Public service: state of transformation
Think pieces and case studies
2019
Public Service: State of Transformation
2019 report from the Public Service Transformation Academy

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This is the second year we have reviewed the national ‘state of transformation’ of public services, and things are not getting easier. Resources – both for the PSTA and for the sectors we work with – are ever more squeezed, attention ever narrower, and structural or central direction ever scarcer. But our theme this year for this report and our conference is helping each other out of the crisis, and it is from this direction that hope emerges.

In this report, we feature two organisations newly partnering with the PSTA to support our mission to build capacity and capability for public services to transform themselves:

- The Connected Places Catapult, operating to connect public and private sectors and local government and transport, creating new commercial opportunities to improve productivity, and the socio-economic and environmental benefits for places.

- The Government Outcomes Lab, mobilising academic insight and practitioner experience to illuminate when and how a focus on outcomes can be effective for delivering public services.

And you will also find many other examples from all of our wonderful partners, contributors, and collaborators.

More importantly, you’ll find that helping each other out of the crisis is a theme across public service transformation – a coalescing of ideas and practice around some key themes. Recognising our humility and fallibility. Working across organisational boundaries and putting the individual and the community at the centre of our universe. Achieving results through collaboratively drawing on innovation, technology, new delivery models, and community willingness. And developing a new form of leadership which prioritises real, embedded, long-term outcomes. In short, taking responsibility for the actual experiences of both employees and residents.

It has never been truer that real transformation comes from a determination to grasp the agenda, despite the challenges thrown up by austerity and financial constraints, cultural resistance, and the work needed to collaborate effectively.

**PSTA and PSS 2019 survey results**

In our separate report, our State of Transformation survey, this time run jointly with the Public Sector Solutions Expo, reveals the scale of the challenge and the sophistication of the people who lead transformation – listening to citizens, seeing digital as absolutely central but critical to do right, and sceptical of the impact of structural changes. Two stark messages are that expectations of true integration across services have dropped significantly, and that people expect more councils to go bust.

**Our think pieces**

**Commissioning is an approach to transformation**
Benjamin Taylor and Garath Symonds, the Public Service Transformation Academy and RedQuadrant

‘Commissioning is simultaneously misunderstood, denigrated, reduced to something else, and important.’ Here, in surveying the range and development of approaches, we make a passionate appeal for appropriate and context-specific commissioning and note that progress in commissioning – like progress in science – tends to both humble us in terms of our role and empower us in terms of the potential to achieve outcomes. And we note that, given the complexity of public services, only the people and communities in question can really define and own the outcomes – so the only continuity is learning.

**Happy ever after or till death us do part?**
Max Wide, Connected Places Catapult

‘I want to propose that if leaders can come to understand both the scale of the change that is needed on this planet, at this time, and understand how different kinds of technology might help, then we could have a combination that can be truly transformational.’ Max looks at how leaders really need to come to terms with technology, adaptive leadership, and the example they set in transformation.
Must struggling local councils turn to citizens for help to deliver vital services?
Nigel Ball, the Government Outcomes Lab
‘We were increasingly hearing talk of a new approach. Commonly used buzzwords like ‘collaboration’, ‘place-based working’ and ‘community participation’ seemed to be representing genuinely meaningful changes in practice in some parts of the country.’ This is a thoughtful overview of the way collaboration is being developed across councils, as a market-shaping approach, and amongst agents of change and systems connectors, and its impacts on leadership, culture, infrastructure, and communities.

Move fast and fix things.
Ian Burbidge, RSA
In the light of a slew of failures, Ian applies the RSA’s model of change to look at ‘why do we often get it so wrong, and what are some commissioners doing to get it right?’ He touches on the factors that crowd out innovation, collaboration, and constrain responses to ‘wicked problems’, and suggests better ways to mitigate risk without creating these problems.

Exactly what is real transformation and how do you make it happen?
Donna Hall, former Chief Executive of Wigan and now Chair, New Local Government Network
In her usual challenging way, Donna encourages us to stop writing documents – ‘if you are serious about transformation my advice is to rip up all those wordy strategies that hardly anyone even reads. They just don’t work. Get out there and start leading change with communities.’ She provides a tour de force of restructuring, culture change, listening to communities, building relationships, and taking a ‘long-term, cost- and community-driven, whole-person, whole-place, multi-agency belief system.’

The point is made that the genuinely incredible results being delivered by Wigan required ‘tough, visceral leadership from officers and politicians.’

Still Bold, Brave and Better?
Robert Pollock and Jonathan Flowers
Five years on from the Service Transformation Challenge Panel report, two of the original authors review the findings of that report. They give the government a score of 3/10 on their efforts, and pick out the progress made and delays encountered in developing people-centred and enabling services, joint working, digital and data and user insight, and collaborative leadership. We’re proud that the Public Service Transformation Network is part of the heritage of the PSTA, and agree that ‘Most of all we need resilience and patience. Change takes time not least because at its heart, it’s about trust between people, about growing capability, confidence, and the curiosity to be open to new partnerships and new ways of working.’

Transformation in Rotherham – ‘It takes a village to raise a child’.
Ian Thomas
Ian takes us on a journey through the challenges and responses that took Rotherham children’s services – and to a certain extent, the whole town – from a ‘dark place’ to something which all participants can feel justly proud of. The whole-system approach employed focused on the simple concept: ‘would this be good enough for my child?’ And a positive mindset, strong change method, and ability to deal with a ‘rollercoaster’ of change supported delivery of a highly aspirational vision.

Our case studies
The Oldham Model for place-based integration
‘Multi-agency integration is not a ‘project’ unrelated to the way mainstream services are delivered. Rather it is the way mainstream services should be delivered across the whole system and in partnership with residents.’ The study makes the point that most approaches to transformation using a programme-based approach don’t cut it – they are too small-scale, too targeted, too reliant on additional resources. Place-based, community conversations drive real change.

Somerset Academies – creating a more integrated approach to health and social care
How the Commissioning Academy has been used to help partners to work together as place shapers and system leaders, building a mutually supportive ‘team’ ethos across Somerset, through developing stronger relationships, shared understanding and collaborative behaviours, and adopting a strengths/asset-based approach.

I hear you! A service design approach to mental health services at scale
How Public Health England and LiveWork used service design to find out how to reach everyone who needs services, including those who are reluctant users or in denial. This work respected preferred ways of engaging with services and the true customer journey, and created a real ecosystem of services, based online. ‘By building in an evolutionary approach to service implementation the service design is continually reviewed, helping to manage risk and reduce the potential for failure.’
The Belfast Region City Deal – unlocking the region’s bright, digitally-enabled future
The Connected Places Catapult demonstrated how effectively harnessing emerging technologies has the potential to boost the productivity of workers and industry, working with Belfast Region to deliver wide-ranging and long-standing benefits.

Leicestershire’s Children’s Innovation Partnership – developing a new model for delivering children’s social care
The council developed a ‘care placement strategy’ which is a whole-system approach to managing its interactions with children, from early contact through to their leaving care, in partnership with Barnardo’s, through a truly innovative commissioning and procurement approach, allowing learning at each stage which helped to shape the final outcome.

Storyhouse – a model for sustainable library provision
A study of Chester’s library and cultural centre with no lockable doors, reception desks, or ‘points of intervention’ to disrupt customer flow, developed and provided through deep community engagement, with city librarians and volunteers sharing the load.

Brent Council and i4B Holdings Ltd – using a wholly owned council company to reduce temporary accommodation costs
A bold and brave approach to homelessness, which doubled in Brent between 2010 to 2016 at the same time as securing accommodation got harder and funding decreased. This radical commercial-led approach has now housed 168 Brent families, including 411 children, who were previously in unsuitable temporary accommodation, saved money, and will create three hundred new affordable homes by April 2020.

Hounslow Parks
Last year the collapse of Carillion was a theme running through our report. This case study highlights the way in which Hounslow took an innovative approach to dealing with their parks and open spaces service, managed by Carillion, when that collapse took place in January 2017. They chose to step back from the market and maximise focus on social return, setting up Greenspace360, a Local Authority Trading Company. Despite the crisis conditions of the set-up, the new body has overseen efficiency savings of £1.1 million, with better transparency, devolution of specification to and oversight by community, Members, and Friends Groups, and an outcome-focused delivery specification.

The Suffolk Libraries story – developing a new model for library provision
Faced with public opposition to possible closures of several libraries, and following a service review, an options appraisal of possible alternative delivery models, and extensive public consultation during 2011, Suffolk County Council decided to ‘spin out’ its library service. We trace the story of the development of an independent organisation which has innovated to drive savings and increase income and maintained ‘a resilient, honest and flexible relationship with Suffolk County Council.’

What the Public Service Transformation Academy has to offer
The report is rounded off with a summary of the ways we try to support public services to drive their own transformation, through Public Service and Transformation Academies, the Service Transformation Programme and Leading Transformation training offers, and other support. Remember that we offer regional and bespoke academies to work with you and your partners on building local resilience and capacity for transformation where you are.

We hope that you’ll find some inspiration and some enabling and supporting help for your own transformation work in these pages, and that you’ll join the discussion and share your learning, so we can all help each other deal successfully with the challenges we face.

Terry Rich
Chair of the PSTA since 2017, Terry runs his own consultancy in improvement and change in health and social care, having had a successful career of more than 40 years in social care. He was a director for over twelve years in three councils, chair of London region of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, is chair of the Avenues Group, a national charity providing supported living and residential care for people with learning disabilities, behavioural needs and acquired brain injury, and has also worked extensively within the NHS.

Benjamin Taylor
Benjamin runs the PSTA and the public service consultancy RedQuadrant.
Commissioning is an approach to transformation

Commissioning as a transformation approach

The term ‘commissioning’ has been with us in the public sector since the inception of the nation state. The state might commission engineers to produce a railway, bridge or a ship; we’ve used the term ‘commission’ to refer to an inquiry into an area of public life such as a ‘royal commission’; officers are awarded the ‘Queen’s Commission’ in the British military. In these ancient uses of the term there is a consistent implication that something is being taken forward on behalf of someone else, or some other authority. Like an instruction or an obligation. In 1962, when John Steinbeck received the Nobel Prize for Literature, he said:

‘The ancient commission of the writer has not changed. He is charged with exposing our many grievous faults and failures, with dredging up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams for the purpose of improvement.’

In the context of 21st century public sector management, commissioning is a term that provokes varying responses – not all of them positive. At a significant public service conference within the last year, discussing the subject, a respected leader referred to ‘commissioning, procurement, or outsourcing’ as if they were interchangeable. Our analysis shows that, across the sector as a whole, a small majority believes that commissioning has been unhelpful rather than helpful, and the ‘death of commissioning’ has been heralded more than once. And there have been many select committee reports and an NAO report, amongst others, into the failures of government commissioning, mostly triggered by the collapse of Carillion.  

So commissioning is simultaneously misunderstood, denigrated, reduced to something else, and important. It is not the only method of transformation – at the Public Service Transformation Academy we recognise, and work with, everything from asset-based community development to service design and systems change – but it is an important, even a vital one.

In the context of 21st century public sector management, commissioning is a term that provokes varying responses – not all of them positive.  

Commissioning is simultaneously misunderstood, denigrated, reduced to something else, and important.

We do not offer a single definition of commissioning, still less a single model, as we do not believe in a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, we encourage leaders of organisations to articulate their own definition and approach to commissioning, so the approach they develop is appropriate and context-specific, shared understanding is built, and ownership results.

In this short piece, we offer a series of ways of thinking about commissioning, a range of approaches which fit the maturity of the context, and some thoughts about how commissioning is continuing to develop.
Ways of thinking about commissioning

Commissioning can be understood from a number of perspectives:

**Commissioning as a systems approach**
There are many implications, as we’ll see, from seeing commissioning as a systems intervention. As a starting point, however, commissioning involves trying to gain an appreciation of a whole interconnected system (or set of systems) – and your place in it – and to make changes that improve the outcomes of that system.

**Commissioning as a method**
At the heart of commissioning is the so-called logical approach – some variant of ‘understand, plan, do, review’ which is fit for your understanding of the complexity of the system you are working with. This can be a fairly long, static cycle, or a fast, iterative, design- and prototyping-led approach. The implication of this is that, fundamentally, you need to develop a model of how you think things work at the moment, and a prediction about how an intervention will improve outcomes – and these enable learning about your own assumptions and perspectives when the results of your intervention turn out to be surprising and not what you predicted. This will often be the case.

In complexity, which is the default context of public services, the role of the observer, different perspectives and ways of framing the issues, and relationships will always be central to this pattern. This makes the process something different from simple mechanical modelling and forecasting; it also makes the learning that emerges – including learning about yourself – central to the process.

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Progress in commissioning – like progress in science – tends to both humble us in terms of our role and empower us in terms of the potential to achieve outcomes.

**Commissioning as a learning mindset**
Commissioning requires constant learning from multiple sources – from the current state of affairs, from the citizen, from the community, from all kinds of providers, the market and your own organisation, from what’s offered by various forms of technology and innovation – all to look for ways to fulfil or enhance positive purpose.

**Commissioning an an identity**
Over the years, we’ve worked with commissioners on what encapsulates their identity. As we’ll see, progress in commissioning – like progress in science – tends to both humble us in terms of our role and empower us in terms of the potential to achieve outcomes. While phrases like ‘system(s) convener’ or ‘architect’ tend to spring to mind, they are perhaps a bit commissioner-centric.

A term we prefer is ‘conductor’ – which, of course, is quite evidently grandiose. But this conductor is not the maestro in front of the audience.

No, it’s more like someone who has been given a baton, white gloves, and tails, and set loose to wander through a large and cacophonous warehouse where oompah bands parade, rhythmic gymnasts spin, garage bands rehearse and all manner of ‘vaguely musical’ activity takes place… and the conductor’s role is not to brigade them all into one great people’s choir, but to see how they can make themselves useful.

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A brief history of commissioning 1.0 to 3.0

In practice when organisational leaders adopt commissioning, they embark on a journey from traditional service delivery to an approach to commissioning that should work for them. We talk about a spectrum of commissioning maturity, which is not necessarily to denigrate ‘earlier’ approaches – each has value, and is better than what came before. It’s no use trying to progress beyond the capability of your organisation or context – to quote Robert Heinlein ‘never try to teach a pig to sing. It wastes your time, and annoys the pig’.

**Compulsory Competitive Tendering / outsourcing / Best Value**
Commissioning owes a lot of its modern roots to the period of Compulsory Competitive Tendering introduced and continued by successive Conservative governments from 1979 to 1997.2 An implication of this is that commissioning is very often seen through the lens of contracting and outsourcing. This approach – and the development of the CCT regime into Best Value under Labour governments from 1997 – focused on comparing in-house services against external competitors,
on lowest price for service, and on contractual relationships. Each of the subsequent levels can be interpreted through this lens – or can be seen as a true shift of identity.

Commissioning 1.0 – the commissioning cycle
This is about procuring a service ‘at value’, with providers forced into a transactional role (even internally). It is about looking out across markets to get the best service and price, and may be about simplistic payment by results. It is often an echo of a response to ‘producer capture’, and can bring with it a focus on extrinsic drivers, proxy measures, competitive relationships, and expectations about delivery – based on professional assumptions and professional boundaries. The responsibility of each party is limited to ‘doing my job’ and my part of the system, and the whole system is often dysfunctional.

