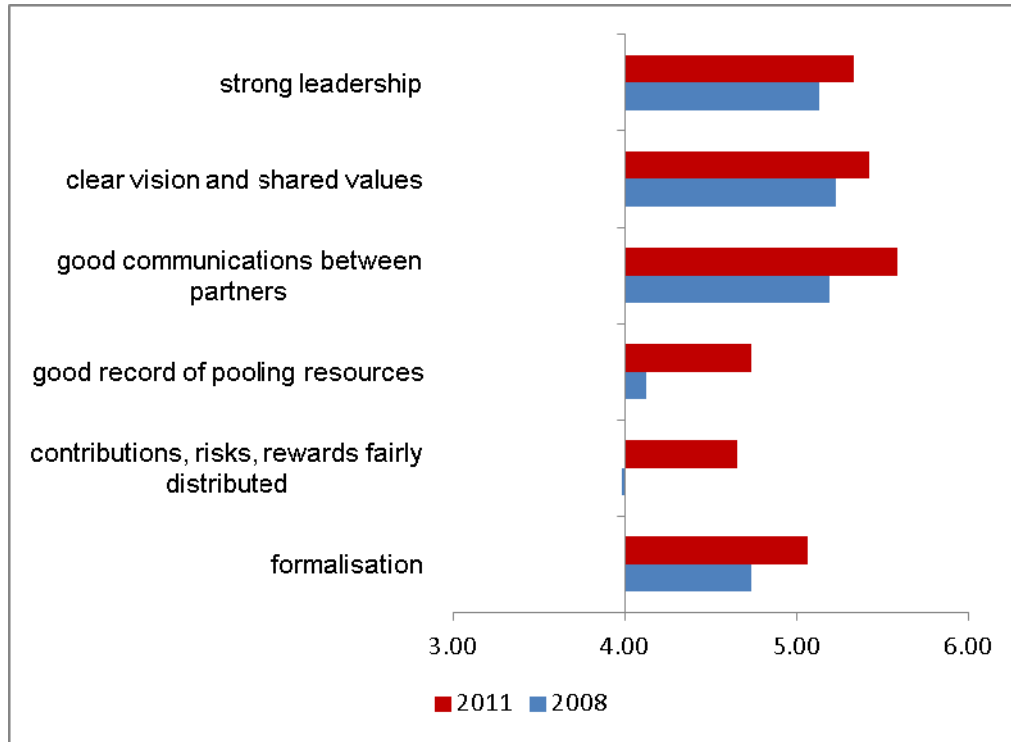
Source: LTI surveys 2008 and 2011

Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

4.29 Changes in the focus of partnership activity and the rating of key partners track into changes in partnership characteristics. Between 2008 and 2011 there were statistically significant differences in responses on the fair distribution of ‘contributions, risks and rewards’ and ‘good record of pooling resources’, both of which, as we discussed

in the previous section, are correlated with local authority as a key partner and the achievement of efficiency savings (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Partnership Characteristics



Source: LTI surveys 2008 and 2011

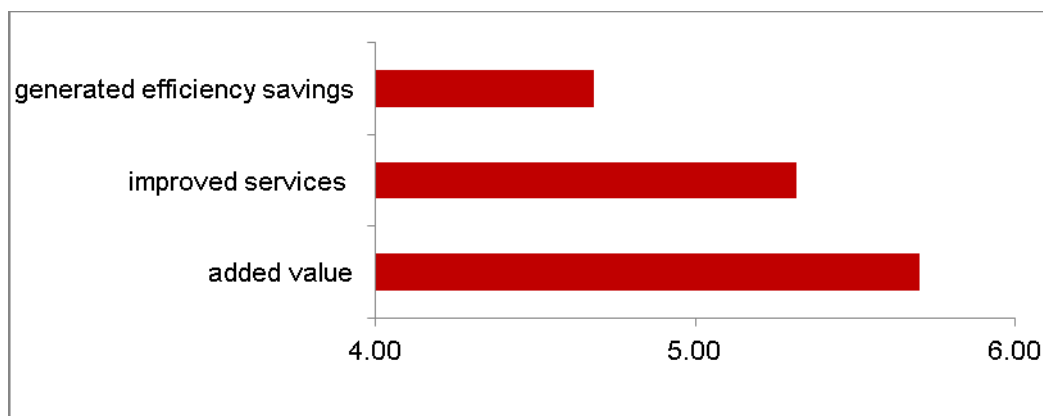
Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

4.30 In summary, our evidence suggests that in 2011 respondents perceived partnership working to be more focused on the efficiency agenda than was the case in 2008 (see Annex 2 for statistical details). Respondents were not just paying lip service to the efficiency agenda. Changes both in their rating of key partners (other local authorities), and the nature of their reported collaborative behaviour (equality of contributions and pooling resources) are consistent with collaborations focused on the pursuit of efficiency.

Partnership Performance

- 4.31 So far, the evidence suggests that partnership working in Welsh local government is highly differentiated; that the form partnerships take is consistent with their function; and that over time more emphasis has been placed on reducing costs. This section considers whether partnership is delivering the improved performance expected of it.
- 4.32 As Chapter 3 discusses, appropriate performance measures are hard to come by in Wales. There are few satisfactory measures of local authority performance, let alone partnership performance. All we have are the perceptions of partners themselves as collected in our surveys. We asked three performance questions in the collaboration part of the survey: did respondents think the partnership added value, improved the service and generated efficiency savings? Aggregate results from the 2011 survey are given in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6: The Partnership Has . . .



Source: LTI survey 2011

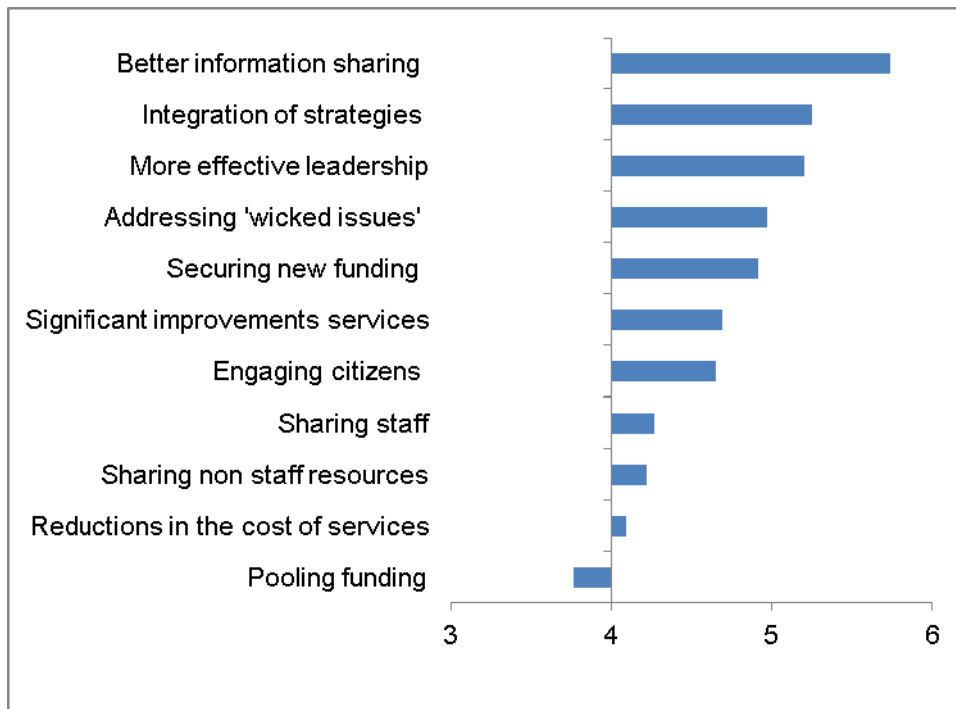
Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

- 4.33 In outline, the data suggest that respondents think that their partnership adds value and improves the service. They are a bit more doubtful

about the delivery of efficiency savings although even here the aggregate score is above the mid-point of the scale.

4.34 Our case study on the role of Welsh Government representatives on Local Service Boards, confirms this picture of partnerships focused more on sharing information than costs. Our respondents rated all of the markers of economies of scale – like sharing staff, reducing costs and pooling funding – as either in or close to negative territory on the Likert scale (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7: Achievements of Local Service Boards



Source: Welsh Government Representative on LSB survey 2010

Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

4.35 We also looked for correlations between the type of partnership (as indicated by the key partners in 2011 survey) and the three performance questions in Figure 4.6. Perhaps not surprisingly, the results are much weaker than the form and function hypothesis, although they do suggest inter-authority partnerships have a weak positive correlation with efficiency, but an inverse (although again very

weak) correlation with service improvement. There is a hint here that officers perceive partnerships with other local authorities as reducing cost but not improving services. Engagement with other sectors is, however, positively correlated with service improvement. The more respondents rated the voluntary sector as a key partner the more they thought their partnership 'had improved the services to citizens'.²

Impact of Partnership Working

- 4.36 So far the analysis has been largely encouraging. The evidence suggests that partnership working in Wales is focused and differentiated, that it is adapting over time in ways which seem appropriate to a more challenging environment, and that it is positively (albeit in some cases only weakly) correlated with perceptions of improved performance. Our survey data do not, however, tell us anything about the scale of partnership activity. What is the scale of partnership working and what sort of impact does it have on the delivery of services and the resolution of problems?
- 4.37 The scale of collaborative activity can be measured in a number of ways. We could ask how much time is devoted to partnership by officers and councillors; how many people are employed in collaborative structures; how much public money is channelled through collaborative vehicles or how many services are provided or outcomes delivered. As we have already observed, the last and most important of these – in terms of robustly measured outputs and outcomes of collaboration – is of course the most difficult to establish. Indeed, without the collection of dedicated partnership level data, we have to rely on the perceptions of individual partners as collected through the surveys and case studies.

² Spearman correlation = 0.313, sig. level = 0.95

- 4.38 Four of our case studies are particularly relevant to the scale question: two on Local Service Boards; and one each on Regional Transport Consortia and partnership working in North Wales. All of these cases were chosen precisely because they are, in their different ways, at the forefront of the collaboration agenda: Local Service Boards are intended to encourage local authorities to work with other agencies within the area; the transport consortia emerged from the requirement to introduce regional transport planning; while North Wales was recommended to us by our steering group as a region at the forefront of the collaboration agenda. All four case studies suggest the same story. Collaboration, although very positive, has to date only been realised on a very small scale and, as a result, has had only a modest impact.
- 4.39 A number of local authorities and other agencies within our case studies have sought to map the number of partnerships they are involved in and the amount of time that is devoted to partnership meetings. Although these studies vary in their methodologies, all point to the significant scale of the commitment to partnership working. Calculations based on the number of partnerships, the number of attendees and the frequency and duration of meetings demonstrate that there has been a very large investment of staff time in partnership working.
- 4.40 Measures of the number of people directly employed by partnerships are however less compelling. As reported in our transport planning case study, the regional consortia employ only one or two people largely using fixed term funding provided by the Welsh Government. Our North Wales case study, found that the new school advisory service in North Wales will employ 30 people, while the new commissioning hub will have a staff of three. Local Service Boards typically employ a partnership manager or co-ordinator and require other participants to combine Local Service Board work with their existing 'day jobs'. These figures are in contrast to the thousands of

employees maintained by the larger local authorities in ‘mainstream activities’. If the number of employees can be taken as indicative of the scale of collaborative activity – and where collaboration is focused on the efficiency agenda we think this is indeed a reasonable measure – then partnership working in Wales is, after more than 10 years of encouragement from the Welsh Government and the WLGA, still of only marginal significance.

- 4.41 Of course the number of employees is not the only, or necessarily the most appropriate, measure of partnership activity. It may be more helpful to look at the amount of money channelled to or through collaborative structures. Although employing only few people, the commissioning hub in North Wales will be responsible for the deployment of a significant amount of funding to procure specialist services. Similarly, the transport consortia play an important part in allocating large sums to member authorities and private construction partners. A measure of the flow of money through partnership-type bodies may, therefore, give a more positive account of the scale of partnership activity.
- 4.42 It could be argued, however, that the real currency of collaborative activity – in which officers and councillors exchange intangible resources through *ad hoc* meetings, telephone conversations, email and social media – resists all attempts to measure it. While the networking is virtual, the outcomes in terms of improved performance might be very real. The picture of Welsh partnership working provided by our surveys and case studies is predominantly one of networking and information exchange rather than resource sharing and cost saving. More crudely expressed, partnerships still seem largely to be ‘talking shops’ rather than ‘one stop shops’. This does not mean that they are not adding value and improving services. *We are clear that networking and information exchange do improve services.* Our point, however, is that to date, few partnerships have been established to employ people and provide services in their own name.

4.43 All our data point to the same story. Collaboration although positive in a number of ways, has to date largely focused on the sharing of knowledge rather than costs. But without integrating people and processes in some way – by for example bringing staff together under a single organisation and then reducing the inputs into delivery processes – it is difficult to see how partnerships could deliver economies of scale. Indeed there is a danger, as we argued in our transport case study, that without the meaningful integration of staff, partnership working might actually reduce capacity - by adding collaboration to the day job and passing some problems to a higher, but sometimes more poorly resourced, level of government.

Conclusions

4.44 The collaborative approach to public service delivery should, properly speaking, be evaluated against the alternative forms of organisation. In such a way, collaboration sceptics suggest that the Welsh Government should reorganise local authorities into larger and more efficient units. Others argue that the Welsh Government should take a step back and give existing local authorities the autonomy to negotiate bespoke collaborative arrangements as and when it is appropriate.

4.45 Without comparative studies of these alternative reform strategies, it is impossible to determine which would prove more effective. The evidence from elsewhere does show, however, that there is no perfect scale or size for local government (Andrews et al. 2006) and it warns that reorganisation is costly and often fails to produce the anticipated efficiency gains (Allan 2003).

4.46 We do know, however, both from our surveys and the literature more broadly, that collaboration is positively correlated with improvement. Changes in responses to our survey over time suggest that local

government is attaching greater priority to partnerships focused on increasing scale and increasing efficiency. These are exactly the changes that ministers would want. So our work lends cautious support to the Welsh Government's approach. We think the evidence underlines the importance of collaboration, but it does suggest the need for an adjustment in the suite of policies intended to deliver it and some consideration of how the outcomes and impacts of collaborative working could be demonstrated.

