

# Learning point 93

## Designing for Outcomes

### What are Learning Points?

Learning points share what people have learned from their experience in regeneration - from people working or talking together, or from research into issues and evaluation of what is happening. Learning points can help people and organisations to improve their practice through identifying what works and what doesn't.

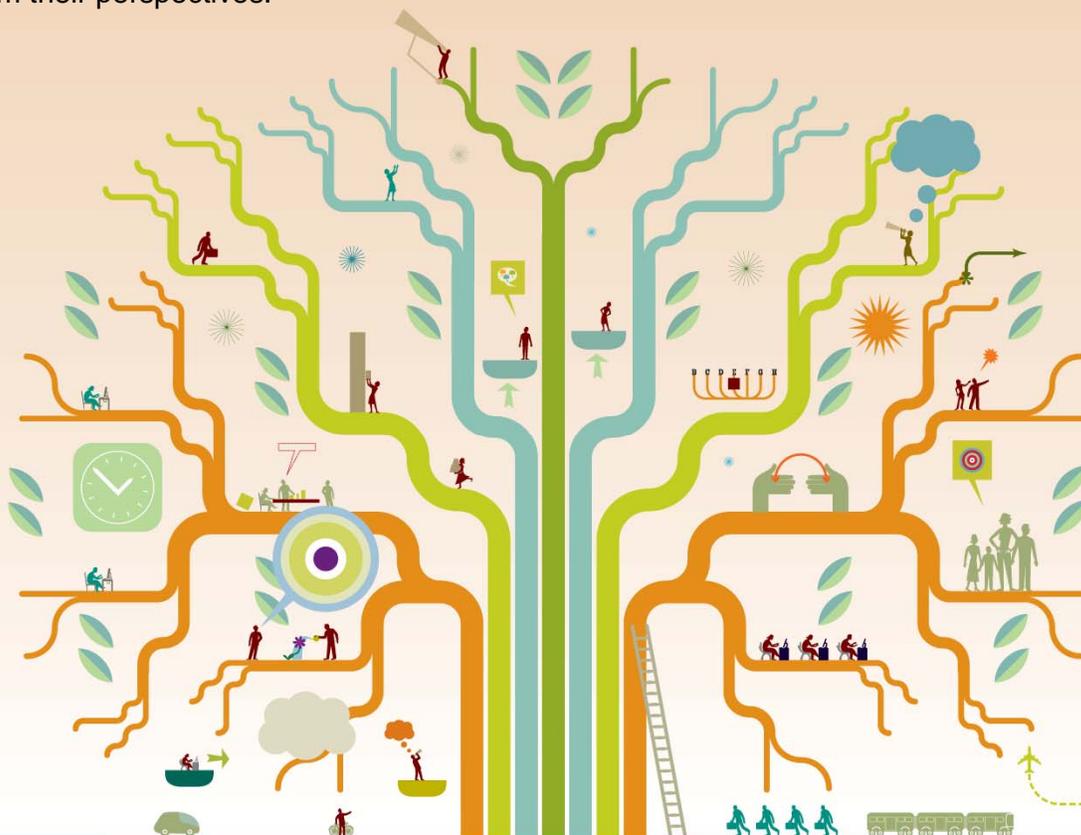
The views described in learning points do not mean that the Scottish Centre for Regeneration (SCR) or the Scottish Government necessarily support them. They simply reflect what has been debated and what those involved in the event considered useful learning and lessons from their perspectives.

### What is this Learning Point about?

This Learning Point captures the key points from the presentation given at the Design Skills Symposium in Dundee on 31 August 2010 by Colin Mair, Chief Executive of the Improvement Service. The presentation was titled '[Planning for Outcomes.](#)'

### Key messages from the presentation

The quality of the place we are born into is the 'earliest intervention' in our lives and over our life-time has an important effect on our health, our education, social cohesion and on our economic prospects. Quality of place and the role of design therefore have a strategically important role to play in many aspects of the Scottish public policy agenda.