Example commissioning cycle models

There are real problems with the traditional commissioning cycle:
- Analysis is done using a needs or deficit-based approach – looking at ‘fixing problems’. And it is done using ‘cold data’ (abstracted from people’s lives). It offers tempting work to avoid the real work, and it can take a long time – by which time, the results of the analysis are often outdated anyway.
- Specification is done based on an assumption of service provision, and with needs increasing and budgets reducing, the temptation is to simplify, standardise, and go for economies of scale through longer-term contracts or volume from sharing.
- Procurement then comes down to hard negotiation which sets up opposition, and with the OJEU process taking up to 15 months, the basis of commissioning is even further out of date.
- Then, it’s often hard to find the time for contract management – things can slide out of alignment – and, if you run out of time to do the full retender, you have to extend the contract.
- And the learning often gets forgotten, but in the best case with a big, ugly contract, you get one opportunity to learn per seven years...

In essence, this is a classic ‘waterfall’ approach with minimal learning.

The reality, of course, is that the intelligent commissioner spins all of these plates simultaneously, taking learning and improvement opportunities where he or she can find them. So ‘Commissioning 1+’ recognises the muddle and complexity implied by the traditional approach, and makes the contextual challenge about balancing all of these requirements to focus on desired outcomes.

In complexity, which is the default context of public services, the role of the observer, different perspectives and ways of framing the issues, and relationships will always be central.
Commissioning should be taking a much wider view of ‘resources’, moving beyond thinking only about individual and pooled budgets, to see the huge range of things that can be marshalled and influenced.

Commissioning 1.0

- Top-down provision by state or independent provider
- Input- or output-based contracts
- Focus on cost reduction or produce interest
- Supply-led focus

Commissioning 2.0

- Personalised outcomes related to need
- Shared resources and pooled budgets
- Collaborative commissioning for range of values
- Preventative focus on demand reduction
- Co-production as biggest element of commissioning cycle
- Co-creation of value

Dr Carolyn Wilkins OBE, the chief executive of Oldham Council, spoke at the launch of the local Commissioning Academy for Greater Manchester. She said that a council can simply procure a contract, for example for street cleaning, or they can ‘commission for clean streets’, which involves thinking about multiple factors, including the position of bins, when they are collected, whether the architecture of local buildings encourages wind alleys, and how the community can get involved in preventing litter dropping.

Commissioning should be taking a much wider view of ‘resources’, moving beyond thinking only about individual and pooled budgets, to see the huge range of things that can be marshalled and influenced – partner efforts, voluntary and community efforts, market and delivery innovation, technology, the power of public services to affect context (from social norms to urban design to legislative regimes) and, most importantly, the resources of individuals and communities to help themselves.

‘deciding how to use the total resource available in order to achieve desired outcomes in the most efficient, effective, and sustainable way’

Adapted from Outcomes and Efficiency Leadership Handbook by R. Selwyn
Commissioning similarly has to grapple with a much more challenging concept of outcomes. While it is the job of procurement to force officers to do the hard work to put their requirements, goals, and aspirations into contractable form, commissioners will be seeking to achieve their outcomes through a wide variety of mechanisms, and come face-to-face with the reality that only the people and communities in question can really define and own the outcomes.

What works for one family might not work for another, and in fact might clash with the outcome their neighbour is seeking. And if you aren’t limited to entering into legal contracts for money to ‘deliver’ outcomes, you’d better start paying attention to the importance of the people actually doing the work and generating results at the frontline. Note that this is very different from payment by results, even though this is often confused as ‘commissioning by outcomes’ or similar. Evidence shows that payment by results should only be used selectively, carefully, and in strictly limited circumstances. So commissioning is free to move from ‘using money to meet needs’ to ‘finding interventions that can help achieve outcomes’, choosing from all resources that can be seen and influenced. This implies a far different, and far more complex, learning cycle than contract review. Commissioners must seek multiple interventions that can provide richer learning, quicker.

**Commissioning 3.0 – building on assets**

Probably an equally significant paradigm shift, but one which might well fit with the commissioning 2.0 approach, was proposed by Field and Miller in 2017 – commissioning that starts not with needs, but with assets – a strengths-based approach. The shift really occurs with the move from what they define as 2.5 – commissioning that takes into account assets of people and communities – to 3.0 – enabling people, communities and organisations, as equal co-commissioners and co-producers, to make best use of, and further develop, their complementary assets to improve whole-life and community outcomes.

**Development of asset-based commissioning**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome-focused commissioning</th>
<th>Asset-based commissioning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wider, more sophisticated, and embedded use of outcomes. Limited engagement with people, communities, and suppliers. Some collaboration with other commissioners.</td>
<td>Whole life and community outcomes. Full recognition of self-help by individuals and communities. Whole systems leadership, co-production. Focus on stimulating and reshaping the use of all assets. Greater use of state resources to support people and communities rather than provide services.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Embryonic commissioning</th>
<th>Asset-aware commissioning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrow set of outcomes, primarily met via traditional services, using organisational assets managed within silos. No meaningful involvement of people or communities.</td>
<td>Wide range of outcomes, fuller and wider consultation. Some co-production, and recognition of the importance of self-help. Ad hoc use of volunteers and other community assets ‘bolted on’ to existing services. Organisational commissioners still decide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Commissioning is free to move from ‘using money to meet needs’ to ‘finding interventions that can help achieve outcomes’, choosing from all resources that can be seen and influenced.**
Radical approaches – how commissioning could develop

Most forms of change tend to be based on a fixed and arguably narrow view of what needs to be changed or how business or analysis should work. Instead of leaping to potential solutions and working backwards, commissioning focuses on the real needs that should be met by the business activity, and takes a much wider approach to understanding user, business, and market perspectives, which generates a broader and more innovative range of options including make/buy/borrow and so on. This means that you never stop learning because you are constantly getting feedback from user, organisation, and market perspectives.

In many ways, systems change is a natural end point.

Commissioning in the middle
Commissioning can also play a critical role as a ‘middle class’ between policy, funding (the ‘upper classes’), and delivery (the ‘working classes’)7 – providing a vital role in pushing back on either side when appropriate, ‘gluing’ the system together, and taking responsibility for the whole. It also implies both the class conflict with which we in the UK are so familiar, and the challenging conditions of being ‘in the middle’ that Barry Oshry has identified so effectively.8

No intervention will do it directly: the whole thing has to shift.

As you work with public services, you realise that the power and leverage is and should be in the hands of the citizens. As you work on cross-organisation leadership, you realise that holistic thinking is needed. When you try to really tackle wicked problems, you realise that no intervention will do it directly: the whole thing has to shift. Systems change is surely coming. This is challenging when you face financial crises, inspections, and ‘events’ – but every commissioner is a systems change agent in reality, whether they want to be or not.

Ironically, of course, civic municipalism and the beginning of public services arose from precisely the kind of entrepreneurialism that systems change advocates. So perhaps we can find our way back to a future that allows systems change to really take root.

In many ways, systems change emerged internationally from a combination of philanthropy, environmentalism, community development, futures studies, and system design. But it’s also a natural extension of place-shaping, and the best of local government work, from the Wigan Deal to community development in Plymouth – the kind of examples set out in our Public Service: State of Transformation reports.

Commissioning as a systems change role

The field of systems change has
to shift.
An element of the RedQuadrant #systemschange approach

What has commissioning learned to become?

Every organisation and every individual needs to find their position in this landscape – a way that fits context, place, language, and possibility. What is notable about the developments we have sketched out is that they also mark a development of humility, just as the rather grander progress of science has reduced humankind’s place in the universe from central to peripheral. And as the commissioner becomes less and less the centre of their universe, they grow in influence and true power.

Part of this is recognising that commissioning is not a standalone discipline, but deeply connected with:

- funding which is outcomes-focused but process-based (paying ‘doing the right thing’ rather than encouraging ‘gaming the system’);
- supporting integration/complementariness of systems interventions;
- service design and more effective implementation of change;
- considering the whole market long-term and other systems mechanisms like individual funding, as well as grant funding;
- alternative service delivery including public/private partnerships; and
- devolution of spend to the lowest possible level

Everyone needs to be a commissioner these days. Everyone needs to think upstream and downstream, needs to think about wider resources, real personal outcomes, interventions, and learning. The shifts we have seen, and we see the possibility for, move commissioners from the left to the right in the table below.

Commissioning will most likely remain a diverse range of approaches and continue to provoke a range of responses. And, at the same time, it is distinct from ‘conventional’ public sector management; it has integrity and holds together as a thing. Central to the ‘thingness’ of commissioning are questions like: ‘what do people need?’; ‘what are we trying to accomplish?’; ‘what resources are available?’ and ‘what are the best ways to achieve the desired outcomes?’ At its best, commissioning is about systems thinking, leading without answers in a complex context; it is about experimenting and failing and learning.

You never stop learning because you are constantly getting feedback from user, organisation, and market perspectives.
Why wouldn’t a leader in the public sector want the answers to the questions above, why wouldn’t we want to think and lead systemically? Surely we are going to have to change our relationship to failure if we are going to innovate our way out of trouble. To paraphrase Steinbeck, perhaps the ancient commission of the public sector leader has not changed. She or he is charged with exposing our many grievous faults and failures, with dredging up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams for the purpose of public service improvement.

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Commissioning is about systems thinking, leading without answers in a complex context; about experimenting and failing and learning.

Benjamin Taylor

Benjamin is the PSTA chief executive. He has been in local public service reform for over 20 years, from front line work in an advice centre through work at the heart of a council’s leadership, to setting up RedQuadrant precisely ten years ago, this year named among the Financial Times UK’s Leading Management Consultants 2019.

He believes passionately in the power of systems thinking, system leadership, and systems change to improve the experience of organisations and public services for employees, customers, and citizens.

Garath Symonds

Garath is a former Assistant Director for Commissioning in local government and is a consultant, and interim manager who specialises in strategic commissioning, prevention and early intervention, and public service transformation. He is also an executive coach working with leaders from public, private and charity sector.

A thought leader and experienced commission practitioner, he led a major transformation that won Best Public Procurement in 2012 and was showcased by the OECD for its innovation in public service reform. Garath advised government on how to set up the Commissioning Academy in 2012 and is an alumnus of the pilot cohort. He is now a facilitator and speaker at Academies and in 2018 he was a Fellow of Practice at the Government Outcomes Lab at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford. He is currently the commissioning lead for RedQuadrant.

With credit to Richard Field for earlier content on which portions of this piece are based.

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A thought leader and experienced commission practitioner, he led a major transformation that won Best Public Procurement in 2012 and was showcased by the OECD for its innovation in public service reform. Garath advised government on how to set up the Commissioning Academy in 2012 and is an alumnus of the pilot cohort. He is now a facilitator and speaker at Academies and in 2018 he was a Fellow of Practice at the Government Outcomes Lab at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford. He is currently the commissioning lead for RedQuadrant.

With credit to Richard Field for earlier content on which portions of this piece are based.

inputs to our thinking over the years have come from collaborative work across Commissioning Academy faculty and alumni past and present – including Richard Selwyn, Karen Tyerman, Peter Johnson, and (particularly) Richard Field, who developed much of this material – from PSTA partners, and from contributions we have sought and valued from Professor Gary Sturgess, Max Wide, and others.


3 Nora Bateson, ‘warm data’: https://norabateson.wordpress.com/2017/05/28/warm-data/


5 Russell Webster www.russelwebster.com/category/commissioning/pbr-2/


7 Gary Sturgess – see video www.youtube.com/watch?v=eR8mGOhwAmc

8 See www.powerandsystems.com
It is about the technology

‘It’s not about the technology’ is a phrase I hear a lot in gatherings of senior leaders, accompanied by a sigh of relief, and permission to talk about something else. I meet many senior leaders who are quite simply intimidated by the world of technology – believing they should know all about it, and yet being uncertain, suspicious and sometimes bewildered by the complexity, expense and lack of clarity about what is available, whether it will work and what benefits they might see.

In this brief article I want to set technology in context and explore how it might help us with the major leadership challenges that face those who lead our communities. Most of all I want to propose that if leaders can come to understand both the scale of the change that is needed on this planet, at this time, and understand how different kinds of technology might help, then we could have a combination that can be truly transformational.

Technology is an ever-present character in the history of human development

Quite simply, technology has always been at the centre of the human story. The origin of the word is in ancient Greek transliterated: ‘techne’ and ‘logos’. Techne means art, skill, or craft. Logos means word, as in the way which inward thought is expressed. Their combination has been responsible for the most momentous and most horrific episodes in history, from landing on the moon to the atomic bomb, the combination of intention and craft for better or for worse.

To further illustrate this point, the plain truth is that technology on its own does nothing. It is the uses to which it is put that makes the difference. Does Facebook or Instagram create pictures of anorexia or self-harm? No. Humans do that. What social media provides is the capability to spread that information rapidly, pervasively and sometimes invasively into the homes of young people. Yet blaming the technology and ignoring the humans using it is all too common.
Our mission is to stop people conceiving of ‘smart’ cities and places as the some-time-in-the-future location of flying cars, and to start realising that only by gearing up to deal with these trends now can we hope to ensure that our environment will be ‘liveable’ in the future.

Many councils in England have recently declared a ‘climate change emergency’, and the evidence is that it was the use of technology that got us into this trouble (the combustion engine, the capacity to mine and create fossil fuels, the age of ‘heavy’ industry). The hope is it will get us out, as we look to other technologies (like solar power and other renewable sources of energy) in the belief that they will save us before it is too late.

It turns out that significant technologies go through a repetitive pattern that shows the best and worst of human nature. Perez describes how their initial adoption is followed by mania and the creation of a bubble, followed by a crash and then reform in which the true abiding contribution of the technology can then manifest itself. She shows how canals and railways went through the same process as the internet is going through at the moment, as the dangers of platforms like Facebook become apparent and they now face regulation and restriction.

Global challenges and strategies

At the Connected Places Catapult, we are tracking the major global ‘megatrends’ and the likely local impact on parts of the UK. Wherever we look we see a frightening picture emerging and, in part, our mission is to stop people conceiving of ‘smart’ cities and places as the some-time-in-the-future location of flying cars, and to start realising that only by gearing up to deal with these trends now can we hope to ensure that our environment will be ‘liveable’ in the future.

Perhaps the most significant of the megatrends is a world population that is set to both grow (from 6.5 billion in 2005 to 9.1 billion in 2050) and urbanise by migrating to the cities. This creates real challenges for cities, which are, in a way, sophisticated machines that support large populations living in close proximity. As a city’s population grows, the need for systems to move people and goods, deliver power and water and remove waste, together with institutions to support civic life, become critical to wellbeing. This trend will also offer challenges for rural areas if they are to remain sustainable. The growth and shift in the population will affect northern Europe less than other parts of the world, but will nevertheless have profound consequences for mobility, congestion, pollution, infrastructure, energy consumption, waste and ageing, to name but a few.

Traffic levels are set to rise by between 17 and 51 per cent by 2050 (depending on the level of economic growth) such that, even if autonomous vehicles become commonplace, people will need to change their mode of transport, or travel less. Waste levels are set to increase from an average of 777 kg to 840 kg per person per year in the richest economies. If current practices are maintained, UK demand for energy will grow from 1900 terawatt hours per year to 2200. The consequences of this growth for the greenhouse gas emissions target are stark – instead of seeing the annual metric tonnes of C02 reduce by 80 per cent (in line with the 2050 target) they will
actually increase by 4 per cent with all of the consequences for our planet. I could go on.

The human race is of course ingenious, and we are used to believing that ‘necessity is the mother of invention’. This may have led us to the view that technology would help us to live our lives as they are without the need to change anything we do. What is clear is that in all the megatrend areas, technology may help, but it will not save us. The reality is that behaviours will need to change. People operating differently is at the centre of all the strategies we need to live sustainably. The key challenge therefore is to figure out how technology can play a part in the complex and brave work that leaders will have to undertake to persuade people to change the way we live our lives.