- 4.47 It is notable that the most advanced areas of collaborative activity, observed in both surveys and case study work, are in services which have been pushed very strongly in this direction by strong leadership from the Welsh Government (waste, transport, education and housing). In other services, inter-authority collaboration, as a policy, is relatively under-powered in comparison to other agendas pursued by the Welsh Government. Simply put, the existing system of local governance leaves the vast majority of local government officers and councillors with more important things to do than collaborate with each other.
- 4.48 Our evidence suggests that if the Welsh Government wishes to see more collaboration between authorities – together with the associated benefits – it will need to push that agenda much more strongly than is currently the case. The focus of collaboration will need to switch quite decisively from the 'shall we or shan't we' debates of the last decade; there will need to be a much greater focus on the 'what and how' of regional and sub-regional service delivery.

Chapter 5 Citizen Engagement

Introduction

- 5.1 The Welsh Government has developed a distinctive approach to public service improvement. Alongside collaboration, it has asserted the merits of equality, universalism and social justice. This is seen in the provision of free and universal services: prescriptions, hospital parking, swimming and school breakfasts. But it is also apparent in the determination to put the 'citizen at the centre' of public service delivery.
- 5.2 In his foreword to *Making the Connections* (WAG 2004) the then First Minister extolled the virtues of the 'citizen model' which he suggested was more in tune with Welsh values, attitudes and the sense of ownership of public services. The theme has continued to be important. In 2009 the Government asserted that 'Better citizen engagement by all public services has been a consistent theme for the One Wales government' and pointed to significant progress in: funding to support engagement projects in Local Service Boards; the introduction of Children's and Older People's Commissioners; increased citizen engagement in the development of community strategies; and wider involvement of co-optees in the scrutiny process (Welsh Government, 2009). In 2011 it endorsed the *National Principles for Public Engagement*, developed by Participation Cymru, distributing a copy to all public service organisations in Wales.
- 5.3 This chapter assesses the impact of the Welsh Government's attempts to encourage citizen engagement. It draws on a wide range of sources, including key Welsh Government policy documents and other reports and academic papers, as well as new evidence from our own surveys of officers and councillors, in-depth interviews with senior civil servants and representatives of the WLGA, and case studies of particular policy issues.

5.4 Drawing on this evidence, we first examine different approaches to citizen engagement and then address five key questions:

- Why engage citizens?
- How to engage?
- Who to engage?
- Is there sufficient capacity to engage?
- And most importantly, what difference, if any, does engagement make?

Approaches to citizen engagement

5.5 It is possible to identify two distinct approaches to citizen engagement running through Welsh Government policy documents – one based on what might be called a consumerist approach, the other on democratic engagement. Table 5.1 provides a summary of policies for local government that feature strongly in Welsh Government statements and reports and reflect the consumerist approach and democratic forms of engagement.

Table 5.1: Consumerist and Democratic Forms of Citizen Engagement

Consumerism	Democracy
<p>Access</p> <p>E-government initiatives</p> <p>Welsh government use of the Kafka Brigade in four councils</p>	<p>Representation</p> <p>2011 Local Government Measure – e.g. proposals to strengthen local authority scrutiny and councillor calls for action</p>
<p>Information</p> <p>2011 Local Government Measure e.g. overview and scrutiny committees are expected to make stronger efforts to raise public awareness about their role and function</p> <p>Single Integrated Plans</p> <p>Annual Report on the Programme for Government</p> <p>Participation Cymru</p>	<p>Participation</p> <p>2011 Local Government Measure – e.g. improve public engagement; remove barriers to standing for election; change the timing of council meetings; remote attendance</p> <p>Single Integrated Plans</p> <p>Communities First</p> <p>ESF-LSB Project</p>
<p>Redress</p> <p>Local Democracy (Wales) Bill – continuation of the local government ethical framework (which has largely been abolished in England)</p> <p>Public Services Ombudsman for Wales</p>	
<p>Representation</p> <p>2011 Local Government Measure – e.g. proposals to strengthen local authority scrutiny and councillor calls for action</p>	

Consumerism

5.6 The consumerist approach is premised on the diagnosis of an imbalance of power ‘between those who provide goods and services,

and those for whom they are provided' (Potter, 1988: 150). At its core is the aim of achieving a 'shift of power away from producers of public services to public service users' (Jung, 2010: 440). Potter (1988) points to five ways of redressing the balance of power:

- Access
- Information
- Redress
- Representation
- Choice.

- 5.7 Four of these five elements are readily identifiable in the Welsh Government policy documents. The importance of access – focussed on equity and availability – is a recurrent theme. In terms of equity, *Making the Connections* asserts that: 'Services should be more responsive to the needs of users, and should be easy to access for people in Wales of all generations and circumstances' (2004: 3). Documents also highlight the value of innovative approaches for people to access services, such as 'first-stop gateways' and through e-government.
- 5.8 Consumers need to know about the opportunities to engage, where they can have influence, why decisions are taken and how this will affect them. The provision of information features prominently in Welsh Government policy documents. The Annual Report on the Programme for Government, for example, promises 'more information than ever before' (2012a: ii).
- 5.9 Members of the public need to have mechanisms to settle any complaints quickly and these can help to act as a form of quality control on public service providers. Redress receives far less attention in policy documents than access and information. *Making the Connections* says only that citizens should have 'a right and an opportunity to hold public services to account' (2004: 9). More recently,

however, the Welsh Government has established a common portal for public service complaints – complaints Wales – which could prove an important mechanism for performance reporting and improvement (Welsh Government 2012a; 2012b).

- 5.10 Representation means ‘that the views of consumers should be adequately represented to decision-makers at all points in the system’ (Potter, 1988: 154). *A Shared Responsibility* places considerable emphasis on this and outlines a series of reforms to the local authority scrutiny function (WAG, 2007a), which have since been adopted in law (WAG, 2010).
- 5.11 Government policy documents argue against the need for choice of providers in public services, but this does not imply a one-size-fits-all approach. *Making the Connections* suggests that service providers should design ‘service options around the preferences of communities’ and shape ‘what is offered to the needs of individuals’ (2004: 15).

Democracy

- 5.12 Without the possibility of choice or exit afforded by a multiplicity of providers, the Welsh Government’s citizen model puts considerable emphasis on the articulation of voice through democratic channels. The academic literature distinguishes between two approaches to democratic reform. First, representative reforms are focused on the methods of election and the accountability of the executive. Second, participative approaches focus on specific tangible problems; the involvement of ordinary people; and the deliberative development of solutions.
- 5.13 *Making the Connections* makes little appeal to the need for reforms to representative democracy although *A Shared Responsibility* proposed some important changes to the organisation of local government scrutiny arrangements, alongside calls for ‘citizen triggers’ like

community calls for action (WAG, 2007a: 47). These reforms, together with other measures designed to broaden the profile of elected councillors, have recently been introduced (WAG, 2010). Overall, however, the citizen model leans rather more heavily towards the participative than the representative strand of democratisation, calling in strong terms for 'greater participation by citizens, communities and businesses in the way that services are designed and delivered' (WAG, 2004: 4). However, our documentary review provided only limited information about how participation will actually be advanced beyond using community strategies as a mechanism through which local communities could be involved in agreeing local priorities and influencing local services.

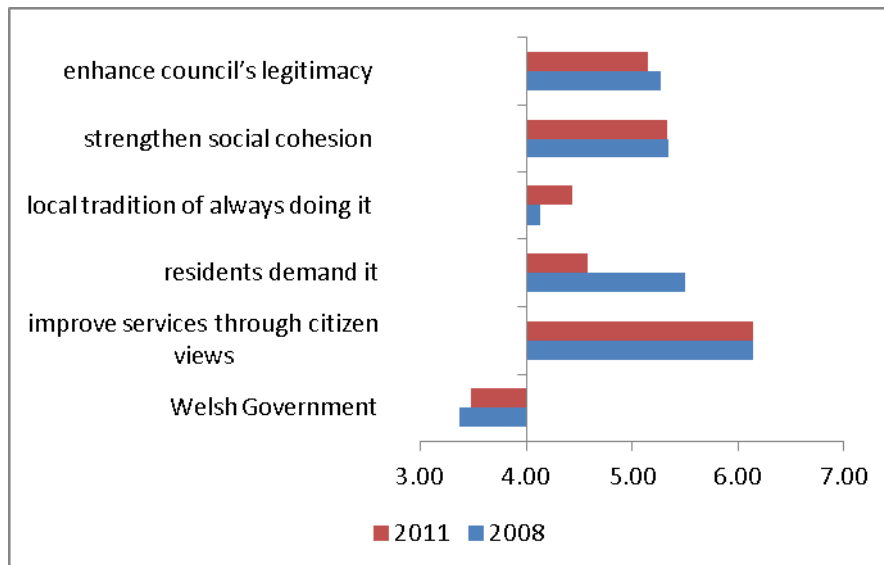
- 5.14 There are difficulties in blending participatory and representative democracy. Some argue that the active participation and influence of citizens can be realised through the intermediary role of local councillors, while others call for processes which are open to scrutiny and can be equally applied to representative and participative institutions. The 2007 Local Government Policy Statement makes an initial effort to reconcile the two in the development of scrutiny committees where 'cooption could also be extended to citizens' representatives with established expertise or experience, or to those who are recognised as community leaders in a specific area' (2007a: 32). However, it clearly indicates that councillors retain 'responsibility for the final decision, showing that Participatory Budgeting does not subvert representational democratic processes' (2007a: 45).
- 5.15 While few would disagree with the principle of citizen engagement, participative forms of democracy require the formal reorganisation of the institutions of governance to devolve decision-making powers to empowered local people and/or groups. The Welsh Government policy documents do not hint at a programme of reform of this type.

5.16 The following sections use evidence from documentary analysis, our surveys, case studies and interviews to assess local authorities' approaches to citizen engagement and the extent to which this has delivered on the promise of a citizen-centred approach to public service delivery. We consider whether there is a consumerist or democratic approach to engagement and assess performance according to Participation Cymru's National Principles for Public Engagement.

Why engage with citizens?

5.17 The senior local officers and councillors we surveyed, reported that the main reason they engage with citizens is in order to improve services (in 2011, 90% said this was the case). They also suggested that engagement is driven by a desire to strengthen social cohesion, to enhance their council's legitimacy and because there is a local tradition of doing so.

Figure 5.1: Why Local Authorities Engage Citizens



Source: LTI survey 2008 and 2011

Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

- 5.18 Figure 5.1 shows that the only noteworthy difference over time was a fall in the number of respondents who engaged citizens because residents and/or service users demanded it. Interestingly, most respondents disagreed with the suggestion that they engage citizens because the Welsh Government encourages them to do so.
- 5.19 The two councils featured in the case studies of school modernisation that we undertook adopted contrasting approaches to engaging with the public. One council used Area Project Boards (made up of a representative from each school, politicians, council officers, and other key local stakeholders) to develop a plan for the future provision of education in the area. It then consulted the public on this plan and faced considerable public opposition and media coverage. The second council used a range of consultation and 'option' documents which were carefully designed with professionals (head teachers, governing bodies and so forth) and then conducted a large number of public meetings to build support for change.
- 5.20 The key differences between the two councils were *how* and *when* the main stakeholders were engaged, the ways in which the public had a chance to influence the process and the rationale for citizen engagement. In the first case study, there was a 'we'll consult but we'll decide' attitude but, in the other council, the focus was on 'not just consulting, but listening'. In both councils, close engagement with professionals has helped to reduce resistance to change. However, both involved only a limited role for local councillors suggesting significant questions about the balance between representative and participatory forms of democracy.
- 5.21 The senior civil servants we interviewed in 2009 tended to describe the thinking behind citizen engagement in terms of consumerist approaches. We were, for example, given the example of the Kafka approach in which the experience of a single citizen is used to explore the dysfunctional systemic effects of separate public service delivery

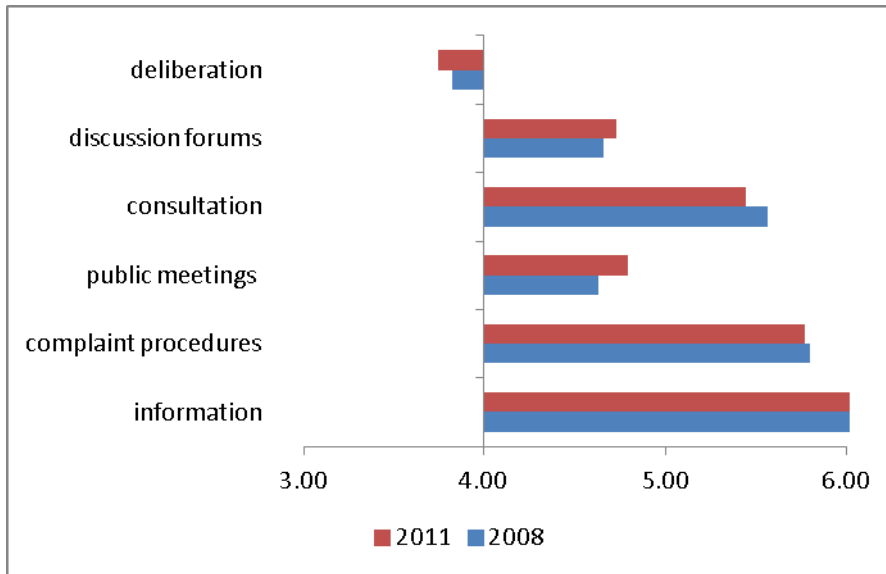
arrangements. The leaders of local public service organisations are then asked to reform their systems to improve the citizen experience. Although in some senses the Kafka approach does genuinely put a citizen at the centre – through the personification of the typical user experience – these are representative of the typical client rather than the citizens as a whole. The approach is, therefore, designed to improve the user’s experience of public services, rather than facilitate democratic debate which empowers citizens as decision-makers.

How are citizens engaged?

5.22 The most common methods of engagement used by local authorities are consumerist approaches: the provision of information, complaint procedures, and consultations conducted via surveys (Figure 5.2). In 2011, 90% of survey respondents reported that their services engage in these activities. Deliberative approaches to engagement are much less common. Only 35% of respondents reported that their services used them.

5.23 The results shown in Figure 5.2 suggest that there has been little change in the methods used over time and that most councils continue to rely on fairly traditional methods.

