



The public policy and reform implications of the Logan Together campaign

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Purpose

This paper offers an initial analysis of the public policy and reform implications of the Logan Together campaign.

Logan Together began life as a proof-of-concept initiative for a whole-of-city child development approach based on well-established evidence-based prevention principles and using collective impact methodologies to galvanise action across sectors and the community. The operating assumption for the project is that the first eight years are foundational for life success and that the societal and public policy costs of children failing to grow into healthy, capable adults are profound. An approach that acted longitudinally across the child's lifecourse and universally across the whole 0-8 age cohort had a chance to alter outcomes for a generation of children and through their success, society at large.

At establishment, the wider policy and reform implications of the Logan Together model were broadly sketched. It is now time to begin a more detailed examination of those implications and to understand the systemic features of the policy and funding environment that may inhibit or promote the model's success.

The public policy challenge

While no one is a prisoner to destiny, the life trajectories of children who struggle in their early years commonly lead to difficulties and disengagement in adolescence and marginal employment, poverty and exclusion as adults. When these adults have children of their own, the cycle is repeated. Taken at a population level, this continuing dynamic is arguably the single most significant and costly public policy issue confronting developed economies. It drives demand in welfare, social services, health, policing, justice, mental health, disability, public housing, homelessness, addiction, family violence and related areas of public service provision.

Moderating these trajectories and interrupting the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage has long been the goal of social policy and practice. But despite over 40 years of increasing investment we have underwhelming results to show for our efforts in terms of population-level shift in the quantum and core characteristics of disadvantage. Influential social researcher Professor Tony Vinson has tracked social outcomes longitudinally in places of disadvantage across Australia since 1970. The lack of progress in such places is one of the most confronting findings of his work.

In Logan, as elsewhere, the bulk of social purpose investments have been focused on either ameliorating the impacts of undesirable social conditions after those problems manifest – think homelessness, mental health, unemployment - or addressing the point in time needs of particular cohorts who are associated with difficult social conditions – disengaged young people, young parents.

While both these kinds of investments are important, action is triggered once people arrive at difficult life circumstances and are typically focused on short-medium term remediation of those circumstances. This kind of community investment is neither designed for, nor has the capability to respond to, the enduring characteristics and complexities of social disadvantage in Australia, which is generally:

- Multifactorial in nature, reflecting the multiple influences that shape persistent disadvantage
- Composed of interactive and interdependent elements which act dynamically to countervail against the alleviation of any one element
- Cumulative in effect over time, as difficult experiences stack, one atop the other, to further handicap responses to future challenges
- Geographically-concentrated and, very often
- Mutigenerational

An emerging reform blueprint

An alternative policy prescription that deals realistically with the nature of social disadvantage is emerging however. Coming together from diverse theoretical origins with roots in neuroscience, early childhood, human development, community organizing, social and behavioural marketing, prevention science, population health and actuarial approaches to modelling economic impacts, a developing literature illuminates a credible, if long term, path forward. The bulk of literature and practice originates in the USA and Canada, but among the most heavily referenced local studies are:

Better Systems, Better Chances: ARACY 2015

Expert Panel Report: Investing in New Zealand's Children and their Families: NZ Government 2015.

The evidence: what we know about place-based approaches to support children's wellbeing: Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) 2014.

Taken individually, the ideas set out in these papers are not new. It is however the aggregation of the policy and practice themes they contain and the articulation of a credible whole-of-population-scale execution strategy which marks out the approach as unique.

Logan Together

Logan Together was designed as a vehicle to operationalize these policy ideas in an Australian context. It is a collaborative partnership of three levels of government, NGOs, Griffith University and community organizations to develop evidence-informed, whole-of-government, place based strategies to improve child development (and related family) outcomes for an entire generation of children -- specifically, some 45,000 children aged 0-8 currently living in the Logan community south of Brisbane.

Distilling the core organizing ideas from the emerging literature, the Logan Together campaign has been structured around the following design features:

Conceptual framing and design:

- Focuses on long term outcomes at the population level
- Focuses on long-term, multi-factorial strategic responses rather than issue-specific, siloed programmatic responses
- Supports practice and investment around an explicit community change model – in Logan Together’s case, based around the lifecourse - with the aim of making every post a winner for every child
- Maintains a strong focus on prevention, rather than just harm mitigation and reform and integrate service systems based around progressive universalism principles
- Focuses on a defined geographic catchment, bringing coherency to investment and program delivery

Measurement and accountability:

- Focuses on establishing baseline indicators of social disadvantage and their attendant risk and protective factors at the population level, and, where possible, at the individual level as well
- Measures definable outcomes using program logic/results-based accountability to align and scale efforts required to achieve those outcomes
- Develops a strong measurement system that tracks risk and protective factors, program interactions with children and families, and program outputs and outcomes at both the individual and population level
- Recognizes the overall accountability of governments for the funding, efficiency and effectiveness of investments using public monies

Design with the community

- Emphasizes co-design, co-production and power sharing between government agencies, community organizations, service providers and service users
- Emphasizes the development of ground-up knowledge and understandings of how and why people change their behaviour

Use evidence, but be prepared to adapt

- Use evidence-based interventions
- Adapt interventions to local circumstances and needs

Create the right infrastructure

- Creating a backbone organization to explicitly drive cross-government/cross-community efforts
- Use multi-level (government, community organizations, service users) approaches and establish effective structures to influence policy so that systems and local practice are aligned
- Invest in strong, local level leadership with power and expenditure authority extensively devolved to local area structures in ways consistent with the overall accountability of governments for budgets and outcomes
- Bind stakeholder groups together with collective impact infrastructure
- Build local competencies:
 - public knowledge
 - workforce capabilities
 - local integrated governance
- Allow a 5-10 year timeframe