Technical versus adaptive change

In his first book, the Harvard professor Ronald Heifetz opened up a debate about the work of those leaders who stand out as people who have changed the course of history. His focus then was on what leaders do to bring about ‘adaptive change’. He regarded this as different to ‘technical change’ saying that:

While technical problems may be very complex and critically important, they have known solutions that can be implemented by current know-how. They can be resolved through the application of authoritative expertise and through current structures, procedures, and ways of doing things. Adaptive challenges can only be addressed through changes in people’s priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties.3

The process and tasks of adaptive change are different. Heifetz’s book made a significant contribution to provide an alternative to the standard process espoused by ‘men in the American military’ – namely to obtain formal positional power, to set out an aim and objectives, to create systems in which people were told what to do and held accountable if they didn’t do it. His observation was that those leaders that we all remember, Mandela, Martin Luther King, Gandhi and so on, were all people who achieved what they did without the use of formal, top-down, position-based power. They inspired people to change behaviours, often against the grain of self-interest, but for the greater good. Such leaders are exceptional, and they are often the living embodiment of their message, which is why people follow them. Along with this essence, Heifetz identified some discernible stages in their work:

1. Identify the adaptive challenge.
The first task of leaders in adaptive change is to command attention. To call out the issue that people need to be focussed on, to convince people that there is a problem to be solved. If the information above about population, waste and energy shocked you into thinking something has to change, then it has done its job. We look at the big picture and determine its implications. This stage risks making leaders unpopular and creating such distress that people don’t want to hear it. They may ‘shoot the messenger’ (the bearer of inconvenient truths) and possibly become ‘deniers’ of one sort or
another. It is for this reason that leaders often work through others to provide the material for this stage.

2. Ripen the issue. The second task then is to increase the pressure or ‘up the ante’ by bringing the issue home to individuals. This is a matter of fine judgement – too little and people won’t believe there is a problem to be solved, too much and people will reject the effort as alarmist. The key at this stage is to focus on the likely future and to show people the moral and practical consequences of not taking action.

3. Make the right choice as easy as possible. Supermarkets and public service leaders share one thing in common, they are both choice architects. Where they place things, how accessible, affordable and reachable they make things affect the choices people make. In San Francisco, the city council mapped every rooftop and then set up a micro-site that allowed people, on entering their address, to access a calculation that showed how much energy solar PV would generate, the cost of installation, the period of payback, the grants available to offset the initial cost and a button that said ‘buy now’. This stage requires choice architects that have done their homework. If proposed solutions don’t work it will put the endeavour back, and to overpromise and under-deliver is fatal.

4. Shift responsibility to the primary stakeholders. The adoption of a particular technology needs three things: the invention itself, a generation of people who are prepared to use it, and a set of organisations that are willing to facilitate the making of positive choices. We see this increasingly in the growth of online retail as banks and other institutions create ‘channel shift’ sometimes through encouragement, sometimes through incentives and sometimes by forcing people to take the path they want.

5. Lock in the change. The final stage then is to turn off the previous choice. This move often takes the form of setting a deadline for this happening and helping the few remaining people to adopt the new practice.

Technology plays a role in all of these steps as the table below shows. For leaders, the work is to understand where they are in the adaptive journey and to deploy technologies at the appropriate level. The table shows examples of different types of technology and the part they may play in the adaptive change journey.

This is of course easier said than done. There is a lack of reliable information about what works, and a significant factor undermining the use of technologies is the fact that buyers often have to rely on information provided by suppliers in order to make decisions. At the Connected Places Catapult, we are aware of this and, as a neutral body not tied to any suppliers, we are developing ratings of each emerging technology based on research. These are categorised in two ways. A 1-9 score describes the readiness of the technology where a score of 1 means that a technology concept has been formulated to a score of 9 where the ‘actual system [is] proven in an operational environment’. We also apply an adoption score on a 1-5 scale, where a score of 1 means that ‘no customers are using this technology’ to 5 where ‘this technology is mainstream’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adaptive change stage</th>
<th>Identify the adaptive challenge</th>
<th>Ripening the issue</th>
<th>Making the right choice</th>
<th>Shift responsibility to the primary stakeholders</th>
<th>Lock in the change</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate technologies</td>
<td>Big data</td>
<td>Data visualisation</td>
<td>Choice architecture</td>
<td>Enabling customisation and ownership</td>
<td>Shutting down legacy systems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Open data</td>
<td>Predictive analytics</td>
<td>Efficient demand and supply side technologies</td>
<td>Encouraging, incentivising or forcing the adoption of solutions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Trend tracking and mapping</td>
<td>Modelling technologies</td>
<td>Personalised information</td>
<td>Choice automation</td>
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### The energy challenge

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges that faces the human race. The ‘solution’ will not only require changes to the way energy is supplied, but also to the amount that is demanded. The table above maps emerging technologies onto the adaptive change journey.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Lock in the change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate technologies</td>
<td>Predictive models such as the DECC 2050 Calculator, which shows the different pathways to achieving the agreed target</td>
<td>Smart metering that enables individuals to track their own energy consumption and patterns</td>
<td>Autonomous buildings that adjust energy usage using sensors to respond to conditions</td>
<td>District heating and cooling (supply of heat or hot water from one source to a district or a group of buildings)</td>
<td>Shutting down legacy systems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Carbon offset calculators that enable individuals to see the impact of their lifestyle and travel choices</td>
<td>Deep energy retrofit as a way of making older buildings more energy-efficient</td>
<td>Energy storage technologies absorb energy and store it for a period of time before releasing it to supply energy or power services</td>
<td>Micro-distributed energy generation grids which are small-scale power grids that can operate independently or in conjunction with the area’s main electrical grid</td>
<td>Differential pricing to make inefficient choices unaffordable</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Locality specific data visualisation such as heat maps that show the amount and location of energy demand or pollution generation</td>
<td>3rd generation photovoltaic cells which are significantly more efficient, working under cloud and producing far more power</td>
<td>Offshore/ onshore wind power</td>
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The energy challenge is multifaceted, requiring a comprehensive approach that includes both technological and behavioral changes. The table above outlines various emerging technologies and strategies that can be employed at each stage of the adaptive change process. These technologies are designed to help individuals and organizations make informed decisions about energy usage, reducing their impact on the environment. By identifying and adapting to these changes, we can work towards a more sustainable future.
In conclusion – a tool not a salvation

Technology is an ever-present part of the human story that history shows can be used constructively or destructively. Many of the challenges we face are as a result of the use of technologies and many people will hope that we can use technology to meet these challenges. However, all of the evidence is that, whilst there are many better technology choices that will be available to us in the future, every significant megatrend area needs some element of human behaviour change. Leaders now more than ever need to understand the tools and techniques of adaptive change as well as the need to live the message they are trying to convey. Technology is not a salvation but a tool, and the more leaders understand the process of change and the available and deployable technologies that help with each stage the better.

Leaders now more than ever need to understand the tools and techniques of adaptive change as well as the need to live the message they are trying to convey.

2 https://cp.catapult.org.uk/
4 http://2050-calculator-tool.decc.gov.uk/#/home

Max Wide

Max Wide’s career began in welfare rights and then through work with homeless people he joined local government and worked for Hillingdon and then Enfield, initially in social care and then running best value. He joined SOLACE to lead their work on leadership and cultural change. From there he went to BT global services as Local Government Strategy Director during which time he was seconded to Barnet and Suffolk councils as Director of Organisational Change. He joined IMPOWER Consulting leading on children’s services and then returned to local government as Strategic Director of Business Change for Bristol City Council. He is now an Associate Director of Connected Places Catapult and a freelance consultant, mentor and facilitator.

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Whilst Brexit is distracting politicians from caring about local issues, councils seem to be scrabbling for spare change to help the most vulnerable. Some local councils seem to be turning to their own communities for help. Is this a brave new era in public service delivery, or does it represent the end of the road for the universal, state-funded public services? That is one of the questions the GO Lab recently set out to try and answer.

**Rallying together or passing the buck?**

As part of our ongoing work up and down the country researching Whitehall’s policies for tackling tricky social problems, we were increasingly hearing talk of a new approach. Commonly used buzzwords like ‘collaboration’, ‘place-based working’ and ‘community participation’ seemed to be representing genuinely meaningful changes in practice in some parts of the country. We wanted to find out what people were up to.

We began some research which culminated in a report, ‘Are we Rallying Together’. This explores ten locally-led projects from across the UK in 2018/19 which identify as collaborations. We saw that rather than the usual contractual relationships and organisational hierarchies, power was being relinquished to community organisations and frontline workers. This brought risks, but where there is risk, there can be reward.

The projects we looked at are all very different. Some are initiated by public authorities, others by the voluntary sector. Some focus on narrow projects for a particular group of citizens, while others represent a comprehensive set of reforms across whole councils. All are ‘works in progress’, but some are permanent, fully embedded ways of working, whilst others are a time-limited initiative.

**We found that collaboration has broad appeal as a solution to intractable social problems that we struggle to address as a society.**

We linked what we heard to what is already known about collaborative practice, to help those who work in public service delivery to consider collaborative approaches. Whilst we found some exciting new practice, there was no such thing as a blueprint for success.

**If privatisation got us in here, collaboration will get us out**

We found that collaboration has broad appeal as a solution to intractable social problems that we struggle to address as a society. But it is not a new concept: the UK public sector has a long history of cooperation with the voluntary and private sectors. We believe the trends driving this are the persistence of ‘wicked problems’, the ‘move to privatise’, and the ‘move to partner’.

‘Wicked problems’ are those social problems for which there are no clear links between cause and effect – like homelessness, chronic unemployment, or educational underachievement. Most agree that progress in tackling these has been slow, yet these kinds of problems aren’t likely to just go away. If anything, they’re likely
to become more complicated – perhaps because of the ‘move to privatise’. Starting in the 1980s, this applied private sector thinking to government operations. The belief was that market forces could increase efficiency and quality in the delivery of public services. Governments increasingly turned to third parties to provide core public services: in the UK, the amount of public spending on voluntary organisations grew to £15.3 billion in 2014/15. This increasingly complex network of organisations delivering services led to a ‘move to partner’, due to the perceived need for organisations to ‘pull in the same direction’ towards jointly desired outcomes for communities.

In this context, the projects we spoke to broadly gave four justifications for collaborating:

- to share financial and service delivery responsibility across organisations and sectors;
- to give members of communities a more significant role in shaping and delivering services which affect them;
- to deliver better overall impact and value; and
- to make the public sector a better place to work.

Many places tried to change the conversation with citizens from ‘what can we do for you?’ to ‘what can we help you do for yourselves?’

Collaboration can mean very different things

There are well-established models for groups to collaborate. They can self-organise, appoint one of their members to take charge of organising things, or create a new body to do the organising. In this context, we found different models in the places we went:

Collaborative councils (Oldham, Wigan, Wirral) are broad programmes of change where entire councils are attempting to change the way they, and other local public agencies, work.

Collaborative markets (Plymouth Alliance Contract, Young People’s Foundations) aim to change the relationship between local voluntary sector delivery organisations from competitive to collaborative.

Agents of change (Ignite, Golden Key) sit outside the public sector, and attempt to use the fact that they are not part of the system to change it from the outside in.

System connectors (West London Zone, Doing the Right Thing) aim to better integrate the public and voluntary sectors by leveraging existing resources, without fundamentally uprooting existing relationships and structures.

Engagement not exploitation

Is this about empowering the disempowered? Or is it just pushing critical public responsibilities onto organisations and people ill-equipped and inadequately compensated to deal with them? We saw big changes in ways of working to enable real collaboration to happen.

Leadership shifted from being about decision-making exerted through traditional hierarchies, to the facilitation of relationships. This type of ‘collaborative’ leadership is quite well understood. We saw stewards, who listen to partners and create a shared understanding of the issue; mediators, who negotiate differences of opinion and nurture the building of trust; and catalysts, who identify opportunities for new approaches and help mobilise partners to pursue them.

Culture had to change. Giving frontline staff more decision-making power and freedom to operate came with risks for those staff as well as their managers and organisation leaders. It represented a major change of working culture. Communicating a shared imperative to work in a different way early on was essential.

Infrastructure had to be put in place. New ways of capturing data and sharing information were needed. Co-location was sometimes identified as a major facilitator, but was not always essential, nor enough on its own. Many sites used new types of meetings to improve communication and relationships between teams, and some provided access to shared IT systems.

Communities were always involved, though in varied ways. Sometimes community members were used as innovators, coming up with ideas that, one public sector leader said, ‘we would never think of as bureaucrats’. Sometimes assets like libraries and swimming pools were transferred to the community to run – though this came with risks in terms of competencies and maintaining equality of access. Many places tried to change the conversation with citizens from ‘what can we do for you?’ to ‘what can we help you do for yourselves?’
If everyone is responsible, no one is responsible

Collaboration rests on equal relationships between partners, underpinned by an empowered and entrusted workforce. So who is in charge? Who measures success, sets targets, and is answerable if things go wrong?

Ensuring healthy flows of information is important. Unlike traditional methods of performance measurement, we found data capture in collaborations was bottom-up, place-based and included qualitative insights. All agreed measurement was useful for providing learning and feedback, and had a role to play in accountability too.

The jury is out on whether collaborative approaches enhance or reduce democratic accountability. On the one hand, because government gives up control of a service, there is no longer a straightforward mechanism by which policymakers are held to account by the electorate. On the other hand, some argue that spreading responsibility out amongst organisations that are part of local communities offers more opportunities for citizens’ voices to be heard – and for services to be responsive to local needs and preferences. The places we spoke to were held externally accountable in multiple ways – by funders, to an elected local council, by government regulators – but ultimately sought to base their legitimacy on improving outcomes for service users. Doing so was dependent on a high level of good quality information and feedback.

Unlike traditional methods of performance measurement, we found data capture in collaborations was bottom-up, place-based and included qualitative insights.
Should we all start rallying together?

As with any research-inspired exercise, we found ourselves ending this phase of investigation with more questions than answers. We would welcome more conversation, discussion and debate.

- Does the web of regulations, statutory requirements, and devolved powers prevent us unlocking the full benefits of collaborative working?
- Does collaboration deliver better value and impact than the status quo? Do we need to show that it does before politicians and policy-makers will be convinced?
- Is collaborative practice resilient in the face of setbacks? Can it withstand a scandal?
- Is it possible to maintain quality of services and access to them when decisions are made by frontline workers and community organisations?
- Is there a system of measurement that can deal with the complexity of the issues, allow learning, and deliver accountability?
- What is the ‘right way’ to involve citizens in the delivery of their own public services?

A rejection of traditional, top-down approaches imposed by a centralised elite. A desperate response to a decade of financial pressure. A recognition that we should engage citizens more in the delivery of services which are supposed to be for them. We are only at the very start of understanding what collaboration is really about.

Is this about empowering the disempowered? Or is it just pushing critical public responsibilities onto organisations and people ill-equipped and inadequately compensated to deal with them?

Nigel Ball
As Deputy Director at the Government Outcomes Lab, University of Oxford, Nigel Ball, nigel.ball@bsg.ox.ac.uk leads the work on engaging government commissioners and other practitioners in the research and best practice generated by the GO Lab team. Before joining the GO Lab, Nigel was part of the founding team of West London Zone for Children and Young People. Previous roles include being the Head of Innovation at Teach First, the leading education charity, and supporting social entrepreneurship in East Africa.
Commissioning and innovation are two terms that belong together, yet all too often they remain separated, unless it is to describe the inability of the former to achieve the latter. In this piece I’ll explore why they are normally used as either/or terms and share some learning from places that are actively trying to put an ‘and’ between them.

Scale

The Government spends more than £250 billion of taxpayers’ money every year, providing services, fixing problems or improving communities up and down the land. The risks of getting it wrong are high-profile, destructive and far-reaching. The benefits of getting it right include improved quality of life, innovation and value for money.