Figure 5.2: Methods of Citizen Engagement



Source: LTI survey 2011

Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

- 5.24 Some of our interviewees reported examples of democratic forms of engagement including instances of deliberation. But these often occurred within specific programmes, like Communities First, where partnerships have successfully engaged with hard-to-reach groups, secured external funding, contributed to social regeneration and boosted training and skills of community members.
- 5.25 Until recently, the Welsh Government has focused little attention on representative or participative-type approaches to citizen engagement. The Beecham Review (WAG, 2006) argued that effective, respected and proactive scrutiny was vital to the achievement of citizen-centred governance. But it concluded that existing approaches were retrospective and too narrowly focused on local authority services. A recent study found that, six years on, scrutiny was still failing to achieve its full potential because of a lack of challenge and public engagement in the process (Downe and Ashworth, 2012).
- 5.26 Following Beecham, the Welsh Government introduced various initiatives to make scrutiny more effective, including the Scrutiny

Development Fund which was launched in 2008 and re-introduced in 2012. One of the Fund's objectives has been to promote a citizen-centred approach to scrutiny but a recent evaluation concluded that this was the most difficult objective to achieve. There was one project in particular that took a citizen perspective by examining whether the Local Service Board was operating effectively with a citizen focus in relation to health and social care services. While most councils have tried hard to engage the public in scrutiny, generating interest is described as being painfully difficult (Downe and Ashworth, 2012).

- 5.27 The 2011 Local Government Measure introduced a number of initiatives to strengthen local democracy and enhance the role of non-executive councillors by ensuring sufficient administrative and advisory support and scheduling council meetings to make them more convenient. Much of the Measure was devoted to outlining ways to improve local authority scrutiny and increase the level of public involvement in scrutiny.
- 5.28 There are, however, a number of tensions in this agenda, such as the conflicts between the wishes of a particular community and the wider citizenry. These tensions can be negotiated by councillors prepared to assume the mantle of citizen champion, but, inevitably, their capacity to perform this kind of role varies. The Wales Audit Office found that while most councillors recognised the value of citizen engagement, they 'found a lack of clarity and level of uncertainty among councillors about what role they should play in public engagement and how it relates to their democratic mandates' (2012d: 31).

Who is engaged?

- 5.29 Participation Cymru suggests that the methods used need to be tailored to the types of citizen organisations want to involve. It is unclear from our surveys whether councils are matching methods with the types of citizen or just using methods they are most familiar with.

- 5.30 Voluntary sector organisations are often seen as catalysts for facilitating citizen engagement (WAG, 2007). Whilst our surveys show that engagement takes place primarily with individual service users, the case studies of Communities First and Local Service Boards that we conducted suggested that councils have learned to appreciate the value of including the voluntary sector in attempts to improve the delivery of services such as regeneration, social care and community safety.
- 5.31 There is a commonly held view that engagement often takes place with the 'usual suspects', but this is not confirmed by our survey. In 2011, only 37% of survey respondents reported that they find it difficult to engage beyond the 'usual suspects', a slightly lower figure than in 2008. We should recognise, however, that citizens' panels, forums and the like are made up of volunteers and so are unlikely to be representative of the population. There is also a question mark over the public's appetite for engagement. Our surveys suggests that there is less demand from residents for it and evidence from the Living in Wales survey suggests that more than eight in ten citizens are not interested in participating in decision-making (Welsh Government, 2009).

Do local authorities have the capacity to engage?

- 5.32 Participation Cymru suggests that in order to design a process whereby the public can influence and shape policy and services, sufficient resources need to be in place (PC principle 8).
- 5.33 Only 23% of the senior managers we surveyed believed that their services had the capacity to engage properly with citizens and only a third reported that they co-ordinate their citizen engagement activities with other organisations. The Wales Audit Office (WAO) (2012d) found that authorities that employ a full-time specialist officer were more

likely to have adopted a strategic approach to citizen engagement. Taken together, these findings show the importance of investing resources in engagement in order to reduce chances of duplication (and associated costs), avoid consultation overload and ensure that the public receives a co-ordinated public service (PC principle 4). Some Local Service Boards have enabled agencies to adopt a coordinated approach to engagement on particular issues, but there is a need for a more strategic approach to citizen engagement across the public sector (WAO, 2012d).

5.34 The managers we surveyed were largely positive about how citizen engagement activities are undertaken. Whilst they have concerns about capacity, in 2011, nearly 60% of respondents reported that they consult effectively with citizens, two-thirds said that citizens are informed effectively about how they can engage with services and 60% said that they provide effective feedback that explains the decisions taken. These findings confirm that there is room for improvement in the kinds of feedback given to participants, something that was also noted by a recent WAO report (WAO 2012d: 45). It is important to get this right as redress is a key component of the consumer model and providing effective feedback helps to motivate people to participate again (PC principle 9).

5.35 There were three areas in which engagement is seen as being weakest by our survey respondents. In 2011, only 42% said that their services monitor the effectiveness of their citizen engagement activities and 56% reported that engagement occurs at a time when it can make a difference. Finally, fewer than four in ten respondents said that citizens 'are closely engaged in decisions about my service' suggesting, again, a consumerist rather than democratic stance.

Does citizen engagement make a difference?

- 5.36 Our survey respondents believed that there are important benefits to engaging with citizens. In 2011, only 16% reported that it made little difference to their service, although this was a slight increase on the 2008 figure. And a majority (57%) believed that citizen engagement had improved the relationship between their council and citizens.
- 5.37 We found a positive correlation between the use of consultation methods (such as surveys, suggestion boxes and so on) and levels of perceived user satisfaction. This echoes other studies. Neshkova, and Guo (2012, p.285), for example, find that ‘greater citizen engagement is strongly and significantly related to better performance of public agencies.’
- 5.38 The Communities First Partnerships with good citizen engagement also claimed to have a record of delivering outcomes. But we also found that CFPs rated themselves better at informing, consulting and involving the community than empowering it (i.e. allowing the public members to determine priorities). CFPs were thought to be relatively good at achieving social outcomes – such as ‘people or social regeneration’, ‘physical regeneration’ and creating a ‘better sense of community’ – but they struggled to influence local services providers.
- 5.39 The case studies of Local Service Boards also raised questions about the extent of citizen involvement in designing and monitoring services. While we did find examples of engagement among the case studies, notably Cardiff’s ‘Transforming Neighbourhoods’ project, fewer than two thirds of the Local Service Board members we surveyed in 2010 reported that citizens had been involved in helping to redesign services. The Local Government Measure 2009 required local authorities to consult on improvement objectives and provide information about local government performance which in turn would increase transparency to the public. However, none of the officers or

councillors we interviewed about the implementation of the measure provided any evidence that the public uses the information they or the Wales Audit Office publishes.

Conclusions

- 5.40 The Welsh Government's declared ambition is to foster the development of a 'citizen model' which 'relies on voice to drive improvement, together with system design, effective management and regulation, all operating in the interests of the citizen' (Welsh Government, 2006:5). The expectation is that citizens will trust public service providers and receive high quality, personalised, joined-up services, planned across organisational boundaries. They should be well informed and have meaningful, diverse ways to express their expectations, receiving redress where appropriate. The model is one where citizens know how well services in their area are performing and see that organisations are being held vigorously to account by their representatives. There are also responsibilities placed on citizens – they should understand that individual and collective needs must be balanced – and that patterns of service delivery must change in order to secure improvement.
- 5.41 Advocates of the citizen model suggest that it has the potential to improve services by re-designing them around people's needs and reducing inefficiencies. The WAO suggests that 'Leaders will need to engage the public as much as possible in debates about the future shape of local services' (2011:7). The Welsh Government has argued that 'Local Service Boards should focus with purpose on strengthening the citizen voice in ways that go beyond consultation to high intensity, high impact engagement around the top issues and priorities' (2012c: 34). Referring to Single Integrated Plans, the Government suggests that citizens need to be engaged in the process 'to rethink, redesign and implement system wide changes' (Welsh Government, 2012c:2).

- 5.42 So, how successful have the Welsh Government and local government been in implementing the citizen model? While citizen engagement is one of four 'critical success factors' essential to transforming public services in Wales (WAG, 2006), it seems that in practice the Welsh Government's policies for local government place greater emphasis on other drivers of public services reform. The Welsh Government has not done enough to clarify what the commitment to citizen engagement really means; while local government has not devoted the resources required to realise a corporate response. Local authorities have not generally co-ordinated activities with other public service providers and have only recently started to hold other organisations to account. Little has been done to empower citizens through devolved resources and there is little evidence of co-production where citizens are working jointly with service providers. The result is that 'effective engagement and co-production are not yet embedded into how public services are managed and delivered' (Welsh Government, 2009).
- 5.43 The Welsh Government has recognised that it needs to blend 'participatory and representative democratic approaches' and appreciates that it 'must generate excellent local and national information on citizen satisfaction and local authority performance' (Welsh Government, 2007b). In a citizen-centred approach, satisfaction becomes a key criterion for success and the basis for measuring public sector performance. But there is a lack of performance data in two main areas. First, local authorities do not know whether their citizen engagement activity has had a positive impact and improved services. Second, insufficient data has been published so that citizens are able to see how their local council is performing (WAO, 2012d).
- 5.44 The evidence from our study suggests that the Welsh government is absolutely right to want to put the citizen at the centre of public service delivery in Wales. The literature points to a whole series of benefits –

from efficiency and effectiveness to satisfaction and social capital – which spring from citizen engagement of one form or another. The question is not whether services should be citizen-centred but how they should achieve this. We think lack of clarity in this matter explains the low prominence – and sometimes the mere lip service – accorded to this agenda. Three routes to citizen-centredness are apparent in the literature.

- 5.45 The consumer model aims to emulate the conditions of a smoothly working free market, in which the customer is king. While the Welsh Government has drawn most on this model – and recorded some important progress in terms of measuring satisfaction and managing complaints – there are real limits to its efficacy in the absence of consumer choice.
- 5.46 The democracy model – in which citizens are given real power in local government decision-making – could be used more. The Welsh government might, for example, consider devolving more responsibilities and resources to smaller units such as neighbourhood and service management groups; it could promote the introduction of community budgets; or it might place greater emphasis on the role of councillors as community champions.
- 5.47 Finally, more consideration needs to be given to a process strategy which focuses on: ‘the way in which governments interact with citizens – and the extent to which citizens perceive those interactions in terms of fairness, equity, respect and honesty’. Governing well through transparent and effective decision-making ‘may matter as much as the ‘tangible outcomes’ measured in traditional approaches to performance management’ Van Ryzin (2011).
- 5.48 While the government can point to some success on all of these fronts, the rather vague edict to put the citizen at the centre has sometimes confused public service managers. Both local and national

governments need to be clearer about why and how they engage with citizens.

Chapter 6 The Central-Local Relationship

Introduction

- 6.1 The relationship between the Welsh Government and local authorities matters. Ministers hold the purse strings and develop policy but they need to work with local councils in order to deliver on many of the priorities outlined in the Programme for Government. Local government spending accounts for around a third of the Welsh Government's budget. It is responsible for the provision of key public services and also for providing effective community leadership. The two tiers of government are, therefore, co-dependent.
- 6.2 In recognition of this, the Welsh Government has a statutory duty to work with local government, and this 'partnership approach' underpinned the concept of shared responsibilities set out in the 2007 Local Government Policy Statement. The 'New Understanding', signed by the Government and the WLGA in 2009, similarly recognised the importance of a constructive relationship. It defined the roles and responsibilities of central and local government and acknowledged the importance of both national leadership and local freedom and flexibility in service delivery in order to secure good outcomes for citizens (Welsh Assembly Government 2009b). Central-local relations are, therefore, an important theme and was one of the three issues that we were asked to consider as part of the evaluation of the Welsh Government's policies for local government.
- 6.3 This chapter draws together the overall findings of our research on this theme. It addresses three questions:
- How important are the Welsh Government's policies to local authorities?
 - How do the Welsh Government and local authorities work together?
 - What kind of relationship works best?
- 6.4 Our analysis draw on evidence gathered from:
- The surveys of senior local authority officers and councillors
 - Eight case studies of specific policies

- Semi-structured interviews with 24 senior civil servants and WLGA officers who are closely involved in the day to day interactions between the Welsh Government and local government.

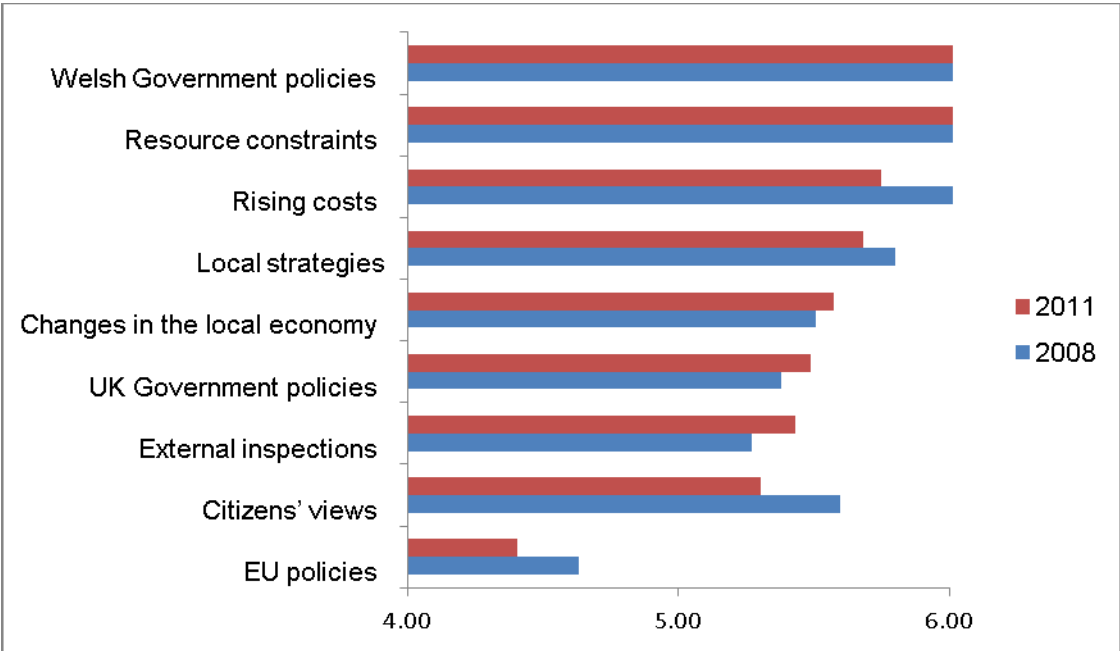
6.5 We analyse central-local relations in terms of four models drawn from the academic literature:

- Local autonomy – a situation in which different tiers of government have their own distinct and clearly defined functions with local authorities left to determine how they discharge the responsibilities allocated to them. Given the strong centralising instincts of central governments in the UK and media and public opposition to ‘postcode lotteries’, this might appear hypothetical. However, in the course of the study we have found examples which come surprisingly close to it.
- Partnership – more immediately recognisable in Wales, this model describes an arrangement in which central and local government recognise their interdependence and work together in pursuit of shared objectives. The existence of the Partnership Council and the importance of an array of (formal and informal) policy networks involving civil servants, advisers and local government professionals, is testament to this approach in Wales.
- Command – a scenario in which central government determines policy top-down and seeks to shape local authorities’ actions using ‘hard-edged’ instruments, such as legislation and guidance, performance monitoring, control over income and expenditure (through grant allocations, council tax capping and ring-fencing) and a variety of other enforcement strategies.
- Competition – where central government encourages local authorities to compete with each other (and in some cases other organisations such as the third sector) for recognition, funding and influence. Examples include initiatives such as the ‘Excellence Wales’ scheme (which ran from 2005 to 2010) and competitive bidding for EU funding.