Collective impact and the counter-literature

The Logan Together framework and that guiding similar efforts in communities around Australia is often described in short-hand as “collective impact”. While collective impact is a major organising framework that does indeed inform the model and its execution strategy, Logan Together’s theoretical and practice basis is considerably broader. It also responds to some of the common critiques of the core collective impact model first articulated by Kania and Kramer in 2011. A recent paper by US Academic Tom Wolfe, for example, discusses a number of criticisms that has appeared since the widespread adoption of collective impact practice. Wolfe’s most salient points include:

- Collective Impact does not address the essential requirement for meaningfully engaging those in the community most affected by the issues.
- A corollary of the above is that Collective Impact emerges from top-down business consulting experience and is thus not a true community development model.
- Collective Impact does not include policy change and systems change as essential and intentional outcomes of the partnership’s work.
- Collective Impact also misses a key role of the Backbone Organization – building leadership.

Logan Together like most “collective impact” projects has evolved to take account of revisions of the original framework and the academic and practice wisdom that continues to build around this work. In particular the community engagement and policy shift requirements of the model are matters of strenuous effort.

Logan Together’s value in the policy context

Considering the policy and practice context described above, Logan Together could be seen to be of interest to policy makers for four reasons:

- It illuminates a cross-sectoral model to effectively reduce levels of social disadvantage at substantial urban scale and the consequent demand for social services;
- It demonstrates the analytical value of profiling and mapping health and wellbeing outcomes at both the individual and population level and their associated risk and protective factors and uses this analysis to inform policy development and investment;
- It demonstrates the efficacy of targeted, evidence-based, integrated, co-designed early intervention strategies across the early life cycle; and
- It reflects, at a systemic level, opportunities for a new government architecture to support the design of integrated whole of government policy and program development and the commissioning of services.

Reform challenges and opportunities

So what challenges and opportunities does the Logan Together model pose for Government partners seeking to support and replicate the Logan Together model? There are several:

1. Orientation to the achievement of outcomes at the population level

Perhaps the most fundamental shift for Government is to conceive of, and then operationalize, its role as a partner in the achievement of long term societal goods in the community. This involves moving beyond its role as service deliverer or service funder within a particular discipline area – such as health or education – to a strategic responsibility for improving the wellbeing and enhancing the functioning of whole populations within defined communities.

2. Shift from standardized program or cohort investments

The immediate practical manifestation of issue 1 above is the ability to shift

- from a program design and funding model dominated by the specification of standardized, issue-specific service responses within programs and departments
- towards an integrated, customizable resourcing model capable of dealing at scale and coherently with the multi-factorial, interdependent, multilevel drivers of disadvantage

At a small scale, the manner in which school Principals have extensive discretion in how their needs-based funding is best applied in their school community offers a point of traction for this approach.

3. Multi-category appropriation

To enable issue 2 above, budgetary appropriation mechanisms may need to be reviewed to facilitate the combining of resourcing from across Government. Commissioning models in New Zealand and the UK refer to this as “multi-category appropriation”.

4. Partnering and the devolution of authority to local structures to allow for adaptability

The ability to combine resources, adapt them for local conditions and flow these through to coherent operational structures requires new ways of localizing and integrating decision making and leadership. Within the Logan Together model doing this with extensive co-leadership from the wider community is also important. Governance infrastructure that supports partnering and the extensive devolution of expenditure and operational authority within an accountability framework linked to outcomes is the likely solution.

5. *Community co-design*

Community co-design is well acknowledged in the ideal as a way to create more effective service delivery, improve engagement, create positive relationships with service users and, often, save money through more efficient, relevant activity. But there is far to go to support its practice from the perspective of organizational culture, resourcing, skill development, mandating and professional support.

6. *Shift to outcomes and from sub-scale to at-scale investment*

Policy discourses over the past decade or so reflect a substantial shift towards outcomes-based contracting in Government procurement practice. So too Logan Together: our initial experience underscores the need to shift to outcomes-based funding and that this be accompanied by - at least some circumstances - a shift in scale of effort. That is, the aggregation of a number of traditional program investments may be required to enable the kind of multi-factorial response required to address the target issue and to achieve the intended outcome.

7. *Changed role of government & relationship with NGO sector and community*

The recent Forecasting the Future report flagged a long-term shift in the role of Government from “service provider” to “service funder” to “service system steward”. To activate community resilience and capability and to maximize the resource potential of the non-Government sector, it is clear that Government needs to continue to shift its identity and institutional relationships in this way. As a strategic partner and a guiding hand, and in the context of network of community partnerships, sharing power and decision making stands to net greater long term benefits.

8. *Culture and workforce capability*

Flowing directly from the shifts outlined above is an imperative to consider the workforce skills and organizational culture that an external, partnering orientation will bring to Government agencies. The demand for a long-term, considered strategy to affect this cultural and capability shift should be recognized.

9. *Data and information systems*

In a devolved, networked, localized environment the ability to respond to local conditions nimbly will be dependent not only on the governance structures and funding conditions created. These features need to be powered by high quality, shared information delivered through well designed and safeguarded data and information systems.

Next steps

The reform implications of the Logan Together model - in terms of its replicability and scalability, its impacts on policy, purchasing and program design, on organizational orientation and culture – require considered exploration. This will be best done via a project with one eye on the delivery of the Logan Together campaign on the ground and one eye on the supporting systems in Government.

The joint development of the Forecasting the Future report as a collaborative project between the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, the Community Services Industry Alliance and Deloitte offers a model for how such a project may be undertaken.

Partners in such a study could include the Department and CSIA as before, but with the addition of the national collective impact body Opportunity Child and perhaps the Griffith School of Government.