When services or contracts go wrong, as we have seen in recent times, they can go spectacularly wrong, ending lives, destroying families, ruining communities. Hope is lost and future expectations evaporate. Carillion, Grenfell, Baby P, Kids Company, Winterbourne View... these and many more besides have entered the cultural lexicon as synonyms for failure. More recently we’ve seen media coverage around the failure of the East Coast mainline rail franchise, the part-privatisation of the probation service and the G4S-run Birmingham prison.

I’ll start by applying the RSA’s model of change for helping to improve commissioning and drive innovation in public services – why do we often get it so wrong, and what are some commissioners doing to get it right?

Is service failure inevitable?

A slew of reports into many of these failures start to unpick some of the common threads, ultimately concluding that the way we currently commission and procure these services or providers is not fit for purpose. Crucially, as Liam Halligan reports, the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) has found that the public sector has become ‘too reliant on a small handful of big businesses’, which are effectively ‘too big to fail’ as they run ‘vast swathes of public services with little effective competition’. At the point at which it went bust, Carillion alone held nearly 500 Government contracts, owed £1.2 billion to sub-contractors and had a pension deficit of £800 million.

It’s time to move beyond the axiom that ‘no one ever got fired for employing IBM’. Little wonder that Liam Halligan argues that the UK’s public-sector procurement chaos is a long-standing, cross-party problem: ‘this is about delivering decent public services and securing some semblance of value for taxpayers – goals that are widely shared across the political spectrum’. Michael King, the Local Government Ombudsman, argued that the public sector ‘can outsource the service but it cannot outsourc its responsibilities’.

Ideas that help square that circle, and in so doing improve the mechanism through which that £250 billion is spent, are at a premium. How might we, for example, engage citizens in the process, liberate the creativity.
of a broad range of potential providers, or change the legal framework around contracting? Identifying, testing and implementing practical steps such as these stands to have a major impact, reducing the risk of failure and increasing public value.

### Analysing the challenge

We’ve been looking at this challenge recently through the lens of our model of change – ‘think like a system, act like an entrepreneur’ – which is the RSA’s account of how we might better understand the world and go about making change within it. It is also a response to why we see that policy, and social change, often fails. You won’t be surprised to hear that our conclusions clearly map onto the way the public sector buys stuff – from paper to services.

Our analysis is that commissioning processes all too often…

- **are linear, path-dependent and slow.** By the time the process concludes, the world has changed, the context has changed and, in a procurement terms, the range of available solutions will also have changed. A recent PACAC report (see link in footnote 2) concluded that ‘competitions exist in which bidding processes take over 18 months and require the equivalent of twelve A4 boxes of information’.

- **assume that it is possible to define all the needs of the service in a specification.** The requirement to prepare a detailed specification to commission against (e.g. to provide a refuse collection service or provide services for autistic children) provides a sense of certainty and an ability to compare submissions on both cost and quality. Yet if it’s not in the spec, it’s not getting done – without a costly contract variation. This crowds out innovation and collaboration.

- **are not ‘solution-agnostic’**. Too often, commissioners start with the end in mind, yet this also crowds out innovation. We shouldn’t expect our commissioners and those charged with spending to be solution experts – how can anyone know the infinite number of potential solutions to a problem? Of course, we’re working in a world where we have to make decisions based on imperfect knowledge, but we can expect commissioners to curate a process that achieves a deep understanding of the problem and moves iteratively and flexibly towards a solution. This absolutely fits the RSA’s notion of acting ‘entrepreneurially’.

- **build in a combative relationship between commissioner and supplier.** Value is extracted through the contracting process rather than created through collaboration and mutual learning. A 2018 review by the Public Accounts Committee makes clear that
the changes to the probation service ‘have weakened local partnership working and local accountability, meaning there is less joined-up working and collaboration at a local level’.3 This is the destruction of public value – value extraction not value creation. Working effectively across complex systems requires collaboration across organisations, built on trust and a degree of give-and-take.

- prioritise management of risk and reputation over experimentation and innovation. The Institute for Government found that ‘providers concerned about their financial survival are generally unwilling to take on further risks by doing things differently’.4 A recent study of payment-by-results programmes notes that ‘because of the financial risk transfer to providers’ these programmes have ‘been more likely to stifle innovation’ than stimulate it.5

- don’t reflect the characteristics of complex systems. As ‘wicked problems’ are never solved you can’t commission a solution. And if you tried, you can never know which elements of what you have commissioned will work, since you have imperfect information, there is no easy way to test a potential solution, and you can’t predict the unintended consequences of intervening in complexity. To quote the recent review of Community Rehabilitation Companies, part of the £3.7 billion Transforming Rehabilitation programme, ‘we are not convinced that CRCs should carry full responsibility for poor performance in reducing reoffending as many of the factors that impact on reoffending are outside the control of probation services’.6

- treat all problems alike. It is clear that any attempt to treat the procurement of, say, latex gloves for the NHS, places in a hostel for those presenting as homeless, repairs to social housing, a service for young people with autism, or a quality-of-life survey for residents of a town, is unlikely to be successful in all instances if the same prescriptive process is used. Ironically, the very efforts that are designed to manage and mitigate risk end up making service failure more likely – not necessarily the large-scale, catastrophic failures outlined above, but, more perniciously, the failure to secure public value for money. Each and every contract that is based on any of the assumptions above will be sub-optimal and in some way fail to solve the presenting problem.

If it’s not in the spec, it’s not getting done – without a costly contract variation. This crowds out innovation and collaboration.

Complex challenges, however, are characterized by unknown unknowns – they are emergent and dynamic, and any interventions in these situations change the interrelationships within the system in ways that can’t be predicted.

The challenge for commissioning is to recognise that not all problems are created equal and to respond accordingly. Failures arise from thinking that there is an existing solution to a complex problem; thinking you already know what that solution is; thinking the solution can be described in detail; and thinking value can be extracted from the relationship with a provider who is working to implement that solution.

As ‘wicked problems’ are never solved you can’t commission a solution.

Not all problems are created equal

It is worth digging into the nature of the problem a little deeper. The Cynefin framework, developed by Dave Snowden, distinguishes four types of situations or problems.

The first, chaotic problems – riot or disaster, for example – are situations that need stabilizing before anything else can be done. Next, simple problems have clear cause and effect relationships and known solutions. The NHS can buy latex gloves to prevent the spread of disease. Complicated problems have knowable cause and effect relationships that can be uncovered even if they are not immediately apparent. Crossrail is hugely complicated but it is an achievable proposition, even accounting for the unknowns that are encountered along the way. Economic judgements of value for money are relatively straightforward in both these scenarios.
Christian Bason, former head of MindLab, Denmark, notes: ‘In the private sector, the innovation challenge is largely about opportunities: how to identify them and leverage them for competitive advantage... In the public sector, the innovation challenge is much more about problems: how to define them, what to do about them, and how to know whether they are being fixed or not...’. How might we achieve this by commissioning more entrepreneurially around complex challenges?

Too often we judge a process by the outcomes yet when we are intervening in complex, dynamic systems we can never reach a point where we say ‘that outcome has been achieved’. Ambitious outcomes such as ‘all people in Newcastle are healthy’ or ‘all people in Plymouth get a good start in life’ galvanise and drive action but the level of complexity and interrelating parts means that we can never know that an intervention will be successful, or an outcome ultimately achieved. With no clear cause-and-effect relationship between intervention and response, we need to work collaboratively to learn from our work whether in-house or commissioned. What happens when we commission or take actions around homelessness, domestic violence or obesity?

In The Art of the Possible in Public Procurement, Villeneuve-Smith and Blake observe that ‘for all of this desire amongst commissioners to think afresh, there can be a countervailing force... That barrier is often perceived to be procurement – with regulations and iron-bound processes acting to stifle reform, hamper innovation and maintain the status quo’. Such blind maintenance of the status quo in the face of compelling evidence for change is our definition of the ‘immune response to change’ in action. The ‘computer says...’

How might we be more entrepreneurial with commissioning?

The very efforts that are designed to manage and mitigate risk end up making service failure more likely.
no’ mindset, of overbearing bureaucratic processes crowding out common sense. In recent work we have been exploring this notion – reasons why things can’t or shouldn’t happen, whether or not they make sense.

Yet sometimes the immune response activates with good cause to ensure our organisations and systems remain healthy: to safeguard lives, spend public funds without any impropriety, avoid career-limiting mistakes that are likely to play out publicly, prevent fraud and corruption. The irony is that processes intended to manage risk have been exposed by the collapse of Carillion, bearing as it did almost £7 billion of liabilities – the largest trade insolvency in UK history. The very risk that the ‘immune response’ was trying to protect against still manifested itself. We need a rethink, a new way of doing things that leverages the best of the present and introduces innovative practice alongside this. Such an approach would enable flexible and responsive investment in a problem, one that incorporates a much wider range of perspectives on that problem.

Thinking and behaving entrepreneurially in public services is anathema to most. But our conception of the ‘entrepreneur’ in the public sector is about judicious and not ubiquitous risk-taking. It’s about acting flexibly, seeking and harnessing the opportunity for change, working to overcome the barriers highlighted above. In addressing complex challenges, we need to iterate our way towards a solution, each step informing the next. As we have seen, this is a far cry from the dry and static specifications against which a path-dependent procurement process is subsequently managed. We can’t expect our commissioners to downplay risk and value for money; indeed, we want them to care about these things more than ever. But we do need to find new ways of mitigating risk that enable an appropriate level of experimentation in complex scenarios, one that is based on a much more nuanced definition of risk.

**Failures arise from thinking that there is an existing solution to a complex problem; thinking you already know what that solution is; thinking the solution can be described in detail; and thinking value can be extracted from the relationship with a provider who is working to implement that solution.**

**A new framework?**

In our work with CivTech, GovTech, the Government Innovation Lab in Northern Ireland, and others, we have seen the components of such an approach. In particular, we see that risk can be mitigated by a range of measures, such as engaging users and beneficiaries in understanding the problem; having break points at each stage of the process; investing in early-stage concept development to open up the market. Collectively these approaches provide assurances at each stage of the process. We shouldn’t ask our commissioners to be solution experts, but we can expect them to be problem experts.

These insights, and others, were captured in a framework we published in our report Move Fast and Fix Things.

The ‘invest to solve’ framework was the result of applying our ‘think like a system, act like an entrepreneur’ model of change to identify opportunities to try new ways of commissioning. Our next step is to test this framework in live contexts in localities and develop it over the coming months as part of our Public Entrepreneur programme. Please get in touch if you would like to work with us on this.

For more information, please contact Ian Burbidge, Associate Director, RSA at Ian.Burbidge@rsa.org.uk
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Christian Bason, former head of MindLab, Denmark

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**Ian Burbidge**

Ian Burbidge is an Associate Director at the RSA where he leads programmes of research and analysis exploring the role of innovation and entrepreneurialism in future models of public services. He is particularly interested in how change happens and how we might more effectively approach the complex social challenges we face as a society. Before coming to the RSA Ian worked in a variety of policy, partnership and community roles in local government, and gained an MSc in Behavioural Science from the London School of Economics. ian.burbidge@rsa.org.uk

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2 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubadm/748/748.pdf
3 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmjust/482/482.pdf
4 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubadm/748/74807.htm
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6 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-44973258
Exactly what is real transformation and how do you make it happen?

Cultures not structures
How many pointless transformation strategy documents have you read in your working life? How many action plans? How many have you written or contributed to? As a former policy officer, I must have written hundreds! And the final question...how many of those expensively produced, weighty, sweated-over, consulted-on tomes have made a long-lasting and significant difference to people’s lives, an organisation or a place?

The well-worn phrase ‘culture eats strategy for breakfast’ is so true. In our hearts we all know it. Yet many council chief executives, management teams and political leaders spend so little of their own time on actively shaping and reshaping the culture of teams, of organisations and of partnerships.

People choose to work in public service for many different reasons. For most that I have spoken to over the years, I think it’s a real personal passion and drive to help people in communities and to improve the place. Whether you are a bin loader on the wagon every day, processing housing benefit or planning applications, a hardworking children’s social worker or an elected councillor, that is what motivates you. Yet we often ignore this primary motivation when we create management structures. We are really missing a trick.

The challenge in Wigan
The layers of management structure in Wigan eight years ago were remarkable and incredibly complex. There were seven or eight layers of incomprehensible management architecture.

The cost of this archaic yet fiercely defended construction was astronomical. Layer upon layer of management, sometimes a manager only managing one other person. But for me the cost wasn’t the main issue. It was one of personal accountability. Where does the buck stop in seven layers of management for any one issue?

Slimming down the structure, reducing pointless layers of management and giving our amazing staff the freedom to innovate on the front line is so important in creating a positive and productive culture. It releases so much energy, creativity, built-up frustration from poor management decisions going back many years.
The ‘Be Wigan’ experience

How can you give people a clear orientation so that you can entrust them to take the right decisions at the right level with a full understanding of the local ambitions?

In Wigan, we have developed the ‘Be Wigan’ experience, an interactive, immersive half-day organisational development programme for all staff and managers to explore how we can shape and reshape cultures in teams, so we are all singing from the same cultural hymn sheet – but with the freedom and permission to innovate in local communities and work differently with local residents depending on the circumstances.

This approach gives us and key partners a common way of relating to residents. It has now expanded into the NHS with our integrated care organisation offering a Healthier Wigan experience in a shopping centre. Midwives, doctors, health visitors, hospital consultants, social workers, dentists all love it.

Be Wigan sets a cultural framework of how we build a relationship with a person. People are treated as people. They are not a statistic, a patient, a parent in trouble, a troubled family, a job seeker, a victim, a unit of need. They are people and should be treated as the uniquely skilled and talented individuals they are, with a focus on what makes them special and what they enjoy doing rather than just what’s wrong with them.

Listening really hard to residents, to staff, to stakeholders is a crucial but undervalued part of the chief executive’s and leader’s skill set, and one that, being honest, I think most need to work a bit harder on. Equally important is changing stuff as a result and building trust at the heart of organisational culture.

The result for us has been low staff turnover in all areas, amazing staff engagement scores which just get better each year and the third most cut council in the UK becoming the third most productive (Impower Index 2018).

The Wigan Deal

The Be Wigan experience is a key element of the ‘Wigan Deal’ – an example of blending an overarching strategy with a single unifying philosophy that binds together every person who lives and works in the place, underpinned by a massive culture change programme.

I’ll be honest I haven’t ever seen anything that is so all-encompassing as this. Co-operative councils do bits of it, but this is a long-term, cost- and community-driven, whole-person, whole-place, multi-agency belief system.

Keeping it simple, making sure it applies to everything and everyone sounds really easy, but it isn’t. It requires tough, visceral leadership from officers and politicians.
sounds really easy, but it isn’t. It requires tough, visceral leadership from officers and politicians. It’s amazing how everyone needs to have ‘their own’ brand, their initiative and we start to lose the intellectual coherence of the collective social endeavour.

The Deal is a child of austerity, created when a Financial Times journalist made the trek up north to tell us that Wigan was the third worst affected council by austerity in the UK.

We realised at that moment that salami-sliced cost cutting and slashing the same 10 per cent off every department’s budget wasn’t going to work on a long-term basis. We needed a plan, but a plan that was simple, clear and embraced not just by the council but by the people of the borough.

**Structuring the deal**

Eight years into this transformative programme, the results are astounding and attract visitors from all over the UK and overseas, especially Scandinavia, to learn from our experience. We are always happy to share the learning and hold regular ‘Deal Days’ to showcase the work and the lessons learned of which there have been many.

Municipal adult social care day centres and residential facilities have been replaced by vibrant community groups and supported accommodation providing independence and higher levels of client satisfaction.

At the same time as closing expensive, ineffective state solutions, Wigan Council invested £10 million over a four-year period in grassroots community and voluntary organisations in order to stem and now reverse the rising tide of demand for adult and children’s social care and NHS services.

