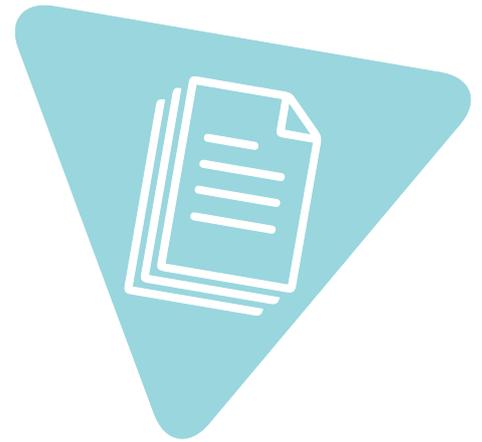




**Using scrutiny to drive outcomes:  
Improving quality of life for people  
with learning disabilities in Scotland**  
Key Findings

## What is the issue?

Over the last decade, Scottish Government has sought to rationalise and strengthen the approach to scrutiny of public services and ensure it is firmly rooted in a human rights approach to delivery. A particular focus of this work has been to tackle the issues of complexity within scrutiny in Scotland and establish how scrutiny could be improved through a more proportionate and effective approach.



As a result of this work, it was also recognised that scrutiny can happen in different ways – for example, through involving people in decisions about planning and delivering services, through citizen-led scrutiny, through internal review and challenge and through external scrutiny and investigation. A key element here is the important inter-relationship between external scrutiny carried out on behalf of taxpayers and people who use services and internal assurance and self-assessment carried out by organisations as part of good governance.

Scrutiny has been proven across various policy areas both nationally and internationally to be an effective tool in driving outcomes for specific community groups within relevant policy areas.

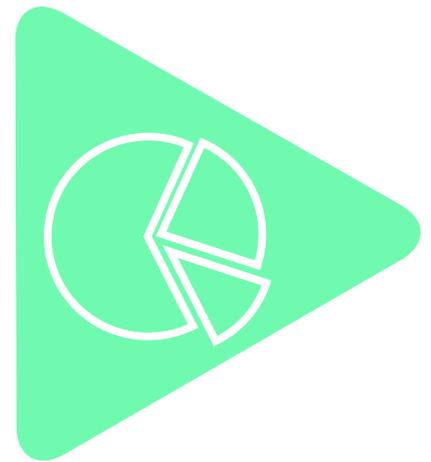
SCLD commissioned this scoping exercise on behalf of the Scottish Government to explore the landscape of scrutiny in Scotland and its role within health and social care. The aim was to better understand the responsibilities scrutiny bodies have and the possible contributions they can make to tracking the journey towards meeting learning disability policy and strategy outcomes.

## What does the scoping exercise tell us?

### Scrutiny of services for people with learning disabilities

The keys to life Implementation Framework and Priorities (2015-17) sets out four strategic outcomes for improving the quality of life for people with learning disabilities:

- A Healthy Life
- Choice and control
- Independence
- Active citizenship



There are mixed views about the extent to which these outcomes are influencing practice around planning, delivery and scrutiny of health and social care services for people with learning disabilities. Some local authorities and health boards can describe how these outcomes are changing the way their organisations do business. Others said the impact of these outcomes was less clear and that guidance about organisational expectations, and a framework for measuring and reporting progress could help embed practice.

Regardless of the approach being taken to implement The keys to life specifically, more needs to be done to make sure that people with learning disabilities are included in mainstream services and scrutiny processes and to make sure there isn't a 'tick box' approach at strategic level that is disconnected from reality at an operational level. Effective planning and delivery of services would benefit from a clearer narrative about 'outcomes for people' as defined by people themselves, along with ways of measuring and demonstrating whether those outcomes were being achieved.

### Scrutiny in the context of health and social care integration

There is potential for partnerships and boards to drive effective integrated working across health and social care through collaborative joint commissioning or shared services. This approach should focus on how to best use the totality of healthcare and social care resources in an area to deliver better outcomes for all. In doing so however, it is important to note the inherent challenge of bringing together organisations and processes with multiple and conflicting objectives.

There are concerns that the current focus on structures and processes associated with integration risked distracting professionals from improving frontline services in the short to medium term. Similarly, the different cultures of health services and local government give rise to concerns that a 'medical model' rather than a 'social model' might dominate the work of health and social care partnerships. Assurance that Commissioning Plans of integrated health and social care partnerships are effectively capturing the right strategic outcomes and operational indicators will be important.

## **Involving people**

A key area of consensus was that scrutiny is about user voices and supporting people to have influence and that visible participation and involvement of people is important.

