

Looking Forward, Looking Back

The PSA identified four thematic priorities for its work in 2012-2013: Cohesion, Localisation, Health and Well-being, and the Social Work Academy. A concern with the shifting remit, skills and capabilities of public servants in the 21st Century has formed a further, overarching line of work.

Looking forward

While continuing on-going projects within these thematic areas, there will be a number of additional key themes for the 2013/14 academic year:

Future Council

The PSA will work with Birmingham City Council to offer an integrated, overarching analysis of the findings of the three tranches of Service Reviews undertaken by BCC and use this analysis, augmented by further evidence, to develop propositions for the Future Council.

This work will feed into the development and implementation of the 2020 "Future Council" Vision and articulate with strategic developments already underway, such as the Localization and Transforming Place agenda.

Offering expertise on the relationship between strategic planning and practice, with a focus on policy enactment, is one area of potential work. The PSA will also explore how it can support the development of future relationships and partnership working with schools

The 21st century Public Servant

This ESRC-funded project builds on the findings of the 2011 University of Birmingham Policy Commission into the 'Future of Public Services' which identified the need to pay attention to the changing roles undertaken by public servants and the associated support and development needs. The project is a partnership arrangement between the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City Council and aims to establish a knowledge portal to support other public servants and public service organisations. The research questions underpinning this project are:

- What is the range of different roles of the twenty-first century public servant?
- What are the competencies and skills that public servants require to achieve these roles?
- What are the support and training requirements of these roles?
- How might central and local government better support and promote public service careers?

The project comprised three phases of activity:

- Rapid evidence appraisal October-December 2013
- Exploratory research January-April 2013
- Creating a knowledge portal May-September 2014

Mapping Public Services Project

During 2013-2014 the PSA is bringing together colleagues from across the College, each with expert knowledge about policy and practice in particular public service areas, to begin to develop a shared map of the current public service terrain reaching across legislative, policy and service as well as discipline areas.

The project will produce and synthesize the most recent research underway in the University and produce briefing papers that will be able to inform BCC and others non-academic users.

International links

While continuing to build on links with the City of Chicago and the University of Illinois in Chicago, there will be a particular focus on Melbourne in the current year, with a PSA lecture tour to Melbourne and an exchange visit from Melbourne's Public Policy and Management MSc programme. The Melbourne School of Government is considering a proposal to undertake a piece of work running alongside the Birmingham work on the 21st century public servant, which might provide a complementary and comparative aspect to this study.

Shaping a new local government agenda for 2015

The PSA has made a commitment to work with Birmingham City Council to develop new policy approaches to local government. We will explore the possibility of using our expertise to provide research synthesis, analysis and strategic thinking in order to develop, in partnership with BCC, a new agenda for local government that could inform policy in the 2015 general election.

Looking back

Highlights of the 2012/13 academic year included:

- Leadership of the 21st Century Public Servant project, including securing an ESRC Knowledge Transfer award that will be working with BCC throughout 2013-14;
- Building on the University's contribution to the Birmingham Social Inclusion Process and development of the White Paper, Making Birmingham an Inclusive City, the PSA is contributing to the current Neighbourhood Dialogues concerning the city's proposed Transforming Place Strategy;
- Contributing to the Devolution and Localization process including acting as a critical friend across the process, including providing ongoing support to the process at a District level;
- Contributing to Youth Employment initiatives, acting as a Critical Friend to BCC programmes, specifically its developing peer to peer mentoring, and contributing to developing coherence of offer across statutory, third sector and voluntary providers;
- Developing relationships with senior officers and elected members across directorates and functions, as well as key members of partner organizations, in order to maximize the PSAs potential contribution to the ongoing transformation of public services in the city;
- Developing international links: hosting delegations from Chicago and Melbourne; and addressing students in China, where the PSA was awarded 'distinguished city'

status in the Guangzhou Innovation in Public services awards;

- Working with colleagues within and beyond the University to develop our students knowledge and experience of public service through careers education and networking; and expanding internship opportunities.

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