At the same time as closing expensive, ineffective state solutions, Wigan Council invested £10 million over a four-year period in grassroots community and voluntary organisations in order to stem and now reverse the rising tide of demand for adult and children’s social care and NHS services. We completely reshaped our relationship with the community and voluntary sector from one of intense scrutiny and mistrust to one of mutual respect and massive trust.

Five hundred amazing projects support people to be mentally and physically happy and well and socially connected in their own local neighbourhoods. This is why just cutting and stopping things isn’t transformative.

Wigan has a balanced adult social care budget as well as balanced budgets across the board and we are working with our NHS partners locally to apply the same principles of strengths-based behaviour change, permission to innovate and place-based working to address the demand issues in health services.

This approach is showing genuinely incredible results. For very little investment we are seeing an enormous reduction in cost as we have realised that 80 per cent of our costs were spent on processing people and passing them around a fractured and incoherent system.
We have applied the principles of The Deal to children’s social care again with amazing results as we focus not just on the child but on supporting the whole family to be the best they can be, using an asset-based approach. As a result, we are seeing numbers of looked-after children reduce against the growing trend nationally which is going in the opposite direction.

Seven fully integrated place-based teams – all of whose members have been through the Be Wigan experience – combine the expertise and knowledge of local GPs, practice managers, dentists, social workers, health visitors, drug and alcohol workers, housing officers, police officers, DWP staff from local job centres, community organisations and elected councillors.

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This unique, long-term transformation and culture change programme also makes the accountants happy as it takes money out of budgets by permanently reducing demand for expensive reactive services.

We have seen a 30 per cent reduction in unplanned hospital admission by adopting the approach of risk-stratifying the local population and proactively targeting early preventative support through GPs.

In the first three months of this year, working in partnership with North West Ambulance Service, we managed to divert over 2,000 individual ambulance trips away from our local Accident and Emergency Department by intervening with step-up and step-down beds in a local care home. This approach is much better for the patients and also significantly more cost-effective.

Despite the fact we have £160 million less money every year as a council, residents are happier with an overall 59 per cent increase in overall satisfaction with the council and how it does things while 82 per cent of residents support the principles of The Deal, which is remarkable.

Stop writing, start leading
So if you are serious about transformation my advice is to rip up all those wordy strategies that hardly anyone even reads. They just don’t work. Get out there and start leading change with communities. It’s what they want and it’s what the public sector needs. Focus on creating an energetic, innovative trust-based model and spend years and years reinforcing it every single day. This has to be the best way we can spend our time as leaders.

If you are interested in finding out more about The Deal, culture change, place-based working or would like to book on a Deal Day, please contact Alison Wright alison.wright@wigan.gov.uk.

Donna Hall CBE
Former Chief Executive, Wigan Council and Wigan Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Service Reform Lead for Greater Manchester.

Donna is also chair of the New Local Government Network (NLGN), which has recently launched ‘The Community Paradigm’ which advocates shifting power to communities as has happened in Wigan.

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As the State of Transformation conference is quickly becoming an important date in the calendar, we thought it was time to reflect on progress made and the long-term challenges we face.

**People are the focus of delivery, regardless of the organisations providing or commissioning – in particular, outcomes for people take priority over output or process targets and measures.**

The Panel’s perspectives on transformation should be familiar. In our view, if implemented effectively, they still offer a radical approach to service provision:

- people are the focus of delivery, regardless of the organisations providing or commissioning – in particular, outcomes for people take priority over output or process targets and measures;
- frequent users of public services are encouraged to make better choices, mitigate their own costs, and contribute to their communities, and services are designed to encourage and facilitate responsible behaviour;
- multi-agency provision of services, virtual and physical co-location are the norm, and service silos and duplication are eliminated;
- digital technologies, and insight arising from shared data and user needs, are embedded in the policy, design and delivery of services to improve customer experience; and
- collaborative leadership, based on local trust relationships, is fundamental to unlocking the right mix of the above, appropriate to the place and to the challenge being addressed.
At the heart of the Panel’s recommendations to government was a recognition that people with multiple and complex needs (multiple disadvantage) fall through the systems cracks or are passed from pillar to post.

Transformative system change takes time.

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<tr>
<th>Panel member</th>
<th>Role in 2014</th>
<th>Current position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sir Derek Myers</td>
<td>Chair of Trustees at Shelter</td>
<td>Chair of Public Health England</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pat Ritchie</td>
<td>CEO Newcastle City Council</td>
<td>Still in role</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philip Colligan</td>
<td>Deputy CEO of Nesta</td>
<td>CEO of Raspberry Pi Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jonathan Flowers</td>
<td>Market Director at Capita /Director of Veredus</td>
<td>Portfolio Non-Executive Director, Advisor, Consultant including Chair of Improvement and Development Board for Local Councils</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Lloyd</td>
<td>CEO of Cambridgeshire County Council</td>
<td>CEO of Local Government Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony Lloyd</td>
<td>Police and Crime Commissioner for Greater Manchester</td>
<td>Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Ann Limb</td>
<td>Chair of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership</td>
<td>Chair of London to Cambridge Innovation Corridor and philanthropist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nick Markham</td>
<td>Non-Executive Director DCLG</td>
<td>Lead Non-Executive Director for MHCLG, also Chair, Inview Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Scriven</td>
<td>Managing Partner Scriven Consulting</td>
<td>Baron Scriven of Hunters Bar in the City of Sheffield, Liberal Democrat life peer, House of Lords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor John Young</td>
<td>National Clinical Director for the NHS</td>
<td>Retired</td>
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What happened to the recommendations?

The panel called for more local collaboration, and greater local accountability, while recognising that this shift in delivery would require flexible, patient funding to invest in the upfront costs of transformation. They understood that transformative system change takes time. That social outcomes and fiscal benefits are longer term. The £5 billion transformation fund they recommended, made up of grant and repayable capital, didn’t fit the Chancellor’s austere agenda in 2015. However, the mantle for

local reform was instead taken on by the Cabinet Office/DCMS £80 million Life Chances Fund.4 That has brought commissioning for outcomes to the fore but constrained the funding model to social impact bonds, which may not always be best suited to drive systemic change.

At the heart of the Panel’s recommendations to government was a recognition that people with multiple and complex needs (multiple disadvantage) fall through the systems cracks or are passed from pillar to post. This is costly to taxpayers and increases demand on stretched services, but doesn’t address underlying needs and is certainly not focused on outcomes. We hear that there may be tentative plans afoot to better understand the underlying needs of that group, and to consider a funded programme, subject to the outcome of the spending review.

The Panel’s other big call for action was around digital, data, and designing user needs into services. This is one area where there has been movement. There’s not a week goes by when one of us isn’t invited to a ‘show and tell’ to reveal the insights from user research into a new digital tool or way of working. Whether this is a wider grassroots trend, or a result of public policy, is a different matter. Government departments including MHCLG are now far more aware of the agile, digital way of working and have set about ‘fixing the plumbing’. Though with only £7 million to distribute, the Local Digital Innovation Fund5 will in future need a much bigger wrench to help local government into 21st century practice.

Most of all we need resilience and patience. Change takes time not least because at its heart, it’s about trust between people, about growing capability, confidence, and the curiosity to be open to new partnerships and new ways of working.

With only £7 million to distribute, the Local Digital Innovation Fund will in future need a much bigger wrench to help local government into 21st century practice.

Fortunately, the third sector and philanthropists are also stepping in to develop and promote digital use cases, common standards, and data models that can work in different places. A Local Data Foundation (official name to be confirmed) may be established to host and share these insights and what works on an open source basis. Watch this space.

There has been some progress on the Panel’s recommendations to enable collaborative leadership. While the end of 2015 deadline slipped, the government did set up the Public Services Leadership Taskforce in 2017, which in 2018 reiterated the Panel’s call for a national academy to enable greater cross-sector collaboration. But, five years on there has been little action. We note that many of the professional leadership opportunities currently available to public sector leaders remain
concentrated in professional or sector silos, although collaborative leadership is increasingly discussed.

Oliver Dowden, Minister for Implementation, has many of the responsibilities the Panel wanted to see in a ‘Cabinet Minister responsible for better local outcomes and taxpayer value’. But he lacks the clout to ensure policy and funding from Whitehall helps rather than hinders transformation.

While the New Local Government Network and other commentators have plotted the rise of commissioning with the community, it is still rare for councils, Wigan aside, to invite local residents into a substantive discussion about what they really want and need and what they should expect to contribute in return.

And finally, another current recommendation was to establish a What Works Centre for Service Transformation to gather and evaluate evidence of actions and services that deliver better outcomes. While this has not happened, we think it is fair to say that the Public Service Transformation Academy – a not-for-profit public-private-third sector partnership – has taken responsibility for what it can, through its website, events, publications, local academies and national conferences.

We also welcome the initial steps taken by the Blavatnik School’s Government Outcomes Lab, whose recent report ‘Are we rallying together? Collaboration and Public Service Reform’ reiterated, with more current examples, many of the messages of the Challenge Panel.

Though the Cameron administration warmly accepted the Panel’s report and set out a detailed response there has been little progress since matters turned to the UK EU membership referendum on 26 June 2016, and the subsequent aftermath. Regardless of where you stand on those issues, we can all agree that the local public service transformation agenda has been largely left to smoulder on the backburner. Against a balanced scorecard the government might get three out of ten.

What’s new?

There remain signs of progress from the bottom up, as some people have taken the transformation agenda into their own hands. Here are a few examples we have come across.

In Essex, the county council has taken the radical step of setting up a charity to commission its £9.5 million drug and alcohol recovery services. While many have outsourced provision, we are not aware of other councils that have so boldly put commissioning in the hands of those who use services. The Essex Recovery Foundation has a board member who embodies the recovery journey, as well as an advisory body made up entirely of people in recovery. The ambition is impeccable, to revolutionise recovery. The council has recognised that it struggles to meet individuals needs as they present, and it has had the confidence to put the needs of the people it serves at the heart of a new commissioning model. Brave, certainly – and Better? We’ll report back on the latter next year, when it should be fully up and running.

Following the disappointment of losing out on a bid to the National Lottery Community Fund, Plymouth was determined to find new ways of working to meet rising and more complex demand for services. That prompted the establishment of the £483 million integrated fund, as well as the creation of Livewell South West, an integrated community health and adult social care provider. The overarching

There remain signs of progress from the bottom up, as some people have taken the transformation agenda into their own hands.
objective is to improve population health and wellbeing across the area and reduce inequality. Plymouth have made this progress ‘under the radar’. By pooling resources they now have a ‘One System One Budget’ approach, with integrated commissioning, and a shortlist of system-wide outcomes against which to measure their progress. These reforms are very much in the spirit and substance of what the Transformation Panel championed. Numerous positive spins-offs have arisen from this collaboration, including for example, opening up local public data to innovators to develop digital products and services that can have social impact.11

Creating a space within the very large Local Enterprise Partnership area in their part of the world, a number of organisations including local councils, private companies, and universities and colleges formed the London to Cambridge (via Stevenage and Stansted) Innovation Corridor.12 This alliance of partner organisations, who share costs, is a model of relevant local determination combined, cunningly, with an All-Party Parliamentary Group dedicated to press the regional economic case in Parliament. Importantly, it has a very strong focus on skills and productivity. When we wrote the original report, the skills agenda was less pressing, but without doubt it is now a critical part of the local public service mix. This ‘coalition of the willing’ demonstrates that world-class sci-tech innovation can collaborate effectively with the local public sector.

So what, and what next?

In principle, there is scope for the NHS Long Term Plan, which has embraced the idea of more locally integrated care systems, to be an engine for local public service transformation. It remains to be seen whether the ‘integration’ agenda can surmount the challenges within the health system and have any capacity and energy left over to engage with the wider social determinants of health which multiple agencies within each locality can help to address. A truly place-based approach to this will need to embrace local determination and local choices, which will require some form of democratic input for legitimacy. This will be a tremendous shock to the NHS system but would truly be Bold, Brave and Better.

It’s sometimes easier to blame inaction on local partners or on blockers that we think only government can remove. What the Panel illustrated, and what still holds true, is that it’s for each place to choose the right path for itself and just get on with it – accepting and offering no excuses, as Plymouth, Wigan and many others can attest. However, we do accept that this would be a bit easier if:

- Central government showed a bit more interest and leadership, and provided a means for places to engage proactively with Whitehall. That might, we hope, include a coherent and strategic set of incentives which leave places accountable for what they need to achieve locally and how they go about it. Too often, responses to issues are piecemeal; separate pots of cash come from different departments often for the same issue;13 or they can bypass local communities, for example the £1.6 billion Stronger Towns Fund which is predominantly in the hands of Local Enterprise Partnerships.

- The spending review takes the opportunity to develop a coherent long-term plan for public services. As public sector finances are back in the black – in January 2019, the country was in surplus by £14.9 billion, the largest in January since monthly records began in 1993 – it’s time to consider whether austerity has incubated social costs we may be paying off for years to come and how we are going to address them: for example, school readiness, knife crime, the skills deficit, social isolation,
the disability employment gap, unmet care needs of the elderly, rising demand for healthcare, intergenerational inequity, and inequality of opportunity between towns, rural areas, and cities.

- We really embraced the positive role that third and private sector partners and small authorities can play in tackling complex social challenges. This was probably one of the biggest gaps in the Panel’s thinking. If the pattern of local public service provision seems to differ from place to place, then this is even more true of community-based and private sector footprints. Strong local leaders are woven in to the network of all the players in their place, are able to create a relevant local narrative and draw in other assets and resources. It is very hard to dictate national models for this from the centre. In very different ways Wigan (there’s that place again), Preston (‘the Preston Model’), Plymouth, Essex, the Northern Powerhouse, and the Innovation Corridor are developing nuanced approaches of that type.

Most of all we need resilience and patience. Change takes time not least because at its heart, it’s about trust between people, about growing capability, confidence, and the curiosity to be open to new partnerships and new ways of working. It’s about local leadership, with the centre in a critical support role, relentlessly focused on making local leadership and implementation easier to do.

This article presents the personal views of Jonathan Flowers and Robert Pollock and does not seek to represent the views of other former members of the Transformation Challenge Panel.

Jonathan Flowers

Following a successful career in NatWest incorporating analytics, consultancy, strategy, innovation and commercial development, Jonathan Flowers moved into local government as a London Borough Director and County Council Deputy Chief. A range of advisory roles in Veredus and Capita followed and he now has a portfolio of non-executive, advisory and consultancy roles, including Chair of the Improvement and Development Board for Local Councils and roles with mySociety, FutureGov and the Connected Places Catapult. Jonathan is a former member of the Transformation Challenge Panel.

Robert Pollock

Robert Pollock is a Director at not-for-profit Social Finance. He is a former Treasury official and has also held leadership positions at the United Nations, DCLG, and Westminster City Council. In 2013, he founded the Public Service Transformation Network, a cross-Whitehall unit that partnered with local government and the wider public sector to test and scale outcome-based delivery models. Robert is a Board Member of the New Local Government Network, non-executive director for the PSTA, and Go Lab Fellow of Practice.

It’s for each place to choose the right path for itself and just get on with it – accepting and offering no excuses.

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The challenge
Imagine this. It’s 26 August 2014. You are a business support officer working in the education service, a key function within the children and young people’s service (CYPS) at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. Before this day you were a hard-working officer, in what you believed was a high-performing section of a well-run organisation. You were entitled to this opinion. Why? Because the secondary schools you support had for a while now been educating their young people to achieve higher levels of GCSE passes at A–C grades (including English and maths) than national averages. However, your perception, alongside much of the rest of the world’s, is shattered on this day, when news breaks of the Professor Jay report into child sexual exploitation.