The Welsh Government’s influence

6.6 The first key finding from our study of the nature of the central-local relationship in Wales is that councillors and senior local authority managers see the Welsh Government’s policies as very important. Respondents to our surveyed in 2011 reported that alongside resource constraints, the Welsh Government was the most significant influence on local services. More than half of the officers we surveyed reported that the Welsh Government’s policies had a strong impact on their services. By comparison, only just over a quarter believed the UK Government’s policies to be an important influence and even fewer said this of EU policies (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Influences on Local Government Services



Source: LTI survey of local authority officers 2008 and 2011
 Scale values: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

6.7 The interviews and case studies that we conducted bore out these findings. The civil servants and WLGA lead officers we interviewed cared about central-local relations and understood their importance to public service delivery in Wales. The ways in which the Welsh Government works with councils also emerged as a key theme in several of our case studies. It was clear that the Welsh Government played a pivotal role in the formation of transport consortia

and Local Service Boards. It provided vital funding for Communities First Partnerships, Local Service Boards and part-funded new school buildings as part of the school modernisation processes. It actively promoted the collaboration agenda in North Wales and, through the Wales Programme for Improvement and the 2009 Local Government Measure, played a major role in determining how council performance is assessed.

Partnership, what partnership?

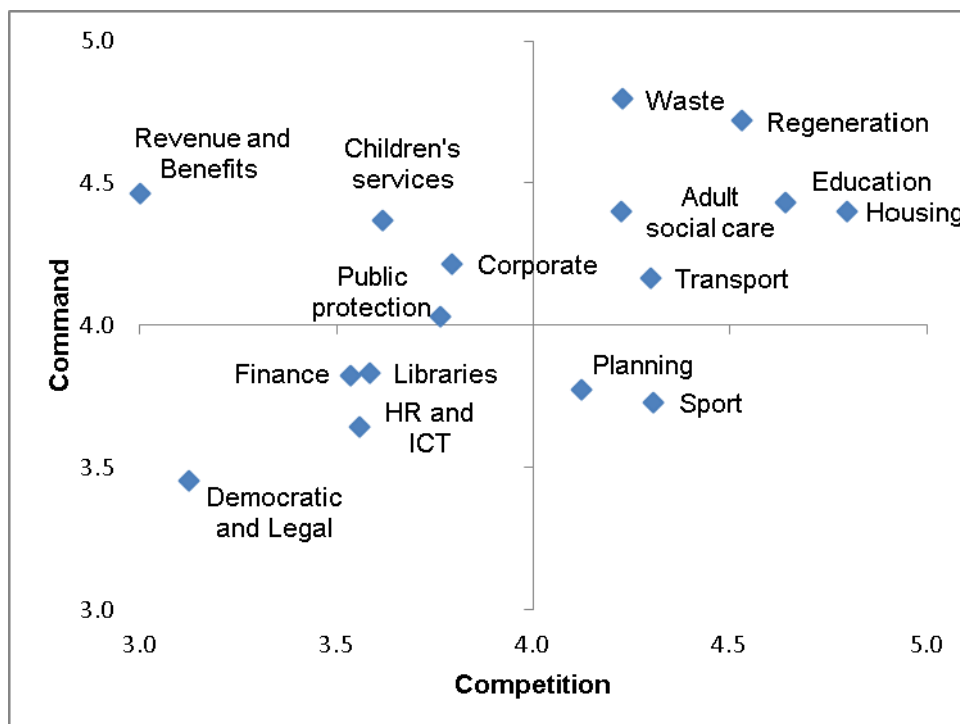
- 6.8 Our second key finding in respect of central-local relations is that there is not just one approach. Different ways of working are apparent in different services and at different stages of the policy process. Furthermore, the nature of the interactions between the councils and government departments changes over time.
- 6.9 Our surveys of local officers and councillors included a series of questions that acted as markers of the four models of central-local relations listed above which enabled us to assess the nature of the relationship from the perspective of those occupying senior positions in local government.
- 6.10 Almost two thirds (63%) of officers reported that their service had a good relationship with the Welsh Government. However, fewer than half (41%) believed that the Government was willing to collaborate with them.
- 6.11 Surprisingly, in spite of the rhetoric of central-local partnership, most respondents described their relationship with the Welsh Government primarily in terms of command and competition. Partnership came third, with autonomy ranked fourth.
- 6.12 Our interviews with civil servants and WLGA officers confirmed that the Government sometimes deliberately chooses to operate through command. However, very few reported that it explicitly uses competition between authorities as a policy instrument. Clearly, this is at odds with the perceptions

of many of our survey respondents and suggests that where competition between councils exists it is, perhaps, an unintended consequence.

Life in the silos

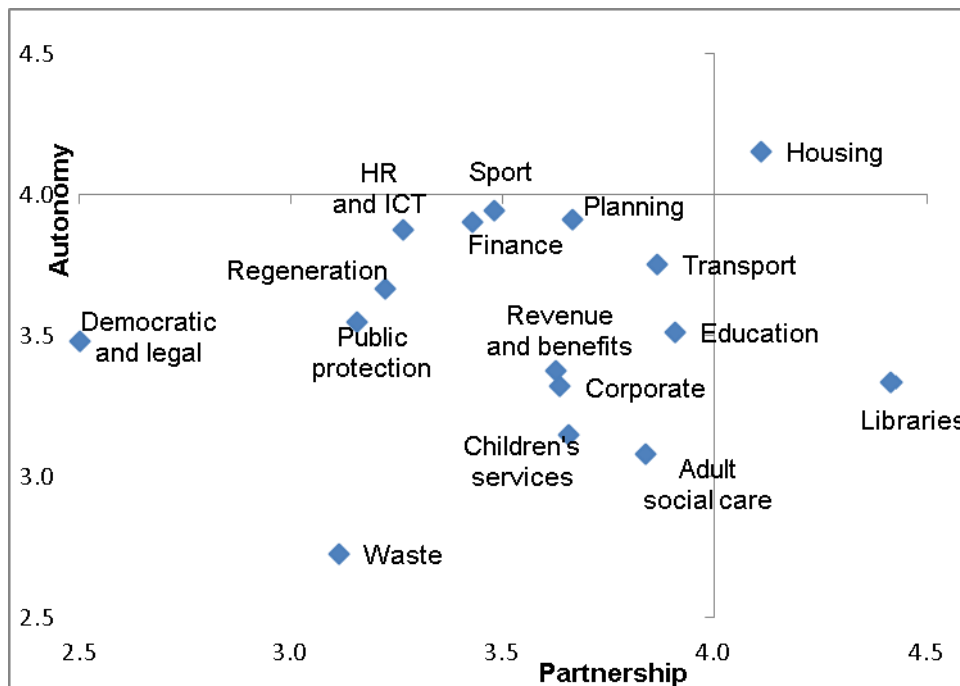
6.13 Our third main finding is that the nature of the central-local relationship varies between services. The functional organisation of central government departments is mirrored to some extent by the way in which services are structured within councils. The result is that the central-local relationship is experienced differently by local government officers working in different services (Figures 6.2 and 6.3).

Figure 6.2: Service Variations: Command and Competition



Source: LTI survey of local authority officers 2011
 Scale values: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

Figure 6.3: Service Variations: Autonomy and Partnership



Source: LTI survey of local authority officers 2011

Scale values: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral, 7 = strongly agree

- 6.14 The problem with this is that Government policies can appear to be contradictory and uncoordinated by those working ‘on the ground’. A majority of local authority officers (70% in 2011) reported that the Welsh Government had multiple conflicting policies. This is partly a function of the ‘silo-ed’ nature of policy-making and delivery, but is also because different parts of the government and different ministers tend to treat local government in different ways. For example, some departments spell out in detail what they want from councils, whilst others take a more hands-off approach.
- 6.15 Local government officers from several services – most notably waste management and regeneration – reported that the Welsh Government seeks to exert control through command, and those working in housing, education and regeneration indicated that competition features prominently in their relationship with the government. However, there were six services which survey respondents said were not driven by command from the centre and eight in which competition between service providers did not play an important role (all scoring an average of under 4). As shown in Figure 6.3, there were

very few services where officers considered they had a partnership relationship with the Welsh Government. Housing and libraries are the only services where some level of partnership and/or autonomy was reported.

- 6.16 Our interviews with civil servants and WLGA officers confirmed and helped to explain the picture painted by the survey results. Consistent with the views of survey respondents, there were some services (for example education, transport and waste management) where interviewees described the central-local relationship largely in terms of command. Several described top-down approaches which they had employed to encourage collaboration between authorities:

You incentivise them through grant mechanisms too. You can sort of say, you know, there will be money available if you work together and do this on a joint basis. So the money will be available to the region rather than to individual authorities.

- 6.17 Another spoke of taking powers away from local authorities unless they agree to work in regional consortia:

It's a sort of quiet threat there in a way that if you don't get your act together and make the ... voluntary consortia arrangements work, then there is always this prospect

- 6.18 Another described a more facilitative approach whereby the government sought to support authorities to do what it considered to be the right thing through incentives rather than veiled threats:

I think there's a fairly wide consensus about the direction in which we want to go I think. If we are command and control, I don't think we're pushing them in a direction that they don't want to go So really our policies are very much designed to sort of support the consortia and to help them develop, but without, you know, without being too sort of directive about what they do. So.... we pay each of the consortia a significant amount of funding each year just to enable them to cover their running costs.

6.19 Local authority officers with responsibility for library services reported that their relationship with the Welsh Government was based primarily on partnership and interviewees confirmed this view. One explained that the government had developed a number of policies designed to encourage collaboration between authorities but:

I think we were to some extent pushing at an open door because I think that... generally people realised that... on their own the capacity of local authorities to develop their library services was perhaps a bit limited.

6.20 Interviews with civil servants and WLGA officers confirmed that, as suggested by the survey results, finance, HR and democratic services enjoy higher levels of local autonomy than other services. One interviewee told us:

There's actually a vacuum at Welsh Assembly Government level around workforce issues...there's not enough emphasis on the importance of workforce issues.

6.21 The interviews also highlighted the multiplicity of local authorities as a further source of variety and complexity in central-local relations. There are marked variations between councils in terms of size, location, political leadership, managerial capacity, performance, and the needs and assets of the areas they serve. As a result, councils are likely to respond differently to government policies. This can make it difficult for the WLGA to deliver a consistent approach and to broker a consensus on behalf of the local government community as a whole. Partly for this reason, in addition to their formal and informal links with the WLGA as local government's representative body, government departments also pursue bi-lateral relationships with individual councils and work through a variety of professional networks.

Changes over time

6.22 Our fourth finding is that the nature of the interactions between the government and local authorities can change over time. Moreover, different services appear to be moving in different directions.

6.23 Interviewees reported that in the period immediately after devolution the (then) Welsh Assembly Government worked closely with the WLGA. At this time the civil service was seen as lacking policy capacity and the National Assembly did not have full law-making powers. Local councils provided valuable political support and professional expertise. As one interviewee explained:

We had to work in partnership if we wanted to get anything done at all.

6.24 More recently, concerns about the pace of improvement and perceptions that local authority performance is patchy have prompted a change in what one interviewee called the 'mood music'. Some ministers have adopted a noticeably more assertive stance, and the Welsh Government has cultivated direct links with local government professionals and relied less on representative bodies such as the WLGA. As one interviewee explained:

The Assembly had limited legislative powers and limited service delivery powers. So if it wanted to get its agenda delivered, it was reliant on local government and the mode of operation it took was to work in partnership ... now the Assembly Government has got more power over local government and it's beginning to flex those muscles.

Another said there was a:

big tendency, if we're not careful, to start acting like a big grown up heavy-handed government.

6.25 Those working in services like democratic and legal services and HR and ICT, which have historically been left largely to their own devices, reported a recent shift towards a more activist approach on the part of the government. They

pointed to a range of policies including initiatives to strengthen local democracy, improve the quality of local scrutiny and attempts to persuade councils to share 'back-office' functions.

- 6.26 Others spoke of getting local authorities to report performance as a way of encouraging competition, though they said that this had been an uphill struggle:

It's all done anonymously cos, you know, you couldn't possibly have something, league tables by the back door But we're having difficulty getting people to engage with that kind of data and make use of the facilities that we do put there.

- 6.27 Some reported a shift towards partnership working. Interviewees from housing described a move away from a top-down prescription in favour of a more collaborative approach in the wake of the Essex report in 2008. Their counterparts from social services told us:

Modernisation of social services in Wales is the common agenda that's agreed between local government and the Assembly Government The social services strategy... was done on a full collaborative basis from a starting position. We discussed through basic principles through to drafting the final document with ADSS that sort of demonstrates, I think, the quality and the depth of the relationship.

Everybody genuinely believes that we do have to do it in partnership I don't think there's anything major on social services that the WLGA's not involved in I do think it's working with us as opposed to "Well we sent you that circular, we told you what we're doing". It doesn't feel like that.

- 6.28 Comparison of the 2008 and 2011 survey results provided some support for interviewees' accounts. The changes between the surveys were not statistically significant, so it would be unwise to read much into them. However, local authority officers working in democratic and legal services, HR and ICT, and finance reported increasing use of command in their services.

The largest change shift towards command was reported in democratic and legal services which also registered the greatest reduction in the levels of partnership and local autonomy. Meanwhile, responses from officers managing education, adult social services, housing, libraries, planning, transport and waste all indicated a possible shift towards partnership-based approaches.

