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Connection, Coherence and Capacity: Policy Making in Smaller Countries

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Tamlyn Rabey

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For further information please contact:

Tamlyn Rabey
Welsh Government
Email: Tamlyn.Rabey@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

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Contents

Summary

Good policy making

Good policy making requires good process: a reasonable adherence to a classic policy making cycle with key stages of: agenda and objective setting; exploration and policy formulation; implementation; and feedback.

Good policy making has the following typical characteristics:

• Focus on outcomes/objectives	• Evidence-based	• Rational deliberation
• Cross-cutting, collaborative	• Good governance	• Deliverable
• Inclusivity	• Simplicity of design	• Learning and adapting
• Openness and transparency	• Innovative and creative	

Findings

The significance of the size of a country for its policy making

- The size of a country is not the most significant factor for good policy making
- There are elements and styles of policy making that can work particularly well or be particularly difficult in smaller countries
- Governments of smaller countries could usefully consider whether they are making the most of the advantages and tackling the challenges associated with their size

Making the most of the advantages

- There are potential advantages for policy making in working at a smaller scale
- The key potential advantages are:
    - **strong policy networks** that can work fast, communicate well and generate a high degree of consensus and joint ownership
    - **horizontal coherence** within and across government, especially where the government is a single organisation. This includes the opportunity to adopt a long term, strategic approach based on a manageable number of outcome-based objectives.
    - **vertical coherence** between strategy, policy and delivery, with short delivery chains and fast feedback loops, leading to simple, pragmatic, implementable policy. Options for decision making by different tiers of government.
- There are many factors that can contribute to an ability to exploit these advantages

Tackling the challenges

- There are particular challenges associated with policy making in smaller countries
- The main challenges relate to:
    - The relatively smaller policy making capacity within government
    - Capacity for evidence gathering and analysis within and outside government
    - Capacity within political parties for developing manifestos
    - The policy environment, including the capacity and maturity of civil society
    - International influence
- There are steps that can be taken to tackle these challenges

The impact of austerity

- Austerity is likely to make some current policy making practice unsustainable
- Reduced resources will require change in the approach to policy making
- The change should be conscious, planned and appropriate to the individual country

Applying the findings to Wales

Policy making in Wales has developed rapidly since devolution. It is often done well in terms of process, characteristics, exploiting the advantages of being a smaller country and tackling the challenges - particularly in relation to stakeholder engagement and policy networks. However, there is significant scope for further improvement and development, particularly in ensuring that the policy cycle is always properly applied, that groups and networks are fit for purpose and that the potential advantages in relation to horizontal and vertical coherence are exploited. The advent of new powers and the context of austerity mean that the time is ripe for planned change. It will be more important than ever to identify and maintain long-term priorities and to ensure policies are effective and roles are clear.

Specific suggestions for the next phase of development are that the Welsh Government:

- Reasserts its principles of policy making and the importance of these.
- Reviews its learning and support for policy makers, drawing on external expertise.
- Considers how to rebalance ‘the urgent’ and ‘the important'.
- Further strengthens its links with the university sector to boost analytical capacity.
- Strengthens its policy links with other smaller nations and regions.
- Takes a more strategic approach to identifying priorities on the basis of long term, cross-cutting, outcome-related objectives that drive business planning and budget allocation.
- Reviews the roles and accountabilities of central and local government.

Forward

This study was undertaken over a period of three months in 2015, as a William Plowden Fellowship. In 1971, William Plowden was a founding member of the Central Policy Review Staff, a unit which aimed to develop long-term strategy and co-ordinate policy across government departments. Nearly half a century later, the same challenge of developing and delivering long-term, co-ordinated policy is faced by policy-makers in the devolved UK administrations, a context very different from Whitehall. This study explores one key difference, namely the much smaller size of the countries and regions involved. It identifies some potential strengths and benefits associated with working at a smaller scale, and explores how to take advantage of them.

William Plowden believed in the need continually to improve the way we are governed. He proposed practical approaches to public policy based on an understanding of the impact on people and sensitive to their needs and experiences. He stated that

> *"Ministers need to ensure that their priorities are adequately reflected in policies which are actually being carried out and that, in practice, these policies are having the effects intended."*[1]

This study considers the scope for governments of smaller countries to build a well-grounded understanding of citizens' needs and experiences and a detailed knowledge of the impact of policies. Despite the particular challenges they face in terms of resources and capacity, it argues that they can be in a strong position to develop and deliver effective policy.

The author is a Welsh Government civil servant with a policy making and project management, rather than academic, background. The motivation for the study is therefore to make a practical contribution to the debate and ultimately to help improve the way we 'do' policy. As we near the end of the fourth term of devolved government in Wales, and in the context of austerity, the report offers some suggestions for the next phase of national policy making in Wales.

[1] Plowden, W (1975) *A Joint Framework for Social Policies,* London: CPRS

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Aim

The aim of the study is to identify and explore ways in which the size of smaller nations can be a positive factor, or can be exploited to play a positive role, in policy making. It identifies some potential strengths of smaller nations in relation to national policy making, and considers how these can be harnessed.

The study also recognises the disadvantages of policy making at the smaller scale, particularly in relation to resources and capacity. It takes resource constraints into account when considering how policy makers do or could work differently in smaller countries.

1.2 Scope

The research is based on the devolved nations of the UK, with a particular interest in Wales. It also considers Ireland, as a relevant comparator in terms of size, the range of social issues, and EU membership. Ireland provides particular insights because it historically drew much of its policy making tradition from the UK but established its own style and approach well in advance of the UK devolved administrations. Ireland also had earlier and greater experience of policy making in the context of austerity.

The quotations from interviews in this report reflect the experience and thoughts of officials and academics from Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland. References to specific countries have mostly been removed, except in Chapter 5, which applies the findings to Wales. The literature reviewed mainly relates to the UK (devolved nations and England) or to general principles of public policy in the European and North American traditions.
Policy making is taken to include the whole policy cycle from formulation through delivery and evaluation (see Chapter 2). The focus is on policy making at the national, rather than local or community, level. In reality there is no neat split, and much of what might be seen as national policy is implemented by local government or others. Similar policies are developed and managed at different levels in different countries. Some consideration is given in the report to the level at which policy is formulated, planned and delivered, but this is a large topic and not the focus of the study.

Because of its interest in the UK devolved administrations, the study focusses on policy areas where powers and functions are devolved, rather than the major economic levers, foreign or defence policy.

1.3 Approach

The aim is to gather and synthesise current thinking and insights, from the literature and from experienced policy makers and informed commentators and academics, on how policy is made. The focus is policy making rather than what policies have resulted or the outcomes they have had.

The three-month study involved:

- A rapid overview of main relevant themes in the literature on policy making
- Identification of current UK initiatives for improving policy making
- Scoping interviews and discussions with a range of policy colleagues and contacts
- Semi-structured interviews with academics, commentators, civil service heads of policy profession and other key civil service officials in each of the countries studied.

The use of semi-structured interviews with key actors means that much of the evidence in this report is largely perceptual rather than based on an analysis of individual policies or outcomes. The approach made it possible to examine the workings of the policy making process and the forces working on it and to identify some possibilities for the future. The study draws on the extensive experience and insights of centrally placed people who have worked at the heart of policy making in their respective countries, and academics who have analysed the operation of government in those countries. The report indicates where there is a general consensus, a spread of diverse views or where a single interviewee made a particular point.

1.4 Overview of the report

Chapter 2 sets out the process and characteristics of good policy making and identifies some current directions in policy making.

Chapter 3 identifies the potential advantages that smaller countries might have in relation to policy making. For each if these, it:

- considers the theoretical background from the literature
- analyses what interviewees said on the topic
- assesses to what extent it is experienced as an advantage in smaller countries
- identifies how it can be maximised.

The chapter also identifies some disadvantages and challenges faced by smaller countries.

Chapter 4 synthesises the findings of Chapters 2 and 3, under four headings.

Chapter 5 begins the process of applying the findings, using Wales as an illustrative example. It suggests next steps for building on the study.

Chapter 2: Good Policy Making

In order to assess the characteristics of smaller countries that can be helpful for policy making, it is useful to have a clear sense of what good policy making looks like. Policy-making has been defined as *'the process by which governments translate their political vision into programmes and actions to deliver 'outcomes' - desired change in the real world*'[2]. There are large bodies of social policy theory about the concepts and practice of policy, and reams of practical guidance for policy makers on how to do it well. What follows is a very brief overview of key ideas and principles, in terms of the policy process, the characteristics of good policy making and a summary of current directions and initiatives.

2.1 The policy process

The dominant concept of the policy making process is a linear or cyclic series of stages. Linear models work in instances of new policy areas (with no pre-existing policy) where the change can be completed and the policy can be terminated. Most modern models are based on a policy cycle such as Treasury Green Book's 'ROAMEF' cycle[3] (Rationale, Objective, Appraisal, Monitoring, Evaluation, Feedback). Cyclic approaches recognise that most policy making takes place in well-worn areas that are revisited periodically, that 'policy makers rarely, if ever start from a clean sheet'[4] and that the process includes feedback and adjustment.

On both the linear and cyclic models, theory and guidance tends to set out clear stages. The stages have been cut and sliced in numerous ways, but essentially relate to:

- agenda and objective setting
- exploration and policy formulation
- implementation
- feedback.

Fig 1 synthesises a number of policy cycles to show the kids of activity ascribed to each stage.

In reality, the stages are not neatly separated. Most recent guidance acknowledges that the practice of policy making is often much messier and more complex than cycle diagrams imply. The complications are of three types, two of which can be seen as positive

[2] UK Government (1999) Modernising Government White Paper London: The Stationery Office
[3] HM Treasury (2003) The Green Book: Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government. London: The Stationery Office
[4] Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (2003) A Practical Guide to Policy Making in Northern Ireland

refinements of the cycle concept, and one of which appears to be more of an admission of defeat:

i) Keeping the whole cycle in view. Guidance usually emphasises the importance of thinking about (but not doing) all stages throughout the cycle. For instance:

- Delivery factors should be considered from the outset in deciding what is feasible and in assessing policy options.
- Evaluation should be built-in and planned as an integral part of the policy.
- Outcome objectives should be borne in mind throughout implementation, to keep the policy on track in achieving what was intended.

ii) Overlap between stages. There is value in some integration between or overlap of stages. For instance:

- Feedback on effectiveness, impacts and delivery issues, is valuable from the start of implementation, even though formal evaluation and review might not be appropriate until the policy has had a reasonable time to bed down and take effect.
- Staged roll-out or pilot projects might mean that implementation and feedback or review run in parallel for long periods.
- If implementation and feedback throw up unexpected problems with the policy itself, this evidence should trigger a reconsideration of the objective and policy options, a mini-cycle within the overall cycle.

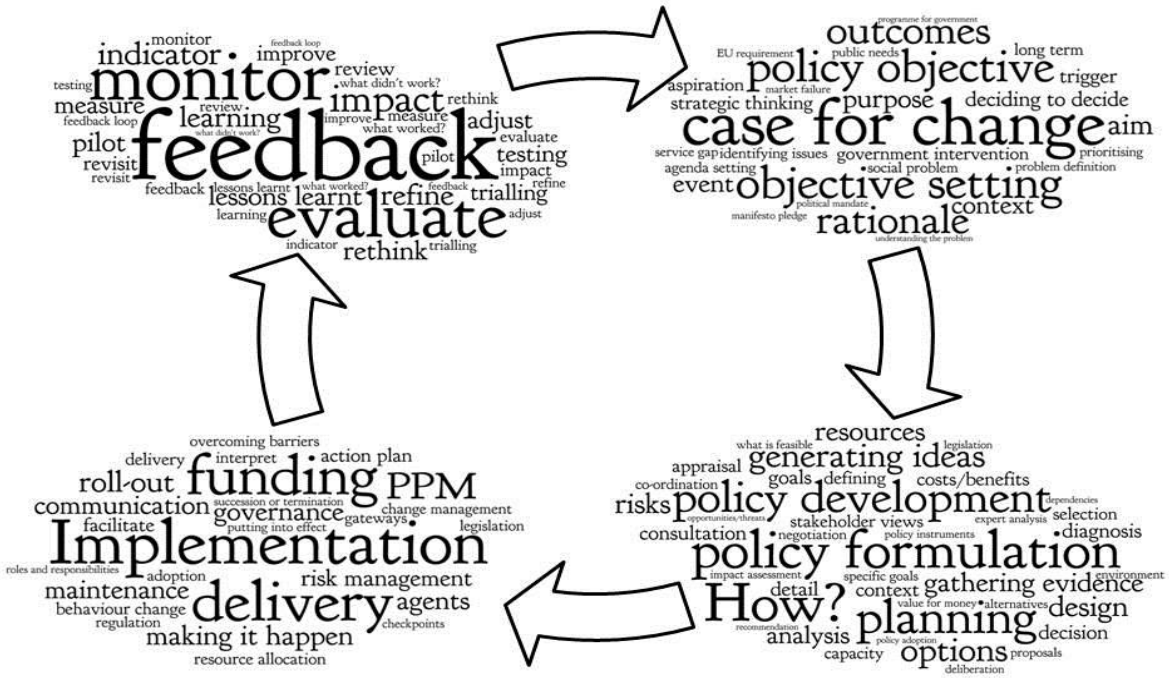
iii) 'Real life' objections: Commentators[5] also point out that in the real world, the cycle does not always happen in order and that some stages are very abbreviated or even missed out altogether. For example, a single option for action might be presented as 'the policy' from the outset (e.g. 'the policy is x more nurses/police officers'), without due consideration of what problem is being addressed, the objectives, feasibility, evidence, other possible options or relative pros and cons. Similarly, theorists note that conditions for policy making are not always perfect - sometimes the wider context is uncertain, evidence is incomplete or inconclusive, money or skills are inadequate, stages of the cycle are executed poorly, unexpected events happen. Commentary about this type of 'messiness' is a fair acknowledgement of the difficulty of good policy making and of what can happen in practice. However, in the author's opinion, it should not be seen as recognition that these problems are inevitable or acceptable. Nor should it be seen as undermining the 'policy cycle' model. Rather, it provides examples and illustrates causes of policy making failure, especially where

[5] E.g. Institute of Government in Hallsworth, M., Rutter , J (2011) Making Policy Better: Improving Whitehall's core business. London: Institute for Government

policy issues are complex or policy options are novel. The application of the policy cycle concept can help identify where a policy has gone wrong or is likely to do so.

Many theorists have criticised the linear and cyclic models more fundamentally, arguing not just that policy does not always work that way in practice, but that policy making is an inherently different kind of activity from that described by the rational models. Some object that the staged models lack explanatory power. The emphasis on rationality, order and evidence is criticised as masking the dynamics of politics, interest groups and power and

Figure 1: The policy cycle



ignoring the fact that agenda-setting and policy selection are value-laden activities usually controlled by elite groups. Others describe policy making as a necessarily messy or even chaotic interplay of multiple networks of actors, resulting in incremental change and unpredictable outcomes or *'a chaos of purposes and accidents'*[6].

While policy cycles may not explain the deeper forces at work in society and politics, they are remarkably persistent conceptions of policy making, appearing in many a government's good practice guidance. This may be because they are familiar, simple, clear, commonsensical and comprehensible by all those involved. Their normative force is

[6] Clay, E. J. and Schaffer, B. B (eds.) (1986) Room for Manoeuvre, An Explanation of Public Policy in Agriculture and Rural Development. London: Heinemann

helpful for governments, civil servants and stakeholders alike in seeking to influence others and impose order and fair process on a messy or uncertain world. Breaking down policy making into 'stages' makes it easier to set out checklists, good practice, roles and responsibilities and statutory requirements for each stage. In this study, reasonable adherence to the policy cycle is taken as one criterion for good policy making.

2.2 Characteristics of good policy making

The second main area covered by policy making theory and guidance is the characteristics of good policy making. Descriptions of the positive features of good policy making show considerable overlap but also some differences of emphasis. Five examples are set out in Table 1 below.

Based on a review of guidance documents and on the interviews undertaken for this study, the most widely advocated characteristics of good policy making (in addition to carrying out each stage of the policy making cycle, see section 2.1) are:

- A strong focus on outcomes and clear objectives (often capable of some form of assessment if not measurement) and identifying the priorities that matter most
- Cross-cutting and collaborative working across government on policy formulation and delivery (including the term 'joined up government')
- Inclusivity: engaging with all relevant stakeholders at all stages of the cycle; 'co-production' of policy; seeking and listening to input from stakeholders, including delivery agents, practitioners and citizens/service users
- Open government, transparency of process and debate, good communication
- Evidence-based ethos, learning from elsewhere and from the past, using experts, research, data and rigorous analytical methods
- Good governance and clarity about roles and accountability. The application of programme and project management disciplines for controlling change
- Simplicity of design, the minimum bureaucracy compatible with achieving the outcomes, consideration of administrative or regulatory burdens on others
- Innovation and creativity: being prepared to experiment, take risks and sometimes fail - and being agile and flexible enough to change course quickly
- Making policy that is fair to all groups, and based on rational and impartial deliberation rather than negotiation between interests on the basis of power or influence

- Understanding that policy is what actually happens rather than what is written in policy documents, so policy formulation must be grounded and practical, implementation must be effective and impacts/dependencies must be considered
- Adapting in response to feedback and results during the policy cycle. Learning throughout, including through evaluation and from mistakes, and disseminating lessons learnt for the future.

These characteristics entail different activities or processes at each stage of the policy cycle.

Table 1: Characteristics of good policy making				
UK Government's 'Modernising Government' White Paper 1999	Practical Guide to Policy Making in Northern Ireland 2003	Department for Education (England) 2013[7]	Scottish Government[8]	Institute for government 2011[9]
Key principles for policy making: • Design policy around shared goals and carefully defined results, not around organisational structures or existing functions • Make sure policies are inclusive • Avoid imposing unnecessary burdens • Involve others • Manage risk better • Be more forward- and outward-looking • Learn from experience	Ten features of good policy making: • forward looking • outward looking • innovative, flexible and creative • evidence-based • inclusive • joined up • learn lessons from experience • be communicated effectively • incorporate ongoing evaluation and review	Five policy tests: • Purpose (clarity) • Role (of government, and necessity of intervention) • Evidence (world-leading policy advice based on latest thinking) • Creativity (exploring radical ideas including doing nothing) • Delivery (can it be delivered)	The 'Scottish approach': • Outcomes based • Cross cutting • Preventive • Citizen focused • Collaborative, participative, co-production • Improvement methodology • Asset based	'Policy fundamentals' (for policy formulation rather than the whole cycle): • clarity on goals • open and evidence-based idea generation • rigorous policy design • responsive external engagement • thorough appraisal • clarity on the role of central government and accountabilities • establishment of effective mechanisms for feedback and evaluation

[7] Barcoe, N and White, H (2013) The Policy Tests: Transforming Policy in the Department for Education, Civil Service Quarterly, July 2013
[8] There is no definitive version of this. The list is taken from speeches by the Scottish First Minister and a number of articles such as Zoe Furguson's 'What is the Scottish Approach (June 2015) http://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/what-is-the-scottish-approach/ and Paul Cairney, Siabhainn Russell and Emily St Denny's The 'Scottish approach' to policy and policymaking: what issues are territorial and what are universal? Policy Press June 2015.
[9] Hallsworth, M., Rutter , J (2011) Making Policy Better: Improving Whitehall's core business. London: Institute for Government

2.3 Current directions

Policy making is subject to shifts in emphasis over time. Some current themes are set out below.

In England, the term *'open policy making'*[10] is given by the Cabinet Office to a collaborative approach and a set of tools and behaviours that help to put many of the principles and characteristics listed above into practice - notably cross-cutting working, inclusivity, transparency and evidence. It emerged from the Civil Service Reform Plan[11], which covers England only and takes as its premise that *'Whitehall does not have a monopoly on policy making expertise*'. The plan sets out ways in which the civil service and ministers can bring more expertise and other voices into the policy making process.

Described as *'first and foremost ...a mindset'*, open policy making requires officials to be *'curious, networked and digitally engaged*'. At the policy formulation stage of the cycle, open policy making engages widely and draws on the best knowledge and expertise available. Policy options can be informed by a range of techniques. Implementation is agile, experimental and iterative. Tools advocated by the open policy making unit include:

- method cards pioneered by MindLab in Denmark
- a 'DIY toolkit' developed by Nesta
- a 'designing with people' website created by the Royal College of Art
- digital tools and advice on their applications, developed by the UK Government Digital Service, think tanks and others.

A number of strands encouraged by the open policy making unit are also international trends in their own right, for instance:

- Use of social media[12], crowdsourcing of ideas and, more generally, digital engagement and communication about policy
- Increased use of evidence derived from 'big data' and linking of data sets for new purposes
- Application of insights from behavioural economics, psychology and social anthropology about how individuals behave and make decisions, to design and improve policies and services. The use of 'nudges', influence, sub-conscious or emotional cues as alternative levers for change, in addition to traditional legislation, regulation or funding/incentives.

[10] https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/
[11] HM Government (2012) Civil Service Reform Plan London: HMSO
[12] UK Government Social Media Playbook https://gdsengagement.blog.gov.uk/playbook/

Examples are set out on the website of the Behavioural Insights Team, and in the 2010 Mindspace report[13]

- Experimentation and innovation, testing policies as an integral part of policy development, using rigorous methodology including randomised control trials, with greater acceptance of failure of some interventions and the need to adapt others. Although testing and piloting is nothing new, bolder experimentation has been advocated by Nesta, The Alliance for Useful Evidence[14] and others. They acknowledge that transparency about failure requires courage on the part of politicians in the face of short electoral cycles and a hostile media, and would benefit from a cultural change in public expectations of government.
- New centres and networks of evidence expertise for policy development, often located outside government. In addition to established universities, research institutes, think tanks and traditional private or third sector researchers and sources of evidence, a new generation of centres is developing. This includes, firstly, the What Works Network[15] : seven centres and associate members What Works Scotland and the Public Policy Institute for Wales. These centres were set up specifically to provide evidence for policy makers and decision makers in central and local government. The second type of centre is innovation labs such as the original Danish MindLab[16] , Nesta's Innovation Lab[17], the Cabinet Office's Policy Lab[18] and Y Lab, the new public sector innovation lab being established by Nesta and Cardiff University.
- Concepts of user-led or user-centred design and co-production draw on private sector techniques in product and software development and social participation traditions such as tenant participation in housing design or community planning initiatives. Although by no means a new idea, the language of co-production has become more prevalent in policy literature in recent years.

Other recent and current directions in policy making include:

- Wellbeing frameworks based on working towards widely agreed long term outcomes (discussed in detail in section 3.3.1)
- Localism and 'double devolution', whereby policy decisions as well as implementation is increasingly devolved to more local levels of government and civil society (discussed in 3.4)

[13] Institute of Government (commissioned by Cabinet Office) (2010) Mindspace: Influencing Behaviour through Public Policy
[14] Breckon, J (2015) Better Public Service through Experimental Government London: Alliance for Useful Evidence
[15] https://www.gov.uk/what-works-network
[16] http://mind-lab.dk/en/
[17] http://www.innovationgrowthlab.org/
[18] https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/category/policy-lab/

- Widespread use of Programme and Project Management in policy development and delivery. This ensures controlled start-up, delivery, closure and review of change programmes, maintains clarity of objectives and roles and responsibilities and provides a structure for stakeholder engagement, risk and resource management and assessment of dependencies. The milestones and stages of project management are often supplemented for major government projects by gateway reviews for additional assurance
- Digital services and apps (eg 'Digital by Default'[19], the UK government's digital service standard)
- The emerging concept of 'improvement science' in service design and delivery, which began in healthcare but is now talked about in relation to other public services. This collection of approaches aims to bring scientific rigour to bear on improvement processes themselves. Its aim is *'to ensure that quality improvement efforts are based as much on evidence as the best practices they seek to implement'*[20] by identifying causes of failure, whether these be cultural, procedural or technical.

The Civil Service in each of the countries of the UK is modernising and changing. In relation to policy-making, departments and governments have taken various steps to ensure that officials have the skills and knowledge they need to make effective policy. These steps recognise that the skills and knowledge required are changing as government, society, and ICT changes. Masters degrees in policy making are made available to key policy officials in most countries, which in some cases has helped strengthen policy networks, research links and understanding between government and universities. In-house Continuous Professional Development programmes have been developed and promoted, and policy makers' networks supported. The Welsh Government and Scottish Government and each of the departments in the UK and Northern Irish civil services has a head of policy profession with responsibility to support and strengthen the policy community and policy practice within their area. Policy making is increasingly seen as a profession, associated with a body of learning and good practice, rather than as a part time role for the *'gifted amateur'*[21]. In England, *'professionalising policy making'* is an explicit aim being implemented through an action plan[22] with related governance and infrastructure. Elsewhere, the emphasis is more on skills and knowledge than on professional identity or organisational structure. This may be partly due to resource constraints, but may also reflect the fact that, in smaller countries, officials

[19] https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/digital-by-default
[20] The Health Foundation (2011) Improvement Science: research scan London: The Health Foundation
[21] Fulton Report 1968 Cmnd.3638
[22] Civil Service Reform (2013) Twelve Actions to Professionalise Policy Making A report by the Policy Profession Board

tend to have a wider range of roles, with few being dedicated solely to policy making as an insulated activity.