With public spending facing a sharp reduction over the next four years (at least) we need to think creatively and imaginatively about whether we can deliver better public services using fewer resources. Moving from a climate of increased public spending to one of declining public spending will be a culture shift. The new focus on outcomes in public policy-making requires us to be clearer both about the purpose of a public service or investment and about the process of delivering that provision. Design is essentially a process that thinks about purpose and can play a critical part in this new climate.

'Design' is an essential tool that has a part to play both in planning outcomes and in designing how services are delivered, and can be applied at all the scales from the individual and the neighbourhood to the community and the national -

- Houses that are designed to meet the needs of older people better could reduce the amount spent on the care of older people and emergency admissions to hospital.

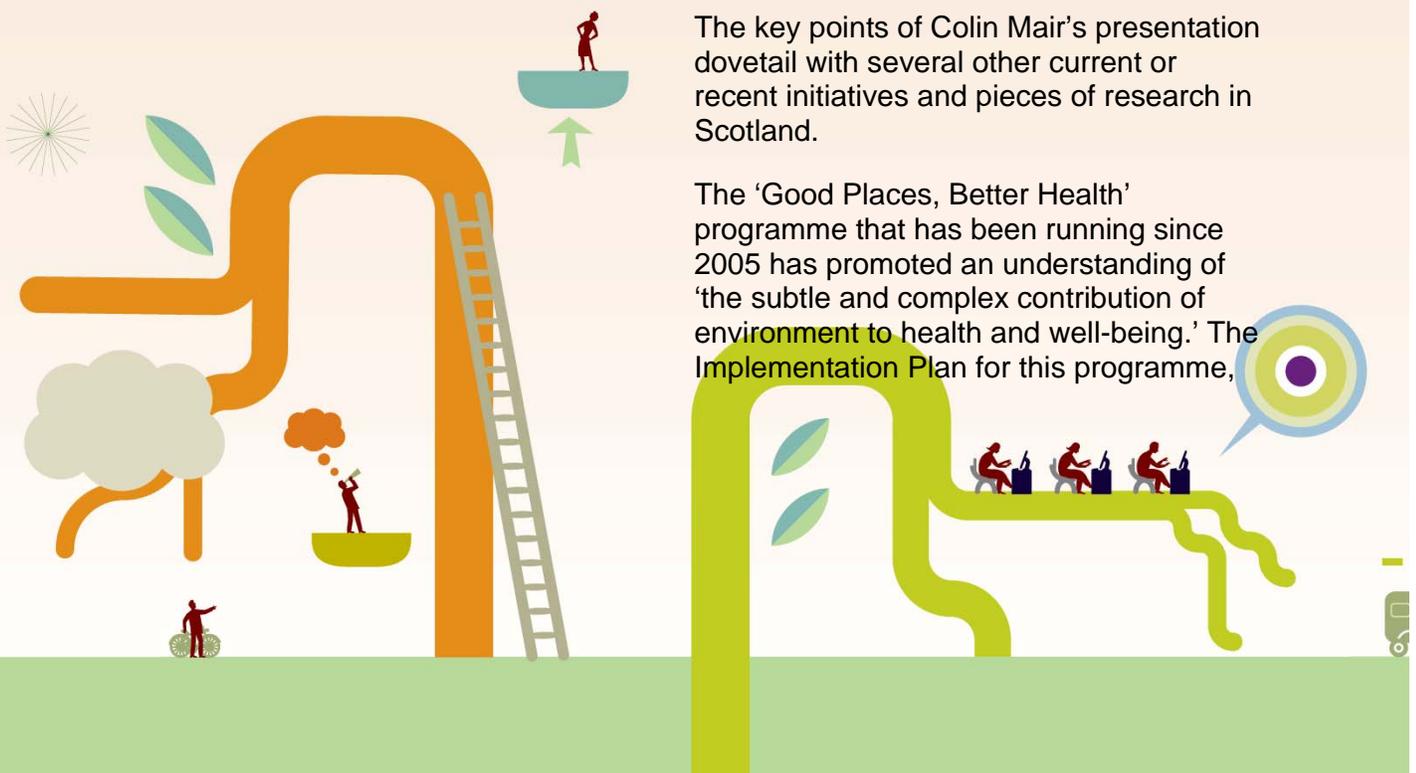
- Schools that are well-designed not only support better teaching and are healthier places in which to study but could be flexible enough to be converted to other uses in 15-25 years time. Do we really know enough about what teaching and learning will be like in 65 years time to commission new schools for this life-span?
- Streets and public places should be designed to generate interaction and add to rather than subtract from social capital.
- Communities should be designed to support the lives of teenagers as well as families with young children.