Differences between policy processes

6.29 The fifth key finding from our study of central-local relations is that different approaches feature at different phases of the policy process. We asked local officers and councillors a series of questions which enabled us to determine which of the scenarios outlined in Table 6.1 were characteristic of the way in which the Welsh Government works with them.

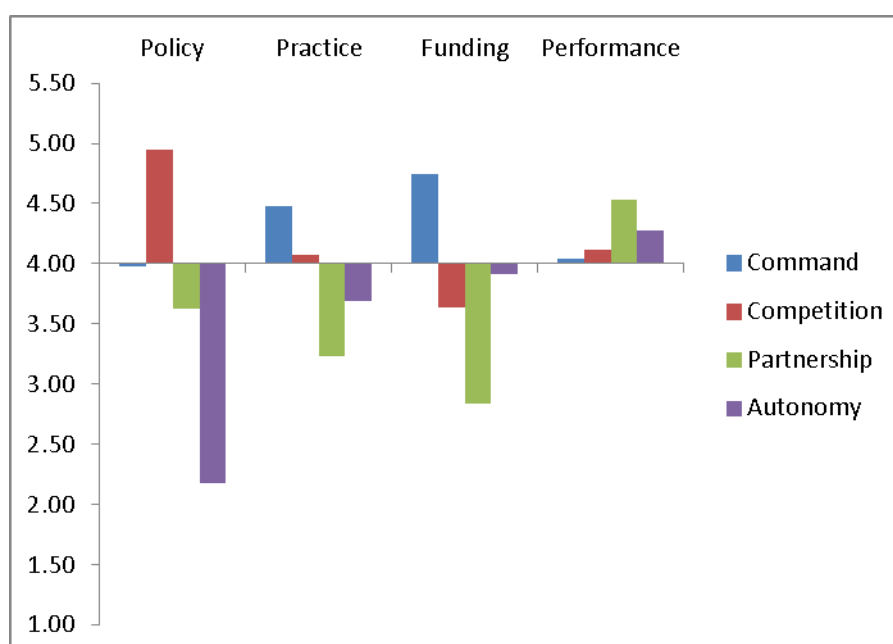
6.30 The 2011 results showed that overall respondents believed that:

- policy-making is undertaken through a competition-based model. Rather than being partners, local authorities feel that they must vie with each other and other voices to gain influence;
- implementation (or practice) is experienced by local government officers as a top-down process, i.e. the Welsh Government tells them not just what to do but how to do it;
- funding distributions are determined by the Welsh Government; and
- the only area in which the Welsh Government is operating in partnership is in performance monitoring (Figure 6.4).

Table 6.1: Central-local Relations and Policy Processes

	Policymaking	Practice	Funding	Performance
Command	Central government makes policy without any meaningful consultation with councils.	Central government attempts to control practice through specific guidelines and regulation.	Central government controls both the income and expenditure of councils through capping, ring-fencing and project funding.	Central government sets performance standards through national performance indicators, targets and minimum standards.
Competition	Councils compete with other actors to influence the policy-making process.	Councils compete to be perceived as innovative or best practice organisations.	Councils compete for funds, from higher levels of government, which are granted for the delivery of specific outcomes.	Councils compete in terms of performance as measured through statutory performance indicators and regulatory judgements.
Partnership	Councils (or their representatives) have significant influence on policy objectives and/or instruments.	Central government helps councils to tackle practical problems. Both play roles in defining good practice.	Income and expenditure is negotiated in partnership with councils.	Mix of national and local target setting. National targets are negotiated with councils.
Autonomy	Councils have the freedom to make policy in clearly defined jurisdictions.	Councils are free to determine practice without specific guidance or regulation.	Councils enjoy control over their income (tax-raising powers) and freedom to spend it (block grants).	Targets are locally set and performance is a local issue.

Figure 6.4: Central-local Relations and Policy Processes



Source: LTI 2011 survey; Scale values: 1 = strongly disagree 7 = strongly agree

- 6.31 Again, there were variations between services. So, for example, whilst the overall results suggested that policy-making is characterised by competition, there were services in which the survey results suggested command as the dominant mode of interaction between councils and the Government.
- 6.32 Our case studies and interviews provided further evidence of the existence of different models of central-local relations in different policy arenas. Part 1 of the 2009 Local Government Measure combined several different ways of working. The legislation was drafted by the Welsh Government in consultation with the WLGA, but the councillors, local authority chief executives and heads of policy who we interviewed told us they had very little direct involvement. They believed that the Wales Audit Office had designed the assessment framework and that by the time local authorities became involved the key decisions had already been taken. However, they acknowledged that there had been a wider process of consultation about the policy that underpinned the Measure, which indicated a partnership approach, and the legislation allows for performance to be assessed according to local priorities that are defined by councils, which is symptomatic of a degree of local autonomy.
- 6.33 Case studies of school reorganisation in Powys and Ceredigion were driven by demographic change and decisions about how to respond were determined locally. The 21st Century Schools capital programme was seen as being helpful in funding some of the required changes but there was concern about the time ministers took to ratify decisions made by councils and the possibility that public pressure might lead the government to block proposals.
- 6.34 We found that the central steering of regional transport consortia, Communities First Partnerships and Local Service Boards had been beneficial. In all three cases, ministers used 'soft instruments' such as exhortation and additional funding, 'carrots' rather than 'sticks'. They met with some success in influencing councils to work in partnership (with each other in the case of transport consortia, with communities in the case of Communities First and with other service providers in the case of Local Service Boards).

6.35 Senior civil servants who represented the Welsh Government on Local Service Boards had improved local partners' understanding of government policies, helped them to gain access to additional funding and resolved some policy conflicts within the Government. They also gained a greater appreciation of the practical difficulties facing local partnerships. However, they could not compensate for a lack of local capacity and most government departments considered Local Service Boards to be peripheral to their mainstream programmes and day-to-day contacts with local government.

6.36 Our interviewees questioned whether the most appropriate modes of central-local relations were being employed in the different stages of the policy process. Many saw merit in command when it comes to establishing broad policy objectives but believed authorities needed to be given space to work out how to achieve them at local level. A WLGA official explained that councillors and local authority officers:

Accept that central government has a responsibility for determining strategy but they think that they're best placed to implement it locally... there is a feeling that the Assembly Government is too prescriptive and doesn't give enough freedom to authorities to interpret how they deliver services themselves.

6.37 A number of interviewees noted that funding was a powerful means of influencing local authorities:

If you are a government and you want to see outcomes achieved, you need to be able to ring-fence or try to control some of what the expenditure is used for

and explained that even relatively modest grants could exert significant leverage:

The smaller amounts of money begin to take on more importance.

6.38 Some reported that service managers often welcomed ring-fenced grants for their areas:

They're now saying "well actually our ministers don't want it to go into the settlement because they're being lobbied by the service areas within the local authorities to say if you put into the settlement it will be disappear and we won't get the money".

6.39 Several believed that the Government should be more actively involved in holding authorities to account for their performance:

when it was the Welsh Office, when the data came out about the performance of local authorities, a press notice would go out and the Minister at the time would comment on those authorities who were doing well and those who were not. So there was a sort of political pressure in that sense and that was picked up in the press. That doesn't happen now.

What works best?

6.40 The fact that there are differences of approach between services and at different stages in the process is not surprising or necessarily inappropriate. It does not make sense to adopt the same model of central-local relations in all services. Nor is there any reason to suppose that one model is equally well suited to policy development, implementation, allocating funding and managing performance.

6.41 The problem with adopting different approaches in different services is that it produces separate funding streams and performance regimes which in turn make it more difficult for services to work together at local level to provide 'joined up' responses to issues that cut across professional and organisational boundaries.

6.42 These concerns are reflected in the fact that, as noted above, a majority of senior local officers and councillors believed that the Welsh Government has multiple policies and priorities that conflict with each other. Our interviews with civil servants and the WLGA confirmed this. One senior civil servant

reported a 'certain sense of sort of policy nimbyism that goes on'. They said that ministers pay lip service to the need to integrate policies but:

We hear 'my new initiative is terribly important and it's important that all authorities do it exactly as we say, so we're going to get all directive about it'. And that crops up pretty frequently. It doesn't change the overall view, but it does cause us difficulty because it conflicts with our policy and it causes authorities considerable irritation.

- 6.43 We are not necessarily saying that a partnership approach is preferable to central command or competition between councils. In some cases it might be appropriate for ministers to specify how services are to be delivered in order to achieve consistency of approach or to try to ensure national minimum standards. And sometimes councils ask for clearer steer from the centre (though they have not always liked the results, as for example in the case of the regional collaboration 'footprint').
- 6.44 However, the evidence from our surveys shows that senior local officers and councillors do seem to value a partnership approach. Those who reported that their service worked in partnership or else had autonomy were more likely to report that they had a good relationship with the Welsh Government. In both models the positive correlations were statistically significant with a high degree of confidence, whilst those interactions with the Government characterised by command were less likely to report that they had a good relationship (Table 6.2). The only exception was the use of specific grants which was positively correlated with command and having a good relationship.

Table 6.2: Associations with Modes of Central-Local Relations

	Good relationship with the Welsh Government	Different parts of the Welsh Government have conflicting policies
Policy	Partnership (+) moderate Autonomy (-) low Command (-) moderate	Command (+) weak Competition (+) moderate
Practice	Partnership (+) moderate Autonomy (+) moderate	Partnership (-) weak
Funding	Command (+) weak	---
Performance	Partnership (+) weak	Command (+) weak
Key: Positive (+) or (-) Spearman correlation at 95% confidence Correlation coefficient: weak = 0.10-0.29; moderate = 0.30-0.59		

6.45 Some of our case studies and interviews showed that those working in local government particularly value opportunities to help shape policy and welcome practical help from the Government in working out how to improve services. Often there is a high level of engagement between the Government and representative organisations such as the WLGA and Solace. The evidence from our surveys suggests, however, that many local government managers may be unaware of these contacts.

6.46 A similar picture emerges with respect to the extent to which the Welsh Government's policies are perceived to be conflicting. Those who reported that their experiences of central-local relations were characterised by command - particularly when it comes to making policy and managing performance - were likely to report that the Government had conflicting policies. It was, however, respondents who reported that they had to compete in influencing policy who were the most likely to perceive policies as disjointed (Table 6.2).

6.47 In contrast, partnership working in practice was inversely associated with conflicting policies. These findings suggest that allowing councils more access to and influence over practice may help to reduce the perception (and possibly the reality) that the Welsh Government's policies are not sufficiently 'joined

up'. They also imply that in those instances where the Government does choose to use command it needs to take care to ensure that the policies pursued by different departments are pulling in the same direction.

Conclusions

6.48 We have suggested that there are four governing strategies available to the Welsh Government:

- it can try to govern hierarchically, dictating policies from the centre and regulating the ways in which councils implement them;
- alternatively, it might seek to create conditions in which rival public service providers compete with each other on the basis of price and/or performance in order to encourage innovation and service improvement;
- thirdly, it may negotiate agreements with local government which set out shared goals and the how these will be achieved; or
- it can leave it to councils to work out what needs to be done in their areas.

6.49 The evidence from our study shows that these four approaches are not mutually exclusive. The Welsh Government has adopted them all - to differing degrees and different services and stages of the policy process. This is not surprising, nor is necessarily a bad thing. There is no one 'right' model of central-local relations and different ways of interacting approaches are needed in different settings. It is the mix of governing strategies that matters. The evidence from this study causes us to question, however, whether the Welsh Government has got the mix right. Of course, this is not just an issue for the Government. It raises questions about the ways in which local government represents itself and chooses to work with the Welsh Government. Sometimes it is difficult for councils to reach a consensus among themselves, and it is all too easy for the extensive consultations that often take place to become confrontational rather than facilitating a constructive dialogue among authorities and between them and the Welsh Government.

- 6.50 However, the key finding from our research is that the Welsh Government's policies are not seen as consistent. Our surveys show that local officers and councillors receive what they believe to be contradictory prompts and messages. This is partly a question of style: different parts of the government and different ministers have their own preferred ways of working with local authorities. But it is also a matter of content. The result is councils and their local partners find that government policies push them in different directions.
- 6.51 Our interviews with senior civil servants confirmed that the policy process is often fragmented and driven by different parts of the Government which have different and sometimes even competing priorities. It is important that ministers and officials understand the cumulative impact of the Government's policies 'on the ground' and the difficulties which apparently unrelated, sometimes seemingly contradictory, policies pose for local government and other local service providers. The way in which Welsh Government representatives have worked with Local Service Boards provides one example of an attempt to develop better joint working between the Government and local agencies and a more a 'joined up approach' across government departments. But there is a need to develop other coordinating mechanisms.
- 6.52 Although many civil servants and local authority officers express a strong preference for a partnership approach, this belies the extensive use made by the Government of command and competition. For example, regional collaboration between authorities is currently such a high priority for ministers that some appear willing to sacrifice central-local partnership working in favour of a top-down approach in an attempt to force the pace of change.
- 6.53 Whilst we found some in local government who preferred to be given detailed instructions from the centre, overall we believe there is a good case for a partnership-based approach to policy-making and practice and for greater clarity about the way in which this is enacted. The Government and the WLGA can both point to extensive processes of consultation with professional associations, other networks and individual local government officers as

evidence of partnership in action. The Efficiency and Innovation Group and the Public Service Leadership Group, for example, both involved chief executives and senior officers as project leads, sponsors, chairs and members of working groups which helped to 'co-produce' policy. However, it is clear from our surveys that many in local government have not felt involved and would welcome the opportunity to play a greater role in policy formulation.

6.54 When it comes to implementation, the evidence from our study suggests that although local government managers say they do not want detailed prescriptions from Cardiff Bay, many would appreciate practical support. We heard from several sources that the Government could and should do more to encourage sharing of 'good practice' and engagement. There are some examples of this, such as the assistance Welsh Government representatives have provided to Local Services Boards. They have helped local authorities and other services to understand government policies and have gained an appreciation of the challenges facing those working on the 'frontline'.