As well as explicit changes to policy making within the civil service, wider civil service reform in each of the countries of the UK impacts on policy making capability. Changes to recruitment, policies to encourage or restrict movement of officials between posts and between the civil service and other organisations, and the eternal debate about the extent to which officials should specialise in a single subject area, are all relevant.

Finally, in looking at current trends in policy making, the biggest and most obvious change is the context of austerity. Since the financial crisis of 2008, policy has been made against a very different backdrop. The regions and countries of the UK devolved in 1999 have had their first experience of budgets decreasing in real terms. Ireland's policy agenda has been dominated by economic imperatives and priorities since 2008. The emphasis internationally is likely to be less on the development of initiatives requiring new money, and more on prioritising, identifying potential savings and, in priority areas, determining how outcomes can be maintained or improved despite constrained budgets. Austerity is an important part of the context of the current study and arose frequently in the course of interviews.

Austerity will have an impact not just on what policies are made, but on how policy is made, with severe constraints on analytical and policy making capacity and resources. Smaller countries have always had to make policy with relatively less capacity and resource than larger countries, due to the loss of economies of scale. Cuts in staff or budgets within government and partner organisations will require an ever greater focus on priorities, efficiency and effectiveness. It can only be hoped that the silver lining of austerity will be that it sparks greater innovation and forces a questioning of assumptions, leading to beneficial changes to structures, processes and style of policy making.

Chapter 3: Potential Advantages of Smaller Countries for Policy Making

The literature review for this study and initial scoping discussions with officials helped to identify four aspects of policy making in which smaller countries might have advantages. These areas were then explored in interviews with key officials and academics in the countries chosen for the study. The following sections set out:

- the theoretical background to each potential advantage, mainly drawn from the literature
- what interviewees said about the reality of the potential advantage in smaller countries
- conclusions about the extent of the advantage and how to make the most of it.

Although the study aimed to focus on advantages of working at the smaller scale, interviewees often stressed the disadvantages too - these are reported in section 3.5. The overall findings are drawn together in Chapter 4.

3.1 Citizen-centred policy

This section considers whether smaller countries have any advantages in relation to developing policy that is responsive to the needs, concerns and experiences of citizens. It has strong links with the following section (3.2), on policy networks, which looks at engagement with stakeholders, including groups or organisations acting as representatives of sections of the population. It also has links with section 3.4, on vertical coherence, because, in practice, it is often at the level of delivery or operational policy detail that citizens become actively involved in service design or improvement.

What is citizen-centred policy? Themes from the literature

The term 'citizen-centred policy' is used here to encompass the variety of ways in which policy can be made to more accurately reflect the needs and wishes of a country's citizens and to be grounded in their experience. This includes research into views and perceptions, direct engagement with representatives of citizens, or with sample groups of varying sizes, and more participative forms of democracy in which citizens play a direct role in decision making.

Some of the arguments for greater citizen engagement in decision making are framed in terms of politics and the principle of democracy - either the intrinsic 'rightness' of empowerment and autonomy at an individual or community level or the benefits, such as community cohesion, of the resulting sense of investment in the state. Other arguments relate to what might be seen as spin-off benefits that are experienced by those involved. This includes personal development, for instance gaining confidence, new social networks,

skills or knowledge. In relation to policy making, however, perhaps the most important arguments relate to the quality of the policy or services that emerge. The underlying belief is that policy makers and service providers are more likely to meet the needs and wishes of those directly affected by a particular policy if they have involved them throughout the policy process, and that the policy will thus be better designed and more effective. Some interim indicators of success in these terms might be: the level of take-up of optional services; customer satisfaction data; or numbers of complaints. Longer term indicators will relate to the impact of the policy on the desired outcome.

This study does not look in detail at the world-wide correlation between the size of countries and the levels of citizen centred policy or participative democracy. However, the World Bank indicators on 'voice and accountability'[23] show that there are large and small countries at both ends of the world ranking. This study is not contending that there is any actual or theoretical correlation between the size of a country and its level of citizen engagement. Even if there were a theoretical link, other geopolitical, historical and cultural factors are likely to be far more significant. The questions being considered here are:

- whether, if a country's government and civic society do wish to promote a more participatory or responsive model of governance, smallness is an advantage
- if so, how this advantage can be maximised.

It is notable that the devolved administrations of the UK, particularly in Wales and Scotland but also in Northern Ireland, have emphasised the importance of citizen engagement in policy making and service delivery, both in rhetoric and in action. Wales has a well-established 'citizen model'[24], that puts the citizen at the centre of policy making and service delivery, and has endorsed a set of 'National Principles for Public Engagement'[25]. There have been new approaches to and legislation about community planning in each of the three devolved administrations[26], in each case strengthening the role of local communities and their representatives. And there has been a groundswell of enthusiasm and activity to promote democratic renewal in Scotland, particularly aiming to capitalise on the public engagement in the debate around the referendum on independence. However, it seems more plausible to see these trends and values as political and cultural - linked to the debates

[23] World Bank (published annually, latest figures relate to 2013) Worldwide Governance Indicators http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#reports
[24] Welsh Assembly Government (2004) Making the Connections
[25] Participation Cymru (2011) National Principles for Public Engagement (developed with TPAS Cymru). Endorsed by the Welsh Government.
[26] Scotland's Community Empowerment Bill (currently in progress)
Wales' Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and Future Generations Act (2015)
Northern Ireland's Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

surrounding devolution (and, in Scotland, independence) and the aspirations of the new administrations, rather than as related to the smaller size of the new units of government.

Much of the literature on social policy making centres on the concept of power. Bertrand Russell described power as the *'fundamental concept in social science ... in the same sense in which energy is the fundamental concept in physics*.'[27] In relation to citizen empowerment or participation, the question according to Dahl[28] is '*who decides, why and in whose interest do they decide?*'. Lukes'[29] typology of three dimensions of governmental power gives three families of answers to this question. Each dimension of power exhibits an imbalance of power between governments and others, with the disparate and unorganised 'public' always at the bottom of the heap. Table 2 uses this typology to consider policy making.

At a less abstract level, there is a body of literature relating to citizen participation in policy making and the responsiveness of policy to citizen needs and views. As Martin et al argue,[30] this literature falls into two main strands, looking at citizens in the context of participatory democracy or as consumers.

In the participatory democracy strand, Fung[31] argues for: transparency in government; policy based on the needs of ordinary citizens; and the provision of information that informs their everyday choices. With Wright[32], he analyses successful examples of *'empowered deliberative democracy'* from across the world. 'EDD' describes situations where practical, concrete issues are tackled by the *'ordinary citizens'* who are impacted by them, through a deliberative process based on reasoned argument, rather than negotiation on the basis of group interests. It is notable that many of the examples from around the world of the successful use of this approach are at the medium scale (large cities or regions), rather than very small scale (although some do involve delivery and detailed governance at the village or local community level). The approach is therefore relevant to the small countries being considered for this study. Fung and Wright welcome the benefits of 'EDD' when it works well, in terms of effective problem solving, equity in the process and the outcomes, and the benefits for communities and individuals of participation itself. But they also acknowledge the significant difficulties and resource implications of monitoring and maintaining the approach

[27] Russell, B (1938) Power, a New Social Analysis London, New York: Routledge Classics
[28] Dahl, R.A. (1967) Pluralist Democracy in the United States Chicago, Ill: Rand McNally
[29] Lukes, S (1974, republished 2005) Power, a Radical View London: MacMillan
[30] Welsh Government Social Research (2013) Learning to Improce: An Independent Assessment of the Welsh Government's Policies for Local Government 2007-2011 Final Report Part 1 Chapter 5. (Steve Martin, James Downe, Tom Entwistle, Valeria Guarneros-Meza with Carol Hayden and John Houghton)
[31] Fung. A (2008) Full Disclosure: The Perils and Promise of Transparency Cambridge: CUP
[32] Fung, A. and Wright, E., 2001. Deepening democracy: innovations in empowered participatory governance. Politics and Society, 29 (1), 5–41.

Table 2: Lukes' typology as a framework for considering citizen-centred policy making	
Dimension of governmental power	Implications for citizen-centred policy making
1. Decision making power: Governments in control in their overt and traditional role as decision maker on specific issues. Even in a pluralist society, the government's role as ultimate arbiter makes it more powerful than other groups, organisations or interests, including citizens.	Rebalancing this dimension of power requires effective and genuine collaboration, stakeholder engagement, communication, consultation and evidence gathering about citizen or other stakeholder views. There is a need for a conscious effort on the part of government and well-established groups to welcome challenge or fresh thinking on any given subject area from new or less engaged groups.
2. Non-decision-making power: Governments control which issues are open for discussion in the first place and define the parameters of that discussion. This can effectively exclude some groups, interests or debates and allow elite groups and powerful economic interests to dominate and set the agenda**.**	In the traditional policy cycle, this dimension is located in the first stage of '*deciding to decide*'[33], in which policy makers identify the problem to be addressed or the outcome objective and determine whether it is a political priority for action. Governments wishing to loosen their grip on this kind of power would need to use broad, open consultation at a level higher than any specific issue. Examples would be people's petitions or 'national conversations' such as *The Wales We Want*[34]. A strong civic society, including issue groups, the university sector and the national media, is also valuable in providing alternative agenda-setting voices.
3. Ideological power: A deeper, more hidden power, exercised by control of social structures, processes and language, to influence citizens' thoughts and wishes.	It is difficult to visualise what sort of counter-measures would meet these concerns, as this part of the theory seems, by definition, incapable of being disproven or addressed, especially to the satisfaction of more conspiratorially-minded theorists. Taking an optimistic and un-cynical view, it could be argued that this kind of power imbalance could be reduced through high quality universal education at all levels, active encouragement of citizen involvement in civic and community life, an open and welcoming attitude to challenge and alternative sources of ideas and views, and moves towards open government and open data.

[33] Hudson, J and Lowe, S (2009) Understanding the Policy Process: Analysing Welfare Policy and Practice. 2nd ed. Bristol: Policy Press
[34] http://thewaleswewant.co.uk/ National conversation led by the Commissioner for Sustainable Futures on behalf of Welsh Government

and highlight the dangers of new, less accountable, power bases or groupings emerging or moving in.

In the consumerism strand, Potter[35] looks at the conditions needed for empowering the citizen as a consumer and redressing the imbalance of power between *'those who produce goods and services, and those for whom they are provided'*. She identifies five requirements: access, choice, information, redress and representation. Guarneros-Meza et al[36], in analysing the approaches taken in Wales to putting the citizen at the centre of local public services, find that four out of Potter's five requirements are met: with equal and easy access to services, good provision of information, mechanisms for redress and representation of consumer views all featuring prominently in policy documents and evidenced by interviews with officials.

The fifth element, choice (especially of providers), is explicitly not supported by the Welsh Government, although *'this does not imply a one-size-fits-all approach. Making the Connections suggests that service providers should design 'service options around the preferences of communities' and shape 'what is offered to the needs of individuals'*[37]' They suggest that if it is decided to limit choice of provider, there should be other mechanisms for measuring satisfaction and assuring quality and improvement. Jung[38] sees choice as central to the consumerist concept but identifies some problems with exercising choice in a public service context. He describes what can in practice be a negative and difficult experience and can *'further increase inequalities and disadvantages between different societal groups*'. Others see consumerism as not going far enough. Needham[39] calls for approaches that see the service-user as a *'co-producer'* of that service. Generally, the term co-production is very much in vogue, although its use varies significantly between contexts, from co-design of services at a detailed level, working directly with customers, to development of a strategy in discussion with representative stakeholder organisations.

Citizen centred policy in smaller countries: what interviewees said

Interviewees recognised and strongly supported the principle that policy should be responsive to what citizens want:

> *'One of the ideas associated with the new [devolved government] is because we are bringing politics closer to the people we could*

[35] Potter, J (1988) Consumerism and the public sector: how well does the coat fit? *Public Administration* 66 (2) 149-164
[36] Guarneros-Meza, V, Downe, J, Entwistle, T and Martin, S.J. (2014) Putting the Citizen at the Centre? Assembling Local Government Policy in Wales, Local Government Studies, 40:1, 65-82
[37] Welsh Assembly Government (2004) Making the Connections, Cardiff: WAG.
[38] Jung, T., 2010. Citizens, co-producers, customers, clients, captives? A critical review of consumerism and public services. Public Management Review, 12 (3), 439–446.
[39] Needham, C (2007) The reforms of public services under New Labour: narratives of consumerism. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

introduce greater consultation, greater transparency and greater buy-in to policy'.

One noted that, in addition to the question of principle, there was a pay-off in terms of citizen acceptance of policies or services that responded to local needs and wishes:

'There's evidence that people are more prepared to pay more tax or make a contribution or wait longer if it directly benefits people in their local community or (less strongly) whatever national community they identify with.'

There were some caveats about the need to balance information about citizen views with other evidence about needs and effectiveness and to avoid purely populist policies:

'What counts as evidence? Even if you have good findings, will it trump the evidence people perceive through media reporting or the impressions of politicians in constituency clinics? Everyone thinks they know about social policy.'

There were concerns about managing expectations and affordability of the services citizens would like to see:

'How you get at what citizens really want is quite difficult. There's some interesting stuff around trying to integrate public services and provide more holistic packages for individuals, which makes sense, but some people say actually the problem is you always end up creating additional services to plug the gaps, you never look at overlaps and remove duplication. So it's a sensible approach but usually means provision gets more expensive. Bureaucracies tend to create more bureaucracy; they're not very good at stepping back.'

The discussion of citizen centred policy and Lukes' typology, above, identified factors for offsetting the first dimension of governmental power. These were good stakeholder engagement, communication, consultation and evidence gathering about wider stakeholder or customer/citizen views. Some of these elements were said by interviewees to be easier to do well in smaller countries. For other elements, the evidence from the interviews was that there was no advantage or even a disadvantage to working at a smaller scale. Networking with key strategic stakeholders and second tier stakeholders was considered generally easier (see section 3.2 on policy networks). Communication with these stakeholders was relatively easier in smaller settings through established or new formal channels and through less formal networks. The concerns raised by interviewees in relation to smaller countries

were the dangers of groupthink, cosiness and exclusion of marginalised groups or anyone other than 'the usual suspects':

> *'The involvement of other players is a positive but the problem is the influence of the usual suspects and the level of access that others have. There needs to be a level playing field so the loudest and best funded organisation doesn't always get its way. There need to be efforts in government and the civil service to encourage weaker voices to be heard alongside stronger voices.'*

Direct communication and engagement with the general public or very large customer groups (e.g. learners, patients, particular age groups) was, in the experience of interviewees, as challenging in a small country as in a larger one, or even more difficult due to overheads, relative resource constraints and in some cases a relatively weak national media.

Formal consultation exercises were reported by some to be unwieldy, with one-size-fits-all requirements on format and timing cited as contributing to consultation fatigue and distracting from real priorities, although it was not clear that this related to the size of the country.

> *'Sometimes I think we should be engaging the public just on things that matter not all the random crap we put out in the classic consultation – everything goes out for 12 weeks regardless of whether it's a set of incredibly tedious regulations that only affect a small constituency – why can't you just go and talk to those? It all goes through this convoluted process to not much effect.'*

> *'We are looking at reducing consultation timeframe from 12 to 8 weeks and at the policy and principles. If you have continuous meaningful engagement, use the Gunning principles, and apply them with early and diverse conversations, then consultation should be a final check – we want to get creative about it. People here are consulted to death and there's one a week. We need to get to real people at all levels , not just the usual interests.'*

There were very mixed views about whether gathering robust evidence about wider public opinion or the views of large groups was easier to do well in a smaller country. Some felt that it was easier to develop a strong evidence base about opinions, with greater spin-off benefits of engagement, while others noted the proportionately greater expense in a context of resource constraints:

'You can't scale down a survey and retain significance and validity. .. A valid survey would form too great a proportion of the relevant budget.'

'When we do a survey or evaluation, we will be speaking to a higher proportion of the total population of those involved, so they feel they are being heard and having an input.'

'Small countries can do surveys very well, you can get all the data you need in a small country and find out exactly what people think and want.'

'We can focus on things of interest to [us] and have survey questions we want the answers to'.

Lukes' second dimension of power is agenda setting: determining which issues have policy made about them in the first place, which social problems get addressed, and the parameters within which policy debates are framed. Diluting this kind of governmental power with more citizen power requires a strong and inclusive civic society, high quality media and broad, open conversations to identify what people really want. Interviewees noted that in some of the countries studied, civic society and the media were relatively weak. But they identified several ways of having such conversations, including citizens panels or juries, crowdsourcing or 'national conversation' exercises such as *The Wales We Want.* Interviewees acknowledged this kind of agenda setting work was very difficult and could not be done often. It was suggested that evidence gathering through research (eg focus groups) was better value for money than wider engagement activity*:*

'In terms of what matters to communities rather than what do they think about a particular thing, you could do citizen panels and ask them what matters and actually listen to it.'

'We are working to develop an approach that will give engagement but work within our resources and timescale. Probably a number of facilitated conversations with groups including different geographical areas, socio-economic groups and so on. But alongside that, we'll try to do some...social media presence, postcards at events etc. So, some solid concrete information plus wider engagement.'

Interviewees reported from experience that it could be difficult to spark people's interest in engagement and that acting on the findings could be challenging for governments:

'[Local authority] did a huge amount of work trying to find out what people's priorities were but people only really took any notice when it came to proposals to close the libraries. Frankly, until it becomes relevant to you because it affects a service you directly receive, why should citizens care?'

'The things people say are most important to them may not accord with the things we are used to delivering or the things we think are important'.

The third and final dimension of power in Lukes' typology is ideological power. The remedies to the imbalance of this kind of power go far beyond any changes to the policy making process. However, in relation to policy making, this dimension of power can be marginally rebalanced through openness to challenge and ideas from a variety of sources, transparency of government in the policy making process and through open data.

Smaller countries had varied strengths and weaknesses in relation to each of these elements, according to interviewees, depending on factors such as the strength of their civic society, university sector and national media or the cultural norms in relation to civic or community engagement by citizens. There was a view that smaller countries had the opportunity '*to do something about the open data agenda'* because of the scope for every local authority or public body to have *'the same functional set, which could mean same infrastructure works for all'*. Every local authority could publish '*20 or 30 data sets that can be re-used and might be of general interest. Especially having... all unitary authorities, so you can have a standardised approach.*' More generally, in relation to openness and transparency of government, several interviewees considered that the devolved administrations of the UK were more accountable than the pre-devolution administrations, although this was generally seen as a function of devolution itself and the accompanying expectations rather than the size of the countries.

There was a view that politicians and officials in smaller countries can be more accessible, and closer to their constituents, giving them a more detailed and grounded awareness of the real lived experience of citizens:

'What's good about small countries is the closeness of politicians to the general public. There's less danger of them living in an insulated bubble. Ministers walk around and can be more engaged with ordinary public concerns than in larger countries – which could keep policy more grounded'.

'Politicians actually live in the areas they represent, often areas of high social deprivation – so people will knock on their doors.'

'It should give rise to opportunities for good relations or closer relations with all communities. Ministers visit all parts of the country.'

Turning to participatory democracy in smaller countries, a number of interviewees in Wales and, particularly, Scotland showed great enthusiasm for increasing the role of direct citizen involvement in policy making:

'It fits with democratic renewal - never at any point have people been so engaged in politics, especially young people, wanting to have a say in the kind of Scotland they want to live in.'

'There's a strong focus on the activist community, the tradition of self-help in Wales'.

Sometimes the insights generated and the resulting policy might not be very different from those resulting from less ambitious approaches such as focus groups, small surveys, panels etc, but interviewees had found from experience that there were important spin-off benefits:

'You get more buy-in and legitimacy or credibility even if same outcomes result. Carnegie has said you need a sense of ownership even if it doesn't look massively different'.

In Scotland, there were many references to democratic renewal and a wish to directly involve large numbers of citizens in policy discussions, capitalising on enthusiasm for politics generated by the independence referendum. However, engagement on a large scale was not generally thought to be actually any easier to do in smaller countries; in fact, due to loss of economies of scale, it could even be more challenging. On the positive side, interviewees observed that people in smaller countries can often have a stronger sense of national identity and thus of 'ownership' of their government or its policies, although some pointed out that people can feel and actually be very far from the centre of power in small countries too:

'There is an advantage in operating in a relatively homogenous population so there's national identity – you get more of a collectivism and more of an acceptance of a particular policy direction. It's easier to made decisions that will work for most places in that country for things that you have to do once. Also where there is a strong sense of nationhood and ownership then people have an acceptance and give

authorising power towards whatever the governing body says – a greater alignment between citizen and state.'

Fung's conditions for participatory democracy were government transparency and the provision of information to inform citizens' choices. The experience of interviewees was that these could be more easily achieved in smaller countries, with opportunities for citizens to visit parliaments/assemblies, fewer government departments to navigate and more chance of speaking directly to the individual official responsible for a policy area. The factors relating to open data and the closeness of politicians to their constituents and the general public were also relevant. On the other hand, the provision of information could be relatively more expensive per capita on a smaller scale.

Potter's five conditions for redressing the balance of power under the consumerist interpretation also include access and information. Two of the other conditions, redress and representation, were not discussed as such by interviewees. In relation to the final element, choice, there was an argument that in smaller countries there is a stronger case for a single provider or service (but responsive to local needs) than for a plethora of choice, as this would be more expensive given the lack of a critical mass to support multiple providers, especially in rural areas.

Conclusion

The evidence from the interviews relating to citizen centred policy making was very mixed. There was a general but ill-defined perception that it should be easier to do in a smaller country, countered by a range of observations about practical reasons why it might actually be more difficult.

Overall, the evidence does not suggest strongly that smaller countries have any significant advantage in promoting wide-scale engagement or participative democracy or engaging with large numbers of citizens.

There was also no clear-cut advantage in relation to gathering information about citizen views. Interviewees universally valued information about the views of the general public or specific sections of the population impacted by a policy. But where research such as surveys, focus groups or citizen panels was required, there was a mixture of views: on the one hand that this evidence was easier to gather in smaller countries, and on the other that it was relatively more expensive due to overheads and loss of economies of scale.

Nevertheless, there was a residual view that politics and policy could be more grounded and closer to the citizen, which could result in a greater sense of engagement:

'Small states have the potential to demonstrate more directly the impact that people's decision making and sovereignty makes, and that creates buy-in'.

'It's important to feel involved - and at small scale it is possible to ensure people do feel involved.'

There was a view that politicians (and also, some said, officials) tended to be closer to citizen views in smaller countries, because there are proportionately more central government (and opposition) politicians and officials per head, and they were thought to be more grounded, visible and accessible than those in some other countries:

'Policy makers here ought to be much better informed about potential impact on local communities – there's less diversity and smaller distances'.

'Civil servants now have a more public role. We know who they are, they are more visible... The small country element is also important: people know of civil servants, they are familiar with the directorates, and vice versa, civil servants know the local area and people. A small polity allows for that in a way which is impossible in a large place.'

'Policy makers (politicians and officials) have greater opportunities to be closer to the customer. It's a more face-to-face society, and you have a strong personal interest in the policy. It's explaining it to your mother-in-law – it's not theoretical, it's really important.'

'Civil servants get out more here, and that is improving and encouraged from the top - it's too easy to be very busy at your desk!'

'It's easier in a small country to look at the sharp end by arranging visits through contacts - we can see and know about a higher percentage of the country.'

The closeness and accessibility gave rise to a concern, voiced by many interviewees, about 'policy by anecdote' and the relative influence of individuals or particular lobbyists:

'Ministers get information from constituents and visits they make so they get quite an anecdotal view of what's going on and the risk is that if you don't have hard information about the current picture and what's being delivered, the anecdotal can take over.'

'It's good that Ministers are close to the public but they can be heavily influenced by key individuals.'

'Lobbying can result in populist decisions.'

'Another thing about small jurisdictions is the closeness of politicians and ministers to their communities which can result in a focus on impact on their own communities.'

Finally, it was observed that the governments of the devolved administrations were particularly supportive of citizen centred policy. This was not seen as a product of the size of the countries, so much as of the ideology of the administrations and public expectations following devolution. There was significant support amongst policy makers in these countries for increasing participation in policy making where this is feasible, affordable and likely to be particularly beneficial in terms of ownership of the policy once implemented:

'[The new government] was meant to be, in its DNA, more accessible to people, more transparent, something which felt closer to people, more in touch, with more scrutiny and fundamentally... closer to and more responsive to the particular needs of [the country].'

Making policy more citizen-centred in smaller countries

Although the findings of this study do not indicate, as initially expected, that smaller countries have any great advantage in relation to citizen centred policy, it does seem that there is both a desire for and can be a realisation of more accessible politics and more grounded policy.

There are ways in which all countries, whatever their size, can make policy more citizen centred. The success factors can be summarised as:

- Political will to promote this style of government and to 'give up' some power - encouraging challenge and scrutiny
- Involve citizens in agenda setting as well as on specific issues or service design
- Ensure good practice in communication, consultation, stakeholder engagement
- Research and evidence gathering about citizen views - surveys and focus groups
- Open government and open data. Provision of information about rights, responsibilities, public sector performance (for instance levels of service expected and delivered)

- Consider options and seek opportunities for large scale engagement
- Support a strong civic society and multiple sources of ideas
- Employ a critical approach to avoid being unduly swayed by anecdote or individual views
- Put in place opportunities for community or political engagement for sectors of the population, especially those seen as 'hard to reach'.
- Use citizens panels or juries, national conversation exercises, crowdsourcing of ideas or other use of social media
- Arrangements for complaints, redress and a culture of good customer service, quality assurance and continuous improvement by government, including frequently seeking feedback about satisfaction.