All these opportunities share a focus on applying resources to achieve positive outcomes from the outset. At the moment a substantial amount of public resource in many sectors, including health, education and the public environment is swallowed up dealing with the negative outcomes that occur because the service/facility was not designed for purpose in the first place.

### **The context: what's already happening in Scotland and how can we build upon good practice in Scotland and learn lessons from elsewhere?**

The key points of Colin Mair's presentation dovetail with several other current or recent initiatives and pieces of research in Scotland.

The 'Good Places, Better Health' programme that has been running since 2005 has promoted an understanding of 'the subtle and complex contribution of environment to health and well-being.' The Implementation Plan for this programme,



published in 2008, recognises that ‘only through organising to deliver can we shape and implement the policies to make a real difference to the places where we live.’

The ‘Radical Scotland’ report published in October 2010 by NESTA paints a clear picture of the savings that will have to be found in the cost of public services in Scotland over the next 15 years, and the need for a new relationship between central government and local communities over the delivery of public services.

The [Christie Commission on Public Services](#) was established in November 2010 in the context of future lower public expenditure to address the role of public services in improving outcomes and see if this can be done more effectively. Part of its role is to examine the ‘design’ of services, their function and their roles.

There is considerable evidence gathered by bodies such as A+DS and CABE for the positive effects of good design on health, the economy, education and other aspects of public policy. A+DS’ Learning Towns programme proposes a joined up approach to the sustainable development of communities that

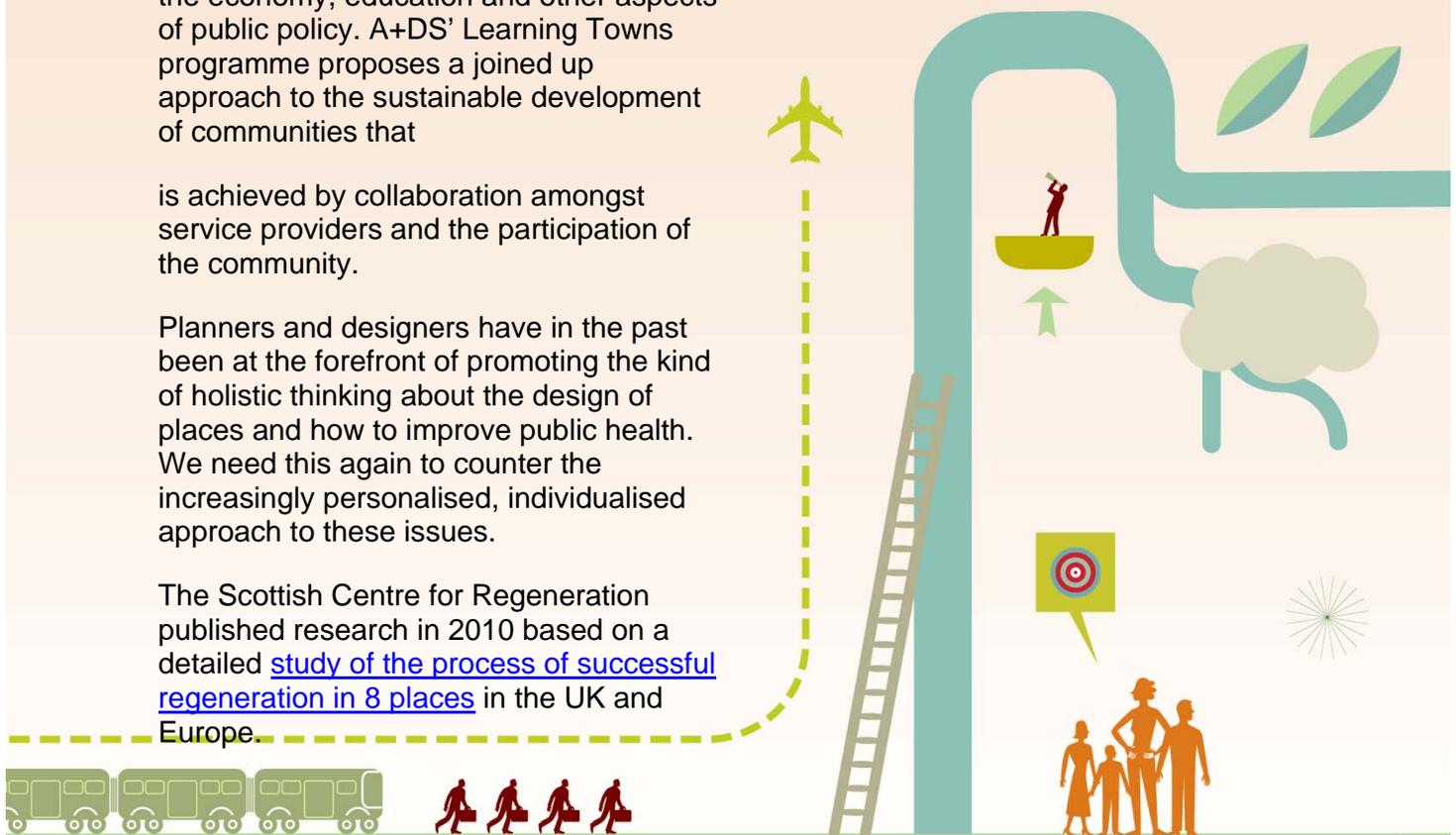
is achieved by collaboration amongst service providers and the participation of the community.