6.55 Choices about which governing strategies to adopt seem not to be made on the basis of a sound assessment of the pros and cons of alternative approaches. The Government currently operates in partnership with councils when it comes to managing their performance, the one area which would probably benefit from a strong steer from the centre and competition between authorities. By contrast, policy-making and implementation, areas which on the face would be best served by a partnership approach, are characterised by competition and top-down command. We believe that there is a need for ministers, civil servants, councillors and local government officers to understand the full range of options that are available and to evaluate these systematically. They need to be clearer about the outcomes they are seeking and to evaluate systematically the advantages, disadvantages and risks associated with different policy instruments. In the absence of this analysis, there is a danger that government departments and local authority services become wedded to the ways in which they have always interacted, regardless of whether these are still (or indeed ever were) the most efficient and effective ways to work together.

Chapter 7 Conclusions and Policy Implications

7.1 This report has examined the performance of Welsh local government and the implementation and impact of the three themes which provided the guiding thread for the 2007 Local Government Statement: collaboration, citizen engagement and central-local relations. Drawing on existing data and new evidence, our analysis points to progress but also some problems. In this final chapter of the report we first highlight the key conclusions from the research and then present what we believe are the implications for future policy.

Key Conclusions

7.2 **Context** – The context in which both the Welsh Government and local authorities are operating has changed dramatically since the start of our study in 2008. Economic conditions and the funding environment have worsened. Thus far, councils in Wales have been sheltered from the huge cuts imposed on local authorities in England. Nevertheless, they have had to contend with a ‘double whammy’ of increasing pressure on budgets and rising demand for their services. The scale of this challenge will increase over the next few years, not least because of the impact of the ageing population. The result is that it could become difficult to protect existing levels of provision unless there are significant changes in the ways in which councils deliver services. We believe the question for policy-makers is whether the approach set out in the 2007 Local Government Statement is the best way to respond to current conditions and challenges. On the basis of the evidence collected in the course of our study, the answer is ‘no’.

7.3 **Improvement** – Our surveys of local authority officers and senior councillors demonstrated that they believe in general that services are reasonably good. Core and strategic performance indicators show that there were measurable improvements in most local government services during the Assembly’s third term. However, inspection reports have highlighted some persistent concerns and comparisons against UK and international benchmarks suggest that

Wales is lagging behind in some services. These findings do not point to a crisis of local government performance in Wales. Nor, however, do they indicate that there has been a 'step-change' the quality or efficiency of local government services.

- 7.4 **Performance data** - There is plenty of performance data, but it is not available in user-friendly formats that enable the general public to gain a clear view of how well their councils are doing in the round. Until 2011, there were few measures of corporate capacity. Changes in national performance measures make comparisons over time difficult. Most services lack reliable data to make international comparisons. The result is that Wales has lacked 'early warning signs' when authorities are struggling and there has been insufficient challenge, support or capacity for early intervention.
- 7.5 **Collaboration** - The evidence from our research suggests that during the period we studied partnership working in Wales has been focused and differentiated, that councils are adapting partnerships over time in ways that are appropriate to the much more challenging financial environment they now face, and that collaboration is positively (albeit in some cases only weakly) correlated with perceptions of improved performance.
- 7.6 **Efficiency** – However, partnerships made more progress in promoting engagement and joining-up than in achieving efficiency savings. All our evidence points to the same story. Collaboration, although showing promise, has yet to result in significant changes in the ways in which services are delivered. The partnerships that have been created are mostly small concerns, which employ a few people operating with small or non-existent budgets and very limited influence compared to mainstream services. It is clear that a voluntarist approach to encouraging collaboration between local authorities has not produced the level of change and scale of improvement that ministers apparently hoped for.
- 7.7 **Citizen engagement** – The evidence from our study suggests that local authorities engage with citizens in a wide variety of ways. The type and extent

of this activity varies considerably between services, but much of it might be called 'passive' rather than 'empowering'. Councils have typically focused primarily on engagement about services rather than wider issues of community leadership. Our surveys suggested that there was little change in the level or type of citizen engagement during the period covered by the study. We did find some examples of engagement which boosted a sense of community and won support for changes in the ways in which services were provided. However, our evidence suggests overall that engagement has played only a marginal role in driving change and improvement.

- 7.8 **Central-local partnership** – the majority of the officers we surveyed believed that the Welsh Government's policies had an important and increasingly significant impact on their services. However, only four in ten believed that the Government was willing to collaborate with their service and many described their interactions with government departments in terms of command and competition, rather than partnership.
- 7.9 The once close relationship between the Government and the WLGA is seen as having cooled in recent years as some ministers have expressed concern at what they see as the slow pace and patchiness of improvement. Many chief executives and some other senior officers have been involved in initiatives such as the Efficiency and Innovation Group and the Public Service Leadership Group. However, there are others in local government who would like to have more of a say in the development of national policy.
- 7.10 Different government departments and different ministers seem to treat councils in different ways. This leads to the perception that the Government has multiple, sometimes even conflicting, policies. Central-local relations also vary over time and at different stages of the policy process. The evidence from our study does not suggest that the current mix is the result of a rational analysis of which operating codes are likely to work best in what settings.

Policy Implications

Performance

- 7.11 It is important that local government performance can be assessed - by the Welsh Government, by local authorities and, perhaps most importantly of all, by citizens. Without accurate and appropriate performance data ministers lack the reassurance they need that local services are fit for purpose, local authorities find it difficult to identify good practice and both parties lack the ability to detect the 'early warning signs' that a council may be in difficulty. And if citizens don't know how well their councils are doing, they cannot hold them to account.
- 7.12 As we noted above, there is plenty of performance data. However, it is not brought together in a way that enables and encourages the public to make robust comparisons of services over time, between councils or with other jurisdictions. We believe it is important for the Welsh Government and WLGA to take urgent action to rectify this situation. This will mean tackling problems of data quality, dispersion and discontinuity.
- 7.13 StatsWales and the Local Government Data Unit need to coordinate their efforts in order to provide user-friendly data that give a clear picture of the performance of public services in the round. Efforts should focus on outcomes that matter most to citizens. Much more attention must be given to creating a climate in which the public is expected to hold councils to account for their performance – via the media, via third sector organisations representing service users and directly via data provided by councils and the Government.
- 7.14 It is also important to put relevant and reliable data in the hands of service managers so that they can gauge their performance and identify the best performing services from which others may learn useful lessons – in Wales and internationally.

7.15 Our surveys indicate that performance management is currently the area in which the central-local partnership is most in evidence. It is true that councils need to be able to set performance measures that reflect local priorities. However, ministers also have a legitimate interest in ensuring that national standards are being achieved and comparisons between councils can provide an important spur for improvement, as well as enabling members of the public to tell how well their local authority. So there is a need for national determination and coordination of the overall approach that is taken to performance management.

Collaboration

7.16 We believe that it is significant that the services which our case studies and surveys suggest have made most progress in terms of partnership working, are those in which it has been strongly encouraged by the Welsh Government (waste, transport and education). Delivering more services on a regional or sub-regional basis is likely to secure improvements in efficiency but the evidence suggests this will require the Welsh Government to push the regional rescaling project more energetically than in the past. It needs to work with local government to determine which services are best delivered regionally, how they should be governed, and what data should be collected in order to monitor the performance of regional partnerships.

7.17 A clearer drive from the centre should not, however, be focused on the micro-management of particular initiatives. Rather, we think the Welsh Government should invest its authority in furthering the debate begun by Pearson (2011), Simpson (2011) and Thomas (2011) about which services should be managed at the regional level.

7.18 More importantly still, the Welsh Government should give pressing attention to the question of what the new form of regional governance should look like. Although there has been good progress in some service areas, there is a danger – as we found from our North Wales case study – that the regionalisation process will be driven down separate ‘silos’ which reflect the

functional organisation of Welsh Government departments. This would run the serious risk of creating a patchwork quilt of different governance arrangements, which in turn would make it more difficult to capture the full economies of scope that arise both across and between different services.

- 7.19 Having made real progress at the local level in terms of joining-up what were discrete services provided by the police, fire and rescue services, health and local authorities, there is a danger that regionalisation could re-invent the old problem of fragmented service delivery which is ill-equipped to address 'cross-cutting' issues that matter most to citizens. We do not think this is an inevitable consequence of regional rescaling. In theory, both integration between services, and accountability to communities, could be enhanced by regionalisation. Fire, police and health already operate on a regional footprint and our case study work shows that councillors often ask tougher questions of arms-length regional services than they do those operated by their own councils. However, service integration and greater accountability to local citizens cannot be left to chance. They need to be designed into the new regional governance at birth.

Citizen engagement

- 7.20 The ambition to put the citizen at the centre of public service delivery has considerable merit. However, there is a significant risk that it amounts to little more than a worthy aspiration or, worse still, simply a slogan. We found that it means very different things to different services, but overall it is difficult to find examples where citizens had played a leading role in designing or monitoring mainstream services, even in programmes, such as Communities First, that were designed explicitly to give communities a stronger voice and greater influence.
- 7.21 Wales has a proud history of 'bottom-up' initiatives inspired by communities, but during the period covered by this study we found no evidence of any significant move towards co-production. Furthermore current approaches to performance management seem to us to be geared to the needs of producers

rather than service users and tax-payers. One solution to the looming financial crisis is to seek to enhance and make greater use of the capacity that exists in communities, and to create more space for 'self-help'. Indeed, local authorities may have little choice if they are to maintain non-statutory services like libraries, parks and other community facilities. So we believe that councils need, as a matter of some urgency, to work out and make explicit how they interpret the notion of a 'citizen-centred' approach and its implications in different services areas.

- 7.22 There is a seemingly endless stream of 'good practice' guides available when it comes to engagement, all highlighting very similar checklists of do's and don'ts. Councils do not need any more guidance from the centre. Rather, they need to adopt a strategic approach which works out where and when engagement can add real value – in terms of improving services or enhancing accountability – and to focus their efforts and increasingly tight resources on those issues and service areas where there is potential for input from citizens to have real traction.
- 7.23 Councils also need to eliminate duplication between services, co-ordinate engagement activities with other public service providers; avoid asking questions where there is already plenty of evidence of what citizens think and want; and do everything possible to take advantage of the opportunities for new kinds of interaction offered by developments in information and communications technology, particularly the increasing popularity of social media.
- 7.24 For its part the Welsh Government needs to resist the temptation to intervene in local decisions (for example about schools reorganisation) where councils engage effectively with their citizens and give an account to them for policies which they adopt. As noted above, robust, user-friendly, comparative outcome measures should be fundamental to a genuinely citizen-centred model of public service delivery. So the Welsh Government should also help to stimulate the development of a consistent set of performance data and

actively encourage citizens and the media to use this to hold councils to account.

Central-local relations

- 7.25 There is much to commend a partnership approach between central and local government, particularly in a relatively small country with a fairly close-knit policy community. However, there is a danger that it produces a cosy consensus in which national and local governments are resistant to external challenge and unaware of good practice elsewhere. In these circumstances service failures and inefficient practices may go undetected for too long, with serious implications for vulnerable service users. So other forms of central-local relations, such as command and competition, often have a useful role to play.
- 7.26 For this reason, we don't argue that there is one 'right' model of central-local relations. We accept that different approaches are needed in different services, at different times and at different stages of the policy process. However, we haven't found any evidence to suggest that the Welsh Government or the WLGA has given much thought to the optimum mix of governing strategies. We recommend that they raise awareness of the pros and cons of alternative approaches within their organisations and work together to develop a greater capacity to be able to make considered choices about which instruments and interventions should be used in different contexts.
- 7.27 Finally, we believe that more could be done to overcome the difficulties caused by the functional organisation of the Welsh Government (in terms of both cabinet portfolios and departmental responsibilities) and the professional 'silos' in which many local service managers operate. There has been some progress in 'joining up' public services in Wales – at both local and national levels. But in an era of austerity, ministers and local managers alike could become increasingly protective of 'their services'. To counteract this, the Welsh Government and local councils need actively to seek out ways of

achieving greater integration in order to make more efficient use of resources and greater effectiveness in addressing 'cross-cutting' issues.

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Annex 1 Learning to Improve survey responses by local council

Council	2008		2011	
	Officers	Councillors	Officers	Councillors
Blaenau Gwent	5	5	5	6
Bridgend	6	3	10	1
Caerphilly	10	1	11	3
Cardiff	2	2	3	1
Carmarthenshire	7	3	6	5
Ceredigion	7	6	8	2
Conwy	6	2	9	4
Denbighshire	5	0	9	2
Flintshire	8	5	22	7
Gwynedd	5	5	6	1
Isle of Anglesey	1	1	2	2
Merthyr Tydfil	10	7	0	2
Monmouthshire	5	2	9	0
Neath Port Talbot	13	4	14	2
Newport	0	3	10	0
Pembrokeshire	12	1	15	4
Powys	5	4	3	2
Rhondda Cynon Taff	6	2	15	1
Swansea	3	3	12	0
Torfaen	7	6	8	3
Vale of Glamorgan	14	2	14	2
Wrexham	7	5	20	3
Missing	0	0	2	0
Total	144	72	213	53

Annex 2 Descriptive statistics of the Learning to Improve surveys

Survey 2008	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Survey 2011	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Part B: Your service and local area						Part B: Your service and local area					
We provide a very high quality service	144	3	7	5.72	0.957	We provide a very high quality service	266	1	7	5.67	1.12
Users find my service very convenient to access	144	3	7	5.44	0.906	Users find my service very convenient to access	266	1	7	5.29	1.154
My service is very responsive to citizens' needs	144	3	7	5.44	0.973	My service is very responsive to citizens' needs	265	1	7	5.35	1.226
Levels of user satisfaction with my service are very high	139	2	7	5.46	1.03	Levels of user satisfaction with my service are very high	266	1	7	5.38	1.245
My service is very efficient	144	3	7	5.29	0.953	My service is very efficient	266	1	7	5.25	1.163
My service is very good at explaining its decisions and actions to local residents	143	2	7	5.01	1.123	My service is very good at explaining its decisions and actions to local residents	264	1	7	4.93	1.319
Most local people have a very high level of trust in my service	144	1	7	5.28	1.25	Most local people have a very high level of trust in my service	262	1	7	5.06	1.307
Citizens know how my service performs against the targets we set ourselves	144	1	7	4.31	1.493	Citizens know how my service performs against the targets we set ourselves	263	1	7	4.43	1.412
My council provides effective community leadership in the local area	144	2	7	5.4	1.013	My council provides effective community leadership in the local area	266	2	7	5.36	1.19