3.2 Policy networks

This section looks at the potential advantages for policy making of the closer or more inclusive networking possible in smaller countries or regions. There are strong links between this section and:

- Section 3.4 on vertical coherence, which draws out the specific potential advantage of smaller countries in relation to coherence between strategy, policy and delivery
- Section 3.3 on horizontal coherence, which looks at the ability of government and its agents to achieve cross-cutting policy between traditional subject areas
- Section 3.1 on participative democracy and the potential for policy makers to be closer to and more in tune with the needs of citizens.

What are policy networks? Themes from the literature

The social policy theory of policy networks starts from the premise that policy is formulated and implemented by interconnected individuals, groups and organisations. Network theory has been deployed by many social policy commentators to attempt to analyse the links between these 'actors' in specific areas or situations. This is done by mapping dependencies formed between groups to help achieve their own goals, relationships of power and influence, frequency and mode of contact, and flows of resources. It is often a detailed exercise based on a particular instance.

Rhodes and Marsh's typology of five[40] (later reduced to two[41]) kinds of policy network focuses on broad relationships between groups at the governmental and strategic level, rather than the micro level analysis of some other approaches. It is therefore helpful in assessing the potential advantages of smaller nations. Their types of policy network range on a continuum of integration, stability and exclusiveness from the tightly integrated and restricted 'policy communities' to loose, more open and less coherent 'issue networks'. Each

40 Rhodes, RAW and Marsh, D (1992) *New directions in the study of policy networks* European Journal of Political Research Volume 21, Issue 1-2

41 Rhodes, RAW (1997) Understanding governance: policy networks, governance, reflexivity and accountability, Maidenhead: Open University Press

policy community or issue network is seen as having a core and a periphery (which might include other issue networks).

Some theorists have criticised the policy network approach. Dowding (1995) states that '*Policy network analysis has become the dominant paradigm for the study of the policy-making process in British political science*'[42], but rejects the approach as '*hopelessly vague'*, metaphorical and lacking explanatory power. He prefers to drill down to analysis of actual behaviours such as bargaining, lobbying and sharing, protecting or transferring resources. However, even as a metaphor the approach provides a helpful framework for analysing how networks might differ between different sizes of country or policy making unit.

There is a practical limit to the number of 'players' (in Rhodes' terminology) that can be accommodated within a policy community, and particularly within its core, on any given subject. In smaller nations, the number of players within the strategic centre, such as a government department, will be smaller. This makes it feasible for the core of a policy community to function effectively while including more players from further down the delivery chain or representing a wider range of interests. This provides greater challenge, more sources of diverse ideas and approaches, earlier consideration of delivery, and a greater likelihood of understanding the range of issues and concerns.

Alternatively, the extra space in the policy community might be filled with a more comprehensive set of players from a sector or tier. This could, for instance, enable the policy or delivery lead within each health body or local authority to have a voice within the core of this community. In a larger nation, only a subset could be included, or their role would be better characterised as part of the periphery, with the need for a further layer of representation inserted between policy formulation and delivery. The ability to speak directly, on a regular basis, to people who are responsible for delivery and aware of the reality of the impact of policies on communities, should have several benefits. It should result in more reliable communication, understanding and ownership of strategic aims at all levels. It should facilitate faster and more accurate feedback about the effectiveness of policies, identification of examples of good or bad practice or early warning of implementation barriers or unintended consequences. The collective intelligence of the policy community should therefore be more grounded in reality.

A further benefit of being able to have more inclusive policy communities is that wider ranges and more complete sets of stakeholders are already aware of the policy objectives and detail through their involvement in its formulation. This should avoid surprises or resistance at the formal consultation stage. It should result in a head start in terms of 'hearts and minds'

[42] Dowding, K (1995) Model or metaphor? A Critical Review of the Policy Network Approach Political Studies, 43 136–158

communication, because stakeholders are aware of the thinking behind a policy and have had an opportunity to contribute their views or concerns. Reaching a greater proportion of stakeholders at an early policy development stage reduces the 'operational disconnect' between policy and implementation (see section 3.4, vertical coherence).

Rhodes' analysis, mainly based on his observations of UK-wide public policy at a larger scale, provides a starting point for thinking about how the benefits of smaller or more inclusive policy networks in smaller regions can be realised or maximised. Rhodes tends to see networks in a somewhat negative or cynical light, using the theory to explain instances of policy failure and seeing players as necessarily trying to maximise their own influence or resources by developing competitive strategies and protecting vested interests. He uses the metaphor of 'players' in a 'game'. The game has set rules, including ideological frameworks and knowledge-based and institutional constraints or agendas. He portrays the impact of networks on policy-making as restricting access to the process, reinforcing the existing balance of interests, constraining the policy agenda by favouring incremental change and acting as a '*major source of policy inertia'* (1992 p260). Although slightly discouraging, his pessimistic narrative does at least serve to point up some of the pitfalls to be avoided if policy communities are to be effective and constructive.

He identifies tight-knit, stable relationships and continuity of restricted membership as characteristics of policy communities. It could be argued, building on Rhodes' model, that in smaller regions or countries this closeness and stability can potentially be stretched to cover a wider range of relationships than could be contained by a policy community in a larger country, for the reasons described above. Greater early involvement of practitioners in policy development, and particularly of practitioners with concerns over the policy direction, has three benefits: opportunities to hear concerns and identify issues early; the likelihood of developing simpler, more deliverable policy; and the bonus of starting to build an early consensus and reduce resistance during implementation.

Rhodes identifies a number of potentially harmful characteristics of policy communities, mainly relating to exclusiveness of membership and insulation from other networks or the public. For smaller nations to maximise the benefit of policy communities then, they need to balance continuity against the need to periodically review and refresh membership and ensure an outward-facing and open approach. This will happen more naturally if the community includes players from further down the delivery chain, but should also be a conscious effort, set out in terms of reference. If part of the benefit of working at the smaller scale is having policy communities that embrace a greater range of viewpoints and sources of ideas or information then there must be a deliberate encouragement of challenge,

alternative perspectives and innovative ideas. This should not be seen as threatening to the ultimate aim of achieving shared goals.

Kickert et al[43] present a more positive approach, recognising the role of networks as an empirical fact and a necessity in complex modern societies. They welcome the influence of multiple views and organisations, as opposed to 'top-down' hierarchical government. They propose careful network management and steering and see a strong networking approach as offering '*major opportunities for the public policy process*'. They state that '*the realistic assumption that society cannot simply be controlled by government, and that public policy is much more complex, does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that policy is usually a mess and governance generally fails.*' In line with the views set out above and expressed by interviewees (see below), they propose that the network management should include varying the actors involved, and supporting challenge and reflection.

Policy networks in smaller countries: what interviewees said:

Interviewees consistently cited networking as a strength of smaller nations - and one which, in their experience, was being relatively well exploited already. Almost every interviewee made a reference to a variant on the theme of the ability to '*get everyone together in one room'* or to talk directly on a regular basis to every strategic stakeholder, partner or delivery agent. A selection of the quotations on this theme is in Box 1.

Interviewees had found that a number of benefits for policy resulted from having effective networks.

Firstly, networks helped generate shared understanding of issues and shared goals:

> *'Another consequence is that people have a shared understanding of how life is... it gets people to focus on what is within the realm of the changeable.'*

Secondly, policy generated through networks tended to be grounded and based on an understanding of delivery. Logistical or pragmatic challenges are considered at the outset, in discussion with delivery partners and agents (see 3.4 on vertical coherence). This influences policy selection and development, rather than being seen as a separate issue to be addressed by other people at a later stage. Similarly, during implementation, shorter and faster feedback loops provide earlier warning about problems:

> *'Solutions can be more in tune with downstream implementation and impact, because you are talking directly to those affected'*

[43] Kickert, W J M, Klijn, E-H, Joop, F m, Koppenian, F M (eds) (2000) Managing Complex Networks: Strategies for the Public Sector London Sage

'In England it would take longer to understand the impact'.

Thirdly interviewees identified the linked benefits of trust and challenge. Building up a trusted group of stakeholders creates the ability to share thinking and explore a wide range of options at an early stage and to be open about risks. The ability to gather ideas and views from a number of sources, and being prepared to be challenged and to change course depended on this relationship of trust.

Box 1: 'Getting everyone in one room'

'Because it's a small country, you can bring everyone together in one hub and you can get everyone with an interest in an issue is a single room.'

'The big advantage is closer networks, around one table.'

'It is about scale - you actually can get all the public sector leaders in a room - and we do, twice a year.'

'You can eyeball every individual responsible for implementation over one table.'

'You can readily get all the stakeholders together.'

'It's easier to have those external relationships with academics and stakeholders and the networks are easier to make and maintain.'

'One of the very clear benefits of being a small country is the networks tend to be there and if you are active in your field you will get to know the participants fairly quickly.'

'The basic concept - that you can get the key players together relatively easily, get consensus more easily, be closer to the front line experience and have positive feedback loops must be true - it's simply a matter of scale. In London you are so much further away and dealing with a much more disparate polity, so it's less easy to have those discussions. So just in practical terms it's a major opportunity.'

'The benefit of being a small country is we can get all the local authorities into a room, all the health boards, all the bodies covered by [the area]… which covers billions of pounds of public expenditure and majority of public services.'

'There's a really big advantage in terms of being a small country because in theory you can get all the public service leaders together in one place and have a reasonable conversation, so the chain of communication should be quite short and you should be able to build productive working relationships based on personal relationship, trust and knowledge and understanding of each other which should on theory strengthen that link between policy making and shaping and delivery and then feedback in terms of making it work effectively and more quickly.'

'We are a very networked system. I can pick up the phone and ring colleagues in any department, and we meet regularly. Those relationships are worth a lot. Studies at EU level have commented on [our] ability to get things done by the ability to network and line things up - a particular skill set.'

'In one area you soon get to know the people you need to know.'

'The main difference [after devolution] was [organisations] became much more involved and had more access to policy makers at the devolved level, which partially had to do with scale as you could pick up the phone, walk down the corridor or the street and be able to speak to people, but also to do with style as devolved assemblies were built on a more open and consensual, consultative, participatory basis compared with the traditional

Westminster system. So there was much more access at all stages including the early stages of policy making and consultation but also going through the legislative process.'

'Closeness to stakeholders is a particular advantage of smaller countries. In a small country you know a lot of people and have a lot of connections and that is seen as one of our strengths, even at EU level, that we network quite a lot.'

'Engaging with all the key academics here on something, or all local authorities is doable. In England it's not doable, at best can engage with a representative subset - and if it's something contentious you can never get consensus. But here you can get everyone in a room and talk things through.'

'If you have trusted groups of stakeholders who you know well, you can do good iterative development and test the waters with ideas (informally, under the radar), before going wider '.

'There has been a huge focus on knowledge transfer, which has led to different style of policy making which is very open to bringing in ideas from outside - very different from London which was a close knit group and the usual suspects driving policy on an ideological basis. There does seem to be a keenness to engage more in different ideas about how to do things and to learn from elsewhere. There is openness.'

Finally, interviewees noted that strong networks brought with them a fresh set of policy levers, such as persuasion and informal dialogue:

'Making speeches and exhorting has limited impact, whereas to have a seat at the table certainly gives people a chance to speak but they also have to listen in return. The framework that emerges if it's done properly actually gives government levers or tools that direct policy development and implementation wouldn't give.'

Interviewees identified a number of factors making policy networks particularly effective in smaller countries. These are set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Why are policy networks effective in smaller countries?		
Factor	Description	Quotes
Exhaustiveness	Being able to talk to all strategic stakeholders or partners within a specific sector or tier (e.g. all local authority leads, all health body leads) rather than just a sample or subset:	*'We know who to speak to and can speak directly to them all'.*
Inclusiveness and diversity	the feasibility of including a wide range of bodies, interests or views, for instance issue groups, unions, practitioners, service user representatives	*'Usually, people who want to have a say can do so and people feel more part of the process here'.*
Direct communication	The ability to communicate face-to-face (sometimes contrasted with written or digital communication) and hold round-table discussions, and to build strong group and individual relationships and understanding. It was important not just to have set piece meetings where each party feels obliged to make a position statement, but genuine dialogue	*'The advantages are being able to deal face to face with people',* *'In a small country you can resolve issues through discussion and negotiation, it's more practical..., very much a co-production model'* *'20 people in a room will always be a sharing on information, a cascade or people taking their individual positions. But with 8, 9, 10, 11 there is a really big opportunity to work jointly properly, for instance on bringing health and social care together – to develop a solution they have all co-created'.* *'The advantage ought to be that in a small country government and civil society are pretty closely networked in a way which is difficult to replicate in much larger countries, so over a sustained period your politicians, third sector and academics all rub up alongside each other fairly frequently and would to certain degree get to know each other quite well. In a larger country it doesn't happen because the pool is so big with rapid change around of personnel.'*
Speed	..of arranging discussions or meetings, and agility in moving to decision making, and having	*'You can get to solutions more quickly and effectively'*

	people with the authority to commit to decisions '*present in the room':*	*'..the speed with which we set up the...support programme by getting four people in a room – a few weeks later it was funded, planned and happening, jobs were advertised – it's easy to reach the front line and the right individuals'.* *'In a smaller country it is easier to change direction... The potential speed I think is a function of small size... The relatively short lines of communication and control can be called on in a positive way.'*
Informal as well as formal networking	The ability to *'just pick up the phone to test out an idea*', and the fact that in a small country, people are more likely to meet each other more frequently and in different contexts	*'the small population means there are lots of other connections not just formal ones'.* *'An advantage is knowledge of players, short lines of communication and a high level of informality and shared understanding.'* *'From a policy perspective, sometimes as a small country you are very much more reliant on the networks and the relationships in terms of who you work with.'* *'The positive is the ease of talking to people across different fields and high degree of informal contact and networking.'*

The practical arrangements described for networking varied widely. They included literally '*getting everyone in a room*' either as a one-off event, short-term 'task and finish' group or as a standing (usually more formal) arrangement. Other examples were the use of virtual teams, or larger scale policy making or consultation events such as roadshows, workshops or national conferences (for instance with all secondary school heads of a particular subject).

Two specific kinds of network were identified by individual interviewees as working well in smaller countries:

- Professional groups:
  'Where you have a group of professionals like HR, finance or surveyors, there is usually a good set of behaviours around networking and getting together on professional development. ... We can rationalise and work together across whole public sector especially in professional areas where there's not much politics - and get whole nation solutions'.
- Analysts and academics (but see section 3.5 in relation to analytical capacity in smaller countries):
  'We have proximity to academics and external researchers through geography and a shared history through being at college together or working together in different contexts. You tend to actually know all the relevant specialists and policy teams and talk to them informally and regularly. So you can think ahead about evidence needs. There's a triangle of external research, policy side and people in public service delivery. Networks of evidence (whether at conferences or in pubs!) and there are conversations in the margins'.

Interviewees also pointed out two risks or challenges associated with policy networks in smaller countries - risks that are in tension with each other. The first is that networks become closed or exclusive and suffer from groupthink. The second is that they become too large, unwieldy and unproductive, offering a show of inclusion without members having real decision making authority.

The first risk, of exclusivity of membership, 'cosiness', lack of diversity of opinion and lack of challenge, needed - according to interviewees - to be avoided by ensuring open debate without fear or favour. Some referred to the need to seek input from outside the range of 'usual suspects', for instance targeting hard-to-engage sectors, organisations or individuals. There was a proposal by one interviewee that the regulation of lobbying be formalised and strengthened:

'The negative is fundamental assumptions are not challenged due to lack of time and resources, and also because stakeholders tend to hold similar assumptions and views. Fewer stakeholders means less diversity, more grouped round average views and contributions.'

'Part of the problem of familiarity of living in a small country is everyone knows everyone, like in a small town. A small environment is more prone to it. You have more insiders - so outsiders find it more difficult to get their policy on the table or their view to be heard.'

'The disadvantage of being close to stakeholders is it can be a very conservative system, especially if the politics is not working well.'

'Regulation of lobbying is important for transparency - there's a public record of who is talking to whom. Public actors being lobbied by private actors gives the perception that some groups may have undue influence.'

The second risk was that over-enthusiasm for inclusivity could generate ineffective groups that became talking shops but did not reach decisions. Networking could became an end in itself and lose sight of the policy objectives. It was stressed that meeting and talking were not in themselves sufficient to ensure that members' interests were being represented:

'The aim is to have meaningful conversations so that if we involve people it is consequential and produces an outcome, so you are not wasting people's time, you are valuing their time when you talk to them. You have an honest conversation about what is up for grabs.'

'What you find is there is a great deal of consultation, early on there was self-reported high levels of satisfaction …with ease of access ... But does it have a causal impact on outcomes, because consulting stakeholders doesn't necessarily mean empowering them or responding to their demands? …there's a disparity between groups that are well embedded and their strategic objectives map well onto what the government wants to do and they are well integrated in the policy process, and other groups who may get access ...but they don't see their demands reflected in policy. Talk is cheap, you can physically get everyone in the room - it doesn't mean everyone's interests are served.'

'The problem is if it's always a few people engaged. There's no point having stakeholder meetings and saying "thanks for coming, I hope you enjoyed the coffee" but their views don't end up informing policy, because people become alienated by that.'

'You need fora where stakeholders engage in real honest debate with evidence – you need to be clear it's not just a whinge session or asking for more money, there are no sacred cows and the issue is the outcome.'

'There was a lot of talk about consultation fatigue and that they were consulted on absolutely everything but they didn't feel it was actually making a difference.'

'It's very easy to set up meetings - a few phone calls and all these people turn up, but the frustrating thing is, where's the follow through, where's the long term value and progress and are we getting anywhere and how do you translate it into long term delivery rather than talking the talk?'

Conclusion

On the basis of the evidence from the interviews, smaller countries do appear to have an advantage in developing closer and more inclusive policy networks. These can help develop grounded and pragmatic policy that meets all relevant needs, alongside a shared understanding of and consensus around that policy. This advantage can be maximised by ensuring all relevant stakeholders are involved, that networking starts early in the policy development process, that all voices and multiple points of view are listened to and decisions are made on the basis of rational argument rather than vested interests or strength of lobbying power. Direct communication, building strong relationships and ensuring genuine dialogue were valued as important.

There is a need to balance stability of memberships of groups against periodic review and refreshing of membership to ensure open access. An open style of working, welcoming challenge and alternative points of view needs to be framed within clear parameters of debate and agreed, shared goals. It is important to be clear what the purpose of the particular instance of stakeholder engagement is (for instance, information sharing, gathering ideas or opinions, or decision making) and to determine the membership accordingly, for efficiency and effectiveness. Some for a will need very open access; others will be more effective with a small number of key decision-makers.

3.3 Horizontal coherence

One of the main potential advantages of working at a smaller national scale is that it should be easier to make coherent policy that spans traditional subject, functional or organisational boundaries and benefits from synergy in terms of its impact. This horizontal coherence has strong links with other potential advantages of policy making in small countries discussed elsewhere in this report, such as vertical coherence (section 3.4) and networking with stakeholders (3.2). A 'special case' of horizontal coherence, namely the use of frameworks of wellbeing outcomes for national vision and strategic direction, is discussed separately at section 3.3.1.

What is horizontal coherence? Themes from the literature

The business of government is very broad and diverse. It has to be sliced somehow to make it manageable, orderly and accountable. But however a government is structured, there will be public or social policies that cannot be contained within a single subject area or organisational unit, insulated from others. Policy decisions in these areas will have a range of potential impacts in other areas. Many policies explicitly tackle cross-cutting areas, such as social exclusion, or chronic 'wicked' issues such as substance misuse. Hood (2005)[44] traces the history of co-ordination between units of government, demonstrating that policy makers have always tried, with varying degrees of success, to anticipate, map and take into account such impacts and inter-relationships in formulating and implementing policy. At the minimum, this has taken the form of trying to avoid unexpected consequences in one area due to actions in another. At best, coherent policy is innovative, holistic, collaborative and delivered seamlessly through co-ordinated services that have an impact greater than the sum of their parts.

The UK Labour government of 1997 brought a fresh emphasis and ambition[45] to its efforts to co-ordinate knowledge and activity between traditional subject domains, agencies and sectors. It also introduced some new vocabulary, coining the terms 'joined-up government'[46] and its antithesis 'silo working' - where the silos represent not just separated and vertical policy structures but also top-down delivery methods or flows of money and services from government to communities. Partnership structures, and the language of partnership, were everywhere at this time – including in the devolution White Papers, rhetoric and legislation (the Government of Wales Act 1998[47] provided for a statutory Partnership Council).

[44] Hood, C (2005) The Idea of Joined-Up Government: A Historical Perspective in Joined-Up Government, Bogdanor, V (ed) Oxford: OUP
[45] PIU 2000 PIU. 2000. Wiring it up: Whitehall's management of cross cutting policies and services. London: PIU.
[46] Mulgan, G (2009) The Art of Public Strategy: Mobilizing Power and Knowledge for the Common Good Oxford: OUP p183
[47] Government of Wales Act (1998)

According to Jupp (2000)[48], the word 'partnership' was used over 6,000 times in Parliament in 1999 compared with 38 times ten years earlier.

'Joined up government', according to Ling (2002)[49] is a '*homogenizing term'* for '*disparate activities'* or '*an umbrella term describing various ways of aligning formally distinct organizations in pursuit of the objectives of the government of the day'.* It was a response to a narrative of '*the emergence of a class of problems whose causes are so complex, and whose solutions are so multi-factorial, that they require a multi-agency response. The spatially and functionally fragmented, professionally dominated, bureaucratic model, accountable vertically to a Minister, suddenly seemed old fashioned and ripe for modernizing*.' Bogdanor (2005)[50] notes that joined up government is generally seen as an approach that seeks to bring together private and voluntary bodies as well as government departments and agencies. This wider interpretation is considered in section 3.2; the discussion here focuses primarily on co-ordination within government itself and with its direct agencies/ sponsored bodies.

Many approaches have been taken to achieve this coherence and 'joined-up-ness' within government. Organisations have been structured and re-structured and processes designed and redesigned to make co-ordination easier or deeper. The main structural or process-based approaches are set out in Table 4.

The potential benefits of joined-up government for policy making, identified in the literature and through interviews undertaken for this study, include:

- better informed policy, because evidence and knowledge/insights are shared between professions and perspectives
- more effective policy due to synergy between the activities of all those involved, or where single agencies or departments do not have sufficient powers or resources to tackle a problem
- a focus on results and readiness at adapt in order to achieve these, rather than loyalty to familiar processes
- policy that is less insular and self-serving (in departmental terms)
- avoidance of unintended consequences

[48] Jupp, B. (2000). Working together. Creating a better environment for cross-sector partnerships. London: DEMOS.
[49] Ling, T (2002) Delivering Joined-up Government in the UK: Dimensions, Issues and Problems. Public Administration Vol 80, issue 4
[50] Bogdanor, V (ed), 2005. Joined-Up Government Oxford:OUP p2

Table 4: Structural and process based approaches to achieving cross-cutting policy	
Approach	Examples
Grouping functions around: • cross-cutting subject areas • sections of the population or • geographical areas	• poverty units, sustainable development departments • units for policy related to older people, women or children • unitary local authorities covering planning and development, infrastructure, education, social services
Superimposing new co-ordinating structures or mechanisms on existing structures	Permanent committees or partnerships Temporary task forces or project/issue/virtual teams Statutory or informal procedural requirements to assess impacts Policing or encouragement of joint working by co-ordinating departments or units
Joining smaller organisations together to make larger entities, either: • fully, or • partially	• formal merger and integration of functions, staff, budgets • sharing leadership or support functions
Agreeing shared vision, objectives, outcomes	Strategic aims that parties sign up to Personal objectives and targets with linked career rewards Shared performance management frameworks or indicators, either between or within organisations, with attendant individual or group incentives and rewards. Funds accessible on condition of partnership working
Developing services and delivery models that operate across professional or administrative boundaries	Multi-agency working, case conferences, one-stop shops. Specific initiatives for particular groups or areas These can be deeply linked including at the planning and development stage or more presentationally linked at the point of delivery or front-of-house
Improving communication and information sharing	Forums to facilitate dialogue, shared IT networks, linking of data systems and opening up access to data.

- a greater appetite for preventative policies, including solutions whose outcomes might benefit other departments' budgets or objectives or contribute to wider wellbeing.
- reduced duplication and therefore saved money.

Barriers and success factors

The universally recognised barrier to horizontal coherence is its sheer difficulty and 'unnatural' nature. Everyone involved has to adapt how they work to make structures and processes fit together. Klein and Plowden (2005)[51] describe how '*cross-cutting work requires people to learn new routines, new cultures and new languages…it imposes heavy costs on both organisations and individuals'*. There are human and bureaucratic instincts to protect turf and budgets (Page, 2005)[52] or, Mulgan contends more importantly, autonomy. Where restructuring is required, this can be costly in terms of money and diversion of effort from policy, and confusing and frustrating for staff and customers alike. Repeated restructuring leads to cynicism and loses loyalty. Additional structures or mechanisms can be labour-intensive and add delays. Foster[53] makes the specific point that delivery of joined-up services requires significant attention to design and testing and, often, substantial culture change. As a result of these concerns, Klein and Plowden and others recommend that there should be only a few such initiatives, asking '*if initiatives proliferate, who will join up the joiner-uppers?*'

Commentators surveying the myriad approaches to achieving horizontal coherence have often concluded that the most important success factors relate to culture and skills, rather than a recipe of specific structures or procedures. Trust is described as '*the most important ingredient*'[54], accompanied by commitment and a sense of common purpose around clear shared objectives (especially if formal decision making powers and, crucially, budgets remain separate and attached to traditional departments). Other cultural factors are openness to new ways of thinking, an understanding of the wider context of policy and a culture of reflective learning[55]. Skills to support inclusive, non-hierarchical[56] leadership, networking[57] and negotiation are needed.

