

Looking back over the 10 years since Christie...

Although I was 2 years into my job with TPS, it's fair to say that I was still finding my feet when the Christie report was published in June 2011.

I'd come from a disability organisation, used to sitting in one 'policy area' and considering issues of equality, service design and effectiveness through that lens. Now I was trying – and struggling – to do the same with homelessness, alcohol and other drugs and justice, as well as disability.

The Christie review helped me to think of all this in a different way. It considered the future of public services as a whole, across the board, not in the narrow and segregated way that I'd got used to. In doing so it identified four key objectives that should underpin the reform programme; to me, these read as the four basic standards that we should expect from our public services.

I remember thinking that while these objectives were designed for whole system reform, they articulated what we needed – and what people were demanding – in each of those 'distinct' areas of work I was trying to operate in. I remember realising that the boxes we build and the labels we put on them were getting in the way of the impact we were trying to deliver. I remember – finally – understanding that there was more that was shared across these 'separate policy areas' than was different. That all this wasn't about forcing people in to those boxes and affixing those labels. That it was – to quote the TPS strapline at the time – about Making Services Fit People.

Christie Objective 1:

Public services are built around people and communities, their needs, aspirations, capacities and skills, and work to build up their autonomy and resilience

Lightbulb moment! And it was exciting! Change felt inevitable; we seemed united in our fear of the 'demographic time bomb' that we faced, in our acceptance that what we were doing wasn't working and change was needed and needed now, and in our acceptance of Christie's recommendations as the way forward.

Clearly it was just me who had needed this particular penny to drop, because TPS was already working to build service models that crossed these divides. I don't think it was possible to have a conversation in our offices at that time without talking about silos and our need to get out of them and work in a way that reflected what people needed, not what suited the system.

We were in the early years of piloting Housing First, a homelessness response to unmet need around mental health and alcohol and other drug use. Turnaround was also in its infancy, building on the well-established 218 model to offer both residential and community based alternatives to custody that targeted alcohol and other drug use as a key route to reducing reoffending. Our learning disability services had always been grounded in shaping support to what people actually wanted, growing as they had from the shift from hospital based living to more independently within their community.

So we were ready for this change. The country seemed ready for this change and Christie had set out just what we needed to do....10 years on, I think we're still ready, but still waiting, and wondering what happened?

Christie Objective 2:

Public service organisations work together effectively to achieve outcomes – specifically, by delivering integrated services which help to secure improvements in the quality of life, and the social and economic wellbeing, of the people and communities of Scotland

There's no question that the Christie report had an impact. The objectives it set out – early intervention, prevention, integrated and effective working – have been absorbed into standard policy language. But we still haven't made any discernible progress in shifting our expenditure to the stuff that works – the prevention and early intervention – instead of tying it up in the stuff that we have to do because it's what we do.

We have established Integrated Joint Boards to facilitate the integration of health and social care planning, resources and delivery. I agree that this is an important element of an integrated approach, but I feel that we used up all our energy and focus on trying – and not really succeeding – in achieving this limited structural change. “Financial planning is not integrated, long term or focussed on providing best outcomes for people who need support”. In short, Health and Social Care Integration has not – yet – delivered Christie's ambitions.

We had another chance with the passing of the Self-Directed Support (SDS) legislation in 2013, introducing in to law the principles that would facilitate the building of services around the people who use them. Again, this was an important structural change that has not followed through to any real shift in how people experience the support that they receive.

Christie Objective 3:

Public service organisations prioritise prevention, reduce inequalities and promote equality

If it seems like I'm taking an overly pessimistic view of our progress – or lack of – to date, that I'm ignoring the steps forward that we have taken, the fact that we needed another

Adult Social Care review in 2020 is proof that we have not yet lived up to the promise of the Christie recommendations. When the Feeley review was announced I felt that we were already pretty clear on what we needed. I thought we would be better investing our time and effort in understanding what had got in the way of delivering the Christie recommendations, what had limited the promise of SDS, and addressing those barriers.

I am however heartened by the focus in the Feeley review on the voices and experiences of people who use social care services, and by the broader idea of what constitutes social care that they've suggested. There is a sense of optimism and a refocusing on the urgent need for change. These recommendations are another opportunity to push forward, but if this time is going to be different there are a few points that I think we need to remember.

Firstly, we have to learn from what didn't work before. I'm worried that we could repeat the mistake of putting all our eggs in one basket. The National Care Service may be a valuable and constructive structural change, just as the establishment of Integration Joint Boards may still be valuable and constructive, but that is not the only work that has to be done. We must not exhaust ourselves on this one huge task.

Secondly, despite the First Minister's statement that this will be *"the most important public sector innovation since the establishment of our National Health service"*, this is not just about the public sector. Scotland's 3rd sector provide a

Christie Objective 4:

All public services constantly seek to improve performance and reduce costs, and are open, transparent and accountable

significant proportion of adult social care services, and makes an even greater contribution to the impact and success of those services through their community focussed delivery. Our connection to the people we support, our experience and our perspective are valuable; do not leave us as an afterthought, include us as partners in finding the answers that we need.

Finally, we need to think beyond health and social care; housing certainly has a greater role to play in an integrated and effective approach to adult social care, the justice system too. And we need more than just structural change, we need shifts in culture and in practice, in ambition and aspiration.

Maybe I'm being too short sighted. Maybe 10 years is too short a time period to judge the kind of whole system change that we're talking about. If that's the case then it's even more important that, as we enter the next decade in that journey of change, that we agree to – at the very least - keep moving forward, keep dismantling and keep building better. Because more of the same is not going to be enough. Because it wasn't enough 10 years ago and it's not enough now. And – bringing us right up to date on TPS straplines – Because People Matter.