Planners and designers have in the past been at the forefront of promoting the kind of holistic thinking about the design of places and how to improve public health. We need this again to counter the increasingly personalised, individualised approach to these issues.

The Scottish Centre for Regeneration published research in 2010 based on a detailed [study of the process of successful regeneration in 8 places](#) in the UK and Europe.

The guide based on this research ‘Delivering Better Places’ reinforces the key contribution to successful regeneration of –

- More attention needs to be paid to the processes we use in regeneration than on the products we aim to achieve
- Better public benefit can only be achieved with better leadership from the public sector, rather than assuming that the private sector will take the initiative and the risk
- We need to create new procurement and investment vehicles and use these imaginatively in order to find new means to achieve the improvements we are seeking
- Long term benefits can only be achieved if we are prepared to plan and invest using longer term time-scales



## Key conclusions of the presentation

Practitioners in the design and planning field need to organise themselves, position themselves and develop a pro-active narrative for the importance of their field so that their voice is heard in the debate about public spending.

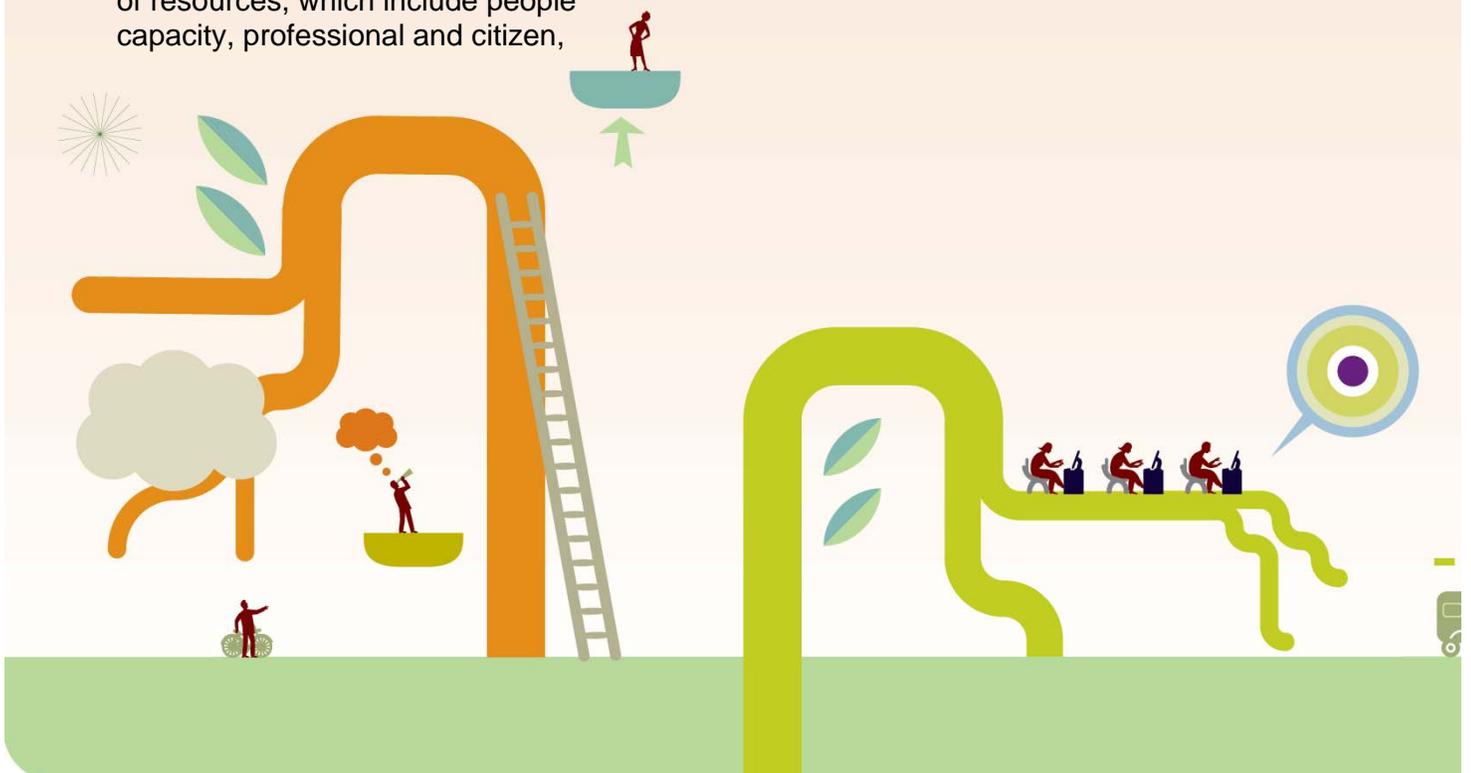
This has to involve a willingness to challenge current practices, processes and assumptions and be prepared to go against the flow in so doing. It will also involve a commitment to the long term – making changes in processes and systems may take 20 years to show positive results.

