

# The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Public Servant

SCOTLAND EXCEL

WORK DIFFERENTLY, WORK BETTER



# “Outcomes-obsessed, delivery-agnostic”





# Revisiting the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Public Servant

## Summary report

Catherine Needham, Catherine Mangan,  
Dave McKenna, Jason Lowther

We advance  
**We activate**  
[Birmingham.ac.uk](http://Birmingham.ac.uk)



# Challenges from the past decade

- ▶ Perma-austerity
- ▶ Communities in distress
- ▶ Incivility in public life
- ▶ The rising profile of equality, diversity and inclusion
- ▶ Remote working

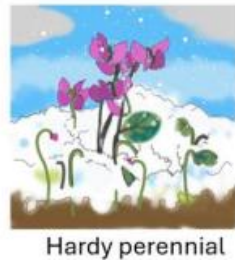
# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Public Servants walk among us.....

- ▶ Collaborative
- ▶ Empowered
- ▶ Mission focussed
- ▶ Data and evidence led
- ▶ Learning approach
- ▶ Digitally enabled
- ▶ Agile



# How have we evolved?

The 10 characteristics of the  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Public Servant  
now



# Public Sector Reform

Figure 1 Public Services in Scotland: Facts and Figures



Public sector in Scotland is larger than the UK and accounts for 22% of total employment, compared to 18% in the UK as a whole. This reflects a larger public sector workforce in many areas, with Scotland having, for example, relatively more police officers, firefighters, GPs, dentists, teachers, and civil servants, compared to England and also reflects differences in which services are provided within the public sector, in areas such as water, railways, and social care.

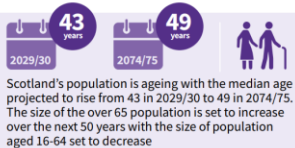
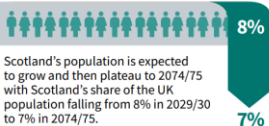


**£1,500**  
The public sector in Scotland is larger and relatively better paid; after taxes the median pay for a full time public sector employee in Scotland earned around more than the UK average in 2023.



**£25 Billion**  
The public sector pay bill is £25 billion, over 50% of the Scottish Government resource budget.<sup>a</sup>

Figure 2 Scale of the challenge



These trends will have spending consequences; health spending is higher for older age groups.

Based on current trends, health and social care spending is projected to rise from around 40% of devolved public spending in 2029/30 to almost 55% in 2074/75.

Without reform, revenue will be unable to meet this demand. This could lead to a potential budget gap of 11.1% (depending on decisions by UK Government).<sup>a</sup>

Figure 3 This strategy builds on the key principles of reform developed in response to the Christie Commission

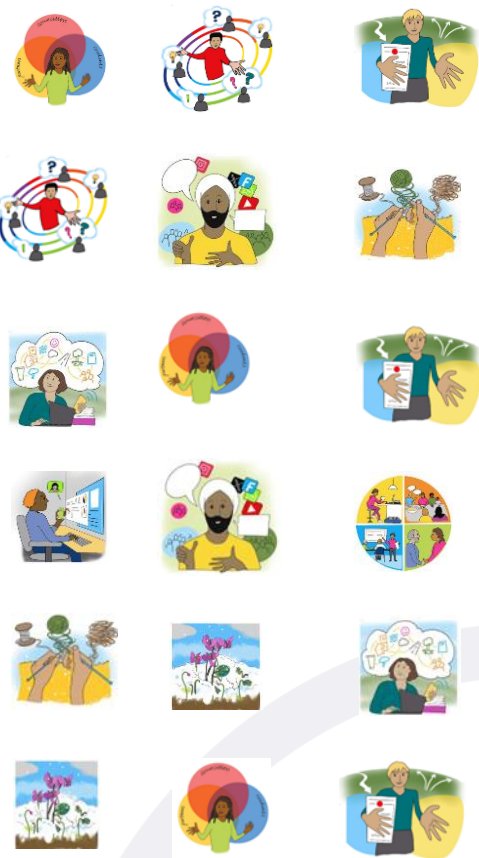


Diagram 1: Root Cause Analysis  
What needs to happen to enable systematic change?



# Local Government Approach

- ▶ Unlock Community Action
- ▶ Design around people's needs
- ▶ Lead for outcomes across systems
- ▶ Embrace digital by design
- ▶ Tackle Inequality
- ▶ Trusted Relationship with Government



# “What does it really mean to work differently and better in *this* context?”

- ▶ “We stopped asking, ‘What service can we offer?’ and started asking, ‘What matters to you?’”
- ▶ “The 21st century servant knows that the solution might not sit in their team – and that’s okay.”
- ▶ “Instead of proving we’re doing the right thing, we asked: are we doing the thing that’s right?”
- ▶ Embrace the idea of a “servant leader in systems” – working beyond silos.

**“Evolve – Work differently, work better.”**