There are lots of different ways in which people are involved. Organisations often involve people who use services on boards or other types of strategic planning groups, either through personal involvement or through representation. Families and carers are often also involved at strategic level. What people with learning disabilities say is important, but organisations sometimes find it hard to capture their views, especially when communication can be complex. Investing in ways to capture seldom heard voices is important and families, carers and peer advocacy through user-led or voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations can help overcome barriers.

## **The importance of good data and insight**

Access to good data and insight is essential to be able to understand the health and social needs of people with learning disabilities. In order to identify any correlation between learning disability and other health factors, and to be able to measure progress in improving health and other outcomes from services, robust data must be available at a national level. Clarity about the 'data markers' that exist for learning disability can help improve analysis and scrutiny so that services can demonstrate how they are responding to people's needs, tackling inequalities and improving quality of life. Further, the lack of any learning disability outcomes in the National Performance Framework was mentioned as a risk to fulfilling the ambitions for improved outcomes and it was suggested that there should be a national 'quality of life' indicator for people with learning disabilities.

It is clear that while transactional indicators are useful in assuring progress, good insight about what the numbers mean and what they say about the outcomes being achieved for people is important.

## **Effective community leadership**

Councillors' scrutiny role is a largely untapped resource that can add value to local and national assurance of progress on improving the quality of life for people with learning disabilities. A place based, whole system approach that brings together commissioners, providers, scrutiny bodies and people with lived experience of learning disabilities can help take a life course approach to improving quality of life.

## **External scrutiny**

Different types of external scrutiny were identified – local scrutiny, either through the involvement of people with learning disabilities, their families, carers and advocates or through local commissioning and delivery partners; national scrutiny, either through inspection of health, social care and mental health services or through the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament, for example through the Justice Committee and the Health and Sport Committee.

Specific experiences of external scrutiny in relation to learning disability was very mixed. Regardless of the reality of scrutiny processes, generally there appears to be a perception that learning disability issues are largely missing from existing scrutiny regimes. This would suggest there is scope to improve communication around scrutiny processes, the purpose and their focus. In turn, there needs to be a stronger connection between inspection, scrutiny and improvement to improve understanding of how the process works.

## **Improving the impact scrutiny can have**

It is recognised that change rarely happens in a vacuum and that setting out national aspirations for people with learning disabilities to experience better health and better services is a good thing. But a consistent message from this work is that achieving national aspirations would benefit from further narrative about the outcomes expected and how progress can be better measured and reported, along with a programme of improvement support. Increasing the impact of scrutiny and of services will mean moving from a 'compliance' culture to a culture that focuses on outcomes for people and builds on the already stated human rights approach.

Scrutiny should not concentrate only on services as they are delivered – this is important, but scrutiny also needs to check whether there is a consistent, clear narrative that links together policy, commissioning, procurement and practice as part of good governance. Questions that can help gather insight about this might be:

What are the challenges we face?

Why do these matter?

How can we to reduce barriers?

Do we need to think differently about finance or the way we use buildings?

Are there new skills we need, either professionally or in communities?

## Moving forward

A key function of scrutiny is to make sure that people who plan and deliver services have high aspirations for outcomes for people who use services and challenge the status quo if things are not working or people are not experiencing better outcomes. Based on the key messages, the following actions are recommended to strengthen the impact of scrutiny of health and social care services:



- Develop a set of clear ‘people focused’ indicators so there is a more consistent approach to how organisations measure and demonstrate progress towards delivering the ambitions of people with learning disabilities. This will help Scottish Government, scrutiny bodies and people with learning disabilities to judge whether services are improving the quality of life for people with learning disabilities.
- Develop a consistent approach to scrutiny of health and social care services that involves all scrutiny bodies incorporating learning disability specific measures in their work, together with a clear approach to measuring and demonstrating the progress being made by health and social care partnerships in local leadership for issues which affect people with learning disabilities. This will help create a whole system approach to improving the quality of life for people with learning disabilities.

- Develop a consistent approach to the capture and analysis of data for learning disabilities. This will help services to understand the health and other needs of people with learning disabilities, to understand any correlations between learning disability and other health factors and to measure and demonstrate progress in improving health and outcomes from services for people with learning disabilities.
- Develop a programme of practical guidance and support to strengthen the impact of scrutiny of learning disability issues with a wide range of stakeholders (including people with learning disabilities and voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations). This will help to showcase good practice, to share and test the outputs from this project and to agree actions for the future in the context of a human rights approach to improving the lives of people with learning disabilities.
- Develop a programme of practical guidance and support to strengthen local community leadership and local scrutiny of progress on issues relevant to learning disability. This will help bring together councillors, health and social care partnerships, commissioners, providers, scrutiny bodies and people with learning disabilities to develop characteristics of good scrutiny, which will help develop a whole system and life course approach to improving quality of life.

SCLD will be engaging with scrutiny and oversight bodies as well as local authorities and service providers to take these recommendations forward.



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