

The Scottish Public Services Network (SPSN)

How The Improvement Service for Scotland has created a national collaboration exemplar for public service transformation.

The Improvement Service for Scotland (IS) has created a powerful digital platform for public servants to collaborate, communicate and connect, enabling its 25,000 members to drive significant efficiencies and tackle important social issues.

As the national improvement organisation for local government in Scotland, IS aims to help councils and their partners to improve the health, quality of life and opportunities of all people in Scotland through community leadership, strong local governance and the delivery of high quality, efficient local services. They do this by providing a range of products and advisory services including consultation and facilitation, learning and skills, performance management and improvement, and research.

Since 2012, IS has been working in partnership with Knowledge Hub, the digital collaboration platform for public service, to deliver the Scottish Public Services Network (SPSN), a varied digital knowledge sharing community for those working in the public and not-for-profit sectors across Scotland and beyond, enabling them to work closer together, discover new ideas and inspire innovation.

Key facts

25,000 members

800+ groups

15,000 members from local authorities

5,000 members from Scottish Government

Plus other representatives from across the public and not-for-profit sectors: health, education, police, fire and rescue, heritage & voluntary organisations.

Purpose of the network

1. Bring public servants across Scotland together to connect, communicate and collaborate.
2. Help public sector organisations drive efficiency, saving time and money by pooling resources and sharing best practice.
3. Support public sector organisations to improve the services they deliver to communities with peer-to-peer learning and skills development.

Action Groups

National Violence Against Women (VAW) Network

◆ **269 members** ◆ Scottish Government, COSLA, local authorities, third-sector organisations and Police Scotland

Scottish Members Services Development Network (SMSDN)

◆ **96 members** ◆ 29 Scottish local councils represented

Scottish Community Councils Liaison Officers (CCLO) Development Network

◆ **78 members** ◆ Members from across Scotland

Digital Partnership for Scottish Local Government

◆ **827 members** ◆ 30 councils represented

Change Managers Network (Scotland)

◆ **635 members** ◆ Members from across Scotland

Society of Local Authority Lawyers & Administrators (SOLAR)

◆ **850+ members across 15 different groups**

◆ Members from across Scotland

Network Impact

Thousands of knowledge exchanges every month leading to:

- ◆ £ millions of pounds in savings through cost avoidance
- ◆ Improved productivity through time saved by not constantly reinventing the wheel
- ◆ A more skilled workforce because of expertise shared
- ◆ Better cross-sector partnerships due to members connecting and sharing
- ◆ Improved services in communities through putting learning and knowledge gained into practice.

National Violence Against Women (VAW) Network

◆ 269 members

◆ Scottish Government, COSLA, local authorities, third-sector organisations and Police Scotland

Purpose: to support VAW partnerships in preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls at a local level.

Impact: reduction in email traffic, increased knowledge sharing, improved communication between partners and better use of case studies and good practice within partnerships.

Facilitator: “The group has positively impacted how members collaborate in a democratic and inclusive way. For example, the group was developing a position paper and members used the group as a space for discussion about what the paper should include, sharing examples of work their council had undertaken.”

Scottish Members Services Development Network (SMSDN)

◆ 96 members

◆ 29 Scottish local councils represented

Purpose: enabling members to connect and share ideas, practice, issues and discussion in between meetings.

Impact: time and money saved through the ability to find and share information quickly.

Facilitator: “When block emails are sent out with requests for information the responses can be lost. When you use the SPSN to communicate and share knowledge with each other the information is captured and can be accessed months or even years later and may in turn save our councils money.”

Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators (SOLAR)

◆ 850+ members across 15 different groups

◆ Members from across Scotland

Purpose: to provide an online communications hub for each of the SOLAR workstreams.

Impact: reduction in email traffic and duplication and increase in knowledge and practice sharing through a commitment to embedding groups as the main method of communication.

Facilitator: “The biggest innovation has been the reduction of email traffic and the increase in sharing best practice, particularly via forum discussions. A hugely valuable resource that helps members avoid reinventing the wheel again and again.”

Digital Partnership for Scottish Local Government

◆ 827 members

◆ 30 councils represented

Purpose: an online space to tap into each other's digital expertise, share practice and ask questions.

Impact: £1million cost avoidance in terms of time and resources in 2018 alone through sharing baseline deliverables and good practice on approaches to the General Data Protection Regulation.

Facilitator: “Materials shared in the group around GDPR have been hugely helpful and have saved copious amount of time, especially as it's a small project team working on GDPR. In particular, the project plan and communications plan allowed us to move from planning to the actual doing relatively quickly”.

Change Managers Network (Scotland)

◆ 635 members

◆ Members from across Scotland

Purpose: to bring together change professionals across Scotland's public sector.

Impact: creation of an established and successful professional peer to peer learning network and key resource for those who had no other dedicated professional association to support them.

Facilitator: “Change managers don't have a specific network so having a dedicated online space is vital for knowledge sharing. With lots of new projects and programmes in the pipeline, we'll have even more to offer the change managers network.”

Scottish Community Councils Liaison Officers (CCLO) Development Network

◆ 78 members

◆ Members from across Scotland

Purpose: creation of long-term repository of shared practice and knowledge that meets members' needs.

Impact: officers growing in confidence, developing skills and greater expertise.

Facilitator: “The success of this particular group is not measured in terms of how many materials are shared or how many people engage in discussion each week; it's more about officers feeling like they can ask questions and ... find out about what others are working on, what challenges they face.”