[51] Klein, R and Plowden, W (2005) JASP meets JUG: Lessons of the 1975 Joint Approach to Social Policy for Joined-Up Government in Joined-Up Government, Bogdanor, V (ed) Oxford: OUP
[52] Page, E.C. (2005) Joined-Up Government and the Civil Service in Joined-Up Government, Bogdanor, V (ed) Oxford: OUP
[53] Foster, C (2005) Joined-Up Government and Cabinet Government in Joined-Up Government, Bogdanor, V (ed) Oxford: OUP
[54] Audit Commission. 1998. A fruitful partnership. Effective partnership working. London: Audit Commission.
[55] Wilkinson, D. and E. Appelbee. 1999. Implementing holistic government. Joined-up action on the ground. London: DEMOS
56 Bardach, E. 1998. Getting agencies to work together. The practice and theory of managerial craftsmanship. Washington: The Brookings Institution.
[57] Mawson, J. and S. Hall. 2000. 'Joining it up locally? Area regeneration and holistic government in England', Regional Studies, Vol. 34, No. 1, 67–74

Other key success factors are continuity of people and clarity and transparency about roles, particularly in relation to goal setting, responsibilities and accountability[58]. Bardach (1998) sees genuine collaboration as requiring a radical change of culture: *'Almost nothing about the bureaucratic ethos makes it hospitable to interagency collaboration. The collaborative ethos values equality, adaptability, discretion, and results; the bureaucratic ethos venerates hierarchy, stability, obedience, and procedures'*[59]. However, Page and others warn against over-ambition in attempts at wholesale culture change, noting resource constraints in relation to training and development and the need to work in an evolutionary way with '*the civil servants we have got, [rather] than to aspire to a new type of civil servant that we have not'*.

For Mulgan, the cultural and behavioural factors supporting co-operative working include clear responsibility for joined-up objectives and strong leadership and ownership at the top. He advocates ministers or senior officials having horizontal as well as vertical responsibilities. His other main factors are '*the key drivers of behaviour – money, kudos, career rewards and targets*', with money being allocated to specific ends rather than functional bureaucracies. He agrees with Klein and Plowden on the importance of rewards for organisations and individuals being tied to the success of cross-cutting initiatives in achieving shared goals.

Process-based mechanisms can be viewed as a bureaucratic add-on, a tick box exercise or a hoop to jump through, rather than providing helpful challenge or improving outcomes. Therefore structures and processes should be clear and simple and add value, and should not become an industry in themselves, with large volumes of additional guidance or form-filling.

Several reports refer to the fact that effective joint working takes time to develop and to deliver results, which can frustrate politicians and officials used to being able to work with more autonomy and speed. However, the literature also shows the importance of stability of arrangements and of allowing time for arrangements to bed in and relationships and trust to be built. People need to invest in the new relationships, so it is important not to repeatedly reorganise structures, and to try to maintain teams and retain individuals in roles over the medium term.

Another success factor identified in the literature is the role of a strong co-ordinating unit such as the Cabinet Office or Treasury in Whitehall, to push and police the joining up. This

[58] Ling, T (2002) Delivering Joined-up Government in the UK: Dimensions, Issues and Problems. Public Administration Vol 80, issue 4

[59] Bardach, E. 1998. Getting agencies to work together. The practice and theory of managerial craftsmanship. Washington: The Brookings Institution. p. 232

must have levers and authority to influence behaviour and can be supported and informed by evidence from audit or scrutiny arrangements and organisations. Foster, commenting on the UK government, notes the need for '*a senior minister...with authority…to oversee and integrate all these processes*'. Gerry Holtham[60], writing before the recent changes to the senior corporate structure at the Welsh Government, describes the Welsh Government as a *'polo mint government'* in having *'no substantial First Minister's department, no strong Cabinet Office and no real Treasury...there is no body that is supposed to help frame an overall strategy of to co-ordinate the strategies of different ministries, which all too often operate with detached independence. ....You won't get joined-up government if a chunk of the government's central nervous system is missing*'.

Horizontal coherence in smaller countries: what interviewees said

Interviewees naturally agreed that horizontal coherence was important and had many benefits:

> *'Integration of services makes sense, for instance health and social care – it's more efficient, more responsive, and it saves money.'*

> *'You avoid dumping of problems on other departments.'*

There was also a note of caution echoing the concerns of Klein and Plowden, with the recognition that it was possible to go too far in trying to join-up everything with everything else, with a resulting loss of efficiency:

> *'We went completely over the top. If you try to join up everything you end up with total stasis. Our initial approach to policy making emphasised the need to consider all implications for every other area and we ground to a halt – we had twenty-plus different impact assessments, all well-meant.'*

> *'You have to choose – sometimes there are obvious links, sometimes you are struggling to find relevance between subjects. Health and social care budgets are a good example of working well, [there are] examples of it not working well'.*

The general difficulty of achieving horizontal coherence, as described in the literature, was well understood as a reality of life by interviewees:

[60] Holtham, G (2015) A polo mint government in The Welsh Agenda issue 54, spring/summer 2015

'Ministers, even when they subscribe to the same programme and are members of the same party, are in some measure in career competition with each other. So, will I do something that makes my colleague look good? Maybe not. Bureaucracies are the same: 'why am I giving my budget to a neighbouring department?' 'If I'm tasked with cross cutting responsibilities will I lose my standing in the organisation?' '

'The trouble is [cross-cutting responsibilities] get seen as additional or optional, the 'real business' is managing the silos.'

'The challenge is increasing people's awareness of the impacts they need to think about when developing things and how their decisions could have a different impact. We can do that reasonably well but it does require quite a sustained effort and sustained engagement when people already have a lot of challenges within their own policy area to deal with. It can seem like a bit of a luxury and also a bit of an encroachment into other people's territory to be going and saying 'so how exactly are you developing your policy?'.'

'The shift in the culture of the civil service doesn't happen overnight. If you're used to a style of working and suddenly you have to start getting on the phone and inviting yourself to meetings and thinking outside your area that you work in. It takes time, leadership and it is to do with personalities.'

'The trick and the challenge is that transparency and accountability is seen as meaning giving separate budgets and autonomous roles but it doesn't allow you to do cross-cutting.'

'If either takes the view, for instance, "I'm the policy maker, you're the regulator or implementer or whatever", or if an agency takes the view that "well the budget is coming through you but we are entirely independent" there will be no way of getting the crossover.'

Interviewees said that it should be easier to achieve cross-cutting or coherent government policy in smaller nations:

'In a smaller country it is easier to collaborate, including internally as a government.'

'In principle, a smaller government that is closer to issues on the ground should be better at making the connections – we should be capable of integrating the issues better.'

For devolved administrations, the ability to join up policy better was cited as one of the advantages of devolution:

'When we started devolution, joined-up government was a theme in thinking about what good government looked like – and an argument for devolution was that it should be more likely to happen'.

There were examples of cross-cutting working being successful in practice, making responsive policy rapidly and effectively:

When we had a problem… we were able to identify the problem as needing relatively urgent action and took legislation through very quickly indeed – it was a very responsive piece of policy making to a specific problem in a small area, that would be beyond Westminster and Whitehall capacity'.

There was a range of reasons why, in interviewees' experience, horizontal coherence was easier in smaller countries. Many of the points made were highly practical, relating to the smaller number of organisations and government agencies between which to make links, fewer people to bring together, meetings are more likely to be on neutral territory and the fact that people (generally) tend to be geographically closer to each other:

'We don't have huge bastions of departments in different parts of the country'.

One feature of smaller national governments was seen as a double edged sword: the scope of any individual's role is necessarily much wider than in larger countries –with individuals in the devolved UK governments often having responsibility for areas covered by one or more substantial teams in Whitehall, and *'The majority of people at grade 7 and above are regularly interfacing with ministers – which is not true in Whitehall where most Grade 5s don't get to meet ministers much'*. This had dangers in terms of capacity and quality as well as an impact on the stress experienced by employees. However, it was thought to have a positive effect on the breadth of understanding of policy context, the ability to gain an overview and to make links and identify potential policy conflicts or duplication:

'One positive is the range of things we do as individual civil servants – having a good overview of lots of areas, not just one narrow area. It has capacity implications but it does mean we can join up better'.

'If I go to an EU meeting I'm representing the full policy field, whereas [representatives from] larger countries represent a particular area. There's advantages because you have the big picture and disadvantages because you are not down in the minutiae so you might not put the same time and effort into the detail. I admire the detail in [representatives from] other countries but sometimes they miss the big picture and the ability to talk in the round and the direction of travel. Small countries also give you the ability to be confident about the whole policy area.'

'Middle ranking civil servants talk to ministers regularly... it's a small organisation and the ministers are right here and people in relatively junior levels have a wide range of responsibility.'

'Inevitably any one person has a broader span than they would in Whitehall. A typical director [here] is covering a portfolio larger than most DGs in the UK government.'

The fact already noted that effective cross-cutting arrangements require substantial effort, meant that small nations with inbuilt capacity challenges should focus their cross cutting efforts in a few key areas.

Having the national government structured as a single organisation with one budget and one senior management group was noted to be a clear advantage. It was pointed out that this provided opportunities to develop a more corporate attitude to allocation of staff and budgets between areas, and to build stronger teams and networks, with fewer members. A greater number of loose or informal networks were described as growing organically as staff moved around the organisation - individuals are more likely to know each other across a range of contexts. A particular opportunity described by several interviewees was the potential to develop a clear sense of national direction, with a small number of shared, long-term priorities – a subject dealt with in section 3.3.1.

Interviewees who identified the opportunity for better joining up within a single government, often added the caveat that this opportunity had not yet been fully exploited:

'We are well controlled internally with good networks and the ability to cross fertilise between portfolios, and external networks are tighter too - people know each other'.

Some considered that there was a long way to go before horizontal coherence was achieved:

'We are a small country but we have relatively complex structures, institutions and layers – all trying to do things to the same set of people rather than stepping back and looking at the problem. Our smallness has contributed to complexity – it's a very crowded space.'

'In some areas, joining up is better in England, because of the maturity of the state and a strong Cabinet Office that can bring everyone together'.

'If it is the case that effective synergies are limited or hampered by a silo effect and ministers competing with each other by using knowledge as a currency, keeping things to themselves rather than sharing, it throws down a big challenge to civil servants and policy makers more widely to have in place mechanisms, relationships and arrangements where we don't operate in silos and we share information at the policy formation stage'.

'We know each other and… we can have common goals and clarity about what we want to achieve. We haven't always delivered on this yet, but it's early days. It would be more difficult in a big country'.

It was noted that departments within the government organisation may not always be as corporately minded and inter-connected as might be hoped, for instance tending to protect their individual budgets or missing opportunities to have officials working closely across subject boundaries. In both Ireland and the devolved UK governments, the vertical departmental structures inherited from Whitehall were still strong, and there could in some cases still be a tendency for some ministers and senior officials to invest more strongly in the identity of their department than that of the government as a whole:

'There's still a very strong alignment to individual ministers so this question of getting onto other people's territory arises – departments are pretty much aligned with ministers.'

'It ought to be possible to have more effective joining up with a relatively small number of people, but people have empires and are suspicious of interventions, people have budgets to protect'.

'Power bases can become quite entrenched with silos, which might be more pronounced in a small administration, where ministers eye each other jealously and are protective of their turf. They are in larger administrations too, but it's more in the public domain, the decision making process is more expansive. In a small country individual ministers really can make an awful lot of decisions pretty much on their own bat on advice which has been quite narrowly drawn in some cases.'

'My personal view is it is less effective to have a Minister full time on some of these issues with a dedicated department than to have a minister with a foot in different departments, because otherwise it becomes 'their problem' and people can withdraw, even though they retain functional responsibilities that are relevant to that issue.'

'If the minister's culture is not genuinely cross-cutting then they will give those signals out to their own civil servants.'

It was reported that the Scottish Government has had considerable success in unifying the government by removing departments altogether.

The fact that cabinets tended to be smaller and co-located in smaller countries was seen as a positive factor, as they could work more closely together on a daily basis:

'The number of ministerial portfolios can have an impact because each minister will want to be taking decisions in their own area so the more ministers you have the more potentially fragmented things become.'

'You would think that it's easier to develop coherent policy with only five or six Ministers sitting round a table (or 7 or 8) and a corresponding number of officials - that should bring some joined-up-ness and symmetry.'

A consistent message from the interviews as well as the literature, was that a strong co-ordinating unit with a Cabinet Office style function could help boost and maintain cross-cutting working:

> *'People will always have interests and fight for their own corner in terms of their department and career – what you need is a function in cabinet that looks across the piece and is prepared to challenge.'*

> *'We need a cabinet office function to provide central direction and policy scrutiny around a central plan. If you don't have that central co-ordinated overview, everything is left floundering about which policies to pursue or how to deliver on those cross cutting themes.'*

> *'There are a lot of good things that could be done that can't be done – that requires something like a treasury or cabinet office function to say on a strategic basis "these things are great ideas, but we cannot do them" '.*

> *'The message is this is not just for one portfolio but for all ministers and the Perm Sec needs a strategic centre to drive it, not just one department.'*

The sharing of back office functions is generally built in to the single government body model. It has potential to eliminate duplication and improve synergy in, for instance, purchasing and procurement, and also provides a common underpinning organisational culture and sense of common ground.

In a smaller country, whether with a single government organisation or not, there may be greater scope (because of physical proximity and a smaller talent pool) for individuals to move in the course of their career between subjects, departments, roles, organisations or sectors. It was suggested that this should lead to a better understanding of the wider policy context and of the pressures and constraints under which colleagues are operating, and more opportunities for identifying potential links, synergies or policy conflicts. It was proposed that more could be made of this advantage through greater use of secondments, placements or changes to recruitment practices:

> *'Also, and smallness helps here, why is it that you can't move between local government and the civil service and academia, for instance on secondments, to bring in fresh thinking? ...it's not necessarily only*

possible in small states, but it should be easier. We need more porous boundaries horizontally and vertically.'

Other points included the greater feasibility of linking data sets and IT systems, working more closely with senior analysts and creating cross-cutting surveys:

'Joining up data on education and looked after children is quicker and easier to bring together than across Whitehall departments - for instance flying start, health, education and social care data.'

'We are combining our household surveys (the national survey, health survey and others). This would be difficult in England where they are run by different departments. We're thereby releasing 40% of the costs.'

It was noted that sometimes the best place to gain a clear picture of horizontal coherence is at the local level ('*externally, people do see the whole – they are impacted by different parts of government*'), and that this can also be a good place to start in trying to join up services:

'Integrating at the centre is very challenging and you could spend all your time trying to bring people together. The job of the LSBs is to try to draw things together locally – so that each public service has a better understanding of what their partners are doing and in a very practical way people can join up services. If we tried to do it nationally it becomes political, but at delivery level they know their patch very well and have in common that they are committed to improving things in that patch'.

Finally, there were some calls for formal impact assessment arrangements to be subject to an element of flexibility and discretion, being used as a tool to improve policy rather than a formulaic tick box exercise:

'You've got to rely on the good judgement and professionalism of individuals to work out impacts elsewhere and to work these through.'

'You can do things which tick every box, but the trouble is they make no difference to the overall outcomes, and we tend to rule out anything that could make a big impact in any dimension'.

Conclusion

Overall, there does appear to be a significant potential advantage for smaller countries in achieving horizontal coherence in policy formulation and delivery. This can be exploited through a number of behaviours and actions, including:

- Having a single government organisation rather than many separate departments or many agencies/quangos, emphasising government rather than departmental objectives, and encouraging identification with the whole government rather than one part of it.
- The political will to focus on the long term:
  'It all depends on the political class – they mustn't care too much about the short term or the nine o'clock headlines. They must have big vision and long term view, and not be weak. You need to have politicians who are clear about the direction and work together with collective responsibility, not changing policy after every reshuffle. Individual ministers should not have total control over their departmental policy – there should be collective decisions and responsibility.'
- Focusing on the achievement of a small number of shared, cross-cutting objectives with ministers and officials having horizontal as well as vertical accountability for outcomes (see section 3.3.1). Avoiding Minister/portfolio/department silos
- Creating and giving autonomy and authority to cross-cutting structures such as projects or virtual teams with shared goals, targets and indicators ('*There are forums for bringing people together and use of champions*').
- Linking or pooling budgets and staff resources ('Such efforts tend to fall apart when it comes to pooling budgets and decision making. We have numerous partnerships but few genuinely pool resources'.)
- Structure and management processes that promote, value and actively reward cross-cutting working and a corporate attitude at all levels: 'You can write it into people's *objectives. There can be ways of overcoming it by giving people specific remits to go beyond their day job',*
- Encouraging movement of staff between departments and subject areas during their careers, but maintaining the stability of teams during the lifetime of cross-cutting programmes or initiatives.
- Ensuring cross-governmental co-ordination through a Cabinet Office-like function with suitable authority
- Using staff resources flexibly, in temporary teams, often with a project-based approach. This helps address the staff capacity issue inherent in smaller governments, as staff are not tied in to indefinite roles and do not have an expectation that work will always remain the same.

- Co-location, geographical proximity or excellent ICT for close working of dispersed teams.
- Use of a project and programme management approach to policy management - to ensure understanding and management of dependencies, risks and impacts.
- An internal culture of trust, commitment, openness, willingness to change, reflective learning. Culture change and commitment from the top: 'Silo is a state of mind not just an organisational structure', 'structures change but the biggest impediments are up here in people's heads, that is the biggest challenge and what determines whether it works'.

3.3.1 Wellbeing frameworks

In recent years, a growing number of countries and regions have developed a strategic approach to policy making, based on a framework of long term outcomes, accompanied by high level indicators. This approach can be viewed as a special case of horizontal coherence (see 3.3 above). Although there is no theoretical reason why it could not be done in large countries, it has tended to date to be a feature of smaller ones, or of regions, and there may be reasons why it is easier to do well at a smaller scale. It is therefore considered here as another potential advantage for smaller countries in relation to policy making. Many of the arguments will be similar to those already made in relation to horizontal coherence generally, but the special features of the wellbeing approach make it worth looking at separately.

What are wellbeing frameworks? Examples and themes from the literature

An early pioneer of the approach was Virginia in the USA, with the Virginia improvement model set up by the Council for Virginia's Future in 2003[61]. It set out a long term vision, objectives, results-based planning and a performance framework. Other countries such as including New Zealand have adopted similar approaches across their public services. Of the devolved administrations of the UK:

- Scotland has been commended as *'an international leader in wellbeing measurement*' by the Carnegie Trust[62] and *Scotland Performs*[63] is generally recognised as a leading example of the performance framework approach;
- Wales is developing an outcomes based approach to improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales around the broadest conception of sustainable development, with a statutory basis through the Future Generations Act[64]; and
- In Northern Ireland, an outcome based social policy framework is in development and an economic strategy is already in place. The Carnegie Roundtable on Wellbeing in Northern Ireland is currently working with the Northern Ireland Executive and others to explore the potential for a whole wellbeing framework[65].

Finland and the Basque region are among other places that have consciously adopted long term outcomes and policy stability, with significant success. Mulgan observes that '*Finland reshaped its government in the early 2000s around a small number of high level strategic*

[61] see www.future.virginia.gov
[62] Carnegie UK Trust (2013) Shifting the Dial: how Scotland performs on wellbeing and what it should do next
[63] http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms
[64] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/contents/enacted
[65] Carnegie UK Trust (2015) Towards a Wellbeing Framework: Findings from the Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland

goals'. James Wilson[66] has commented on the Basque region of Spain, observing that it has the highest level of policy autonomy of EU regions. It has risen from the economic doldrums, with old industries that were struggling to survive, to now being in the top 5-10% in GDP per capita. It was more resilient to the recession than the rest of Spain. The salient features of its policy making were:

- open policy making using TV and huge public meetings to gather views and ensure everyone was included
- political stability that has enabled a long term regional vision and strategy and growth of consensus.
- an atmosphere of enthusiasm for the 'project', with a sense of regional identity that enabled pulling together
- attracting top people from other sectors into government, which welcomed other viewpoints and worked closely with other systems
- a 'crisis' of sudden 'big bang' devolution which meant that co-operation and cross cutting working was essential for policy survival.

The key features of the wellbeing framework family of approaches are:

- a focus on outcomes rather than inputs or outputs. The outcomes are often expressed as a vision of what the country or region will look like in an ideal future.
- concentration by the national or regional government on a small number of outcomes, rather than a large number of activities, often underpinned by a single purpose.
- a long term view, with most outcomes being ones that will take years or even decades or generations to achieve, usually well beyond the term of any one political administration.
- outcomes are high level and generally cut across traditional policy subject boundaries. The approach requires ownership of these cross-cutting outcomes and a sense of common purpose or direction.
- an inclusive style, with considerable evidence gathering or consultation to determine priorities, and significant efforts to build consensus around these across public service, sometimes underpinned by statutory obligations to work towards them and report on progress.
- usually, a reappraisal of the roles and accountabilities of different levels of government. Central government generally takes a more strategic role; delivery and local spending decisions are devolved to local government. A greater acceptance of local autonomy in relation to some policies and sub-regional variation to reflect local circumstances.

[66] Wilson, J R and Aranguren, M J (unpublished) The Basque Country: A Long-term Case in Regional Industrial Policy (Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness and Deusto Business School)

- an improvement methodology, sometimes based on local experimentation and national/regional sharing of learning.
- long term, high level outcome indicators and open, regular or real time reporting of progress against these. These can be supported by shorter term targets and milestones.

The approach can help to avoid an overcrowded governance landscape and to clarify the proper roles of national and local government, with (broadly) strategy being determined by national government and delivery including local adaptation being the role of local authorities, health bodies or the third sector.

Wellbeing frameworks: what interviewees said:

There was a notable level of support for this kind of 'national strategy' approach and for focussing on a few priorities. A selection of interviewees' comments is in Box 2.

Box 2: Long-term outcomes

'We need long term goals and a sense of national direction'

'You need clarity about goals, objectives and what social good you are trying to impact and in what direction and then a debate about how and about measures, so everyone is clear about where things are going. What aspects of societal wellbeing are we trying to influence and in what direction? Then you need a theory of change, identification of mechanisms'.

'The really important policy issues require consistent delivery over a number of years – a long and persistent thread - to see the impact. Will politicians consistently deliver over five-plus years, or do they get fixated on short term initiatives?'
There's a positive story to tell since devolution – a coherent narrative. But now we need bigger ambitions to realise dream of being 'a small clever country' - for instance a few themes: jobs, poverty. We could internally organise around aims rather than departments.'

'It's been around for 20 years, to look at outcomes not outputs dominating policy thinking. But how to get politicians to champion that to drive consistent processes?'

'Can we develop, with social media etc., a pressure from civic society that says 'actually guys, we want a politics that is longer term and goes into the deep issues

here and takes a mature view'. We know economies will be difficult, money will be tight, demographics are getting older and perhaps there has to be a slightly different social contract but we need to have co-ordination between community, family, individual and government to deliver prosperity and social justice and let's work on a longer term basis.'

'There's a risk of trying to do a vast range of things and whole range of initiatives that are too small to affect the economy or society... they absorb a lot of time of officials but can't be done properly because you'd need more people managing and evaluating than delivering. So we need to focus on the things it is appropriate for central government to do.'

'If you throw a bit of money at a nice project you will get some good results - but unless you maintain it over many years, you won't change anything.'

'I would hope next time around we would have a programme which has fewer commitments – not trying to cram too many things in – a bit like a supermarket trolley full of small items and there were some big items which were important and some others which were nice to have. But if you can't afford all that, you have to put some back on the shelf'.

'Most important issues are a 20 year job. If politicians say so, and say they will only get so far towards it in 3 years, the public will understand there is no easy magic turnaround. The public is losing confidence in the process.'

'We need a coherence across public policy which gives purpose to the public service in a small country and says 'this is where we want to go, these are the things of value to us'. Central government can set these in a broadly consensual way and then it is for others to fall in behind.'

There were different views on how far progress had been made in this respect, and the position was different is each of the countries studied:

> *'At the moment policy tends to bubble up from the bottom of the organisation rather than there being a central view of where priorities should lie.'*

'We have already begun to put in place a better system....convening and organising the public sector with a set of agreed outcomes which everyone is working towards, but how they do it and what contribution everyone makes is up to them'

'I sometimes think one of the dangers is we tend to approach policy from the point of view of subjects rather than outcomes. We need to focus less on subjects and departments and more on outcomes - perhaps parts of the civil service might be usefully restructured to reflect outcomes rather than policies.'

Several interviewees said that it could be easier in a smaller country to identify and agree a manageable set of long term objectives, based on outcomes. Some of the reasons for this have already been rehearsed in the previous section - for instance the number of individuals and groups involved, and the fact that the government might be a single organisation with a single budget, and might have a smaller cabinet, with Ministers more able to sit round a table and debate policy priorities. One interviewee said that it was only in logistics that the size of the country made a difference:

'Can you only have an outcomes based approach if you are small? I don't think so - but it's certainly easier in some of the practical arrangements.'