There is a high level of participation in voluntary/community activities in the local area	144	2	7	5.28	1.029	There is a high level of participation in voluntary/community activities in the local area	265	1	7	5.13	1.224
Most local people are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	142	2	7	5.44	0.964	Most local people are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	264	1	7	5.17	1.072
Most local people feel that their communities are safe	142	2	7	5.03	1.098	Most local people feel that their communities are safe	265	1	7	5.11	1.104
The overall quality of the local physical environment is good	142	1	7	5.34	1.154	The overall quality of the local physical environment is good	265	1	7	5.2	1.122
There is a high level of social cohesion in the local area	142	3	7	5.01	0.967	There is a high level of social cohesion in the local area	264	1	7	4.85	1.07
The local economy is doing well	142	1	6	3.89	1.264	The local economy is doing well	264	1	7	3.68	1.362
Part C: Factors affecting your service						Part C: Factors affecting your service					
EU policies	144	1	7	4.63	1.65	EU policies	262	1	7	4.4	1.741
UK Government policies	144	2	7	5.46	1.24	UK Government policies	264	1	7	5.49	1.368
Welsh Assembly Government policies	144	2	7	6.32	0.913	Welsh Government policies	265	1	7	6.39	0.928
Changes in the local economy	144	2	7	5.51	1.322	Changes in the local economy	264	1	7	5.57	1.465
Changes in the local population (e.g. migration)	144	1	7	5.34	1.39						
Developments in technology (e.g. e-government)	144	2	7	5.27	1.172						

Sustainability agenda (e.g. climate change)	144	1	7	4.96	1.5						
Rising costs (e.g. fuel, pay etc.)	144	1	7	6.06	1.123	Rising costs (e.g. fuel, pay etc.)	266	1	7	5.75	1.462
Resource constraints	144	1	7	6.32	1.008	Resource constraints	266	1	7	6.27	1.14
Citizens' views	144	1	7	5.6	1.066	Citizens' views	264	1	7	5.3	1.278
External inspections	144	1	7	5.27	1.44	External inspections	265	1	7	5.43	1.38
Recruitment difficulties	144	1	7	4.97	1.617						
Local strategies (e.g. community strategy, service plans, etc.)	144	1	7	5.8	1.204	Local strategies (e.g. community strategy, service plans, etc.)	265	1	7	5.68	1.288
Decisions taken by cabinet members	144	2	7	6.09	1.115	Decisions taken by cabinet members	265	2	7	6.14	1.08
Scrutiny by non-executive members	144	1	7	5.1	1.408						
The actions of senior managers	144	2	7	6.08	0.889	The actions of senior managers	265	2	7	6.13	1.023
The actions of frontline staff	144	1	7	6	1.183						
Part D: Your service and its relationships with the Welsh Government						Part D: Your service and its relationships with the Welsh Government					
The Assembly Government usually develops policies in partnership with my service	144	1	7	3.84	1.513	The Welsh Government usually develops policies in partnership with my service	265	1	7	3.63	1.633
The Assembly Government places a lot of restrictions on my service	144	1	7	4.47	1.496	The Welsh Government places a lot of restrictions on my service	265	1	7	4.48	1.535
						The Welsh Government has no direct policy influence on my service	261	1	7	2.18	1.561

The Assembly Government provides clear guidance about what it expects from my service	144	1	7	3.85	1.53						
Most of the interaction between my service and the Assembly Government takes place through formal channels	144	1	7	4.8	1.372						
The Assembly Government helps my service to tackle practical problems	144	1	7	3.15	1.391	The Welsh Government helps my service to tackle practical problems	264	1	7	3.23	1.489
The Assembly Government allows my service to work out the best way to deliver policies at local level	144	1	7	3.73	1.538	The Welsh Government allows my service to work out the best way to deliver policies at local level	262	1	7	3.69	1.636
The Assembly Government makes policy in my service area without proper consultation	143	1	7	3.95	1.589	The Welsh Government makes policy in my service area without proper consultation	264	1	7	3.98	1.788
Targets in my service reflect a balance of national and local priorities	144	1	7	4.68	1.508	Performance indicators in my service reflect a balance of national and local priorities	265	1	7	4.54	1.644
My service is under strong pressure from the Assembly Government to achieve national targets	144	1	7	5.11	1.56						

The Assembly Government uses performance indicators to encourage competition between authorities	144	1	7	4.09	1.75	The Welsh Government uses performance indicators to encourage competition between authorities	262	1	7	4.12	1.604
The funding which my service receives is decided through negotiation with the Assembly Government	144	1	7	2.44	1.388	The funding which my service receives is decided through negotiation with the Welsh Government	263	1	7	2.84	1.66
The funding that my service receives is allocated through bids we make in competition with other authorities	144	1	7	3.77	1.816	The funding that my service receives is allocated through bids we make in competition with other authorities	265	1	7	3.63	1.856
My service benefits from specific and/or ring fenced grants provided by the Assembly Government	144	1	7	4.66	1.817	My service benefits from specific and/or ring fenced grants provided by the Welsh Government	262	1	7	4.74	1.884
						Performance indicators in my service are determined locally	264	1	7	4.28	1.685
The Assembly Government rewards good performance in my service	144	1	6	2.58	1.387						
						The Welsh Government encourages my service to compete with others for recognition as an example of best practice	263	1	7	4.08	1.628

The Assembly Government's performance management frameworks lead my service to focus on national priorities rather than local ones	144	1	7	4.06	1.454	The Welsh Government's performance management frameworks lead my service to focus on national priorities rather than local ones	264	1	7	4.04	1.576
My service sees the Assembly Government as an organisation willing to collaborate	143	1	7	3.96	1.419						
My service seeks external recognition through applying for awards	144	1	7	4.47	1.718						
Different parts of the Assembly Government seem to have conflicting policies	144	1	7	5.49	1.51	Different parts of the Welsh Government seem to have conflicting policies	266	1	7	5.3	1.404
						The Welsh Government doesn't have a major say in the allocation of funding between services	261	1	7	3.91	1.654
My service has to compete to ensure that its voice is heard in the Assembly Government's policy process	143	1	7	4.77	1.537	My service has to compete to ensure that its voice is heard in the Welsh Government's policy process	266	1	7	4.95	1.654
My service has a good relationship with the Assembly Government	144	2	7	4.93	1.132	My service has a good relationship with the Welsh Government	265	1	7	4.84	1.411

The benefits of external inspection outweigh the costs in terms of improvement in my service	144	1	7	3.44	1.633						
Results from external inspections are used to improve my service	143	1	7	5.08	1.425						
Assembly Government policies help to promote effective workforce planning in my service	144	1	6	3.15	1.394						
There is little contact between my service and the Assembly Government	143	1	7	3.42	1.701						
The following have a positive impact on my service:						The following have a positive impact on my service:					
Regional Partnership Boards have a very positive impact in my service	144	1	8	4.23	2.058	WLGAs Regional Partnership Boards	263	1	7	4.12	1.599
Local Service Boards have a very positive impact in my service	144	1	8	4.3	1.9	Local Service Boards	263	1	7	4.2	1.546
Improvement Agreements have a very positive impact in my service	144	1	8	4.65	1.941	Annual Improvement Reports	261	1	7	4.35	1.561
The protocol for intervention & support in local authorities have a very positive impact in my service	144	1	8	4.49	2.362	Intervention in failing services and councils	259	1	7	3.24	1.663

Community Strategy has a very positive impact in my service	144	1	8	4.92	1.422	Community Strategy	262	1	7	4.61	1.507
Public Service Management Wales has a very positive impact in my service	143	1	8	4.3	2.172						
Ffynnon has a very positive impact in my service	143	1	8	4.67	2.055						
Making the Connections has a very positive impact in my service	144	1	8	5.2	1.377						
Wales Spatial Plan has a very positive impact in my service	143	1	8	4.43	1.845						
Citizen engagement pilots have a very positive impact in my service	144	1	8	4.9	2.149						
Wales Programme for Improvement has a very positive impact in my service	144	1	8	4.81	1.458						
						Outcome Agreements	262	1	7	4.4	1.545
						Invest to Save Funding	261	1	7	4.11	1.674
						European Structural Funding	261	1	7	3.68	1.89
						Public Service Leadership Group/ Efficiency and Innovation Board	257	1	7	3.46	1.538

Part E: Partnership in your service (respondents answered based on the most significant partnership in their service)						Part E: Partnership in your service (respondents answered based on the most significant partnership in their service)					
The partnership is focused on reducing the costs of service provision	132	1	7	3.73	1.729	The partnership is focused on reducing the costs of service provision	247	1	7	4.64	1.78
The partnership is focused on delivering more joined-up services	132	1	7	5.92	1.189	The partnership is focused on delivering more joined-up services	247	1	7	5.91	1.249
The partnership is focused on engaging a wide variety of stakeholders	132	1	7	5.76	1.326	The partnership is focused on engaging a wide variety of stakeholders	247	1	7	5.53	1.381
The partnership is focused on securing external funding from government (EU, UK or Assembly Government)	132	1	7	4.45	1.851	The partnership is focused on securing external funding from government (EU, UK or Welsh Government)	246	1	7	4.41	1.844
The partnership is driven by the requirements of government (EU, UK or Assembly Government)	132	1	7	4.89	1.753	The partnership is driven by the requirements of government (EU, UK or Welsh Government)	245	1	7	5.17	1.608
Other local authorities are key members of the partnership	131	1	7	4.05	2.502	Other local authorities are key members of the partnership	246	1	7	4.7	2.332
Other public sector organisations (e.g. health, police, etc.) are key members of the partnership	132	1	7	4.99	2.236	Other public sector organisations (e.g. health, police, etc.) are key members of the partnership	246	1	7	4.84	2.221
Private sector organisations are key members of the partnership	132	1	7	3.46	2.073	Private sector organisations are key members of the partnership	246	1	7	3.7	2.093

Community and town councils are key members of the partnership	130	1	7	2.58	1.697						
Voluntary/community sector organisations are key members of the partnership	132	1	7	4.52	2.29	Voluntary/community sector organisations are key members of the partnership	246	1	7	4.47	2.198
The partnership is highly formalised with rules, regular meetings, and minutes	131	1	7	5.21	1.667	The partnership is highly formalised with rules, regular meetings, and minutes	245	1	7	5.16	1.724
A small number of key players make most of the decisions in the partnership	132	1	7	4.97	1.685	A small number of key players make most of the decisions in the partnership	244	1	7	4.82	1.612
Contributions, risks and rewards are fairly distributed among partners	131	1	7	4.37	1.628	Contributions, risks and rewards are fairly distributed among partners	241	1	7	4.67	1.632
The organisations we collaborate with bring valuable resources to the partnership	132	1	7	5.36	1.309						
The partnership has a good record of pooling resources	131	1	7	4.53	1.575	The partnership has a good record of pooling resources	244	1	7	4.77	1.537
There are good communications between partners	132	2	7	5.66	1.09	There are good communications between partners	245	1	7	5.53	1.246
There are high levels of trust between partners	131	2	7	5.53	1.172						
The partnership has a clear vision and shared values	131	2	7	5.75	1.172	The partnership has a clear vision and shared values	245	1	7	5.47	1.404

The partnership adds little value to my service	132	1	7	2.09	1.149	The partnership adds little value to my service	242	1	7	2.3	1.498
Partners seek to learn from each other	131	2	7	5.43	1.11						
The partnership has strong leadership	132	1	7	5.6	1.132	The partnership has strong leadership	239	1	7	5.36	1.311
						The partnership has generated efficiency savings	242	1	7	4.68	1.5
						The partnership has improved the service to citizens	243	1	7	5.32	1.34
The partnership has reduced the role of elected members	132	1	7	3	1.578						
Part F: Citizen engagement in your service						Part F: Citizen engagement in your service					
The Assembly Government encourages us to do it	143	1	7	3.22	1.816	The Welsh Government encourages us to do it	259	1	7	3.47	1.828
We want to find out from citizens about how to improve services	142	2	7	6.23	0.943	We want to find out from citizens about how to improve services	262	1	7	6.14	1.052
There are demands from residents and/or service users	142	1	7	5.65	1.174	Residents and/or service users demand it	262	1	7	4.58	1.493
There is a local tradition of always doing it	142	1	7	4.3	1.525	There is a local tradition of always doing it	261	1	7	4.44	1.636
There is a desire to strengthen social cohesion	141	1	7	5.34	1.362	There is a desire to strengthen social cohesion	258	1	7	5.33	1.407
We want to enhance my council's legitimacy	141	1	7	5.3	1.362	We want to enhance my council's legitimacy	261	1	7	5.15	1.572

.Providing information (e.g. council newspapers, council websites)	143	1	7	6.15	1.064	Providing information (e.g. council newspapers, council websites)	259	1	7	6.09	1.174
Complaint procedures	142	1	7	5.88	1.212	Complaint procedures	258	1	7	5.77	1.389
Public meetings	142	1	7	4.7	1.758	Public meetings	254	1	7	4.8	1.719
Consultation (e.g. surveys, suggestion boxes)	142	1	7	5.64	1.349	Consultation (e.g. surveys, suggestion boxes)	257	1	7	5.44	1.525
Discussion forums (e.g. neighbourhood meetings)	141	1	7	4.76	1.760	Discussion forums (e.g. neighbourhood meetings)	257	1	7	4.73	1.744
Deliberative approaches (e.g. citizen juries, community appraisals)	142	1	7	3.88	1.885	Deliberative approaches	254	1	7	3.74	1.91
Individual service users	143	2	7	5.71	1.314	Individual service users	260	1	7	5.69	1.383
Service user representatives	143	1	7	5.12	1.701						
Citizens who do not use the service	143	1	7	3.37	1.532	Citizens who do not use the service	259	1	7	3.54	1.657
Community groups	143	1	7	4.77	1.639						
Voluntary sector groups	143	1	7	5.06	1.516	Voluntary sector groups	261	1	7	5.13	1.575
Ethnic minority groups	142	1	7	3.63	1.631						
Community and town councils	142	1	7	4.49	1.897						
Other	17	2	7	5.65	1.618						
My service finds it difficult to engage beyond the 'usual suspects'	144	1	7	4.11	1.587	My service finds it difficult to engage beyond the 'usual suspects'	259	1	7	3.86	1.604
Elected members help citizens to engage with my service	144	1	7	5.11	1.459						

There are guidelines which inform how my service engages with citizens	143	1	7	4.40	1.557						
My service has sufficient capacity to engage properly with citizens	144	1	7	3.58	1.521	My service has sufficient capacity to engage properly with citizens	262	1	7	3.52	1.681
Citizens are informed effectively about how they can engage with my service	144	1	7	4.81	1.290	Citizens are informed effectively about how they can engage with my service	262	1	7	4.94	1.304
Citizens are closely involved in decisions about my service	143	1	7	4.06	1.502	Citizen engagement occurs at a time where it can make a difference to my service	262	1	7	4.66	1.461
Citizens receive effective feedback which explains the decisions we take	143	1	7	4.57	1.308	Citizens receive effective feedback which explains the decisions we take	261	1	7	4.67	1.306
My service coordinates its citizen-engagement activities with other local public services	143	1	7	3.68	1.656	My service coordinates its citizen engagement activities with other local public services	261	1	7	3.9	1.599
						Citizens are closely engaged in decisions about my service	260	1	7	4.1	1.482
						My service consults effectively with citizens	262	1	7	4.77	1.291
My managers and staff are trained how to engage effectively with citizens	143	1	7	4.24	1.512						

My service monitors the effectiveness of its citizen engagement	142	1	7	4.09	1.589	My service monitors the effectiveness of its citizen engagement	258	1	7	4.24	1.565
Engagement with citizens has directly informed the priorities of my service	143	1	7	4.97	1.414						
Citizen engagement leads to unrealistic public expectations	142	1	7	3.22	1.479						
Citizen engagement leads to slow decision-making processes in my service	143	1	6	3.10	1.393						
Citizen consultation makes little difference to my service	143	1	7	2.38	1.221	Citizen engagement makes little difference to my service	259	1	7	2.9	1.596

Annex 3 List of strategic and core indicators

NOTE

Numbers indicate the percentage change using 2006-07 (or earliest year) as a baseline.