The report pertained to the findings of an inquiry commissioned by the then RMBC chief executive, following increasing intelligence of an unusually high prevalence of abuse over a 16-year period, from 1997 to 2013. The report differed from previous related works – it shone a light on an uncomfortable truth, that there was a race dimension to the sorry tale. According to Professor Jay’s inquiry, a conservative estimate of 1,400 girls, British white in ethnicity, had been sexually exploited throughout the period by grooming gangs of Pakistani heritage. The report landed with the outrage one should have expected and this triggered an Ofsted inspection of children’s services which, on 19 November 2014, confirmed that the service was inadequate (bottom six per cent in the country), meaning there were ‘widespread systemic failings’ across the system.

In the wake of this, then Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan MP, appointed a commissioner, Malcolm Newsam (now CBE), and Eric Pickles, her counterpart at Communities and Local Government, appointed Louise Casey (now Dame) to lead a corporate governance inspection as there was evidence of failings beyond CYPS, extending to senior officers in other directorates and elected members.

I was appointed as strategic director of CYPS by Commissioner Newsam and an appointments committee of elected members, supported by a new interim chief executive Jan Ormandroyd, and I began work with the council on 1 January 2015. The scale of the challenge was exacerbated by the publication of Louise Casey’s report following the corporate governance inspection, which confirmed that, in her view, the council was not fit for purpose. Accepting these findings, Secretary of State Pickles relieved the council of its statutory responsibilities and vested powers for running the council in six commissioners, led by Sir Derek Myers and including previously appointed Commissioner Newsam.

A whole-systems approach is required to ensure that children are safe, that they thrive throughout childhood and make a transition to become adults who make a positive contribution to society.
‘It takes a village to raise a child’

In my view never a truer proverb has been spoken. Here, Nelson Mandela articulated in one short sentence how a whole-systems approach is required to ensure that children are safe, that they thrive throughout childhood and make a transition to become adults who make a positive contribution to society.

My experience in Trafford MBC and Derbyshire County Council, and knowledge of effective systems in North Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Leeds, Kensington and Chelsea, Hackney and Essex, juxtaposed with professional training and development at the National College for Leaders of Schools and Children’s Services, helped to give me an unswerving focus on the system, as opposed to the work within individual silos.

Two approaches were used to drive an agenda for continuous improvement. ‘Appreciative inquiry’ helped us to identify strengths across the system to galvanise a collective response to the many failings over nearly two decades; whilst Professor John Kotter’s eight-step change model was a useful reference point for a sequence of critical work packages. Using the model’s headings below, I explain how transformation became a reality for the council and children’s services within it.

1. Create a sense of urgency

For leaders in Rotherham, this was probably the easiest of the eight steps.

The mood in the town was dark, the media was omnipresent in and around the council, and the English Defence League, eager to capitalise on the growing racial tensions in the town, were literally camped outside the council offices and regularly marching through the streets.

I recall being sat in my office sketching a spider diagram to capture the multifarious complex issues we were faced with on one seemingly intractable web. Even though the reality was different, there were days early on when it seemed nothing was going well – even the simple things. For example, I often tell the story of a diary entry that should have read ‘gold command training’ but was inserted as ‘gold commando training’ – as a result I nearly didn’t show up for that one!

In the first few weeks, securing early wins was a task in itself as the (understandable) anger in the community and the vitriolic response across all popular social media platforms served as a constant reminder of the council’s failings.

In sum, in modern social policy history, there was no greater ‘sense of urgency’ than the one required in the case of the Rotherham abuse scandal.

2. Build a guiding coalition

The ‘authorising environment’ of an excellent team of expert commissioners and a newly formed ‘advisory cabinet’ of able, committed elected officials, provided a bedrock for building a coalition for change.
A key ministerial decision to move to all-out elections provided much-needed political stability in the medium term and the formulation of a new council structure. Key appointments, such as a cadre of new corporate directors and a new chief executive, Sharon Kemp (succeeding Commissioner – now Dame – Stella Manzie), helped strengthen the council’s core performance. High-profile, critical historical failings such as taxi licencing were by now already transformed, following exceptional work by Commissioner (now Dame) Mary Ney.

Meanwhile statutory partnerships, such as the health and wellbeing board, local safeguarding children’s board, adult safeguarding board and community safety partnership, were strengthened. With the support of central government departments (CLG and Department for Education), these developments are credit to many actors across the local system, including South Yorkshire Police, the health economy, schools, the voluntary sector and the citizens of Rotherham, notably the victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation, who stepped up to help us all remedy the wrongs of the past.

**3. Form a strategic vision and initiatives**

One of the most common areas for development emerging from staff surveys relates to the (lack of) organisational vision. It was therefore a key imperative but one that required ownership at all levels.

I was fortunate to be among people who were agitating for excellence and, inspired by my very talented new senior team and the ‘authorising environment’ mentioned above, a vision for excellence was crafted for consultation. Any highly aspirational vision is a gamble as one has to achieve a balance between ‘stretch’ targets and the art of the possible. Given the efficacy within the leadership, staff team and partners, I believed that working towards being regarded as ‘outstanding’ within four years was achievable. So this was the proposition put before the partnership and accepted, together with feedback to hone the wording as follows:

The vision of Rotherham’s children’s services is to be rated outstanding by 2018. We will pursue three objectives:

a) All children to be safe from harm;

b) All children to start school healthy and ready to learn for life; and

c) All young people and their families to be ready for the world of work

This will result in people being proud to come from Rotherham.

This vision set the tone for rapid transformation as throughout the journey not even good was good enough. It became the source of tension at times but as the late Henry Ford said, ‘Quality means doing it right when no-one is looking’, and in my view the children of Rotherham deserved no less than the excellent quality and service standards which I would expect for my own children.

Initiatives were aplenty but getting the business basics in place was a top priority. The structure of the service was addressed to ensure proficiency of service response,

**Any highly aspirational vision is a gamble as one has to achieve a balance between ‘stretch’ targets and the art of the possible.**

resulting in a new early help service connected to partners in localities and a sharper focus on social work compliance initially. Then we moved on to developing high-quality, effective commissioning and spans of management control that facilitated a strong ‘line of sight’ to the front line of practice. The forensic eye of central government meant that governance had to be strong, overseen by a number of boards instituted to monitor the impact of initiatives and pace of change.

As the late Henry Ford said, ‘Quality means doing it right when no-one is looking.’
3a. Communicate the vision
I hope Professor Kotter (and readers) will forgive me for adding an adjunct at this point.

Another popular, often legitimate gripe of the staff survey respondent is the lack of communication within organisations. We often get our communications wrong believing that a one-off email does the trick.

I grew up in the 1970s and 80s believing that a ‘Mars a day helped me to work rest and play’. Why? Because the Mars confectionery company told me repeatedly throughout the day using a variety of modes – TV, radio, newspapers, billboards etc. Great communicators recognise the importance of repetition and that as humans we all have different learning styles. According to Honey and Mumford I am an ‘activist/pragmatist’ which means I learn best by doing. Others prefer ‘theoretical/reflective’ approaches to learning.

I believed that the strategy to communicate our vision widely needed to recognise human psychological preferences and so a variety of methods were deployed, through written, verbal and interactive tools. Opportunities to reinforce the ultimate goal were seldom missed and over time, using appreciative inquiry aided by social media to celebrate successes, our staff and partners started to believe that our vision could become a reality for Rotherham children.

4. Enlist a volunteer army
My current mentor, Jo Miller, Chief Executive of Doncaster MBC, often quotes Margaret Mead who said, ‘never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has’. This I believe is true. However, any such group requires a broader church of support ultimately if they are to galvanise a movement.

Our volunteer army included some unlikely volunteers such as KPMG Foundation Trust and their visionary CEO, Jo Clunie, who worked with us to develop the largest child sexual exploitation prevention project in the country – ‘Reachout’ – in conjunction with Barnardo’s.

Others included Rotherham’s thriving voluntary sector which boasted 49,000 volunteering positions, our children and young people’s fora, our peers across Yorkshire and Humber region and beyond, the Local Government Association, the regulator as part of its improvement work, and the growing network of survivors of exploitation who, through expertise gained in objectionable circumstances, were stepping forward to help us enhance the quality of our practices.

5. Enable action by removing barriers
Barriers that serve to prohibit change exist in all transformation programmes. Recognising the types of barriers and responding to them quickly are essential in my view.

Some barriers are easy to identify and tackle such as the physical environment – office accommodation, service delivery points, IT equipment etc. However, some such as lack of confidence, mindset, and quiet subliminal resistors are harder to both identify and address.

A positive mindset helped us to win the psychological war against a small minority working to undermine the transformation underway. By this stage our ‘army’ had embraced the mission objectives and were hungrily exploring the art of the possible.

‘An impressive corporate response’ (highlighted by Ofsted), including excellent access to legal, HR, finance, IT and property services, enabled us to create conditions for quality of practice to thrive, ranging from excellent office accommodation and the procurement of a new IT system for our staff, through to excellent service-user facilities such as ‘The Journey’ – a new safe space for our care leavers.

A positive mindset helped us to win the psychological war against a small minority working to undermine the transformation underway. By this stage our ‘army’ had embraced the mission objectives and were hungrily...
optimism is the faith that leads to improvement, nothing can be achieved without hope and confidence.’

exploring the art of the possible. The words of Helen Keller below, epitomises the attitude prevalent across the movement at the time:

6. Generate short term wins
A commitment to appreciative inquiry helps keep the positive in clear view. Not everything in Rotherham’s children’s services was broken. The outcomes achieved in early years was impressive, as was the trajectory of improvement for pupils in the educational primary phase and the outcomes consistently achieved for secondary phase learners.

I never believed that people had come to work to do a bad job in Rotherham in the past and as a team we were keen to ensure this was acknowledged. Following focus groups with staff and partners, after a few weeks we attained quick wins such as:

- supernumerary agency resource for frontline workers to reduce caseloads;
- additional high-quality interim management to improve access to support and supervision;
- joint protocols across statutory agencies; and
- new joint senior posts with health, signalling a commitment to partnership working

Key milestones achieved relatively early on include the success of ‘Operation Clover’, a partnership between South Yorkshire Police and the council, which led to the conviction of 13 sex criminals in 2016 who were sentenced to a total of almost 200 years in prison. In the same year, the council secured an ‘outstanding’ Ofsted inspection outcome for its children’s disabled breaks facility. This was a first for the authority and a clear statement of intent.

7. Sustain acceleration
The vision became a critical focal point for the system of leaders and it was this that kept us improving at pace.

Key personnel changes in the ‘authorising environment’ saw the establishment of seven (game-changing) tests by the outgoing Commissioner Newsam, which focused on a wider council response and the appointment of a new Executive Commissioner, councillor Patricia Bradwell, together with a practice improvement partner in the form of Lincolnshire Council, spearheaded by its director of children’s services, Debbie Barnes.

Coaching psychology sat at the heart of this phase, with practice partner colleagues working alongside our own dedicated workforce to reflect on practice quality, which was a key test. The leadership team all had access to an external coach, Julia Morrison, who helped the team to build resilience and maintain a high pace of improvement.

Our unrelenting focus on quality saw the introduction of ‘restorative practice’, ‘signs of safety’ and ‘social pedagogy’ and together with practice quality standards developed by our frontline practitioners in early help and social care, the ‘Rotherham Family Model’ was born.

Signs of safety + restorative approaches + social pedagogy = Rotherham Family Model

Juxtaposed with this, a key test in establishing a compelling offer to the workforce focused our attention on staff recruitment and retention and the resultant action led to a reduction in agency usage of family social workers from 44 per cent to 16 per cent, as well as in vacancies, turnover and sickness absence.

Then there was the direct work we as senior leaders did with our young people. An example is the looked after children council’s ‘ban a bin liner’ campaign – a campaign to eradicate the appalling practice of children in care being moved, often at short notice, and having to put their belongings in a bin liner as if it were rubbish. To make the point, they staged a fashion show with
clothes made out of bin liners for leaders to model, including yours truly! On another occasion they had us dressed up in tutus as we took part in a dance routine designed by the young people at their ‘Pride of Rotherham’ awards evening. You need to know that I banned social media activity for this, and all pictures taken remain classified to this day!

8. Institute change

Regarding sequencing, there is a slight flaw in this model I believe (sorry Professor Kotter) and why I tend to allow for flexibility when applying theoretical concepts.

Change is often iterative and, in this case, we were on a roller coaster ride. The trajectory of improvement was not linear and at times we were derailed. An example is the performance of three of our residential care homes, which were rated inadequate by Ofsted at a time when we were making good progress across the wider child protection system. Albeit relatively early on in our journey, these inspection outcomes served to undermine confidence and, as professional leaders, we had to spend much time with elected members, trade unions and others to explain the rationale behind our judgments, the outcomes in the context of the wider systems work underway, and the reason why in the end we recommended that the provisions be decommissioned.

However, overall the changes we had made became more and more embedded as we pursued our vision and continually asked ourselves ‘would this be good enough for my own child?’ at every turn. We were preparing for our re-inspection through focusing on protecting our children and supporting them to achieve their full potential.

On 6 November 2017, we got the call advising us that the following day our four-week Ofsted re-inspection was about to commence. When I announced this to the team in our ‘engine room’, there was a real sense of ‘bring it on’ amongst the staff – it was their time to shine. As with all inspections there were tense moments and much discourse with inspectors regarding where we were on our journey. As one can imagine, convincing the inspection team that we had made the leap out of the inadequate category was a daunting prospect and a claim which would only stand up if we were able to show them evidence that the quality of our practice had improved.

At the end of a gruelling four weeks, inspectors confirmed that the service was ‘good overall with outstanding features’ (care leavers, adoption support, and response to complex abuse), placing the service in the top 16 per cent nationally. When the report was published in January 2018, we celebrated hard. My deputy director of children’s services, Mel Meggs (now strategic director of children’s services at Kirklees) and I threw a party for the staff and word on the street is we are still actually paying our credit cards off. But you know what? They were worth it!

Ian Thomas CBE

Ian Thomas CBE is currently Chief Executive of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and has 33 years’ experience in the public, voluntary and private sector. Previous roles include periods as Chief Executive of Lewisham and, before that, Strategic Director of Rotherham Borough Council’s Children and Young People’s Services, where he was responsible for the transformation of the service following the child sexual exploitation scandal which rocked the town. In recognition of his work, Ian was made a CBE in the 2019 New Year’s Honours list.

This piece does little justice to the hard work and emotional investment of the Rotherham faithful and, whilst never forgetting the past, the town should feel justly proud of what has been achieved in recent times. I would like to pay tribute to everyone who helped make possible the transformation I have described above, whilst also acknowledging the continuing impact of abuse on those who suffered.

‘It takes a village to raise a child.’

1 For more information on appreciative inquiry, see https://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/the-art-of-appreciative-inquiry
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Case studies

The Oldham Model for place-based integration

Transforming outcomes for people, places, and public services
The headlines

- Multi-agency teams, physically based within communities, are key to transforming outcomes for people, places and public services.
- Our approach is firmly rooted in our Oldham Model (as outlined in our Oldham Plan 2017-22) where we set out how co-operative services need to work hand in hand with thriving communities and an inclusive economy to shift the stubborn inequalities within the borough.
- Figures from our Holts and Lees site have proved that this approach really does deliver impressive results against our Oldham Model, results which we expect to be matched or even exceeded in other sites:
  - Inclusive Economy – 44 per cent of the cases we have dealt with have resulted in an improved financial situation for individuals and families – with some being better off by up to £16,000 per year. Seventy per cent of the money saved by people is not ‘one off’ but will continue to be released year-on-year.
  - Thriving Communities – in 20 per cent of all cases people have become involved in activity helping to tackle social isolation and loneliness – a major public health issue proven to be as damaging as smoking 14 cigarettes a day and costing over £600 a year per person to the public services.
  - Co-operative Services – the team has moved 80 per cent of cases from ‘not coping’ to ‘adapted’. In other words, from higher-cost services into universal services, resulting in better outcomes for people and changing demand and cost for the system. The systems savings amount to £3 million against an investment of £350,000.
- Multi-agency integration is not a ‘project’ unrelated to the way mainstream services are delivered. Rather it is the way mainstream services should be delivered across the whole system and in partnership with residents.
- What we have learnt so far from our early adopter sites is now informing how we scale up public service reform across the whole system and within all Oldham’s localities.