Most interviewees who discussed the topic, however, argued that the wellbeing framework approach fitted smaller countries well. It was said that there might be a stronger sense of nationhood and national identity in some smaller countries than in some larger ones. Similarly, civil servants working for a single government organisation identify themselves as working for, for instance, the Welsh Government or the Scottish Government, rather than for a specific department within that government:

'In a smaller country you have a smaller civil service so people identify very strongly with the [government] not a particular part of it which helps in terms of working together - and we are regularly together and co-located.'

'[It] would be incredibly difficult in Westminster, to get the different departments to sign up to it and not fight their own corner. That is the challenge - it has to be as holistic an approach as possible, it can't just all be about health or all about education, it has to be a balanced suite,

has to look at social, economic and environmental. It has taken us long enough to embed it on this small scale, how would we do it across massive departments?'

There was a consensus that the approach was working well in Scotland, especially the ownership of cross-cutting outcomes at director level, although it was early days in terms of actual outcomes, some areas were easier to adapt to the long term view than others, and there were reservations about how well budgetary allocations had followed outcomes to date. Observations (by interviewees from all the countries studied) about progress on this front in Scotland are in Box 3.

Box 3: Scotland Performs

'*For each outcome we have a lead at director level who owns each of the 16 outcomes - a champion at director level. They have to be aware that they can't achieve their outcomes without help from other areas.'*

'Making directors responsible for outcomes and seeing them as the drivers in the organisation was a good way to go.'

'The outcome way of working was the best thing we could have done for stability without a shadow of a doubt - hugely important.'

'Some areas just lend themselves better to a more outcomes based approach - in others like some parts of health there are still very specific things to be delivered on the ground in the short term. It's changing people's mindsets to the longer term. There are still systems in health with specific targets about beds and waiting times, which is very legitimate, those targets still need to exist, so it's about respecting that in some areas that's appropriate but it should always line up with the longer term goal.'

'They are open about it, that many things didn't work, some issues look better from the outside than close to. It has worked well in some areas like criminal justice, but their social care problems of getting alignment are the same as rest of us have. But it has been a positive process, it's about maturity of politics and clarity of view by politicians and administrators about how you affect change, decent structures that can adapt to the process and ability to work it through over time.'

'Having a clear idea of what they're trying to achieve seems to help in Scotland. It's early days in terms of delivering a better Scotland but it's obvious from talking to them that it's changed their culture, you can't talk to anyone in Scotland without them talking about Scotland Performs. It's changing the way the organisation is thinking - 'what's Scotland Performs saying at high level, and how does our area feed in.'

'The idea of a single performance framework has been very effective - such a clear sense of Scotland wanting to move forward that there's pretty much political buy-in across the board for it. We have a single statement of what the government is all working towards - the whole of public service... We made single outcome agreements with each local authority and took away ring fencing.'

'Different people characterise the Scottish model different ways but a key component is breaking down silos and getting collaboration, vertically and horizontally, a focus on outcomes not inputs or outputs, a consciousness of using the assets we have and the notion of shifting towards prevention. A lot of it is shaped in the current fiscal climate of less money. There's a greater appetite now for third sector involvement (or even private sector) and also community engagement as a strong theme especially since the referendum and the extraordinary upsurge in democratic participation. The rhetoric is very strong at the moment - the rhetoric is very good on all these things, the challenge is to deliver all of that.'

'[Not having departments] worked, and I think it was because there was really strong commitment from the top of the civil service - two strands of a new Perm Sec and new cabinet from other careers who entered politics late and come into government and think "this is no way to run a business". At the same time the civil service thinks "after 8 years of devolution, we've really just taken the old Scottish Office model and we need new thinking". The coincidence of two factors and the old guard beginning to disappear. It was embraced by the civil service, the senior officials really bought into it and believed in it and that message went through the system. It has bedded down.'

'None of this is linked to resource allocation. ...There's no coherent system for allocating resources... So you have priorities and a typically incremental budget process and until the crisis there was so much money they didn't know how to spend

it all. Once that changed it became more important to allocate resources more strategically but it's still not linked to the policy framework.'

Conclusion

The importance of long term stability of policy and a unifying vision and strategy came across very strongly from the interviews. Many interviewees strongly favoured the wellbeing framework approach.

A few voiced important reservations and concerns relating to:

- the need for evidence of effectiveness
- the need to ensure that frameworks actually make a difference to what is done and that existing activity is onto retrofitted onto new high level objectives, creating an additional layer of reporting and bureaucracy
- the feasibility of ministers and central government sticking to the strategic big picture and not getting caught up in issues around local delivery
- the familiar issues related to indicators and targets, such as unintended consequences:

  'There's no easy solution to the outcomes based approach and how to you know a good outcome, but I do know that targets don't work, but the language of outcomes is often translated into targets. Indicators are almost always a proxy and games get played and people focus on the indicator.'

Some of the most important factors identified in making the wellbeing framework approach work well are set out in Table 5.

Table 5: Success factors for wellbeing frameworks	
Focus on a few priorities	*'Be selective, choose a number of things you can do... , because we don't have vast numbers of policy makers. Choose five priorities – I don't think you can go more than 5 in a programme for government.'*
Long termism	*'Policy uncertainty is very damaging for everybody... Substantive change will take a minimum of 15 years to bed down, that's the reality...It's really important that without pitting themselves against the politicians, the civil*

	servants see their role as these longer term projects, which are the ones that will make the big difference.'
Cross cutting ownership of outcomes, a unit that co-ordinates, business planning and budget allocations that follow outcomes and priorities rather than organisational structures, continuous reflection and being open to challenge and sources of ideas.	*'It links back to the challenge function – there ought to be a strategic policy function, which might point to a cabinet office type role saying these are our real priorities and to make sure we do work in a cross cutting way to deliver on these things.'*
A cabinet that is unified and where politics and personalities are supportive of a whole government approach rather than individual success:	*'One way we can improve things is – how cabinet operates is a collection of separate people operating in their own areas and not working collectively, there's not much challenge.'*
There was a view that a statutory basis for the long term outcomes was important for longevity and clout:	*'The statutory nature gives people another hook to hang their hat on for why they are doing things, 'we have a duty' - this will help with trying to do everything and getting out of breath. With too much prescription you can't create genuine buy-in but areas like social care and social services function on statutory obligations so it protects them and facilitates their job because they have leverage for money and when it comes to delivering.'*

It was noted that it was not necessary to restructure to achieve this approach, although departmental silos aligned with individual ministers and their portfolios were unhelpful. Cultural and behavioural change were cited as more important factors:

> *'I often observe there is a preoccupation with structural configurations and sometimes you invest so much energy in the structure that you lose sight of the substantive issues, like better public services. Structural*

issues can be seen as a surrogate for improving policy. You still have the same people in the new organisations. Maybe more so in small countries.'

3.4 Vertical coherence

This section looks at vertical coherence, another form of 'joining up' – this time between levels of government and between policy formulation and delivery.

What is vertical coherence? Themes from the literature:

Traditional 'policy cycle' models represent policy formulation and implementation as separate activities or stages. Although this separation is conceptually helpful, it should not be misinterpreted as meaning that ideas and decisions should be taken first and implementation considered later, with policy simply being 'handed down' to those responsible for making it happen. It is, of course, essential to consider delivery issues from the start. Thinking about delivery should inform the range of options considered and the selection of options for testing or implementation. But many commentators have noted that, in practice, an artificial split between policy and delivery, and institutional divisions between the people responsible for each, have been the downfall of many a policy. Anthony King and Ivor Crewe[67], in their analysis of policy failures of British governments of recent decades, see '*operational disconnect'* as one of the main human errors leading to policy failure, and describe what they see as a Whitehall culture of 'thinkers' separated from 'doers', with higher status attached to the former: *'No feature of the blunders we have studied stands out more prominently - or more frequently – than the divorce between policymaking and implementation and, in human terms, between those who made policies and those charged with implementing them*.'

Similarly, Mulgan[68] stresses the importance of integrating strategy and implementation, suggesting that it is helpful to have the same people working on both. A policy proposal should only be accepted when the requirements for its implementation have been fully analysed, including skills and infrastructure: '*implementers should be involved in shaping strategy and vice versa'*. Once a policy is being implemented, he advocates reality checks from front-line practitioners and constant feedback on progress.

The theoretical models in the academic literature are often broadly characterised as top-down or bottom-up[69]. Top-down approaches see accurate implementation as the aim, requiring conformity to rules and the elimination of any gap between policy intention and actual practice. Bottom-up approaches see the influence and mediation by other players as inevitable and often desirable, allowing for adaptation to local conditions.

[67] King, A and Crewe, I (2013) The Blunders of Our Governments UK: Oneworld
[68] Mulgan, G (2009) The Art of Public Strategy: Mobilizing Power and Knowledge for the Common Good Oxford: OUP
69 Hudson, J and Lowe, S (2004) Understanding the Policy Process: Analysing Welfare Policy and Practice Bristol: Policy Press (Understanding Welfare: Social Issues, Policy and Practice Series)

Taylorist, ‘top-down’ approaches to system management focus on control through hierarchies and policy levers. There are bodies of theory and advice for policy makers on this rationalist approach to management of delivery. Theorists and ex-government advisers have described the conditions for faithful implementation, identified barriers to successful delivery of outcomes and provided toolkits and techniques. Recent incarnations of the top-down world-view range from new managerialism (including 'deliverology' - see below) to formal Programme and Project Management disciplines. Top-down approaches generally see policy making and delivery as to some extent separable. Once policy has been decided, its implementation can be viewed as a value-free administrative process. The tools used are generally formal, often statutory, levers for planning, informing, monitoring and encouraging or ensuring compliance. Top-down implementation is often characterised by the use of arms-length bodies and performance management through targets linked to incentives or sanctions. Failures of implementation are seen, by definition, as lapses of planning, specification and control. If the right mechanisms are in place, the ‘top’ or centre should be able to control delivery.

Michael Barber’s pragmatic ‘deliverology’ approach[70], which began in education but has now been expanded to encompass all government activity[71], emphasises the importance of identifying a few top priorities, establishing small units focussed on ensuring performance, having the right performance data and targets, embedding the right routines and building good relationships. He sets out[72] how to analyse delivery chains, identify and address weak links and ensure good communication flows. He strongly favours measurement, prescription and central control rather than space for professional or local discretion or management based on trust.

Elmore[73] identifies four main ingredients that those adopting a purely top-down interpretation would require for effective implementation:

1. clearly specified tasks and objectives that accurately reflect the intent of policy
2. a management plan that allocates tasks and performance standards to sub-units
3. an objective means of measuring subunit performance
4. a system of management controls and sanctions sufficient to hold subordinates accountable for their performance.

The literature on bottom-up approaches largely consists of case studies, often of examples of policy failure, rather than offering practical guidance, generalised conclusions or

[70] Barber, M, Kihn, P and Moffit, A (2010) Deliverology 101:A Field Guide for Educational Leaders Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press
[71] Barber, M (2015) How to Run a Government: So that Citizens Benefit and Taxpayers don't go Crazy Penguin
72 Barber, M (2008) Instruction to Deliver Instruction to Deliver: Fighting to Transform Britain's Public Services Methuen
[73] Elmore, R. F. (1978) *Organizational Models of Social Program Implementation*, Public Policy, Vol.26, No. 2: (185-228pp)

conceptual frameworks. Lipsky's classic work on street-level bureaucracy[74] was an early description of how the front-line practitioners who directly interact with citizens in delivering services and policies might vary, interpret or distort the services or policies. This can be through the application of professional discretion or personal judgement, for instance due to loyalty to professional principles or codes, an awareness of local or individual circumstances that do not chime with the policy, or personal or ideological resistance. Alternatively, it can be caused by resource constraints, in terms of time, staff, money, technology, information, awareness of the policy or training in how to implement it. Sometimes it can be because of corruption, discrimination or favouritism. Whatever the cause, the result is that the actual policy as delivered may not resemble the policy as originally envisaged at the centre, and may have very different outcomes.

Even above street level and away from the influence of front line practitioners, there is considerable scope for unforeseen implementation issues to undermine policy intentions. Blakemore[75] notes that '*a policy is not just a piece of legislation or a static list of written objectives and guidelines. …Policies develop once the implementation process starts…Policies are living things – and the policy becomes what is implemented in practice as well as what is written down in formal or legal terms*.'

Some writers have tried to synthesise the top-down and bottom-up approaches. Hudson and Lowe[76], taking a purist theoretical view, contend that this is ultimately impossible because of the '*incompatible value systems'* of '*compliance and empowerment*'. However, Mazmanian and Sabatier[77] do attempt a hybrid model, describing a situation where policy is an authoritative decision at the centre but is in practice mediated by local factors. They see three variables as affecting the effectiveness of implementation: tractability of the problem, appropriateness of the chosen intervention and the impact of external factors on how much support the intervention has from a variety of sources. Their analysis[78] shows how local factors such as '*size, intra-organizational relationships, commitment, capacity and institutional complexities mould responses to policy*'.

Elmore also synthesises the top-down and bottom-up approaches, using the concepts of 'forward mapping' and 'backward mapping'[79]. Forward mapping is traditional policy formulation based on objectives, selection of interventions to meet those ends and

[74] Lipsky, M (1980) Street-level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services. New York: Russell Sage
[75] Blakemore, K and Warwick-Booth, L (2013) Social Policy – An Introduction (4th ed) Maidenhead: Open University Press
[76] Hudson, J and Lowe, S (2004) Understanding the Policy Process: Analysing Welfare Policy and Practice Bristol: Policy Press (Understanding Welfare: Social Issues, Policy and Practice Series)
[77] Mazmanian, D.A. and Sabatier, P.A. (1983) Implementation and Public Policy. Glenview, IIIinois: Scott, Foresman
[78] Mazmanian, D.A. and Sabatier, P.A. (eds) (1981) Effective Policy Implementation Lexington MA: Lexington Books
[79] Elmore, R. F. (1979), Backward Mapping: Implementation Research and Policy Decisions, Political Science Quarterly, Volume 94, No. 4, 601-616pp.

judgement of outcomes by set criteria. Backwards mapping identifies the behaviour to be changed at the lowest level, perhaps based on the views and interpretations of target groups or front line practitioners, and maps backwards or upwards through the hierarchy to describe the tools or action needed to make this happen. King and Crewe endorse the importance of backwards mapping, although theirs is a rather watered down version of the concept, shorthand for considering implementation at the policy formulation stage.

The theoretical debates outlined above suggest an essential tension between central control and local discretion and empowerment. However, it is perhaps more helpful to see these as the two ends of a spectrum of approaches, rather than as incompatible world-views. Hill and Hupe[80] set out a typology of models of governance, from authority (with rules imposed and enforced or regulated), through transaction (where outputs are expected and managed through contracts or performance frameworks), to collaboration or co-production (where the direction is indicated but partners are invited to share decision making and accountability).

Vertical coherence: what interviewees said:

Interviewees consistently emphasised the importance of vertical coherence:

> *'Delivery depends on local, so the centre's job must be to make local better.'*

> *'We should be in a position where what we do at the centre is really reacting and relevant to what's happening locally and we develop it with them and iterate and improve it through delivery experience'.*

Overall, interviewees tended to favour an increased emphasis on local responsiveness ('*we need to be more citizen centred and work back from citizen not transactional top down*'), but there was a cautionary note that for some policy, firm central control was essential: '*In economic policy, 'bottom-up' doesn't work - you need an autocratic hand setting the direction'*.

In general, interviewees' experience was that it should be easier to integrate delivery with policy formulation in smaller countries, avoiding the 'operational disconnect' and resulting in simpler, more grounded and implementable policy, and in better implementation of that policy:

> *'Being small, having policies that actually work in practice and will deliver is important – you haven't got long supply chains and are more likely to keep things reasonably simple and deliverable.'*

[80] Hill, M and Hupe, P.L. (2009) Implementing Public Policy: an Introduction to the Study of Operational Governance Sage

'We don't have cadres of staff who are pure policy makers and that's not a bad thing - we're good at making policy that's actually implementable, clear, not complex.'

'The closeness between policy makers and service deliverers here provides for a very healthy process of policy development. I went to a best practice event in Whitehall which was so rarefied, with little appreciation of what happens when the policy gets down the line and has to be introduced, I found it rather artificial. I wouldn't like to be in that environment where there is a danger of developing policies that are inappropriate for the final stakeholders or user.'

'Policy and delivery has to be interlocked at all levels - which is easier in a small polity.'

Interviewees identified several kinds of reasons why vertical coherence should be easier to achieve in smaller countries. One was the 'groundedness' of a policy: how 'in touch' it was with the lived experience of citizens and how feasible in terms of complexity and capacity. The experience of interviewees was that politicians and officials are likely to be in close contact with citizens impacted by the problem to be addressed or by the policy intervention (also see 3.1, citizen-centred policy):

'We do have the advantage of being closer to stakeholders and being able to relate policy development more closely to "so what's this going to mean in practice?" '

'We are good at going out and working with people and we develop some very good policies and initiatives as a result.'

'We should be able to make use of local knowledge and local sources of understanding in ways that a centralised larger one can't – proximity to ground, people and knowledge, ought to assist us in developing policies that fit our local circumstances better'.

'For the last 15 years government and civil servants have been working far more 'out there' with communities in doing our job designing and

delivering policy than we ever did before. The days of doing government behind your desk ended with devolution.'

Interviewees also noted that the scope of individual government officials' jobs tends to be more mixed. Most officials are engaged in oversight of delivery and operational matters as well as policy formulation. They are therefore aware of practical considerations and of the 'mood music' within various sectors. There was more scope for '*getting alongside people who are delivering those services in the community and working with them to understand what the barriers they face – the things that get in the way or the things that would enable them to do things differently*':

'You can't just focus on what's going on in your department and parliament, it goes right through to front line services and the distinction between policy and delivery is much more blurred – you could argue it's always blurred but it's much more real here, no-one actually just has a policy job.'

Finally, interviewees said that capacity constraints provide a strong incentive for developing simple, pragmatic and cost-effective policy with lean delivery arrangements – although this did not always work in practice:

'The disadvantages are in terms of capacity - do you have to work as if you were a small version of a big country? Sometimes we lapse into that and try to copy the complexity and bureaucracy of a big country because 'that's what a proper country does'. We can be simpler in the way we operate.'

An important ingredient for successful implementation noted in the literature is consideration of delivery as integral to policy formulation, and involvement of delivery agents and partners at policy formulation stage. Klein and Plowden state that policy makers should focus on and listen to those who are '*in the best position to discern what makes sense on the ground*'. In relation to smaller countries, interviewees noted that delivery agents are more likely to be involved in policy communities, influencing the selection of the policy intervention on the basis of what is feasible or known to work (see 3.2, policy networks). It will be more likely, for instance, that all local authorities/health bodies are involved in policy formulation, rather than just a sample. This helps with the sense of common purpose and commitment to or ownership of the policy:

'Many agents have been involved in development so they are already aware of the policy and rationale'.

Smaller countries were reported as having an advantage in relation to the relative ease of communication with delivery partners and agents throughout implementation. The evidence from the interviews suggests that government officials were more likely to have strong existing relationships with delivery partners or to be in a better position to develop these, due to the smaller number of agencies involved. There may be fewer delivery organisations or types of organisations, making communication more feasible:

> *'Implementation is easier and quicker because there are fewer organisations, fewer levels, messaging can be more direct or done by the centre with fewer intermediaries.'*

Relationships may be stronger and two-way communication more frequent, resulting in a better shared understanding of and commitment to goals:

> *'Our lines of communication ought to be shorter and more effective with people in the field in terms of nature of the problem and we ought to be able to have a better set of working relationships with people we have to work with.'*

During implementation, faster feedback loops meant that concerns about implementation problems or impact could be heard and responded to more quickly by the centre:

> *'Our delivery chains can be much shorter, our feedback loops are very quick so we are very responsive to concerns'.*

> *'It is ..a healthy thing ...that partners are able to send signals that "actually right now we don't have a lot of confidence in how you are operating", I wonder if that would be as straightforward in larger societies where the structure is so bedded in that nuances aren't picked up so easily.'*

Interviewees also pointed out that smaller countries often have a different policy landscape and different policy options to choose from: '*there may be a less crowded or complex delivery context, with fewer organisations or less variety of circumstances to respond to*'. This resulted in a different range of options for delivery, including more informal policy levers:

> *'Having worked in England and Wales, I was struck by the significant variation in the 'how' in coming to Wales – the options for how to implement include more direct ones. England only has levers such as*

funding and targets, we can use more direct conversation and persuasion'.

'The role of the policymaker is about changing people's minds, attitudes and behaviours. Schemes and processes can be helpful but they are only a part. Giving people money - of course it changes behaviour, they will do something if you pay them to do it. But if you want a policy that will have deeper impact, it's about getting people to think about how they regulate themselves and looking for better solutions for themselves. Who reads guidance documents?'

'A lot of the traditional tools of government that you might see in a large country like legislation, guidance, regulation, hypothecated grants, in theory you could dispense with. Not completely, but you shouldn't need to do so much micro management of delivery: let partners get on with that, while you take decisions, get feedback and realign decisions. Because you are working to a shared endeavour and purpose with constant communication.'

Piloting a proposed approach or experimenting with a number of approaches might be more feasible on a smaller scale or in a less diverse demographic context. However, it was noted that there can be political pressure to roll out the same policy everywhere from the outset, and political difficulties with experimenting with a number of approaches due to the perception of 'failure' of some of them. Interviewees reported that it was often possible to make more detailed policy at the centre in smaller countries, because *'we at the centre can look at real community level data - and this matters for mapping needs and for delivery*'.

In general, interviewees' experience was that delivery chains were shorter, with fewer links between strategy and front line delivery, including the option of direct central control by a government department or NDPB. This was an advantage because:

'If delivery chains are too long or methods are ineffective, efforts are lost at every point like water from a leaky pipe.'

Shorter chains provided potential for combining local discretion with central control through constructive partnership working. Greater proximity to and familiarity with the individuals involved in delivery chains should make mapping and diagnosis easier and more precise at the smaller scale.

Decision making at different levels

Discussion of delivery often led to discussion of the levels at which different kinds of decision are made in smaller countries - central government, local government/health bodies, quangos, third sector agents, community level etc. Interviewees identified a range of options that was, in theory, the same for small and large countries, but noted that very different considerations apply in small countries when determining the optimal level for making different kinds of decisions. Interviewees identified smaller countries as having options at opposite ends of the Hill and Hupe spectrum, namely:

- More scope for single national approaches or unified services (because some countries, it was noted, are the size of a large local authority in England). As well as consistency and fairness, arguments related to simplicity, efficiency and reduced bureaucracy. The point was made that national politicians would be held accountable by citizens and the media, whatever the governance arrangements ('*There is theoretical freedom but it is hampered by political reality')* so they needed the power to control delivery. Ireland had more national arrangements, several of which were exercised through quangos.
- More appetite for 'double devolution', pushing decisions down to local or community level: *'the issues for communities in different places are very different. It's a service design and delivery level of decision making*'. The greater appetite was seen as a natural progression in the context of the debates about devolution, and seemed to be more prevalent in the devolved administrations of the UK, especially Scotland. Arguments in favour related to responsiveness to local circumstances, empowerment, engagement and the ability to join up a range of services around the individual or community rather than in subject silos.

Interviewees described a huge range of permutations in terms of central control versus local discretion and a number of more or less formal policy levers to achieve the right balance for each specific policy. Successful compromises were described, which struck *'a balance between requiring everyone to talk and therefore account for their actions while at the same time not prescribing a particular format of delivery or evaluation.'* There were arguments for different arrangements for different kinds of service or policy (described by several interviewees as '*horses for courses*') or different social contexts: '*You can have a small state that is homogenous or one that isn't'.*

The appropriate place on the spectrum for a particular policy or service depends on the nature of the problem and intervention and the capacity and roles of various agencies and organisations. It may be easier in a small country to arrive at a consensus on this question because communication is more regular, often face to face and in smaller groups. If it is

possible to push more policies towards the collaborative end of the spectrum, this will reduce the burden on the centre in terms of developing detailed and prescriptive guidance, while enabling local delivery partners to exercise and develop autonomy, discretion, adaptability and innovation:

> *'It is a challenge sometimes to cope with the breadth of policy and all the operational delivery and maybe we could make life simpler for ourselves if we were prepared not to directly manage so much but delivered on the promises of giving partners more autonomy.'*

The range of views on this subject is illustrated by the quotations in Box 4. In general there seems to be an appetite for moving towards greater genuine local accountability.

It is not one of the aims of this study to consider the huge question of the level at which different decisions should be made. The purpose here is to highlight that there was a range of views and an overriding message that it was important to systematically consider the question of where each kind of decision should be taken. Interviewees stressed the importance of clarity about where responsibilities lie and of minimising duplication or requirement for 'sign off' at the next level up. It was stated by several interviewees in different countries that consideration of where decisions should be made had not been systematically reviewed, and that the context of austerity could make this increasingly important:

> *'We haven't looked at it systematically. If ministers feel they are going to be held to account for something they are reluctant to let go of it entirely and that applies to money as well – it's difficult for ministers to say 'that money is not going to be ring fenced any more because people tell them that actually they value it being ring fenced so they can't let it disappear into LG coffers, never to be seen again.'*

Box 4: Who decides? Interviewees' thoughts on where decisions should be made

Whether it should be more centralised or more subsidiarity is a political judgement. I think we have hitherto tended too much towards centralisation – perhaps we were so anxious to establish the [national] tier of government that we tended to take on responsibilities ourselves to show we could do it, when could have afforded to be more hands off.

