

CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL PSAs: THE CHALLENGE OF DELIVERY
11 JUNE 2008**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION AT TABLES****1. Introduction**

Tables were invited to discuss the challenges they faced in delivering on their Public Service Agreement (PSA) and how they planned to overcome these challenges under the following headings:

- Measuring outcomes
- Programmes and governance
- Delivery partners
- Engaging citizens
- Applying the principles of value for money

A number of **key themes** emerged from the discussions, as follows:

- **Seeing all the PSAs as a coherent programme.** How to ensure that PSAs reinforce each other and don't work against each other and the challenges of measurement and resource allocation across different PSAs.
- **Communicating priorities and targets down the line.** How to raise awareness of PSAs and make them meaningful at local and community level (and to junior staff in departments).
- **Building shared purpose and trust.** "There needs to be more joining up with Ministers"; "Have Perm Secs really got together to determine what is important?" Need to tackle 'silo' thinking through a strong and clear communications strategy.
- **Focusing on outcomes rather than process.** "The public will not care about organisational matters only about delivery".
- **The importance of Place.** "Departments have to understand and accept that local place shaping is fundamental to effective delivery to help Depts break out of silos".
- **Pace versus consensus.** "Every time we go a stage further, are we bringing enough people along or is this a recipe for delivering in 2030 even though it feels like the right process?"
- **Rewards and incentives – for organisations and individuals.** "When departments are clear there is no extra money why should they take some accountability?" "If we have a Director General (DG) who sits on 6 PSA boards, how should that be linked to their personal rewards?"



Good examples cited were:

- Department of Health: performance committee in place, and two boards – specifically for PSAs. One chaired by Perm Sec. Another (performance committee) has an independent chair. Third chaired by an NHS Chief Exec – will include reps from Trusts, etc. will review and adjust as go along, depending on what comes up;
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) also have governance structures in place – may work – will review as go. Includes delivery partners such as Environment Agency, Natural England. Also includes independent member for challenge/rigour. And a Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit (PMDU) rep – common to other depts;
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) joint delivery boards for driving standards;
- headteachers frequently referring to Every Child Matters outcomes;
- in HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) there is a stream that is responsible for face to face service;
- PSA 12 have a stakeholder group.

2. Measuring outcomes

“Monitoring in the wrong way can leave you data rich but information poor”.

Key challenges were identified as:

- defining success;
- measuring outcomes which will take a long time to achieve; data lags/problems with data quality/no baselines;
- measurement of perceptions and behaviour change;
- measurement of the effect of preventive measures – difficult to prove a negative;
- avoiding the danger of doing what can be measured rather than what impacts on the outcome;
- how to split the credit between several actors/interventions;
- local government indicators not being aligned with PSAs;
- ensuring trust in the evidence provided.

Overcoming these challenges could involve:

- identifying interim measures of progress;
- early engagement with statisticians and researchers and nationally commissioned research to fill gaps in information;
- looking for relative changes rather than absolute results;
- shifting from performance management to identification of intelligence; data sharing (including internationally); openness in communications;
- thinking about unintended consequences;
- reducing numbers of indicators (but are fewer indicators able to give a full picture of complex outcomes?);
- making better use of the Government Offices.



3. Programmes and governance

“Leading is harder than managing...welcome to the 21st century”.

Key challenges were identified as:

- the risk of creating too many additional governance structures; danger that complexity of governance might be mirrored all the way down the delivery chain;
- aligning different governance structures for different PSAs;
- a lack of clear accountability for individual contributions to PSAs – how to engage departments who don't have financial responsibility;
- ensuring that Boards really add value – they should be of real use, not just a process requirement;
- the pace of delivery being determined by the slowest, while faster moving departments tend already to have established business models, designed programmes and allocated resources so have no space to take into account contributory activities required by others;
- how to make better use of Senior Responsible Owners (SROs);
- governance structures can be very complicated but will simple structures provide assurance of delivery?
- how to “mainstream” PSAs;
- “different departmental cultures make it difficult to work together or even understand what we are saying to each other or what the problem is!”.

Overcoming these challenges could involve:

- Cabinet Committees, cross-government Delivery Boards, cross-government working level official groups;
- internal audit teams joining up across contributing departments to audit individual and joint contributions;
- developing communities of interest to share good practice, including between central and local government; SROs to disseminate lessons learnt.

4. Delivery partners

“It's a question of trust”.

Key challenges were identified as:

- identifying partners in the first place;
- being innovative in the ways in which people and communities work, especially horizontally;
- the need for a much closer appreciation of experience in communities and at the level of those affected;
- operational partners are not aware of PSAs and don't see them as relevant;





- “the frontline are exhausted by being bombarded with guidance documents – they stop listening!”;
- “need masses more communication with partners – but where get time and resources?”.

Overcoming these challenges could involve:

- raising awareness and getting front line staff to understand the purpose of PSAs;
- Local Area Agreements as a key way to link the priorities of local communities with the priorities of national government;
- thinking strategically about alliances and use of evidence; ensuring communications feed into other streams;
- raising the skills and capabilities of people in central government departments; helping to build capacity and understanding in the non-statutory sectors;
- listening and being seen to act on what is said;
- building consensus. “Either we all fail or we all succeed. We are all accountable, it’s about building consensus. Took 6 months and this was 85% Department for International Development (DfID)”;
- knowing and using the language of outcomes, not the language of PSAs;
- sharing information across the delivery system;
- “culture change – different mindset for staff. Really strong link with Transformational Government”;
- flexibility for local areas to decide their own priorities;
- Regional Ministers who understand how policy translates; explore Regional Area Agreements.

5. Engaging citizens

“No one at our table is directly involved in engaging with citizens”.

Key challenges were identified as:

- personalising the issues;
- difficulty in giving the citizen a clear message, e.g. on climate change;
- dealing with the media;
- particular problems of influence and measurement in relation to international PSAs.

Overcoming these challenges could involve:

- giving meaning to the PSA targets based on real knowledge and understanding of what matters to people;
- less formal consultation and communication channels; use of new media: websites and blogspots;
- smarter use of networks – stakeholder management needs to go to a new level;
- making links to citizens’ concerns, for example security in relation to international development;
- communication through doing, for example in relation to breast feeding target;
- using non-government intermediaries to facilitate – DfID is a good example;
- devolution of budgets to citizens;
- not setting up new networks and groups – using existing ones.





6. Applying the principles of value for money (vfm)

“Need to recognise that VFM is not just about cost savings”.

Key challenges were identified as:

- tracing money through the delivery system;
- impact of investment not seen until the next Spending Review;
- combining efficiency in delivery markets with innovation and diversity;
- lack of evidence for evaluation and assessing impact;
- tensions between different PSAs in terms of vfm;
- how to pool budgets effectively.

Overcoming these challenges could involve:

- building evidence of what works, modelling of impact;
- being bolder about risk and incentivising innovation;
- getting smarter about integration and personalisation of services;
- using Lean techniques to help balance delivery of both vfm and outcomes.

7. Conclusion

There was strong awareness of the challenges of delivery at tables. But there was also a keen appetite to rise to those challenges and a raft of practical ideas of how to do so, as well as examples of good practice already in place. The key themes which came out of discussion across the board give some indication of priority areas for further action. There was also strong demand for more sharing of innovation and good practice: “We want more opportunities to share the issues e.g. events like this one”.