The Oldham context

Learning, both locally within Greater Manchester and nationally, has shown the necessity to take a different approach to organising the public services. Previous approaches have tended to focus on specific organisations or specific issues; to be associated with particular programmes (e.g. Troubled Families); or linked to specific funding (e.g. New Deal for Communities). These programmes have often been too small-scale, too targeted, or too reliant on additional resources.

To achieve sustainable change, we know that we must fundamentally rethink:
- the way the public sector operates, and the relationship with communities;
- how we work with individuals and families with problems;
- how we engage with the community both to develop community connectedness and build confidence;
- how we have potentially challenging conversations that prompt a desire for change; and
- how we operate as a ‘system’ to unblock the barriers and system conditions that prevent people being able to make good choices and to live good lives.

Fortunately, as long ago as 2016, there was an appetite across Greater Manchester to really test how agencies could come together in one team to help create a new model for public services. Oldham was therefore able to draw inspiration from and work alongside other early adopters such as Wigan and Rochdale.
The Oldham model

The Oldham model, as set out in the Oldham Plan 2017-22, outlines the transformational shifts we need to make as a partnership to shift the stubborn inequalities in our borough and achieve the shared goals of:

- an inclusive economy, where everyone has a fair chance to improve their living standards, wages and skills;
- co-operative services, underpinned by collaboration, integration and innovation, that improve outcomes for residents and create effective and seamless services; and
- thriving communities, where people have the power to be healthy and happy and can make positive choices about their lives.

Fortunately, as long ago as 2016 there was an appetite across Greater Manchester to really test how agencies could come together in one team to help create a new model for public services.

Our story so far

Currently there are four sites operating on our new model, based in some of our most deprived communities and involving 14 different services and agencies. In addition, we also have health and social care integrated teams working on a larger geography mirroring this learning. The most developed site is in Holts and Lees, a small community of 3,100 households, but with very challenging needs and high demand for services. The site has been operating for two years and delivering impressive outcomes for people, communities, the workforce and public services. The Holt and Lees ‘hub’ team has nine full/part-time officers from housing, police, the council, health, probation and the community and voluntary sector.

- It is creating a single front door – literally an old shop front on the street.
- It is truly integrated working across agencies and the community and voluntary sector through a ‘key worker’ model.
- It is getting to the root causes of problems – for people and communities – working with people to have challenging conversations and solve problems.
- It is wrapping services around the community assets that can help us unlock problems.
- It is using an evidence base (our Thriving Index – the first in the country) which provides insight at a really granular level, including insight into what drives behaviour (or in other words social norms), as well as data on reactive and non-reactive demand.
It is challenging and changing how the ‘system’ operates. For example, how data is shared, or social housing is allocated or kids are excluded from school.

These small and focused sites are now informing how we will scale up public service integration and reform across the whole system, including how we will integrate with health and social care on a larger footprint in the future – moving this approach into mainstream delivery.

**What’s been the impact of our work?**

The data from the Holt and Lees site has demonstrated the following outcomes:

**People outcomes**

The team gets to the root causes of people’s problems and there is no ‘refer on’ culture. Levels of trust are high and enforcement is rarely used. Ninety-five per cent of individuals and families stay engaged with the team, compared to around 70 per cent for other services.

The team has a clear route for escalating issues and blockages that stop people from leading good lives. For example, providing a ‘second chance’ for people with debt to access social housing.

What people have told us:

‘I engage with the team who are helping me and I benefit from their help. Without the help of the team I am uncertain as to where I would be in my life.’

‘I can’t thank you enough. I would be dead within the year if I was still homeless.’

‘I would have been locked up (sectioned) if it wasn’t for this team.’

‘I like the fact that I see the same people all the time so I don’t have to keep telling different people my story like I have in the past. And I don’t feel judged by any of the people in the new team.’

**Place outcomes**

The community outcomes have gone from strength to strength as the team helps to build a thriving community alongside thriving individuals and families.

The Holt and Lees team continually has community conversations with over 100 residents to find out what people value and what issues the community wants to work on with the hub team.

The support and activity is co-designed based on what matters to local people (not to public agencies), such as tackling food poverty and holiday hunger, the ‘state of the area’, or helping the community to develop a café (essential in an area with very few local assets). The hub team has been successful in mobilising the community with support from borough-wide programmes including Oldham’s Food Network and the Clean Streets programme. The development of a ‘community pantry’ has been hugely successful with 200 members signing up in the first two
months alone. The community has organised its own activities such as a Christmas parade and community clean-up.

The community identified negative social norms in its area such as alcohol misuse and illegal money lending. The hub team then worked with people to develop peer networks including local alcohol champions and credit union volunteers. This kind of peer activity was previously unheard of in the area.

The team has been successful in bringing £119,200 of external funding to support activities such as work on tackling holiday hunger and refurbishing the café into a community venue so that the area can continue to thrive.

System outcomes
We are starting to see long-term cost savings to public services as a result of working in this way.

The cost saving to public services in preventing evictions, homelessness, hospital admissions, police and fire call-outs, prison sentences and mental health referrals, as well as increasing employment and training opportunities, is an estimated £3 million per year against a total partnership investment of £350,000.

Staff outcomes
There has been an overwhelmingly positive impact on the staff involved and the learning we have developed from multi-agency sites is informing much wider models of workforce reform.

What staff say:
‘The relationships I have developed in the team mean I can get things done so much quicker, what would have taken a phone call or a referral just gets done now.’

‘It has enabled me to own issues rather than referring them on to someone else and I have so many more skills that I know how to approach problems like I never used to.’

The key elements of our success
Our success has been based upon:
● a strong strategic partnership and culture that works from the strategic through to the tactical and delivery, with a set of committed partners determined to make the approach work;
● an Oldham model that all partners have signed up to; and
● good relationships and support from across Greater Manchester and a willingness to make this approach mainstream

And if we were starting again…
If we were starting again, we would:
● have understood the need to focus on people and place outcomes earlier on and to ensure a strong role for the community and voluntary sector from the outset

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Vicky Sugars
Vicky Sugars is Strategy, Reform, Partnerships, and Policy Manager at Oldham Council, where she leads a team that pioneers the council’s co-operative approach and public service reform in Oldham. Vicky started her career working for the Electoral Commission and various governmental organisations before joining the London Borough of Newham to run an engagement programme with elected members before the 2012 Olympics. She has since built her career on collaborative working in Greater Manchester with a particular emphasis on integrated working across agencies, sectors and communities at all spatial levels.
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Creating a more integrated approach
to health and social care
The headlines

- Somerset County Council and its local clinical commissioning group (CCG) are working together, using local projects to influence a system change towards prevention, early intervention and joined-up working.
- Health Education England has played an important role as a funding partner.
- The initial focus has been on developing a series of commissioning academies, which have become an important part of the delivery of Somerset’s ‘Fit for my Future’ wellbeing strategy and its sustainability and transformation partnership (STP).

The Somerset context

Somerset has coterminous county and CCG boundaries. The county and its partners have been looking to create a more integrated ‘joint commissioning’ approach to the delivery of health and social care, with more emphasis on prevention, early help and re-ablement. As a rural county, isolation, poor social mobility, an ageing population and difficulties in recruiting carers create a strong need to move towards an approach that mobilises local assets in the community.

Results from a baseline survey conducted before day one of each of the first two Somerset Academies validated the hypothesis that, as partners, we did not have the right building blocks in place (relationships, mutual understanding, creativity, an outcome focus) to enable us to work effectively across Somerset’s health and care system.

The Commissioning Academy model

The national Commissioning Academy is run at venues across the UK. The programme uses practical, peer-led learning involving master classes, workshops, guest speakers, site visits and peer challenge, with a focus on implementation. Over a five-day period, it covers key commissioning issues such as:
- commissioning for outcomes;
- whole-systems thinking, bringing all facets of public services together to deal with issues;
- co-producing with communities new ways of supporting people and using local assets better;
- behavioural insights;
- market engagement and development;
- alternative funding models, such as social impact bonds; and
- joint commissioning across organisational boundaries

Each participant is a part of a mixed sector cohort of up to 30 participants. The cohorts are designed to provide as much diversity as possible to maximise learning from experiences across a range of public service organisations, including central and local government, justice sector and health bodies, and ‘place-based’ groups (where organisations are working together in one area).

The Somerset Academies programme

The Somerset Academies programme tailors the national approach for Somerset.
- It focuses on the challenges in the health and social care sector.
- It involves a five-day programme run over a period of five months.
- ‘Challenge projects’ build momentum through action research and creating a 100-day action plan to make real change happen.

The aim is for partners to work together as place shapers and system leaders, building a mutually supportive ‘team’ ethos across Somerset by developing stronger relationships, shared understanding and collaborative behaviours and adopting a strengths/asset-based approach.

The programme supports people to live independent and positive lives by:
- promoting wellbeing and independent living;
- providing person-centred support;
- fostering partnership working and collaboration;
- encouraging strength-based conversations;
- exploring sustainable, community-based solutions; and
- focusing on outcomes
Our story so far – evolving the Academy for local impact

Two cohorts have engaged in the programme so far, a third is in progress and a fourth is being planned.

Cohort 1
The first cohort closely followed the Commissioning Academy format and was funded by Somerset County Council. Locally, the emphasis was on commissioning for outcomes, co-production and leading across the system. Participants came from the county, local district councils, the CCG, police, and the voluntary sector (Community Foundation).

We decided to organise the programme around group projects. Leaders from across the system suggested and sponsored participants, who were then allocated to the projects. The projects were broad by definition and part of the academy approach was to help project groups, through facilitation, to develop a focus. ‘System leaders’ attended on days two and five to work with the teams in order to help guide projects.

The projects were designed to deliver change and promote a shift in commissioning – initiatives such as Community Connects (local community support) and Home First (enabling discharge from hospital) started following the programme and are attributed to it.

One project explored how to create a broader community response in Cheddar and Axbridge to a range of health and wellbeing issues, using asset-based community development approaches, and established a ‘Seattle-style’ community fund to support local wellbeing initiatives.

A data sharing protocol between the NHS, local authorities and emergency services arose directly as a result of a project looking at how better to support frequent attenders at A&E with multiple needs, but found that sharing data to analyse the issue was an obstacle.

A housing (HMO) project in part of Bridgwater used asset-based thinking and co-production with local groups to integrate single tenants better into the local community. The project succeeded in bringing voluntary groups operating in the area together to help enhance the local environment in co-production with the community and the project has also influenced the broader Somerset strategic housing framework.

Cohort 2
The second cohort was set up in a very similar way to the first. However, funding switched to Health Education England. The cohort saw an increased focus on asset mobilisation and development. The cohort also started to involve the Somerset NHS Trusts’ quality improvement (QI) faculty and methods.

A 100-day follow-up workshop in October 2018 indicated that projects were continuing in a range of areas:

- tackling the high number of home-educated children in the county and how to enable them to be employable;
- identifying early signs of self-harming in children – this work has fed into commissioning activity aimed at prevention, in support of Somerset’s ‘Fit for my Future’ wellbeing strategy;
- exploring (via a data group) how data can be used intelligently to improve targeting of resources;
- commissioning a role to support young people’s transport in West Somerset, which has the lowest social mobility score in England;
- specifying a website for young carers; and
- starting a falls prevention education campaign, aimed at 50 to 65-year-olds supporting their parents, thereby also making this younger generation ‘falls aware’ as they themselves age.

Cohort 3
This cohort is still in progress (as at March 2019) and is funded by Health Education England. The cohort is more health-focused in terms of participants and has integrated the QI faculty and methods more closely into its activities. Attendance was affected by the winter pressures on the NHS, but the group has maintained around 20 to 25 members.
Projects are more specific and as a result have thrown up systemic issues which may present potential barriers to progress. Therefore, we have been holding calls with project teams between academy days, looking more at root causes in some cases and prototyping in others.

Once again, there is a range of projects.

- Young people who go ‘missing’ often have complex needs and poor and expensive outcomes. How can earlier help and integrated working improve outcomes?
- One group is working with businesses in a retail outlet village with high shopper footfall to create a dementia-friendly environment, building on existing initiatives.
- Another group is prototyping/testing an ‘advanced care (end-of-life) planning protocol’ with micro-providers and families in Minehead.
- Yet another is seeking to understand and respond to paracetamol poisoning (self-harming) through prevention and behavioural strategies.
- Finally, one group is exploring the pathway associated with ‘medically unexplained symptoms’.

The model is moving towards collaborative commissioning, continuous improvement and the direct delivery of projects.

Cohort 4
A fourth cohort was agreed in February 2019 with Health Education England funding.

The model is moving towards collaborative commissioning, continuous improvement and the direct delivery of projects, sponsored through the STP delivery boards. The academy is being redesigned to do this, with greater joint ownership and an approach focused more explicitly on system change and integrated health and social care. The Public Service Transformation Academy will lead a group of County Council, NHS and Somerset Quality Improvement Faculty (SQIF) representatives to carry out the redesign.

Projects are therefore being given more support in how to leverage the national academy tools and QI methodology brought into the development days. System leadership to deliver a more integrated care system will also be a focus.
Overview of Somerset academy programme flow

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Focus of content</td>
<td>Commissioning for outcomes and adopting a systems thinking approach. Initiate Team challenges</td>
<td>Community and place-based approaches including co-production. Accessing and using data.</td>
<td>Funding and commissioning for value across whole systems. Measuring impact.</td>
<td>Using behavioural insight to deliver outcomes: commissioning for value; new ways of working with providers</td>
<td>Building on assets and making change happen within STP context. Role of QI in transformation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Day 1 Develop initial thinking (where are we now and why?), connect across the system and focus challenges</td>
<td>Day 2 present initial thinking to senior system leaders and peer challenge (where do we want to go with our action research project?)</td>
<td>Day 3 Reflect and review progress Day 3-4 action research to build momentum, plan twelve months and hundred day next phase (doing and asking for help)</td>
<td>Day 4 Reflect and review progress Day 3-4 action research to build momentum, plan twelve months and hundred day next phase (doing and asking for help)</td>
<td>Day 5 present proposals and demonstrate momentum to invited senior panel (how will we get there and what impact will it have?)</td>
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<td>Key questions for challenges</td>
<td>What defined outcomes would represent real change and improvement? What is the ‘system’? What relationships are needed? How will we work together? What data is needed?</td>
<td>What defined outcomes would represent real change and improvement? What is the ‘system’? What relationships are needed? How will we work together? What data is needed?</td>
<td>What is current funding in area we are looking at? How can we do better with less? What new funding methods can be used? What economic/value impacts can the project have?</td>
<td>How can we work in new ways with providers to develop local improvements? What changes in behaviours are we aiming for? What market changes are we looking at?</td>
<td>How we made the best use of assets? What will it look like in twelve months? What do we need to achieve in the next three months? What do we need from senior systems leaders?</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The partners

Key partners include:
- Somerset County Council;
- Somerset CCG; and
- Health Education England through the STP local area workforce board (LAWB)

Latterly, they have been joined by:
- The NHS QI faculty; and
- South West Academic Health Science Network

What’s been the impact of our work?