There's a fundamental question of what you want you want local authorities to deliver, do you want them to deliver core services like education and social services, and if you

do you need to give them scope to decide local priorities, and be clear on the things that matter nationally. Or you could decide that most of the things that are important in those services are the same wherever you are – the basic standards you expect and outcomes you want – so what's the point on giving local scope when the nuances are a bit pointless.

The relationship with local government ...started with the concept of genuine partnership [which]...had potential merit but became too cosy or was side stepped. Now, 15 years down the track and with the prospect of a new and stronger tier of local authorities, we may be able to step back.

There is confusion about who is accountable for what.

It's a paradox of a small country that we would want to step back. In fact I think it looks inevitable, both under pressure of resources and getting too close to local government has stifled their independence and their creativity.

We are in the detail but in a way that isn't helpful.

In terms of decision making we are still very centralised - it is generally accepted. It became even more centralised in the recession because of economies of scale... a lot of power moved to the centre. For a small country... my view is it makes sense to decide things once, have a template and roll it out.

Too often we put in place a rigid structure which a local authority won't have ownership of but has to implement, and the chances of that being done with enthusiasm.... if you give local authorities responsibility and the have a Minister saying 'this is how you do it', then you have a problem.

Perhaps we have stifled independent thinking in the public sector.

We have got too close to local government – the loving embrace of a boa constrictor – but it needn't be so, if we were genuinely working with them rather than telling them what to do.

Guidance – do we honestly think that's what social workers need, that they're not sure what they're supposed to be doing and a 400 page guidance document is going to make it better?

We need to have a sensible and mature conversation about what level of government is appropriate. If we believe in localism then local government should have something meaningful to do but at the same time a dogmatic stance about 'local is best' isn't going to deliver the best solutions...We haven't had that conversation since devolution.

Where [aspirations] haven't been met, we decide need to help make things better by being more specific, write more guidance, set a KPI, have audit body go in – and it still isn't any better and we're closing down the room anyone has to prioritise or take ownership.

There's a great case for devolving more power and more responsibility and accountability to local authorities to make them account to people.

Maybe you can't brigade all these things into government. There is strength in having independent specialists at arms-length from government.

A specific issue raised in relation to third sector delivery partners was the need to ensure that their advocacy and challenge role was not weakened by becoming purely agents of government:

> *'Partners like the third sector are being asked to deliver public services more than ever. On the one hand they are pleased because it gives them a new role and a legitimacy in seeking certain design, but there is the adverse impact too - third sector organisations are not universal service providers. They represent the particular demands of their group, but if you increase competition and make them fight each other for money you can see certain groups where their interests are not high on the policy agenda no longer receive help.'*

> *'The problem is we turn them {the third sector] into mini civil servants writing reports and justifying by outcomes and you lose challenge and dissent.'*

'Organisations might see their missions drift to fit with the strategic objectives, which is fine if it reflects demand but less fine if it simply reflects what policy makers with no idea on the ground think people need.'

'The disadvantage is that you could say it promotes docility: part of the role of civil society is to challenge.'

'We have to find a framework for preserving the historic function of the third sector, not in a fuzzy 'they're nice, let's give them money' way but because they are effective and function well in small nations as opposition and scrutiny bodies and therefore making sure we don't suck them into the shadow state will be important to maintain that function - they are the canary in the coalmine to tell you about demand on the ground.'

As well as the potential advantages of smaller countries in achieving vertical coherence, interviewees also mentioned a number of reasons why it could be more difficult in smaller countries. These related to capacity (for instance for testing/piloting and monitoring), risks of cosiness or inertia, undue influence of individuals or lobby groups and a lower appetite for making difficult decisions that might upset any group:

'Feedback loops are quicker but you don't get as much breadth or depth of feedback. At development stage this means for instance very few responses to consultations and fewer very good responses because the stakeholders also have capacity issues.'

'The sort of engagement we tend to have is the set piece engagement with a group of self-elected people who purport to speak on behalf of communities with particular interests. You all get together and pontificate and a piece of paper is produced and legislation arises. The question is, what difference do a lot of those policy documents make in the real world?'

'You cannot afford to make enemies in a small polity.'

'The disadvantage of that is groupthink, informality and a lack of rigour at times - we don't want to offend the neighbours.'

'It's not as simple as saying we will work in partnership. Sometimes we will want to criticise each other, and we have to recognise that it's not going to be peace and harmony all the time - and you need that challenge to make it work properly. You're not always friends.'

'The flip side is we can be over-sensitive to noise in the system because someone somewhere is unhappy. We don't risk offence or unhappiness so we don't make tough decisions or give tough messages. Change and discomfort go together and if we don't tolerate people being uncomfortable, we can't make change.'

Conclusion

The evidence from the interviews suggests that vertical coherence is a major potential advantage in smaller countries. Although there were many positive examples of good practice and a view that smaller countries avoided some problems experienced in larger countries, there was still considerable room for making the most of this advantage. In order to do so, there was a strong view that governments should review the level at which decisions are made in different policy areas. Meanwhile, policy makers should:

- Analyse the delivery options, taking into account capacity and resource issues, and agree with partners the level and mechanisms of control, and roles and accountabilities. Ensure clarity about where decisions are made, with clear lines of accountability and avoidance of duplication at different levels.
- Consider less formal mechanisms such as persuasion, voluntary adoption of shared goals, collaboration, capacity building, support and advice, using statutory approaches or heavy performance management only when necessary. Where possible, operate at the collaborative end of spectrum: although accountability needs to be clear, it is important not to create large volumes of additional guidance or complex new requirements and processes to govern partnerships or assess impacts.
- Analyse and map delivery chains and challenge the requirement for each link in the chain, resulting in shorter chains and faster feedback loops. Attempting to replicate the delivery chains of larger countries may result in very small individual links reliant on overstretched individuals, with risks to quality, capacity, resilience and efficiency.
- Ensure that responsible officials from central government 'go out' to see the problems, interventions and impact in person and listen to deliverers – preferably in a low-key, collaborative style, avoiding set piece presentations and 'welcoming committees'.

- Emphasise good two-way communication from the start of policy formulation through to implementation and evaluation.
- Encourage a learning culture within organisations and partnerships/groups, allowing for experimentation, acceptance of (reasonable) failure, sharing of experience and adaptation. As one interviewee said, '*Don't believe your own rhetoric*'.
- Be aware of the dangers of measurement and accountability regimes in terms of unintended consequences or fragmenting complex social problems. Where possible use more holistic outcome measures and genuine delegation of accountability.

3.5...and some disadvantages

Although the study's aim was to 'accentuate the positive' in relation to policy making in smaller countries, many interviewees also emphasised that policy makers face particular disadvantages directly as a consequence of working at a smaller scale. This section summarises the disadvantages that interviewees identified and the suggestions they made for tackling them. It is based purely on the interviews rather than on a literature review.

Because the intention of the study was to focus on the positive advantages, the interview questions were framed in those terms. Therefore the relative weight and space given to advantages and disadvantages in this report should not be taken as representative of the balance in the experience of policy makers. Interviewees varied in their views about whether the positives outweighed the negatives, but people's experience was that the challenges are very significant:

> *'The downside is clearly one of analytical capacity and policy making capacity – there are fixed costs associated with these things and you have to have a certain level of capacity whatever the size of the country and we are clearly under-resourced in certain areas. There are real issues.'*

> *'There are potentially great advantages, but each can also be a disadvantage.'*

The main theme within the challenges is the comparatively limited capacity of smaller countries, which are grappling with the same range and complexity of policy and issues but working with a fraction of the resources available in larger countries. Capacity issues can be broken down into government policy making resources, analytical and evidence gathering capacity, a specific issue around the resources available for the development of manifestos and the wider capacity of civil society. The other challenge identified is the relative lack of international clout of smaller countries. This section is therefore organised under five headings:

- Policy making capacity
- Evidence and analytical capacity
- Capacity for the development of manifestos
- The policy environment
- International influence

The devolved administrations of the UK also operate under the significant constraint of not being able to determine their overall budget. To a certain extent, Ireland operates under a

similar constraint in the context of its membership of the Euro. However, this lack of total fiscal autonomy is primarily a feature of the devolution settlement and Eurozone conditions, rather than a feature of being a small country per se. It was also not an issue raised by interviewees in relation to being a small country. It is therefore noted but not discussed in this section.

Policy making capacity:

There is inevitably more pressure on resources for policy making in smaller countries. Policy making is an activity with significant economies of scale, with similar 'amounts' of policy required whatever the size of a country but '*there's less of us to make it happen*' in smaller countries. Approaches developed for and effective in larger countries will not necessarily be supportable or realistic in smaller ones. Several interviewees reported that capacity issues and the expectations on them in terms of coverage of policy areas outweighed the potential advantages of working at the smaller scale, noting that there would be large teams of staff working on the same area and range of tasks in a larger country:

> *'Smaller countries have the same questions and same problems but have to come up with solutions using less effort – this can be quicker but not necessarily better policy.*'

> *'There is a point of intersection in the benefits of being a small country - you are better networked but your resources are correspondingly smaller so actually all those theoretical benefits have a point at which they stop being a benefit because you run out of resource. For each civil servant here there are whole teams doing the same work in London. We know we could synergise things better and we want to do better but it's hard to even do the core job'*.

It was also noted that individuals tended to have a greater range of roles, from policy development to ensuring delivery as well as day-to-day briefing and governmental processes. The advantages of this fact in terms of horizontal and vertical coherence are noted elsewhere, but there was also concern over the negative impact, in terms of the difficulty of doing everything well and the stress on individuals:

> *'People are spread thinner so you have less time to spend on the detail of any particular topic and there's a capability issue that you need people who can do the broad range of policy development, policy research, spending time keeping on top of the subject while at the same*

time covering a much broader portfolio and being involved in the delivery and performance of the system, so the ask is quite high.'

In particular, there was a need to redress the balance between '*innovative policy work versus cranking the wheel*.' Interviewees' experience was that day-to-day reaction to events, detailed '*micromanagement of delivery*' or feeding of the political machinery did not allow officials '*space to think*' about policy and about the *'important rather than just the urgent issues*'.

'The opportunity might be there to do interesting and exciting things but the constraint is the headspace. The day to day might crowd that out. So you might find there are large areas that have the potential to "take advantage of the advantage" but are not doing so because they are too busy getting on with it.'

It was suggested that stronger internal policy networks and a *'safe place for dialogue*' would help officials to cope, but that a more fundamental change to the division of the working week between the immediate and the strategic would be beneficial for policy quality. It was proposed that policy making should be more explicitly valued as core business and valued as an important discipline, not an add-on to the day job of 'feeding the machine'. HR policies and organisational structures and processes should take into account the need to develop policy making capacity.

Other solutions included prioritising policy areas in order to focus on fewer policies and initiatives, favouring simplicity in policy design and being pragmatic, accepting the limitations and not over-reaching:

'The resource issue will always be there so we have to make virtue of necessity and focus on strengths - not necessarily the best possible policy but the most pragmatic solution for the circumstances, including stability and fit with the status quo. It might be better to live with an imperfect system that works OK, people understand it, it's bedded in, rather than try to achieve a perfect one that's hard to implement and destabilises things.'

Interviewees said that governments of smaller countries needed to have clear and bespoke approaches to and styles of policy making suited to their own circumstances. They considered that the skills relevant to policy making in smaller countries had a different emphasis from those required in larger countries. The skill set might include more facilitation and stakeholder engagement skills, more political awareness (at a lower grade level) and a wider range of experience. Smaller countries had an opportunity to address this need by co-

ordinating skill development centrally. There was potential for staff to move between policy areas. There were suggestions about how training could be improved, through close working with universities and joint training with other parts of the public sector:

> *'It's a different skill set in the civil service in a small polity - facilitation and bringing stakeholders together.'*

> *'We need more people who can engage, better stakeholder skills, more experience of working in the areas they are making policy on, more experience of systemic change and looking at the whole.'*

> *'Civil servants must be politically shrewd but not party political – an important skill, especially in small countries where more of us are closer to politicians.'*

> *'What skills are needed? We can decide from the centre.'*

> *'A strength is that people can move around in the organisation so people get a more rounded picture of what's going on.'*

> *'[We need] relational skills, relationship building skills, emotional intelligence, the ability to collaborate, influence, work in partnership. A lot of our training is not done across government but with our partners - joint training with police, services, local government - we do it together because we're all on this boat together and all working to the same outcomes.'*

However, there were different views on the question of specialist versus 'generalist' civil servants and the frequency with which people should move between posts or policy areas:

> *'You need some experts in knowledge terms, others should move around for transferable skills and understanding the whole system – for instance spending time in private office. You could have more managed moves for experience and wider awareness and skills and awareness of other people's pressures.'*

> *'Specialist versus generalist is horses for courses. At higher levels you don't need specialists (except in finance). Sometimes you need a generalist to ask the "dumb questions".'*

'Moving around can help us with cross-cutting, networking and making links between subjects and improving transferable skills. But we are moving to more knowledge-based specialisation within subjects, rather than skill sets'.

'New experience and knowledge and avoids staleness. Balance that with stability and continuity and personal investment in long term outcomes – no sense of "I'm outta here". Maybe there's a happy medium of generally expecting to stay five years?'

'I don't like the word generalist because it doesn't capture what we are doing, we are bringing to bear experience from other areas into new ones and your specialism is how you do government rather than what subject matter you know. There's a difference between being a subject matter expert and an expert in government.'

Evidence and analytical capacity:

In relation to research and analytical capacity, the same general point was made about the loss of economies of scale in smaller countries:

'The quality of thinking involved is a disadvantage. We've had difficulty involving academics - some have done some bits but they need to keep it theoretical.'

'Capacity is a big issue – for instance, student loan forecasting and modelling is the same process whether the numbers are in the billions or millions, and we have to be just as accurate!'

Some specific points were also made about the methodological and resource challenges faced in smaller countries:

'We have small total numbers so it's difficult to identify groups within data sets, for instance ethnicity numbers can be too small to be valid, similarly with geographical factors. Finding significant numbers in specific groups can be costly.'

'A survey would form too great a proportion of the relevant budget. Also bought-in surveys and participation in international surveys is disproportionately expensive and…limits our ability to buy other international surveys.'

'It's having the material to work with. A small country is a difficult animal to capture and dissect. Forecasting is problematic, small flows represent big change and variability in a small population doesn't give as much scope for comparison as in a bigger society. So it's not just that it's more difficult to sustain analysis, it's more difficult to carry out robust analysis.'

As well as in-house resources, interviewees discussed the external capacity for contracted out work, and the pressures on those providing raw data:

'There are fewer academics [here]... for instance one institute… out of 80 in UK, and the UK ones don't usually look at [us]...and having only one means there is no competition, so quality could suffer. Competition generally for research contracts is low. The field force for conducting surveys is limited'.

'Local authorities and schools also have capacity issues for supplying data.'

Interviewees suggested a variety of responses to the problem. There were varied views on how much analysis and specialist advice should be sourced from external bodies versus in-house services, and on the Whitehall concept of 'contestable policy making' (where most evidence and research work is contracted out). However, there was generally an acceptance that in-house resources could only ever be a small part of the picture in smaller countries and that solutions should be sought through making more use of external resources and networking internationally. This engagement was described by one interviewee as easier in a small country:

'For us to engage with academics, stakeholders, delivery partners, third sector in thinking about what the issues are and how to solve them is easy because of the scale of ourselves... and because the world we sit in is smaller.'

Using external analytical resources entailed having *'research questions that are all with a policy focus, not pure academic research, it must be relevant to policy - the expectation is*

that every paper will end with the last section being implications for policy' and having policy makers within the civil service *'who can use the analysis in a critical way not just take something - so they can present a good overview of the validity and quality of the evidence and research.'*

Making full use of external resources included the use of research bodies, think tanks, third sector organisations and bodies such as Nesta, but was framed mainly in terms of strengthening links with the university sector:

> *'Unis are the centres of excellence in research. Think tanks might have an agenda or a donor or ideology. You can have co-operation between the state and universities that can be really beneficial if it works - It would be nice if it was more systematic, agree a programme, create a longer term relationship. It's not expensive, a few PhDs.'*

> *'Small countries don't have an ability to do analysis - that can be difficult. That's where we need to build stronger networks with the academic community.'*

The increased emphasis within the Research Assessment Exercise on engagement, and the new element of impact, were cited as beneficial for smaller countries in working with their university sectors on policy issues:

> *'Unis are now funded not just on research output but also increasingly on a factor of impact. We are lucky because we are such a small policy community we can track "I provided evidence, which led to a report, to debate and legislation" – academics elsewhere envy that position.'*

It was suggested that there was untapped capacity within the university sectors of other countries, and particularly (for the devolved administrations of the UK), universities in England. This is discussed in section 5.1.3 below.

Good research links with universities had, in some places, worked well alongside links on the training and development of policy staff (skill development is discussed further in section 5.1.1.):

> *'We have very good professional development links with the civil service. About 50 senior civil servants are doing masters in political admin here. Each department sends two of their senior staff each year, which means we have a growing relationship with them and they will lift*

the phone and say "My committee's doing a piece of work on x, can anyone in the uni help" so we're in and out of the government a lot.'

Interviewees advocated '*looking outwards'* and international networking, especially with other small countries and regions, to pool resources and share ideas, experiences, findings and examples of successful policy:

'We could work more closely between Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It's an opportunity to work together on policy development and also sharing of delivery.'

'Colleagues in Luxembourg told us "we do the important policies, but for the rest we do what the Dutch do" - it's useful to look for other models already working elsewhere.'

'Networking is useful between smaller countries, especially within the EU. Everyone is dealing with the same issues so it is useful to see what response they are making.'

'As we have devolved power, there has become greater receptivity to evidence from outside the boundaries of the UK.'

'You can have strong relationships with other countries and piggy-back on their analysis and see their policy and decide if it is the right direction of travel.'

A caveat here was that policies cannot necessarily be transferred to new settings and have the same outcomes - different local circumstances meant that 'policy transfer', or the unquestioning application of a *'recipe'* was risky, but ideas could be gathered for consideration and testing.

'Watch out for policy borrowing, because context matters so much and the same policy in different countries will work its way out totally differently because the human response is different.'

'In collaboration between small countries, the experimental research is very local so there would be advantages to looking at multiple locations so that findings are more generalisable. Look at the Campbell

collaboration - this tries to share social policy findings internationally on the model of Cochrane in medical research.'

'You can either copy bits of what other people have done, but it might not fit together, or use the whole lot, but there is a different context and circumstances. You need to look across to other countries but then adapt it on a whole system approach.'

Capacity for the development of manifestos

A particular issue raised by interviewees was the need to ensure that manifesto commitments are underpinned by evidence and a proper policy making process. Quality assurance of manifesto pledges in policy making terms was not an issue exclusive to smaller countries:

'With the current [general] election, which we have known is coming on this date for five years, now every few days there is a new not very well thought out bit of policy floated in front of us – why haven't they planned for this?'

'The soundbites become the thing that happens if parties get into power because the media won't let you get away with it. The dilemma is that most policy issues are complex and that doesn't fit readily with the political system - soundbites are what is needed to get people on board but soundbites quickly get you into trouble. If you don't have detail about something in the run up to an election, you are seen as waffling or not actually having done your homework'

.

'There's a big issue around balancing the challenges of the political business cycle with the challenges of trying to plan something for the longer term. Manifesto and programme for government election documents and commitments are fundamental. If you wait until they have done those as civil servants you can't then criticise them if the party is in power.'

The problem was however, in the experience of some interviewees, a greater concern in smaller countries, due to the extremely limited analytical and policy capacity of their political parties compared with those of larger countries, and the relative lack of external ideas and evidence:

'The only chance is to have external organisations to anticipate what the issues are and to have some of the research ready. Small countries have less of this capacity.'

The concern was that manifesto pledges were not always the result of the proper policy making process (set out in section 2.1) of identifying desired outcomes and objectives, assessing a range of options for policy responses to achieve these and considering dependencies, risks, costs/benefits and impacts:

'There are a few examples where things that seem like a good idea have got sign up by ministers before there's been a proper assessment of what difference they make.'

'We claim to have evidence based policy but it's based on a manifesto for which there is no evidence'.

'They haven't worked out a way to put the long term outcome focus into a manifesto.'

'It's a dilemma for politics, because more educated society wants to know more about exactly what you are going to do, but you can't make it too complicated.....but then someone comes along with a 'silver bullet' even if it's not costed, you don't know the mechanisms, the evidence etc, but it sounds plausible.'

'Manifesto commitments that make good headlines are a big problem. We are trying to start a campaign for not having commitments in manifestos that will cause problems. Ring fencing and focusing on inputs in manifestos makes major problems, but it's difficult to write a manifesto on outcomes. We need a change of culture around this especially now, with no money.'

This was not an area where interviewees had detailed solutions, and some did not feel qualified to comment on how political parties might tackle the problem, beyond a general wish for earlier engagement, within the parameters of democratic propriety. However there was a strong view that '*There's no one way of solving this issue, but there are probably ways of doing better than we do'.* There was a suggestion that more arrangements could be made to make data, evidence and analysis available to all parties, drawing on civil service or

external resources, to ensure that all parties had the opportunity to base their manifestos on thorough analysis of the nature of a problem and evidence about what works:

> *'There are long standing arrangements for parties to sense-check manifesto policies and work with government analysts. There may be scope for starting this earlier or it being stronger.'*

> *'Of course we don't write manifestos but we do have a responsibility to give people information and analysis about what is going on, what is working, what will have an impact and to come up with the best ideas that we can.'*

> *'Engagement with Special Advisers can avoid policies appearing in manifestos (at least of the governing party).'*

> *'We have to try to get in earlier in policy development process and shape it – to avoid "policy-based evidence".'*

> *'Having grappled with delivering what has to be delivered... and some of the operational things, what have we learnt, what's the evidence, what are the really important things we want ministers to be aware of before they get to thinking what to put in their manifestos. They too are aware of wanting to learn from experience and see how they can do even better next time. That's very welcome.'*

> *'While a party is in government, you need government analysis of what are the problems and options for addressing them, on which the manifesto can draw – instead, the solution often emerges from nowhere. It's a maturity issue... you can see progression over years.'*

> *'It's a tricky issue because the civil service has to observe propriety about not getting involved in a partisan way, but it is legitimate for it to inform thinking about manifestos in terms of suggesting to Ministers areas that are ripe for legislation. If we can see an issue or a problem then it is not improper to suggest it to Ministers.'*

The policy environment

The final challenge in terms of capacity is the relatively narrower and shallower policy environment in smaller countries. There are fewer sources of ideas and challenge.

> *'There isn't the variety of sources of thinking. You don't have the powers of some of the big think tanks in London some of whom are throwing up genuinely interesting ideas and wider issues. So we have to find out the ideas.'*

Small groups and networks can suffer from inertia, '*cosiness'*, '*groupthink'* or risk aversion, especially where there is a smaller civil society or, some suggested, dominance by a single political party. This could lead to a *'lack of serious and profound thinking about the full range of policy'* or to '*policy capture'* by influential individuals or lobby groups:

> *'The negative is risk aversion because everybody is so exposed and visible and there's a degree of group think, all using the same language, too much consensus and touchy-feeliness and unwillingness to upset the boat.'*

> *'Small countries should be closer to the citizen, with better access to politicians or Ministers. But it tends to just be close access for a layer in any sector… – always the same set of go-to people. This creates another layer or tier and it gets cosy. The real issues are the disengaged [stakeholders], for instance those that see [government] as imposing more regulation for no benefit. How to retain the advantages without being seen as insular?'*

> *'[Evidence] should not just be evidence about what stakeholders think, which can be swayed by dominant voices. That can perpetuate the status quo because establishment stakeholders are unlikely to want to rock the boat –they can be inward looking and lack innovation.'*

> *'There is a group of people who know each other – an elite of insiders…often male.'*

> *'A corresponding disadvantage is that larger countries have larger resources, for instance a think tank industry in London and a massive*

one in Brussels and Washington. It's a bit thin and flimsy [here] - at a cottage industry stage.'

'Something to guard against in small countries is capture by lobby groups – the positive side is engagement but the negative side is the danger that perspectives will be shaped by people who have sectoral interests and the risk of that is potentially greater in small countries. Various lobby groups are quite influential – we effectively fund some groups to lobby us.'

'Proximity to stakeholders is good, but in a lot of areas there are stakeholders that either have too much influence or shape the debate in a way that does not give a rounded picture.'

Essentially, responses proposed to the problem were support for civil society and the application of basic policy making principles and good practice (as set out in Chapter 2). It was particularly important to consciously seek multiple voices, sources and examples, ensure openness of information and debate, inclusiveness and make sure certain groups do not dominate the debate:

'Making sure that a range of voices is heard is important. The old chestnut of not just looking here, look at elsewhere.'

'You need in a small country to be able to draw on the potential contributions of everyone.'

International influence

The final challenge for smaller countries in policy making is their relatively smaller influence on the international stage. For the devolved administrations of the UK, there were also issues of influence on UK-wide policy and visibility in the UK media.

