

Collaborative Place Leadership & Public Service Reform - Readout

Tuesday 24th September 2024, Online Event

The SLF Place Leadership event was organised to explore innovations in place leadership and collaborative working within the wider context of public service reform.

This event built on the conversation convened in June, which focussed on the emerging learning from [Reform Clusters - Collaborative Leadership Across Systems](#). In that session, 'place' surfaced repeatedly as a key lens for working collaboratively to drive reform.

2024 marks five years of the publication of the [Place Principle](#). Place is often evoked as one of the key pillars of reform along with Prevention, Partnership, People and Performance. Given the importance of place-based working, we wanted to explore whether we are making the most of this approach, what makes great place partnerships and what gets in the way.

Sincere thanks to our Co-Chair, COSLA's CEO, Jane O'Donnell, for hosting and to the Scottish Futures Trust's Associate Director, Diarmaid Lawlor, for chairing. Thanks too to our excellent panellists - Jim Savage, CEO of Aberdeenshire Council, Jim MacDonald, CEO at Architecture + Design Scotland, and Ailsa Cook, Director at Matter of Focus.

We learned about [The Place Standard tool](#), about the ongoing work which is transforming lives and services in parts of Scotland ([Alva Pathfinder](#)), and how to sustain this work in an increasingly challenging fiscal context ([Regenerative Futures Fund](#)). We heard about the importance of building capacity, relationships, trust, and seeing 'place' as the anchor.

Common themes explored during the event included:

- Importance of investing time in building trust and relationships. It is about spending time together. We need to pay attention to 'being' as well as 'doing'.
- Sharing common purpose and agreeing key outcomes from the outset. This scaffolding is critical, as are the steps which leaders take to enable people.
- Using 'place' as the way to anchor responsibility, remembering that accountability structures can either help or get in the way.
- Need to be thoughtful about organisational cultures as well as diversity of place. Culture and outcomes need to come first.
- Respect for communities and place, parity of esteem and equity.
- Need for clarity about what's needed for sustainable partnerships.
- Be prepared to invest in skills for 'orchestration' to amplify impacts - an investment in the collective and the collaborative across time and place.
- Not underestimating the value of sharing knowledge between colleagues and organisations.

If you would like to continue the conversation about the importance of place in your leadership practice, we invite you to contribute your comments under a dedicated post on the SLF [LinkedIn](#) profile.