(*) Direction of indicators was reversed in order to show improvement over time

Corporate and Democratic Services

No suitable indicators

Education	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
EDU002i (*)			100.00	143.79	150.98	The percentage of all pupils (including those in LA care) in any local authority maintained school, aged 15 as at the preceding 31 August who leave education, training or work based learning without an approved external qualification
EDU003		100.00	101.76	103.94	105.35	The percentage of pupils assessed at the end of Key Stage 2, in schools maintained by the local authority, achieving the Core Subject Indicator, as determined by Teacher Assessment
EDU004	100.00	97.60	102.58	105.53	109.62	The percentage of pupils assessed at the end of Key Stage 3, in schools maintained by the local authority, achieving the Core Subject Indicator, as determined by Teacher Assessment
EDU011	100.00	102.52	106.32	113.36	117.71	The average point score for pupils aged 15 at the preceding 31 August, in schools maintained by the local authority
EDU015a		100.00	106.26	106.23	108.04	The percentage of final statements of special education need issued within 26 weeks including exceptions
EDU015b		100.00	109.64	109.57	110.96	The percentage of final statements of special education need issued within 26 weeks excluding exceptions
Absenteeism secondary (*)	100.00	103.23	103.23	104.30	107.53	Pupils attendance records of absenteeism in secondary schools

Social Care Adults	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
SCA001 (*)	100.00	126.13	134.56	135.41	139.30	The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 or over
SCA002a	100.00	98.73	98.73	96.58	90.69	The rate of older people (aged 65 or over) supported in the community per 1,000 population aged 65 or over at 31 March
SCA002b (*)	100.00	108.67	114.27	118.33	118.33	The rate of older people (aged 65 or over) whom the authority supports in care homes per 1,000 population aged 65 or over at 31 March
SCA003a	100.00	101.62	101.10	101.68	101.57	The percentage of clients aged 18-64 who are supported in the community during the year
SCA003b	100.00	102.11	103.10	104.59	104.48	The percentage of clients aged 65+ who are supported in the community during the year
SCA007	100.00	110.06	118.45	124.42	131.45	The percentage of clients with a care plan at 31st March whose care plans should have been reviewed that were reviewed during the year

Social Care Children	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
SCC002 (*)	100.00	89.85	96.72	100.15	91.91	The percentage of children looked after at 31 March who have experienced one or more changes of school, during a period or periods of being looked after, which were not due to transitional arrangements, in the 12 months to 31 March
SCC033a	100.00	103.10	101.52	105.23	102.96	The percentage of young people formerly looked after with whom the authority is in contact at the age of 19
SCC033b	100.00	99.69	103.65	107.39	105.14	The percentage of young people formerly looked after with whom the authority is in contact, who are known to be in suitable, non-emergency accommodation at the age of 19
SCC033c	100.00	100.31	99.82	100.68	106.90	The percentage of young people formerly looked after with whom the authority is in contact, who are known to be engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19
SCC037		100.00	118.77	123.41	149.12	The average external qualifications point score for 16 year old looked after children, in any local authority maintained learning setting

Housing	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
HHA013		100.00	133.45	144.15	141.44	The percentage of all potentially homeless households for whom homelessness was prevented for at least 6 months
HHA002 (*)	100.00	68.49	84.73	93.51	96.48	The average number of working days between homeless presentation and discharge of duty for households found to be statutorily homeless
PSR002 (*)	100.00	116.75	131.20	135.91	129.00	The average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant
PSR004	100.00	96.64	175.17	210.74	291.95	The percentage of private sector dwellings that had been vacant for more than 6 months at 1 April that were returned to occupation during the year through direct action by the local authority
PSR006 (*)	100.00	104.62	118.57	132.33	137.23	The average number of calendar days taken to deliver low cost adaptation works in private dwellings where the Disabled Facilities Grant process is not used
Fuel Poverty (*)	100.00		70.00	55.00	70.00	The percentage of households in fuel poverty

Planning	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
PLA002	100.00	101.38	100.13	103.80	105.62	The percentage of applications for development determined during the year that were approved
PLA003 (*)				100.00	100.04	The percentage of appeals determined that upheld the authority's decision in relation to planning application decisions and enforcement notices
PLA004a	100.00	91.67	88.95	91.05	90.46	The percentage of major planning applications determined during the year within 13 weeks
PLA004c	100.00	104.05	106.62	112.79	113.95	The percentage of householder planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks
PLA005	100.00	107.73	101.68	101.47	101.48	The percentage of enforcement cases resolved during the year within 12 weeks of receipt
PLA006	100.00	74.73	146.79	244.65	249.57	The number of additional affordable housing units provided during the year as a percentage of all additional housing units provided during the year

Libraries	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
LCL001	100.00	105.87	114.67	114.52	117.15	The number of visits to Public Libraries during the year, per 1,000 population
LCL002a	100.00	100.77	103.83	107.11	104.81	The number of publicly accessible computers per 10,000 population
LCL002b	100.00	96.46	94.50	90.63	87.09	The percentage of available computer hours in use
LCL003		100.00	104.74	100.19	102.60	The percentage of library material requests supplied within 7 calendar days
LCL004			100.00	99.56	96.74	The number of library materials issued, during the year, per 1,000 population

Sport & Recreation	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
LCS002			100.00	102.92	101.70	The number of visits to local authority sport and leisure centres during the year per 1,000 population where the visitor will be participating in physical activity
Free public swims 16 and under	100	98.35	103.37	90.55	73.46	The number of free public swims for 16 years and under (school holidays)
Free structured activities 16 and under	100	89.26	121.57	133.16	127.44	The number of free structured activities for 16 years and under (school holidays)
Free public swims 60 and over	100	96.59	108.37	113.77	112.61	The number of free public swims for 60 years and over
Free structured activities 60 and over	100	149.73	193.38	192.30	195.31	The number of free structured activities for 60 years and over
Paid swims 17 and over	100	102.69	113.00	111.66	113.46	The number of paid swims for 17 years and over

Transport & Highways	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
THS007	100.00	102.72	105.01	105.80		The percentage of adults aged 60+ who hold a concessionary bus pass
THS009 (*)	100.00	104.42	101.47	122.32	120.84	The average number of calendar days taken to repair street lamp failures during the year
THS010a (*)		100.00	98.14	84.19	47.21	Condition of principal (A) roads that are in overall poor condition
THS010b (*)		100.00	87.77	64.65	10.35	Condition of non-principal/classified roads that are in overall poor condition

Waste management	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
WMT004 (*)		100.00	106.29	113.38		The percentage of municipal wastes sent to landfill
WMT007	100.00	105.16	113.08	121.35	121.84	The percentage of municipal waste received at all household waste amenity sites that is reused, recycled or composted
STS006			100.00	100.73		The percentage of reported fly tipping incidents cleared within 5 working days
STS007			100.00	228.50	266.29	The percentage of reported fly tipping incidents which lead to enforcement activity

Regeneration	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
Jobs created		100.00	61.24	41.72	64.97	Number of jobs created
Investment Induced		100	39.63	30.54	84.07	Investment Induced includes R&D Investment Induced (£000) which was introduced 09-10
Enterprises Created		100	55.48	81.45	16.59	The number of enterprises Created includes elements of individuals started trading
Premises created or refurbished		0	100.00	49.30	11.47	Premises created or refurbished (m2)
Land Developed – Employment		0	100.00	28.21	0.00	Land Developed (Employment and Other) (hectares)
Land Developed – Other			100.00	73.49	1.20	Land Developed (Other) (hectares)
Regeneration Schemes			100.00	3.17		The number of regeneration schemes. Regeneration Schemes was introduced in 2008-09 but Regeneration transferred to Sustainable Futures

Finance	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
CFH006	100.00	100.24	101.47	103.07	104.74	The percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid in 30 days
CFH007	100.00	100.03	99.82	99.86	99.98	The percentage of council tax due for the financial year which was received by the authority
CFH008	100.00	99.98	99.08	98.69	99.33	The percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year which were received by the authority

Human Resources	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
CHR001		100.00	93.15		97.75	The percentage of employees including teachers and school-based staff who leave the employment of the local authority, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis
CHR002	100	97.17	98.59	103.45	108.66	The number of working days/shifts per full-time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence

Public Protection	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Description
PPN001i			100.00	98.39	99.93	The percentage of high risk businesses that were liable to a programmed inspection that were inspected, for Trading Standards
PPN001ii			100.00	96.97	99.51	The percentage of high risk businesses that were liable to a programmed inspection that were inspected, for Food Hygiene
PPN001iii			100.00	99.83	99.87	The percentage of high risk businesses that were liable to a programmed inspection that were inspected, for Animal Health
PPN001iv			100.00	99.95	102.89	The percentage of high risk businesses that were liable to a programmed inspection that were inspected, for Health and Safety
PPN007i		100.00	106.11	104.00	114.57	The percentage of significant breaches that were rectified by intervention during the year for Trading Standards
PPN007ii		100.00	89.75	94.45	104.95	The percentage of significant breaches that were rectified by intervention during the year for Animal Health

Annex 4

Service area profile by sources consulted

	PIs (2006-2011)	Expenditure (2006-2011)	Reports (2006-2011)	LTI* (2008) Perception index of service performance	LTI* (2011) Perception index of service performance
Corporate			- Improving through better corporate strategies and collaborative working	5.3	5.4
Democratic services			- Scrutiny functions have improved but rarely seen as lever for service improvement	5.5	4.5
Education	All seven indicators show slight improvement	Area with highest outturn expenditure but expenditure levels have been constant	- Levels of attainment have improved at decreasing rates. Effective school improvement programmes	5.9	5.4
Finance	Almost no change in all three indicators	Outturn expenditure rate has decreased since 2006	- New challenges as a result of the Introduction of Financial Reporting Standards	5.4	5.5
Housing	Four out of six indicators have improved, one of them significantly	Outturn expenditure increased significantly in 2011 compared to 2006	- Only 26% of social housing achieved targets set	4.8	5.3
HR	Almost no change in the two indicators		- Encountering new challenges regarding workforce planning and cuts	5.3	5.2

Libraries	Three out of five indicators show positive change	Decreasing rates of outturn expenditure since 2009		5.8	5.5
Planning	One indicator shows significant improvement, others show small but positive change	Outturn expenditure rate increased significantly, especially in 2008-9		4.8	5.5
Public protection	Two out of six indicators show slight improvement			5.8	5.5
Regeneration	All indicators decreasing but mainly as a result of change in European funding schemes	Same as planning	- High risk service area as a result of tight financial climate	5.3	5.5
Social adults	Five out of six indicators show some level of improvement	Area with second highest outturn expenditure, but expenditure rate has been constant	- Overall improvement has been observed - More partnership working & trained staff - Concerns: adults with dementia	4.7	4.7
Social children	Four out of five indicators show improvements, but only one is significant	Same as social adults	- Overall improvement has been observed - More partnership working & trained staff - Concern: fostering services	5.1	4.9

Leisure/sport	The majority of indicators show improvement, but only two significantly (regarding 60+)	Same as libraries		5.3	5.5
Transport	Two out of four indicators decreased over time	Outturn expenditure rate increased significantly in 2008, but then remained constant		4.7	5.2
Waste	Two out of four indicators show significant improvements	Outturn expenditure rate increased since 2006	- Improvements but not enough to achieve targets set on recycling	5.7	5.1
Councillors				n/a	5.0
<p>(*) Learning to Improve (LTI) perception index: 1= strongly disagree, 4= neither agree nor disagree, 7 =strongly agree. The higher the mean score the higher officers' agreement with the statements posed on service performance.</p>					

Annex 5 Correlations coefficients indicating form and function of partnerships

Key: (*) sig. level = 0.90; (**) sig. level = 0.95

Table 1: Purposes and purposes.

	Reduce costs	Join up	Engage	Win £	Coerce
Reduce costs	1	.233*			
Join up services		1	.557**		
Engage variety stakeholders			1	.292**	
Secure external funding				1	.204**
Driven by government requirements					1

Table 2: Partners and purposes

	LAs	Public	Voluntary	Private
Reduce costs	.215**			
Join up services		.332**		
Engage variety stakeholders		.419**	.304**	
Secure external funding			.554**	.183**
Driven by government requirements				.183**

Table 3: Partners and partners

	LAs	Public	Voluntary	Private
LAs	1		-.295**	
Public		1	.648**	.182*
Voluntary			1	.280**
Private				1

Table 4: Partners and behaviour

	LAs	Public	Voluntary	Private
Formalisation		.210**	.201**	.148*
Power elite				-.175*
Equality	.240**		-.156*	
Pooling	.297**			
Communication	.153*			.140*
Vision		.283**	.245**	.205**
Leadership		.171*	.208**	.191**

Table 5: Partners and performance

	LAs	Public	Private	Voluntary
Added value		.151*		
Efficiency	.150*			
Improvement	-.130*	.234**	.169**	.313**