All countries are subject to the vagaries of global capital and the world economy, and none is in total control of its destiny. However, self-determination was viewed as a greater challenge for smaller nations.

'An obvious disadvantage is external influence or the lack of it. Small countries are often policy takers rather than policy makers. Small countries also have to ride the waves; you don't aspire to control them.'

These countries face the additional problem of being in the shadow of larger countries and the 'pull' of the policies of these countries. Again, there was a specific issue for the devolved administrations of the UK in relation to the pull of policy designed for England: *'We are dragged back to England... with no real way getting a distinctive voice against London pressures because of the lack of a distinctive media and lack of a strong civil society which is a pre-requisite for being able to take the advantages of being small'*.

Interviewees cited smarter cross-border relations as part of the solution. This would involve, firstly, better networking between the devolved administrations to share intelligence, experience and capacity, as discussed above. Secondly, it would mean building stronger relationships with England in recognition of the fact that much policy will continue to be shared or similar, much evidence generated in England will be highly relevant elsewhere, and the relative capacity available in England is significantly greater. It was suggested that there was, paradoxically, as great or a greater need to work closely with counterparts in England after devolution than before, to be aware of policy developments that might impact on the devolved administrations.

In the EU context, the devolved administrations had to work hard to build or maintain good working relations with counterparts in Whitehall in order to influence the UK position in negotiations with the EU in a range of areas of devolved policy:

> *'We have to work within the limitations of not being a member state ourselves, we have to find a way of cohering our policy as best we can with the wider UK policy and hope that the UK which is the negotiator in Brussels with put forward the policy we have developed. It's fine when we're on the same page but tricky when we are not'.*

> *'In the international, especially the EU, context, being small and without the baggage of some former colonial powers, you don't threaten anyone and have the potential to build alliances without trampling on predispositions. The downside of the international context is you don't have the strength in depth that bigger countries have to manage their interests - they take a more systematic approach to mobilising influence and engagement as a matter of routine across all international fora and organisations.'*

On the positive side, it was noted that it could be easier to develop a genuinely national and inclusive position on a policy question in a smaller country:

> *'It's very easy to cohere a position from [our] local authorities but very difficult from English ones just because there are so many and so politically diverse. When you have to get agreement [in England] then the agreement gets blander and blander and meaningless whereas with smaller countries it probably is possible to get punchier policy with more bite to it - less of the lowest common denominator.'*

Visibility to and in the UK media was also raised as an additional challenge for policy makers, in terms of public and stakeholder awareness of and attitude towards policy differences between England and the devolved administrations. The media often reported the English position as if it were UK-wide, leading to confusion. Several interviewees mentioned the need to help London based journalists understand the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish contexts and to improve the accuracy of reporting of policy.

Finally, in terms of international influence, some interviewees discussed the need, particularly in the context of austerity, for governments of smaller countries to prioritise those areas in which they could exercise control or achieve reasonable traction, and not try to '*do everything*'. One interviewee observed:

> *'Even in smaller countries there is a bias towards action. You have to do something, this is something, therefore you have to do it. Hence the pendulum tends to swing to and from on issues.'*

Chapter 4: Summary of Findings

This chapter summarises the findings discussed in chapter 3, organising the findings under four headings and providing summary tables of key points.

To start with some caveats, this short project has:

- Focussed on principles, processes, structures and styles of policy making, rather than on the content or impact of any specific policies or policy areas.
- Mainly been based on the views of civil servants and academics. Local government officials or other stakeholders would have a different range of opinions and experience.
- Only looked at a few smaller countries, and has not looked at any larger countries by way of comparison.
- Looked at one sovereign state and three devolved administrations within the UK. The different context and powers have been noted where relevant.
- Looked at countries with populations between 1.8 and 5.3 million. There are, of course, some very much smaller states than this, which will face a different order of challenges. The contention is not that there are any 'magic numbers' at which different approaches start or cease to work, but rather that there are tendencies on a spectrum, making different styles and approaches more or less difficult to do well in smaller and larger countries.

Some ideas for next steps to further validate the findings of this project are suggested in section 5.2.

The study's findings fall into four areas:

1. The significance of the size of a country for its policy making
2. Making the most of the advantages
3. Tackling the challenges
4. The impact of austerity.

4.1 The significance of the size of a country for its policy making

Key findings:

- **The size of a country is not the most significant factor for good policy making**
- **There are elements and styles of policy making that can work particularly well or be particularly difficult in smaller countries**
- **Governments of smaller countries could usefully consider whether they are making the most of the advantages and tackling the challenges associated with their size**

There is no suggestion either in the literature or from the interviews that the size of a country is the most important factor in determining the quality of its policy making. Being a smaller country is clearly neither necessary nor sufficient for good policy making, and many similar challenges face smaller and larger countries. It was not the aim of this study to contend that the size of a country was an over-riding factor. A small number of interviewees were also keen to stress this point. Eg:

> *'Those issues arise everywhere - balance, getting away from silos, co-ordination, so it's the same kind of issues in all organisations.'*

> *'I hear from London that "because of your size you can do x y and z" and I've never been convinced It's just because of the scale. A lot has got to do with the ethos… I don't buy the argument about size. Scale probably helps us but we're doing it for philosophical reasons that don't fundamentally derive from scale.'*

Nevertheless, evidence from the literature and interviews does indicate that smallness can be a positive factor and present opportunities for good policy making but can also bring its own challenges.

The policy making principles and characteristics set out in Chapter 2 apply whatever the size of the country. Some specific factors related to culture, behaviour, structures and process were cited by interviewees, including the need for:

- Explicit adoption across government of policy making principles, process and practice

- Mechanisms for supporting policy makers to develop and maintain professional knowledge, understanding and skills, including learning and development opportunities, networks for sharing ideas and experiences
- An organisational culture and senior management that support 'space to think' within the working week, encourage and invite challenge and scrutiny and ensure that officials feel safe in offering impartial advice based on evidence
- Sufficient analytical capacity to provide the evidence and analysis required to assess policy options and impacts
- Structures, approaches and behaviour that encourage cross-cutting working within government and effective and inclusive engagement with stakeholders and delivery agents
- Strong leadership and collegiate style of working at cabinet and senior level, with shared commitment to organisation-wide policy objectives that drive policy making in a strategic way
- Clarity about and consistency in long-term outcome objectives
- Open government, open data, open policy making

As shown in Chapter 3, there may be some correlation between the incidence of these factors, or the ease of achieving them, and the size of a country. The sections below identify some potential advantages of smaller countries which can be exploited, and a number of challenges that need to be addressed, to achieve good policy making. The study suggests that governments might find it helpful to consider its own style of and approach to policy making through the lens of being a smaller country, in order to assess whether these advantages are being exploited and the challenges addressed in a way that fits the particular context and circumstances of the country.

4.2 Making the most of the advantages

Key findings:

- **There are potential advantages for policy making in working at a smaller scale**
- **The key advantages are strong policy networks, horizontal coherence and vertical coherence**
- **There are many factors that can contribute to an ability to exploit these advantages**

Although size might not be an over-riding or determining factor guaranteeing good policy making, the study found that smaller countries do have some clear potential advantages in relation to policy making. These are discussed in detail in Chapter 3 (sections 3.1 - 3.4).

The development of 'citizen-centred' policy that is firmly grounded in detailed local knowledge and a thorough understanding of the views of citizens and stakeholders, although important and supported by interviewees, was found to have only weak links with the size of the country. Some of the activities required for development of citizen centred policy were actually more difficult in smaller countries. The element that particularly lent itself to a smaller scale was a slightly intangible sense of having politicians and officials who are relatively accessible and in touch, leading to more grounded policy.

In summary, the study found evidence of key opportunities for smaller countries in relation to:

- Strong and inclusive policy networks that can work fast, communicate well and generate a high degree of consensus and joint ownership
- Strong horizontal coherence of policy within and across government, especially where the government is a single organisation. Cross-cutting (or 'joined-up') policy making was seen as a (relative) strength and an area where there was potential for deriving more benefits. Smaller countries have a particular opportunity to adopt a long term, strategic approach based on a manageable number of outcome-based objectives, around which there is consensus, especially where there is a strong sense of national identity and direction.
- Strong vertical coherence between strategy, policy and delivery, with short delivery chains and fast feedback loops. The ability to make simple, pragmatic and implementable policy was again seen as both a strength and an area for further improvement, with calls for clarity about roles and responsibilities. Smaller countries have a different range of options for decision making at different levels (ranging from a single national approach in some areas, with reduced bureaucracy to a locally responsive approach in other areas, with devolution of decision making to sub-regional or community level).

Each of these potential advantages can be more fully exploited if a set of success factors is in place. These are discussed in Chapter 3 and summarised in Table 6. Success factors for citizen centred policy are also included in the table for reference.

Table 6: Success factors in making the most of the advantages	
Potential advantage	Success factors
Citizen-centred policy	• Political will to promote this style of government and to 'give up' some power - encouraging challenge and scrutiny • Involve citizens in agenda setting, seeking views on overall priorities as well as on specific issues or detailed service design. • Ensure consistently good practice in communication, consultation and stakeholder engagement at all stages of policy development and delivery. • Open government and open data. Provision of information about rights, responsibilities, public sector performance (for instance levels of service expected and delivered) • Ensure officials 'go out to see for themselves' • Consider options for and seek opportunities for large scale engagement • Support a strong civic society to maximise sources of ideas • Opportunities for community or political engagement for all sectors of the population, especially those seen as 'hard to reach'. • Use of citizens panels or juries, 'national conversation' exercises, crowdsourcing of ideas or other use of social media • Research and evidence gathering about citizen views - surveys and focus groups • Arrangements for complaints, redress and a culture of good customer service, quality assurance and continuous improvement by government, including frequently seeking feedback about satisfaction.
Strong and inclusive policy networks	• Exhaustiveness: Talking to all strategic stakeholders or partners within a specific sector or tier rather than just a sample or subset • Inclusiveness and diversity: including a wide range of bodies, interests or views, for instance issue groups, unions, practitioners, service user representatives. Targeting hard-to-engage stakeholders, not just ‘the usual suspects’. This drive for inclusivity needs to be balanced against clarity of the purpose of

	the network or partnership, so that those involved have the appropriate decision making authority and nobody's time is wasted. • Stability of membership of groups for effectiveness… • …balanced with periodic review and refresh of membership • Multiple sources of information and ideas, balanced with • Direct communication: face-to-face discussions, direct and frequent communication, informal as well as formal networking, building strong group and individual relationships and understanding. Avoiding set-piece meetings in favour of genuine dialogue. • Clarity about parameters of debate and identification of shared goals within these. • Open style of working, welcoming challenge and alternative points of view within agreed parameters • Inclusion of delivery partners or agents at early stage
Horizontal policy coherence within government	• The government is a single organisation and staff identify with the whole organisation not their part of it. • A single budget and consistency in policy making practice and process across the organisation • Shared and cross-cutting objectives, with horizontal as well as vertical accountability for outcomes (Ministerial and official). Avoidance of Minister/portfolio/department silos. • Cross-governmental policy co-ordination (Cabinet Office type function) with suitable authority. • Cross departmental projects, groups, with shared goals, targets, indicators and with autonomy. • Structure, culture and management processes that promote, value and actively reward cross-cutting working at all levels (eg HR processes and staff performance frameworks) • Internal culture of trust, commitment, openness, willingness to change, reflective learning. • Flexible deployment of staff between departments to maximise use of resources.

	• Expectation of movement between departments during course of career and structures to support this (aids mutual understanding of constraints and pressures in different policy areas). • PPM approach to policy management - understanding and managing dependencies, risks and impacts. • Shared budgets (systems and processes are likely to already be shared) • Co-location, geographical proximity - or excellent ICT for close working within dispersed teams.
Wellbeing framework	As above plus: • A clear vision and long term policy stability around a small number of agreed priorities • Cross-cutting ownership of outcomes, a unit that co-ordinates, business planning and budget allocations that follow outcomes and priorities rather than organisational structure • A unified and collegiate cabinet, driven by whole government rather than individual success • Consider a statutory basis for the long term outcomes for longevity and clout
Vertical coherence between policy and delivery	• Analyse the delivery options taking into account capacity and resource issues. Agree with partners the level and mechanisms of control, and roles and accountabilities. • Where possible, use less formal mechanisms such as persuasion, voluntary adoption of shared goals, collaboration, capacity building, support and advice. Use statutory approaches or heavy performance management only when necessary. Avoid large volumes of guidance or complex requirements and processes • Analyse and map delivery chains. Challenge the requirement for each link in the chain, resulting in shorter chains and faster feedback loops. Avoid replicating the delivery chains of larger countries. • Ensure that responsible officials go out to see problems, interventions and impact in person and listen to deliverers –

	preferably in a low-key, collaborative style, avoiding set piece presentations and 'welcoming committees'. • Emphasise good two-way communication from policy formulation through to implementation and evaluation. • Encourage a learning culture within organisations and partnerships/groups, allowing for experimentation, acceptance of (reasonable) failure, sharing of experience and adaptation. • Be aware of the dangers of detailed measurement and accountability regimes in terms of unintended consequences or fragmenting complex social problems. Where possible use more holistic outcome measures and genuine delegation of accountability. • Systematically review the level at which policy and management/delivery decisions should be taken. Ensure clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of central and local tiers of government

4.3 Tackling the challenges

Key Findings:

- **There are particular challenges associated with policy making in smaller countries**
- **The main challenges relate to capacity (policy making, analytical, development of manifestos and policy environment) and international influence**
- **There are steps that can be taken to tackle these challenges**

The study found that smaller countries can face particular challenges and disadvantages in relation to policy making. These are discussed in section 3.5. In summary, the key challenges are:

- The relatively smaller policy making capacity within government
- Capacity for evidence gathering and analysis within and outside government

- Capacity within political parties for developing manifestos
- The policy environment, including the capacity and maturity of civil society
- International influence

Interviewees suggested a number of ways in which smaller countries might try to tackle or offset each of these disadvantages. These are discussed in section 3.5 and summarised in Table 7.

Table 7: Tackling the challenges

Challenge	Counter measures
Policy making capacity	Make a clear organisational and leadership commitment to good policy making practice (see Ch 2) and policy making as core business Redress the balance between policy work, day-to-day management, briefing etc to create 'space to think' in working week Strengthen internal policy profession network and create 'safe' forums for policy discussion and sharing Identify skills relevant to policy making in smaller countries and ensure these are developed Centrally co-ordinate policy skill development Centrally coordinate horizon scanning and ensure capacity for keeping in touch with developments in other administrations Draw on whole system to engage in policy development HR policies and organisational structures and processes that support development of policy making capacity Prioritise policy areas: focus on fewer policies and initiatives; accept limitations Favour simplicity in policy design - avoid legislation or over-management where possible Make organisational decisions about optimal patterns for staff mobility and the specialist/generalist debate and communicate these to staff
Analytical capacity	Strengthening links with the university sector: a long term, structured, systematic approach, agree a programme.

	Actively work with university sector in England encouraging them to develop more expertise and interest in and awareness of policy in the rest of the UK, including comparative studies. Look outwards to other countries and regions to pool resources and share ideas, experiences, findings and examples of successful policy. Use policy transfer, but appropriately and cautiously, with reference to context and the 'whole system' Develop networks with other small countries Use What Works Centres and innovation labs Work with other research bodies, think tanks, third sector organisations and bodies such as Nesta
Manifestos	Mainly a matter for political parties but there were suggestions about: • Earlier engagement, within the parameters of democratic propriety. • Making data, evidence and analysis available to all parties, drawing on civil service or external resources
Policy environment	Support the growth of civil society Apply basic policy making principles and good practice as set out in Chapter 2. Seek multiple voices, sources and examples Ensure openness of information and debate Be inclusive and make sure certain groups do not dominate the debate
International influence	Build/maintain good working relations with counterparts in Whitehall to influence the UK position and to share evidence and benefit from their greater policy making and analytical capacity (devolved administrations) Network with other small countries and devolved administrations to share intelligence, experience and capacity Work to 'educate' UK media about differences in policy and context, and correct any inaccuracies Prioritise areas where influence can be greatest and not try to '*do everything*'.

4.4 The impact of austerity

Key findings:

- **Austerity is likely to make some current policy making practice unsustainable**
- **Reduced resources will require change in the approach to policy making**
- **The change should be conscious, planned and appropriate to the individual country**

The study has found a widespread view that austerity will force the pace of change and will make it essential for smaller countries impacted by austerity measures to make policy differently. Much of the literature on policy making was formulated before austerity and much of the recent literature reflected a period of relative flexibility of resources. However, the interviews strongly brought out the current context.

Capacity issues and relative resource constraints of smaller countries have already been mentioned above but, in the opinion of interviewees, the impact of austerity measures on the governmental budgets of smaller countries has been (e.g. in Ireland) and will be (in the devolved administrations of the UK) of a different order and will require different responses:

> *'There's an awareness that money will run out soon'*

> *'There's a problem that in early years of devolution, when money was increasing annually, we wasted it and when you have a new policy you create new interests so to reverse it is extremely difficult. So it will be really challenging in the years ahead. There are some really interesting things going on though in areas where you are getting collaborative working and a shift to prevention, but against a tide which is pushing towards short termism and '1000 new cops'.*

There was a view that the impact of austerity on policy making will be proportionately greater in smaller countries, calling for radical and innovative responses and making maintenance of the status quo unsustainable. It was therefore important to reflect and plan a conscious response rather than let change happen of its own accord in an undesigned way.

'There will be hard choices about priorities. One of the hardest things for a small government is realising budgets are going to get smaller at the same time as the ambitions are getting bigger. That is an opportunity in a way because it forces you to focus on what is actually having an impact and seeing who else is doing things - because we can't afford to duplicate. But it also creates a sense that with hindsight there are things we would have taken more slowly - taken the trouble to get a proper evaluation and then take a decision whether to roll out rather than deciding "I want it to happen everywhere now". We've been learning along the way about the importance of evaluation, the time it takes for things to happen, the need to plan'.

There was relatively little detail on what the response might be, but comments included the need to '*be smarter*', '*be more resilient'* and '*do less*', as well as making greater use of external sources of capacity (see 4.3). There was an even greater need to prioritise outcomes and areas for policy development and to not try to do too much in too many areas at once.

There was a call for clarification of the role of central and local government, to avoid duplication or micro-management (see section 3.4). There was recognition of the pressures on local government:

'The trouble is the context - we are asking more of councils and giving local authorities more autonomy at precisely the time the rug is being pulled out from under the economy, so they effectively have to do more with less'.

It was stressed that policies should always be developed with impact in mind, minimising bureaucratic overheads and regulatory or other burdens imposed. There were calls to learn from countries where *'there have already been years of swingeing cuts and people have found ways of doing things differently and still deliver.*'

A strong theme, particularly in Scotland but increasingly elsewhere too, was the need for preventive policy, aimed at reducing future demand on public services and welfare. This related to all areas of social policy, not just health: for instance, looking at investment in early years and in 'early older years'. A tension was identified between, on the one hand, the need for more preventive social policy for the achievement of long term social benefits and financial savings and, on the other hand, the up-front costs of preventative approaches during the period of austerity, when there is also increased pressure on funding for acute services:

'All of this is harder when there's no money. For instance on prevention its hard to talk people into shifting their budget streams when budgets are being cut. There is a balance between meeting existing demand and preventing future demand - and for politicians, why would I spend something where the next incumbent may reap the benefit. Policy time doesn't map onto political time very well'.

'But how to shift resource for preventive work? There's some interesting speculative work on using borrowing powers similar to capital programmes to borrow from the future, but obviously there are problems of guaranteeing it being paid back and there's a massive risk. It has to be treated in the same way as capital spending. There's no money in the system anyway, and it runs up against the risk averse culture.'

There was a warning that some of the advantages of smaller countries could be lost if the response was the wrong one:

'Things that need to continue – the babies in the bathwater – are the degree of engagement with external organisations and partners, because that is a strength'.

'Stakeholder engagement becomes more difficult under austerity - to secure buy-in... From the departments' perspective, with no money to do new things, why would you consult? I have a strong view that even in terms of operational capacity there is an importance in consultation and talking to the customer base.'

Chapter 5: Applying the Findings

This chapter begins the process of applying the findings to consider how they can help inform the improvement of policy making. This is done in section 5.1 by applying the findings to Wales. This is intended both as an illustrative example and as a practical output of the study for consideration by the Welsh Government.

Section 5.2 outlines some next steps that could usefully be taken if this area of study were to be further researched or applied.

It was noticeable in interviews with participants from all the countries studied that people frequently spoke in terms of aspects of smaller countries that *'should be an advantage in theory'* or that *'you would expect would help make better policy'*, but often with the rider that this advantage either had not yet been fully exploited or was difficult to exploit due to resource constraints. This general pattern was repeated in Wales, although not to any greater extent than elsewhere. The pattern indicates that pursuing the analysis along the lines set out in this chapter could be beneficial for policy making by helping to identify areas for improvement.

5.1 Applying the findings in Wales

In the time available for this study, it has not been possible to apply the findings in a comprehensive way. This section therefore offers first thoughts on the implications for Wales of looking at policy making through the lens of being a smaller country, and proposes some areas for consideration by the Welsh Government. It is based mainly on views expressed by contributors, advisers and interviewees working in Wales.

The findings are applied in three ways:

- Firstly, Welsh Government policy making is considered against the process, characteristics and current directions in good policy making set out in Chapter 2
- Secondly, each of the potential advantages of smaller countries (discussed in sections 3.1-3.4 and summarised in section 4.2) is discussed in the Welsh context to consider if they are being exploited and how they might be further realised
- Thirdly, the disadvantages of smaller countries (discussed in section 3.5 and summarised in section 4.3) are discussed in the Welsh context to see how they are being tackled and whether further steps might be taken.

Finally, a few overall conclusions are offered for consideration, drawing together the themes from the study as a whole applied to the context of Wales.

It is important to note the historical context when looking at policy making in Wales. In all of the devolved administrations of the UK, participants noted that policy making on any significant scale was still '*very new, relatively speaking*', with the system still in a process of '*heaving to*'. Interviewees described how policy making pre-devolution had often been simply a matter of copying or very slightly adapting policy made for England, sometimes simply '*crossing out England and writing* [the name of the country]'. They also referred to the inherited policy making model and culture and an initial position of trying to be a '*mini-Whitehall*' or '*Whitehall-lite'*. Interviewees recalled that it was '*early days'* for these '*young governments'* in the process of developing a more distinctive and bespoke approach to policy making that was suited to the specific country - '*it takes time to develop capacity, confidence and political systems*'. It was noted that neither the politicians nor the officials had '*done a lot of national level policy*' before devolution and were '*still on a journey*'. One interviewee even suggested that:

> *'Part of context is we are young government and there has been a desire to maintain ministers' confidence in us by not saying things that are challenging and going along with things when evidence doesn't support it.'*

It was noted that significant cultural and political change had already occurred in a relatively short period of time:

> *'Twenty years ago... Welsh politics happened in London. Institutions are developing now but they are not part of our history.'*

5.1.1 Policy making in Wales

Chapter 2 set out the process and characteristics of good policy making, and some current directions in policy making.

The policy process was well understood by interviewees from Wales, and their experience was that the process often was applied properly and worked well, with the stages in the right order. However, there was a serious concern that this was not always the case and that the process was not universally understood or implemented at political or official levels, perhaps due to resource constraints or pressure to move to decision and delivery at pace. In particular, there were calls for policy makers to ensure that they always:

- Start from identification and analysis of a policy problem or objective rather than from an idea or policy response - even where these appear in a manifesto commitment;
- Carry out an option appraisal, including the 'do nothing' option;

- Identify clear objectives and build in plans for evaluation against these objectives from the outset.

The characteristics of good policy making were also supported and understood by interviewees from Wales. For many of the characteristics, the verdict was along the lines of 'a good start, but plenty of scope for further improvement'. For most characteristics, there were positive and negative views about the performance of Welsh Government.

Some interviewees, commenting on the 'story so far' since devolution, cited particular strengths in terms of:

- strong stakeholder engagement and partnership working. Inclusive working was praised as a relative strength of the Welsh Government, although it was noted that it was important to constantly review practice to ensure engagement with new and diverse groups was rather than just 'the usual suspects'. It was noted that the Welsh Government preferred, where possible, to work through consensus rather than command and control.

  'There has from the outset of devolution been a genuine desire on the part of government to engage and include people.'
- joining up policy across government was reported to be a relative strength. It was recognised that stakeholders might not consider this to be a strength and that there was still considerable scope for improvement, but several interviewees noted occasions when stakeholders had observed that policy and government were more joined-up in Wales than in England.
- looking outwards for ideas and policy options (but see below for the alternative point of view on this characteristic):

  'We do look to other small governments quite a lot in looking for options'
  'We maintain dialogue with other countries because they are looking at similar issues and may have got to some things first - other things we may have got to first'.
- Using evidence and analysis was a significant strength in some areas, and a weakness in others (see below for the weaknesses):

  'We are quite conscientious in looking at research and what works'
  'In my area, we can produce lots of research and analysis from research foundations'.

Examples of the principles and good practice that people suggested needed to be improved included:

- A consistent focus on outcomes and objectives.