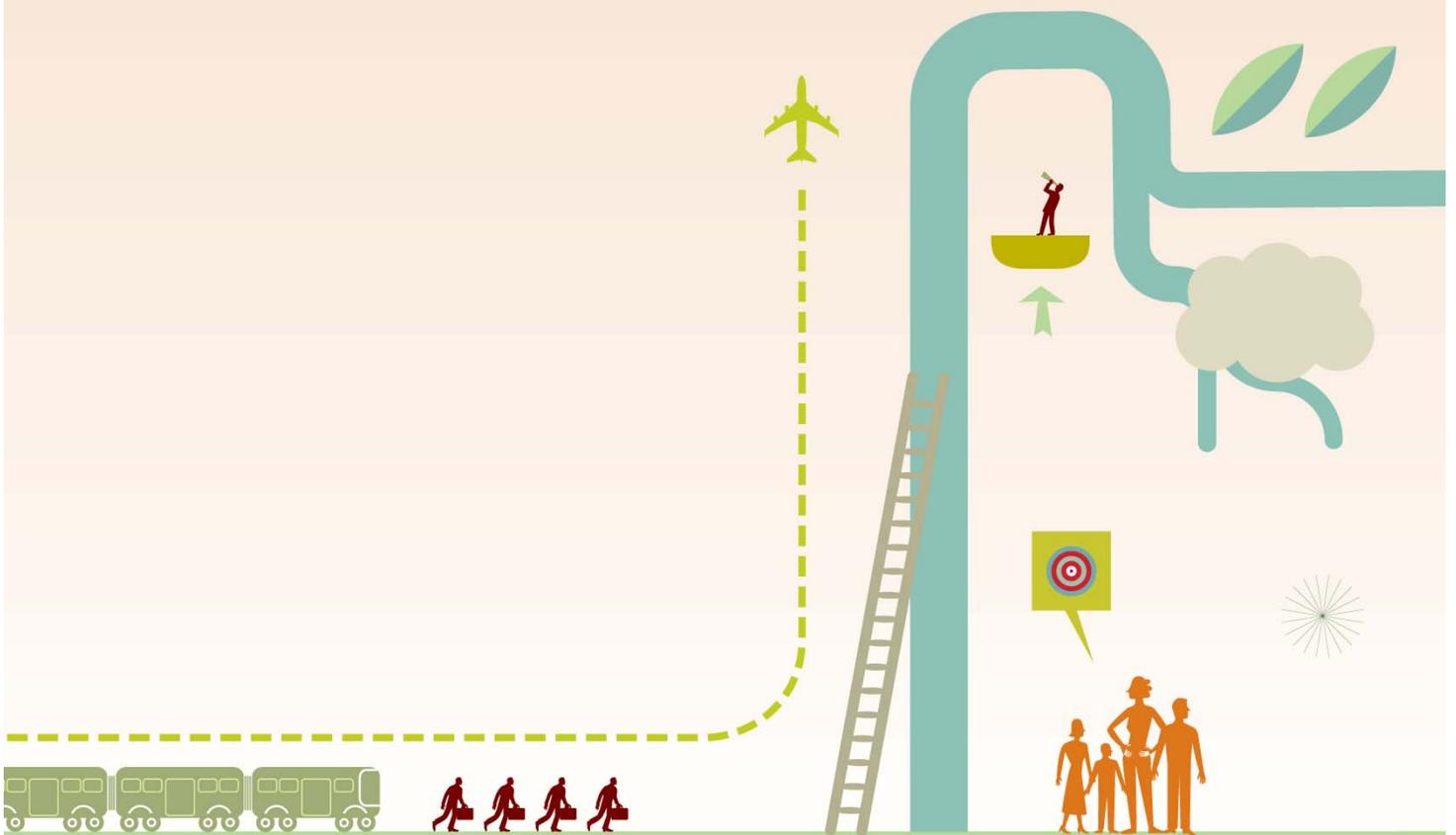
Those involved need to examine the partnerships they form, the way they engage communities in designing provision, and the system of designing itself. As part of this the public sector must also be prepared to think openly about which part of this agenda can be delivered by the private sector.

## What next?

Designing for Outcomes is necessary and challenging. It challenges us to think creatively about how to make the best of the assets we already have. This includes our existing settlements, buildings, streets and facilities. Matched with a creative use of resources, which include people capacity, professional and citizen,

investment and enabling by public, private and third sectors, we can start to develop new approaches to the challenges of our time. The Learning Towns model is an important initiative in this context. It seeks to engage thinking about how to best use what we have to get what we need; lifelong learning, confident contributors, active citizens. We are committed to developing this model, inviting discussion and sharing learning through [www.smarterplaces.org](http://www.smarterplaces.org). In addition, we are committed to working with partners to challenge the findings of 'Delivering Better Places' in terms of their application to existing places and current challenges in Scotland. In this context, we have set out a broad set of principles for action, which can be accessed [here](#).





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### **Scottish Centre for Regeneration**

This document is published by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration, which is part of the Scottish Government. We support our public, private and voluntary sector delivery partners to become more effective at:

- regenerating communities and tackling poverty
- developing more successful town centres and local high streets
- creating and managing mixed and sustainable communities
- making housing more energy efficient
- managing housing more efficiently and effectively

We do this through:

- coordinating learning networks which bring people together to identify the challenges they face and to support them to tackle these through events, networking and capacity building programmes
- identifying and sharing innovation and practice through publishing documents detailing examples of projects and programmes and highlighting lessons learned
- developing partnerships with key players in the housing and regeneration sector to ensure that our activities meet their needs and support their work

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The views expressed in case studies are not necessarily shared by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration or the Scottish Government. June 2011