- Prioritising areas of work (see below)
- Determining or changing a policy in response to solid evidence or evaluation rather than single views/lobbying or anecdotal feedback. Being prepared to drop or change a policy where there is evidence of problems or lack of effectiveness:

  'It gets stuck into politics – "this is going to be great", "no its not", "yes it is" – rather than testing and looking from what goes wrong and learning from it and then picking successful ones and scaling them up. Sometimes there's been an announcement or statement in a speech several years ago therefore we must do it and keep doing it so the culture about looking for improvement or value or areas where we might need to reform or enhance isn't there.'
- Openness to learning from elsewhere, including from England. Not feeling that '*we have to do it all ourselves*' within Wales. This required stronger links with policy makers in England (given the impact on Wales of policy made for England) and stronger networks and links with other countries or regions (some interviewees specifically mentioned other similar EU regions, other smaller countries or other Celtic nations/regions)
- While there was a general awareness of the need for policy to be evidence based, capacity problems could rule out a comprehensive approach and there were still some areas not embracing evidence based policy making:

  'We are not always great at knowing how to draw on and interpret information from elsewhere – there's not always a strong appetite or expectation to do that.'

  'In some areas we have used international evidence, and we had people from around the world coming in to give advice. But there are other areas where we have just 'had a go' or just done what we used to do and even in some areas that are strongly evidence driven, how we roll them out isn't necessarily done in the best most effective ways'.

It was proposed that the principles of good policy making should be reaffirmed and supported by the organisation, giving officials at all grades the confidence and authority to ensure that proper processes are carried out.

There was recognition of the steps that had been taken and significant efforts made to support networking and learning amongst policy makers. It was noted, however, that much of this happened through the good will of some committed individuals on top of the day job. There was a wish to see this strengthened and driven at the senior level. Learning and policy skills are discussed below (5.1.3).

Of the current trends in policy making discussed in section 2.3, interviewees identified the following as areas where policy makers in Wales could develop further awareness or expertise:

- Innovation and creativity, including looking for ways of simplifying processes and policies and reducing administrative or regulatory burdens;
- Greater use of the learning from the What Works Network including use of the PPIW;
- Experimentation - trialling approaches before commitment to full roll-out, accepting that some policies or aspects of delivery will fail and others succeed:
  '*The new Policy Lab will help test out policies. Being small we can test out on a small enough scale to get it going quickly but still in a range of circumstances so we can know if it will work across Wales.'*
- Considering a wider range of policy instruments - it was suggested that there was a strong case in smaller countries for using behavioural techniques, persuasion and collaboration more, and legislation and regulation less.
- Use of digital resources and solutions and of social media.

There were different views on professionalising policy making. Some suggested that Wales was behind the game in relation to skills development and the development of policy making as a distinct professional area:

> *'The UK government approach... to evidence and questioning why we do things a certain way is good and the emphasis on professionalising the policy making process - in which we are quite far behind here. Some departments and bits of departments are better but collectively we are not generally as good'.*

Others considered this approach less appropriate in a smaller country, where officials combine policy making with a range of other roles. Overall, there was considerable support for a greater organisational culture of learning and skill development, whether or not policy making was seen as a separate profession.

5.1.2 Exploiting the advantages of being a smaller country in Wales

Citizen centred policy making: section 3.1 found that smaller countries do not have any great advantage in relation to citizen centred policy, other than a slightly vague perception of politicians and officials being more grounded and in touch with the views of citizens, an opportunity to have more accessible politicians, officials, organisations and information and a potentially greater sense of national identity. The success factors for citizen centred policy are set out in section 4.2.

Wales was considered by interviewees to perform relatively well in terms of citizen-centred policy, although not because of its size so much as because of its post-devolution political culture and aspirations. There was a consensus that, relatively speaking, seeking and listening to citizen views was a strength and that consultation practice had improved significantly since devolution. Citizens had been involved in agenda setting as well as specific design or delivery issues, for instance through the 'Wales We Want' exercise:

> *'Wales is further ahead than us in thinking about participation and you have had participation guidance for some time. What you gain is credibility and you get people involved.'*

As always, there was still scope for further improvement, but the experience was that the style of government, genuineness of consultation, accessibility and extent of being 'in touch' were very much greater than under the Welsh Office. Areas for further improvement related to more extensive use of citizens' panels or juries, openness in relation to data, welcoming scrutiny and challenge, continuing to improve practice in stakeholder engagement especially in terms of communication with harder-to-reach or more marginalised groups, public surveys and use of social media and digital approaches to service delivery. There were also suggestions about reviewing the universal consultation arrangements .

Policy networks: section 3.2 found that stronger and more inclusive networking was a significant potential strength of smaller countries. Here again, the experience of interviewees was that Wales was performing relatively well in terms of stakeholder engagement in policy making, with inclusiveness, discussion with key stakeholders and consultation very much the norm. Wales was reported as taking advantage of the ability to 'get everyone in a room' for direct discussions, and the ability to maintain good working relationships between government officials and key stakeholders on a more regular basis than would be possible in a larger country.

> *'Some stakeholders complain about complexity of engaging with us but it's still much less than with a bigger government that is split into completely separate entities.'*

> *'There is an advantage across the delivery chain in any given policy area because you have all the local authorities in a room, you have all the decision makers there. You can bring the entire top leadership of public services in Wales together and actually do workshops with them. The networks are across providers, police, health and everybody - so that networking thing can be significantly enhanced.'*

Where formal governance arrangements or set-piece meetings were needed, these were best underpinned by strong, less formal, individual relationships maintained alongside the formal arrangements.

As described in section 3.2, there was a tension between inclusivity and effectiveness. The solution was in being clear about the purpose of any particular network or meeting. Some networks aimed to gather views and generate ideas. Here, it was particularly valuable to include a diverse range of stakeholders. Other groups aimed to make decisions and take action, and in these instances it could be more effective to ensure stable membership of individuals with decision making authority. In general, it was thought to be helpful to review membership periodically to ensure it was still appropriate for the purpose.

Interviewees advocated that where appropriate, groups actively sought challenge and multiple sources of ideas and scrutiny, to avoid 'groupthink' or cosiness. Whatever the membership, no particular interests should receive disproportionate consideration due to having better connections, resources or lobbying more effectively.

Horizontal coherence: section 3.3 found that smaller countries had an advantage in developing joined up and coherent policy across traditional policy subject divides. This was particularly the case where the government was a single organisation with a single budget and relatively consistent processes, as is the case with the Welsh Government.

> *'We are structured as a single organisation ...and that reduces friction between departments and it's easier to do business across departments.'*

A strength of this arrangement is that staff identify with the organisation as a whole rather than a single department. Interviewees reported that this was generally the case in Welsh Government and should be further encouraged to ensure staff do not become parochial in loyalties to a single area. One measure to promote this was encouraging staff to move between departments during their career, balanced against staying in each post long enough for continuity and to develop sufficient expertise. This could be supported by having significant numbers of staff available for flexible deployment across the organisation.

During the course of the study, and after most of the interviews were carried out, major changes were made to the senior staff structure in the Welsh Government, reducing the size

of the senior team under the Permanent Secretary from the previous six Director Generals to two Deputy Permanent Secretaries and the Director General for Health and Social Services, with an enhanced corporate and cross-cutting function for the team. This change is very much in line with the direction many interviewees supported. Interviewees had voiced serious concerns about the rigid vertical structure of 'Minister/ DG/Department silos' and the impact of this on cross-cutting working ('*DGs working to one Minister reinforces the silo mentality*'), and on the lack of central policy co-ordination across the Welsh Government. The recent changes have the potential to address these concerns, especially if linked with a *'Cabinet Office or Treasury type function'* with suitable authority (as is planned), and horizontal ownership of cross-cutting objectives (see the section below on wellbeing frameworks).

The overall picture of horizontal coherence within the Welsh Government was again that things had improved since devolution and were often good compared with larger countries, but that there was still considerable scope for improvement. Some areas were cited where cross-cutting working had been successful, with teams sharing objectives and working effectively:

> *'Getting agreement in a big Whitehall department or across Whitehall is incredibly time consuming whereas if we want to do something including a new policy going through the process of getting it agreed is much quicker and easier - including where It's cross-cutting. It's still difficult across departments but much easier than bringing together three or four Whitehall departments. There's a speed of decision making and bringing together a much smaller set of people involved - you can actually get things moving.'*

In other areas it was sometimes very difficult to break through departmental barriers. Cross-departmental communication was not always driven or promoted by ministers or senior officials. Arrangements were said to sometimes flounder when it came to sharing or relinquishing budgets. A key proposal by interviewees was that money should follow priorities rather than structures, and that allocations should be fundamentally reviewed rather than incrementally follow historical patterns. Interviewees also mentioned frustrations with ICT. In the context of horizontal coherence, there was a particular need for more reliable and accessible videoconferencing and teleworking facilities to aid effective working between office locations.

Wellbeing frameworks: section 3.3.1 found that smaller countries have a particular opportunity to embrace an approach of long-term, cross-cutting outcome-related objectives

that drive policy, generate consensus and help prioritise action. Again, this was found to be easier where the government was a single organisation as in Wales (which, with its very few NDPBs or agencies had a more structurally unified government than most).

Interviewees generally wanted a clearer 'big picture' of what the Welsh Government was trying to achieve over the long term. There was a view that in its early days, the Welsh Government had, perhaps necessarily, been trying to do a large number of things, resulting in extensive programmes for government, but that the time was right for a more strategic approach, particularly in the context of austerity.

> *'It's more plausible to think that Wales can set a limited number of long term objectives than England, where there are too many stakeholders and competing influences'.*

Particular points included:

- A wish for fewer, more strategic, priorities and an overarching long term strategy with high level, cross-cutting outcome-based objectives (see section 3.3.1) - '*Welsh Government is good at fixing things, less good at long term evidence based strategy*'. Some advocated a single uniting aim and several referred to focussing limited resources on a smaller number of areas or initiatives.
- The need for Cabinet and officials at all levels to adopt a collegiate and corporate approach to achieving these, avoiding the silo mentality. The use of horizontal as well as vertical structures.
- Proposals for a strong policy co-ordination centre, described as a 'Cabinet Office function'.
- Greater challenge of some '*nice to have but not essential*' policies or initiatives, especially in the context of austerity. Having a government-wide set of priority outcomes would provide a basis of criteria for stronger challenge of piecemeal ideas that could not be shown to contribute towards these.
- Ensuring that business planning and budget allocations flowed downwards from strategic objectives rather than upwards from existing structures and activity.

The Future Generations Act was cited by some as a major opportunity to adopt such an approach and realise the attendant benefits, especially as it had already developed a set of long term outcomes and had a statutory basis, ensuring longevity of the approach and providing 'clout':

'The Future Generations framework should force us to be more coherent when we're going out to other organisations and to consult people and to say how we see it fitting in with everything else'

'This is the first time we have put in law a common purpose for public bodies across Wales. Very few countries have done that. There is now a statutory purpose effectively for public bodies to... achieve their goals in a sustainable way while improving economic, social, cultural wellbeing. It is intended to transform the way public service decisions are made... all public bodies must contribute to headline goals... and make policy in a different way. They are new parameters for policy making in Wales - we have a big job to communicate it.'

However, some interviewees were less aware of the Future Generations Act or questioned whether the approach would be effective in shaping or streamlining future programmes for government in a strategic way. There was a fear that if not embedded well or maintained over time, the approach could simply add a layer of reporting and bureaucracy, to which existing or new activity would be retro-fitted:

'Whether that's successful or not...it could be a complete flop in that we have a Bill and some indicators and an annual report but then we don't actually do anything any differently. The Bill has potential but it's not enough on its own, it needs active attempts to get the organisation working that way. It would be easy to just comply with the Act.'

Political imperatives for short termism and for Ministers and officials to *'be in the detail'* of delivery, were known to be very difficult to resist. There was recognition of the public and media pressure on ministers to ensure good service delivery across Wales, and the tension between this and further devolution of decision making to the local level.

Vertical coherence: section 3.4 found that smaller countries should be more able to join up policy intention and delivery and reduce the 'operational disconnect' that can lead to implementation failure. This was an area where interviewees expressed some concerns about the extent to which Wales had capitalised on the potential advantage to date - although some reported Wales as doing relatively well in some policy areas compared with England, with a lot of good practice. Local Service Boards were seen by some as a positive model, particularly in terms of looking at service delivery and joined up delivery from the perspective of the service user rather than the provider. Others observed that they could be very time consuming for some organisations that spanned more than one LSB area. Central

government officials were reported to be more accessible than in larger countries, and '*prepared to get out from behind their desks*', communication was often good and effective working relationships were often built and maintained. Feedback loops often worked quickly and well, alerting central government to delivery problems.

Nevertheless, despite many of the success factors being in place and examples of good practice, there was a concern that in some policy areas it was not clear enough where accountability lay for decision making and delivery. This was perhaps partly because of, rather than despite, being a smaller country: the feasibility of central government having any role in local delivery could blur lines of accountability. In a larger country, it would be clearer that central government could not take responsibility. There appeared to be a pattern of the Welsh Government delegating accountability to local authorities or other delivery partners, but then prescribing how delivery should be undertaken in great detail, issuing voluminous guidance and attaching complex systems of performance indicators and oversight arrangements.

There was some appetite for a systematic review of the levels at which decisions and responsibilities should lie and the roles and accountabilities of different tiers of government. This was noted as being particularly important in the context of austerity, where neither central nor local government could afford to duplicate activity undertaken at the other tier of government. There was no universal view about the direction in which decision making should move. Some points were made in favour of further devolution to the more local level:

> *'You need a level of trust, not to be all over them.'*

Others favoured central national management of services where there was an expectation of uniform entitlement across the country:

> *'We do so much prescription of what's required we may as well just do it nationally, commission it and stop giving them responsibility for something and then removing the room for manoeuvre'.*

5.1.3 Tackling the challenges of being a smaller country in Wales

Section 3.5 set out the disadvantages for policy making of being a smaller country.

In relation to policy making capacity, interviewees in Wales echoed the general point that there was a need to redress the balance between the urgent and the important, and between policy making and other roles: '*We tend to focus on the important and urgent; we need some time on the important but not urgent, and we need to avoid the expectation of 'busy-ness'.'* Stronger policy networks and a '*safe place for dialogue*' were supported.

There was a need to maintain and develop the skills and knowledge base in relation to policy making within the organisation. It was suggested that the Welsh Government should become '*a more learning organisation'* in relation to policy making, with more staff taking advantage of internal and external training and development opportunities in policy making. It was noted that a lot of work had been done to develop an in-house advanced policy training course, and that other policy making courses were available at a less advanced level. However, there were concerns that learning and development had been less to the fore in recent years and that in-house courses would not be sufficient by themselves to provide the required challenge and keep practice up to date:

> *'Quite a bit was done previously but not so much now at that senior level to get that exchange of ideas... more of that needs to happen in future'*

> *'The T&D offer for the next executive and SCS is not as good and visible now as it was five years ago, which is a concern because with increasing autonomy and the fact that we didn't buy in to civil service training and everything is in London and the head of the civil service says more exchanges between DAs and Whitehall should be encouraged. I haven't seen a huge movement. There's a risk of getting a bit parochial and stale if people don't see how things are done in other organisations and that little sting of "gosh we can up our game here" and raise our expectations'.*

Other suggestions for supporting policy making practice were:

- clear and straightforward guidance on policy making principles and practice
- greater use of secondments to and from the Welsh Government. Secondments and other mechanisms for movement of staff both within the public sector and between sectors were proposed for widening skills, experience, knowledge and understanding. The use of inward secondments of practitioners to supplement policy teams was cited as a positive example that could be repeated more often. Civil servants in Wales were said to come from a diverse range of backgrounds and subject specialisms, with a wide range of skills and motivations, which was a strength and provided a solid base from which to develop.
- more outward looking recruitment: *'In talent management and leadership – we need to grow our own but also recruit from outside and encourage cross border flows'.*

- more clarity about whether the organisation valued specific subject knowledge, implying that individuals should stay in one area or post for the long term, or more generic skills and breadth of experience, implying that careers should involve movement between areas.
- the use of flexible project teams or individuals, who could be moved to pressure points of special projects/key areas of policy development was reported to be a sensible and proven way of managing with less, and one that recognises the changing resource requirements of the policy cycle.
- There was a suggestion for more formal arrangements for the discussion of policy by the Cabinet and amongst senior officials. This sprang from a concern that not having cabinet committees, and requiring Cabinet papers to be very short and seeking approval rather than debate could lead to a lack of challenge and scrutiny at the higher levels.

There was also a recognition that capacity challenges will remain a fact of life for smaller countries, and will be a particular issue throughout the current period of austerity - therefore organisations and policy makers would need to find ways to innovate and be creative:

> *'We need to expect more of ourselves – we must expect excellence. We shouldn't talk about being under-resourced all the time, we need ideas, not money'.*

Turning to analytical capacity, there was a strong consensus that more capacity was needed to gather, generate and analyse evidence and data on which to base policy development in Wales. Expert support for option appraisal and evaluation were considered to be essential for sound policy making practice. Concerns centred on availability of resources and the timescales for action, which sometimes did not allow for sufficient up-front gathering of evidence, analysis or assessment of options.

Opinions differed about what the balance should be between in-house provision and external sources. Generally, there was a desire to work more closely with the university sectors within and outside Wales, encourage cross-university collaboration and to draw on existing evidence from other countries more effectively.

> *'Here, the academic sector hasn't built up to support policy. We need to focus on doing something about that.'*

There was a call for clarifying the role of the PPIW and how it could be used by officials, and for ensuring that this and other opportunities for working closely with academics were maximised. There was general support for the idea of the PPIW:

'PPIW's mission is to compensate for our lack of internal capacity, a structured way of bringing evidence into government and identifying best practice – especially in areas where Ministers feel we are not being creative enough. So the weakness can become a strength.'

'The PPIW is positive - it brings together range of experts, not just Wales based but thinking about Welsh issues and being used on a regular basis.'

It was suggested that there was untapped capacity within the university sectors of other countries, and particularly universities in England. It was noted that academics in England often confined their studies to England, missing the opportunity to compare four distinct UK approaches to a particular issue. They were perhaps unaware of how easily they could access the key people to talk to in the governments of smaller devolved countries, compared with Whitehall. Efforts could be made to spread the word on this front, bringing benefits to all sides.

Plans to establish 'Y Lab', the policy innovation lab for Wales took some steps forward during this study. This was seen as a great opportunity and an area where Wales as a smaller country had an opportunity to do things well. Generally, people supported more piloting and trialling of policy ideas to ensure effectiveness before full roll-out:

'In a big country, piloting a policy, the range of circumstances is very different and you can't pilot in hundreds of areas - it would be bigger than rolling it out. So would you really know if it's going to work? But we can test it in a more diverse set of circumstances but still a small number because there aren't that many places to do things. We have the potential to do more in terms of thinking of different ways to tackle a problem. If we're not sure they'll work, we can be more sure if we set it up properly that the test results will give a good indication.'

In relation to capacity for developing manifestos, the general problem identified at 3.5 of manifesto commitments not always being based on proper policy development processes and principles, was also discussed in the case of Wales. There were suggestions for making more arrangements to make data, evidence and analysis available to all parties, using civil service or external resources to ensure that all manifestos could be based on thorough analysis of the nature of a problem and on evidence and option appraisal.

In relation to the policy environment, interviewees noted that policy making in Wales had started from a different place at devolution compared with the other devolved administrations. Scotland had always had its own legislation, and separate legal and education systems, and Northern Ireland had an established separate civil service and experience of distinctive social policies responding to its specific demography and politics. It was noted by several interviewees that Wales had historically been more closely aligned with England. A particular feature of the policy making landscape in Wales at devolution, identified by several interviewees, was that it was '*starting from a low base in maturity of our civil society*'. This view referred to think tanks, national-level third sector organisations, the university sector and national media.

It was reported that the consequences of this '*weaker hinterland of civic society that government can feed off for its own thinking*' included having fewer sources of policy ideas and supporting analysis and relatively little high-level and well informed external challenge and scrutiny. This was not as fertile an environment for policy making as in some of the other countries studied, making the challenge for politicians and officials all the greater. A plurality of voices and sources was noted to be key to good policy making: '*the most important thing is diversity of sources of information. Where small polities go wrong is only having a few sources such as in-house advisers or the same few stakeholders, so you can get stuck or make mistakes*'. Suggestions for combatting this included:

> *'Perhaps we could use special advisers more to sound out ideas – try to deliberately create structures to allow exchange of views and discussion – more quasi academic discussion around medium term future, 5 to 10 year horizon.'*
>
> *'be very open, rotate chairs, seek out new sources'*
>
> *'more networking within the profession and between countries to share experiences and draw on many sources.'*
>
> *'use PPIW well, and external sources of evidence and organisations like Nesta.'*

5.1.4 Some conclusions

In the context of austerity, this study has concluded (section 4.4) that smaller countries will need to review how they approach policy making to ensure that they make best use of their very limited policy making and analytical resources to achieve the best outcomes for

citizens. There was a consensus from the interviews that policy making (including delivery) in Wales has come a very long way in just 15 years since devolution. There was an emerging sense from the interviews taken as a whole that the time is ripe for a new phase of further development, particularly given the financial context.

> *'We are at a tipping point, driven there by the burning platform of austerity because we can't afford to keep on this way, it's not tenable. We have a huge batch of new powers coming and a smaller civil service and smaller public sector to deliver it. We need to think seriously about the way we do business collectively and our priorities. There's an opportunity to use the Future Generations Act to shape things and pull things together using outcomes to really pare back on some of the complexity of the system we have created. To mature as a government and be a government which leads and leaves the micromanagement to other parts of the public service.'*

The preceding sections make a number of suggestions for areas to consider. The most important of these are that policy making could be further improved by the Welsh Government:

- Reasserting at an organisational level its own principles of good policy making and the central importance of policy making as core business of the organisation.
- Reviewing its provision of learning and support for policy makers, tailored for the needs of Wales. Ensuring the provision and take up of high quality learning opportunities for policy makers and structures for sharing ideas, experiences and concerns. This should draw on the latest thinking from within and outside Wales and would require external input and expertise.
- Considering how to rebalance roles and the working week between ‘the urgent’ and ‘the important’ and between making and delivering policy on the one hand and carrying out routine work on the other.
- Further strengthening and formalising links with the university sector within Wales to boost the analytical capacity available to policy makers. Promoting an interest in Wales amongst academics elsewhere, including university sectors of England and the rest of the UK.
- Strengthening policy links with other smaller nations and regions within and beyond the UK to provide more sources of policy ideas and challenge.
- Taking a more strategic approach to prioritising a smaller number of key areas for action based on agreed long term, cross-cutting, outcome-related objectives. This should be

supported by a central co-ordination unit and by business planning and budget allocation that follows outcomes rather than organisational structures.

- Reviewing the respective roles and responsibilities of central and local government to ensure decisions are made at the right level and there is clarity about where accountability lies and no duplication of effort.

5.2 Next steps

This three month study aimed to draw together the main elements of current thinking on the topic of policy making in small countries, and to identify key themes from discussions with policy makers and commentators in the countries studied. It also began the work of applying the findings to Wales. It has necessarily been limited in scope and method. In order to build on these foundations and test and strengthen the findings, it would be helpful to:

- Consider other smaller countries or regions, for instance the Baltic states, Scandinavian states, New Zealand, the Channel Islands or Isle of Man or small island states.
- Consider some larger countries by way of comparison.
- Interview other groups, for instance delivery partners or other key stakeholders in a range of social policy areas in the countries studied.
- Study some specific policies, initiatives or policy areas, and in particular assess their content, outcomes and impacts, and compare these with similar policy areas in larger countries.
- Consider the relationship between good policy making and national levels of public satisfaction with government or public services (for instance through the existing national surveys) or engagement with politics or public life.
- Map and compare the resources available for policy analysis and policy making in a range of countries.
- Develop a framework approach for considering how smaller countries can ensure they are well placed to benefit from the potential advantages of their size and tackle the associated challenges. This could be constructed by exploring each 'potential advantage' area in more detail and further exploring the success factors for maximising its benefits.
- Evaluate policy processes, impacts and outcomes in a specific area before and after any changes to improve the policy making environment.

Annex: Contributors, Advisers and Interviewees

Claire Bennett	Glyn Jones
Jonathan Breckon	Prof Michael Keating
Tracey Breheny	Prof Colin Knox
Simon Brindle	Marie Knox
Prof Gillian Bristow	Steve Lazell
Prof Paul Cairney	Prof Steve Martin
Sharron Carlin	Steve Marshall
Prof Paul Carmichael	Peter May
Kate Cassidy	Marcella Maxwell
Raj Chari	Prof Philip McCann
Andrew Charles	Dermot McCarthy
Des Clifford	Prof James Mitchell
Anne-Marie Conlong	Prof Kevin Morgan
Charles Coombs	James Morris
Kate Crabtree	Eoin O Malley
Jo-Anne Daniels	Jonathan Price
Prys Davies	Matthew Quinn
Carys Evans	Orlaigh Quinn
Owen Evans	Hugh Rawlings
Rodney Fernandes	Andy Rees
Caren Fullerton	David Richards
Doreen Grove	Chris Roberts (KAS)
Will Haire	Chris Roberts (SPAD)
Niamh Hardiman	Frances Ruane
Mike Harmer	Emily St Dennis
Eve Hepburn	Jamie Smith
Geoffrey Hewings	Prof Markku Sotarauta
Kenneth Hogg	Barry Vaughan
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Author Details:

Tamlyn Rabey is a civil servant at the Welsh Government.