Cohort 1 demonstrated buy-in across the system, with take-up (aiming for a minimum of 25 participants) exceeding expectations. Forty people participated from across Somerset County Council (including children’s and adults’ services, economic and community infrastructure, and public health), the CCG, primary care, the police, district councils, the Department for Work and Pensions and Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

The feedback was excellent, with 100 per cent of participants reporting on day five that:
- they had made useful connections via the academy;
- they had learnt from other academy participants; and
- the academy had been relevant or highly relevant to their individual learning needs and had been a good or excellent use of their time

Meanwhile, cohorts 1 and 2 demonstrated the following impacts, as set out by the LAWB:
Developing stronger relationships and a shared approach
System leaders commented on the commitment amongst the participants to improve the way we deliver services across the system and on the shared language which had developed during the five days.

Seeing a step-change in collaborative behaviours and system leadership across the system
The range and calibre of representatives from across Somerset’s health and care system is viewed by the academy delivery partner as an exemplar.

Applying effective outcomes-focused, place-based commissioning which builds on strengths/assets and co-production
Three of the challenge projects have used an asset-based commissioning approach with some impressive results. These also provide great examples of co-production with local communities.

Taking forward actions and plans produced by challenge teams that lead to embedded and sustainable change and outcomes
One project has rallied the whole system in finding a solution to data sharing across the health and social care system.
Another has established a fund for community activity in a locality of Somerset and has paved the way for the Stronger Communities workstream.

Shaping the journey towards a more integrated health and social care system
Taking the learning from cohort 1, subsequent cohorts have been shaped with health and the programme adjusted to encompass the quality improvement (QI) methodology, which is largely practiced in acute health settings. This will help us in our objective to talk the same language across partners.

The key elements of our success
Many factors have contributed to our success.

- Identifying the specific challenges before day one of the academy encouraged greater system-wide buy-in.
- We have involved people from across the system in identifying these challenges and pinpointed the participants who will benefit most and have most to contribute to each specific challenge.
- Previous participants and senior system leaders are used to identify specific challenges and agree participants. We learned and evolved to bring in the STP delivery boards into this process.
- We benefited from the collective insights of people across the system who understand what type, scale and scope of challenge the academies can help address.
- Working closely with the NHS QI faculty in Somerset has opened up involvement of the NHS Trusts.

Day five evaluation cohort 1: will the programme lead to action?

DAY 5: What statement best reflects how committed you are to take action via your 100-day plan?

- Planning to take action
- Already taking action
- Already taking action
And if we were starting again...

If we were starting again, we would take even greater account of:

- the challenges of working effectively with participants who are affected by the massive pressure the system is under as a result of high demand for services combined with the need to implement major change programmes to achieve (austerity) savings;
- given time is at a premium, the need to set up the programme to ensure full buy-in from managers and participants – one way being to seek greater clarity at the outset from system leaders about the project areas that interested them and another being to build stronger emphasis on the team ownership of projects before day one;
- the importance of group leadership and drive – distributed leadership is fine, but the groups needed resources to push the work forward between the academy day meetings; and
- the value of meeting ‘on the day’ but the challenges of organising the sessions

Our key contacts

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Andrew Fisk, Learning and Development Consultant, Somerset County Council
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Vikki Hearn

Vikki Hearn is the Strategic Manager for Commissioning Development within Somerset County Council. Within this role she manages the commissioning learning and development needs of Somerset County Council and the commissioning gateway, as well as the organisation’s transformational requirements with regards to the commissioning function. Vikki has a background in managing Leaving Care Services, housing strategy and commissioning and was responsible for the development of Somerset’s Youth Housing programme.

Andrew Fisk

Andrew Fisk is a Senior Learning and Development Consultant at Somerset County Council. He has worked within the learning and development arena for over 20 years and is a Chartered CIPD member, trained coach and mediator, able to deliver development workshops, team development sessions, and face-to-face training and to give psychometric recruitment and development feedback. Andrew started out as a primary school teacher and spent 13 years in the Civil Service before joining the county, where he has now worked for over 10 years.

Jo Howarth

Jo Howarth works as Deputy Director of Nursing and is the Quality Improvement Lead at Yeovil District Hospital. She is a registered nurse and has worked in both the acute and commissioning sectors of the NHS. A manager since the mid-1990s, she has been instrumental in setting up services such as Clinical Site Management, Waiting List Management (now Access/Contact Centre), Theatre Admission and Discharge lounges. After re-joining YDH in 2013 as the Associate Director of Patient Safety she led the delivery of reductions in avoidable harm over the following four years. Jo has recently completed the Director Programme with the NHS Leadership Academy.
I hear you!

A service design approach to mental health services at scale
The headlines

● Adults in London have a high level of unmet need for timely access to mental health services.

● Public Health England, on behalf of the Healthy London Partnership, designed a totally new online service, Good Thinking (https://www.good-thinking.uk/), to provide inclusive, immediate help at scale. Use of digital data to identify and target people with mental health problems had never been done before.

● We used a new approach, service design, to tailor mental health support to the behaviours and service preferences of different groups of customers. Qualitative research techniques developed customer insights which were used to inform service blueprints and future customer journeys. The approach recognised the role of digital technology in reaching Londoners, allowing individual journeys through the service to be tailored to each customer.

● The service ecosystem used both the NHS clinical and digital infrastructure (centralised pathway) as well as those offered by third parties (distributed pathway).

● The approach benefited from the support and involvement of all the clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and most borough councils in London, the Mayor of London, and voluntary and community groups. It also drew on the expertise and knowledge of digital providers, marketers and social media experts. The solution integrated rather than duplicated existing service offers.

● Since December 2017 over 200,000 people have used the service. Of those who have used the interventions offered, 60 per cent have experienced a reduction in stress.

● The approach is now being considered for other health and care services.

The challenge

Almost a third of Londoners report low-level mental health challenges. Half describe themselves as anxious. Very few Londoners are seeking or receiving any help for their condition which has a negative impact on quality of life and economic productivity. In addition, over 15 per cent of London’s adults are likely to have a common mental health difficulty. Of these, only 24 per cent are likely to be receiving clinical help for their condition. People often need more immediate access to mental health services than can be provided. A large percentage of people are unlikely to seek clinical help.

Public Health England’s role is to protect and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. Improving mental health and wellbeing is one of our priority areas. We needed to design an inclusive and timely service that would reach all Londoners.

The Healthy London Partnership funded and championed the initiative – an umbrella body which brings together the local authorities and CCGs in London, the Greater London Authority, the Mayor of London, Public Health England, charities and voluntary bodies. The Partnership knew that digital interventions worked but very few people accessed those that already existed. The challenge they set was to design a service to provide inclusive, immediate help, at scale.

Making a difference

Public Health England, on behalf of the Healthy London Partnership, developed a business case which outlined the problem, and identified key elements of the solution. We obtained support from most of the boroughs and all the clinical commissioning groups in London. We wanted to take a new approach and issued a competitive tender for a service design company to help us. LiveWork Studio was appointed to design a service which would enable people to access help whenever they needed it.

The LiveWork team set about complementing existing research with qualitative user research, talking to people in their homes about how they deal with their problems. Or not. From these interviews, LiveWork developed profiles of groups of people with shared characteristics (personas) and behaviours (typologies).

They interviewed Londoners like Christina who was suffering post-traumatic stress after being robbed at home. She was able to articulate her problems and was actively seeking support from her peers online. She’s the sort of person who would proactively seek help.

They also met people like Martin who simply accepted anxiety and insomnia as his lot in life. Someone like Martin would never knowingly go to a government healthcare website about mental wellbeing.
From speaking with people like him, we learned that the real challenge is in reaching people who are unaware and reluctant to make a fuss. Martin had not considered that his work digging tunnels and his recent marriage breakdown could be causing him stress. Talking about it led him to consider that seeking support might be beneficial.

The research revealed that to reach everyone who needs services, including those who are reluctant or in denial, we need to respect their preferred way of engaging with services and where they are on the customer journey. People may not recognise that they have a problem or may think that there is nothing that can be done to help them. They may not go to a website to seek help. But they are online anyway, scrolling through social media on their phones. If something appears that resonates, it offers them a doorway out of that environment to gain access to help.

Designing the service

The service design is particularly innovative. It is the first time that digital data has been used to identify and target people with mental health issues in order to offer assessment, treatment and advice. It is more than just a website. The service recognises the lifecycle of a patient’s need from raising awareness that a problem, such as difficulty sleeping, exists through to seeking and participating in treatment. Each stage of the lifecycle offers interventions tailored to the individual’s preferences for care. Interventions may be digital (for example using a self-assessment questionnaire or taking part in peer-to-peer mentoring) or face-to-face (for example, referral to a local community group).

The service ecosystem used both the NHS clinical and digital infrastructure (centralised pathway) and those offered by third parties (distributed pathway), for example other technical platforms, apps, and face-to-face community services. The overall architecture is illustrated in the ‘ecosystem’ diagram below.
We conducted a small trial study, placing advertisements for help with insomnia on popular sites. We began at the human scale, by designing for individuals, in one borough. This could then be scaled to cover London – with a vision to scale the service to the whole of the UK.

After further testing and piloting Public Health England rolled out the service, with ads on social media and other forums leading to content on the Good Thinking site. The service started by targeting young adult men with sleep problems. Some key features of the service include:

- targeting Londoners who may not recognise that they may need help through awareness campaigns;
- enabling personal assessments to be completed by the user to help them identify what help they need and how they want to engage with support;
- clinical risk built into the design with rapid referrals to other mental health services if required;
- community capacity building – peer-to-peer and moderated platforms enable Londoners to help others; and
- management of ‘blips’ in a Londoner’s journey, recognising that addressing mental health problems is sometimes challenging

Our partners
Our partners have included:

- local councils;
- clinical commissioning groups;
- the Mayor of London;
- mental health providers;
- voluntary organisations with an interest in mental health;
- community groups;
- users of the service;
- organisations with access to targeted groups (e.g. football clubs);
- service designers;
- providers of social media and other digital technologies; and
- marketing experts

What’s been the impact?
A full and independent evaluation is being carried out by King’s College London which includes the impact of the Good Thinking service on the health and care system. Since December 2017 over 200,000 people have used the service. Of those who have used the interventions offered, 60 per cent have experienced a reduction in stress.

By integrating rather than duplicating information and reaching out to people on the digital channels they already use, we have increased our reach while the costs of identifying Londoners who need help are lower than other methods. A win-win.

The impact of our work has been far-reaching. Stakeholders from the project are now using this novel approach to design and research services in public health in a growing array of areas. We combined our expertise and extensive research with the LiveWork user insight informed design. The result is a service that reaches demographics that have eluded traditional public health campaigns and a growth of user-focused services that actually meet the needs of the most vulnerable in society.

The key elements of our success
Our success has been based upon:

- embedding a culture of service design into the way Public Health England thinks about and approaches strategies to improve health;
- being bold! – this was a completely different way of delivering services at scale;
- measuring success and responding quickly to lessons learnt;
- working with the right partners, who understand health and the health system, but are not constrained by current ways of thinking;
- understanding the potential of digital technology; and
- keeping stakeholders supportive of the initiative with quick wins, which meet their priorities

And if we were starting again…
Service design offers both a strategic and operational way of improving services. This methodology is not well understood in health and care. Capacity building of health and care teams in service design offers a new opportunity for service development.

The potential for digital technologies to build community assets and
networks in local communities and to improve health outcomes is an untapped resource.

This service has evolved using the agile methodology. Although it is one of the approaches to digital implementation recommended by the Government Digital Service, this was a new approach to service design and procurement for many general managers in the health and care system. It has many advantages for addressing complex issues. By building in an evolutionary approach to service implementation the service design is continually reviewed, helping to manage risk and reduce the potential for failure. This case study demonstrates what is possible and the advantages of an agile approach, which is needed to strengthen the capacity and capability of stakeholders in health service design and development methodologies.

**Our key contacts**

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1 IAPT refers to the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/adults/iapt/

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**Diarmaid Crean**

Diarmaid Crean is Deputy Director, Digital at Public Health England. An international digital leader and innovator in organisational transformation, product development, digital communications, marketing, branding and e-commerce, Diarmaid has 24 years’ experience of delivering change across both the public and private sectors. A passionate practitioner of user-centred design, he is always happiest when obsessed with a new opportunity to advance another organisation using the power of digital, technology and data.

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**Liz Watson**

Liz Watson is an experienced interim manager and consultant focusing on health and care system change. Liz applies service design and service improvement methodologies to improve performance and develop new models of care, most recently in prevention and integrated care services. She has set up and managed strategic planning systems for populations of 500,000 to 1.5 million. Liz has a special interest in social enterprise with experience of establishing social enterprises in health care. Her PhD investigated how social enterprises can address health inequalities by contributing to health system strategy and capacity building.
The Belfast Region City Deal

Unlocking the region’s bright, digitally enabled future
The headlines

- A £350 million investment from UK government was confirmed in the 2018 Autumn Budget to go with funding from the Northern Ireland government, local authorities, universities and the private sector.
- There is a clearly defined vision of how digital projects could drive growth in the local economy through the City Deal.
- Four clear concepts for digital infrastructure programmes are linked with the region’s wider plans under the City Deal.
- The sponsors of nine projects involving six local authorities and two universities have been aligned to a common vision regarding the shape of the innovation and digital element of the City Deal.
- Letters of intent have been secured regarding future involvement in City Deal projects from seven companies.
- Four strategic outline cases have been created for digital projects that have approval from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Belfast context

The Belfast Region, like the UK as a whole, suffers from a productivity gap in key sectors. For example:

- reports suggest that as many as thirty-three per cent of adults in Northern Ireland lack the digital skills necessary to use the internet and email;¹
- forty-two per cent of those surveyed cited limited availability of highly skilled digital workers;²
- twenty-five per cent of those surveyed highlighted limited digital infrastructure;³ and
- the region was ranked last out of the twelve UK regions on the national ranking of innovation.⁴

Effectively harnessing emerging technologies has the potential to boost the productivity of workers and industry: embracing new technologies could see key sectors in the regional economy (manufacturing, health, creative and professional services) challenge global competitors; and the region’s growing tech sector (e.g. Kainos, Rapid7) and leading centres of excellence in computing and data analytics (e.g. ECIT, CHIC) could form the basis of an innovation ecosystem that extends the benefits of new technologies out into the wider economy.

However, such transformation will not happen by chance.

Introducing the Belfast Region City Deal

The City Deal offered the Belfast Region the opportunity to undertake transformational investments that would generate and secure inclusive economic growth for current and future generations. It would also see the region assume full responsibility for regional decisions, do what is best to help the local business sector, foment economic growth, and support decision-making on spending of public money.

The scale of this opportunity was mirrored only by the scale of transformation that new technologies are expected to deliver across the economy. New digital technologies, from the internet of things and 5G to artificial intelligence and automation, are changing industries, markets, and the nature of work itself.
An ambitious – and successful – pitch for funding

The vision for the Belfast Region (which comprises Belfast City Council and five neighbouring local authorities) is, ultimately, to secure £1 billion in total for its City Deal from a range of stakeholders – first among them being the UK central government, from whom, with Future City Catapult (FCC)’s involvement and support, the region secured an investment of £350 million in the Autumn Budget 2018.

This hugely significant, now-confirmed commitment from UK central government has in turn opened the channels to further investment from secondary and tertiary stakeholders, which include the Northern Ireland government and the local authorities involved, as well as additional investment secured from the private sector – a process that is now enabling the region to make confident strides towards delivery of the full £1 billion City Deal.

The potential for a digital innovation partnership

A phased implementation programme

Phase one saw the delivery of a ‘digital infrastructure strategy’ for the Belfast City Region to support the digital infrastructure element of its ‘Ambitious Proposition’. This strategy – in which Future Cities Catapult (now Connected Places Catapult®) facilitated the selection of digital infrastructure projects for potential inclusion – described how the region planned to spend the £1 billion proposed through the City Deal.

Phase two delivered ‘strategic outline cases’ (SOCs) for the four key digital projects set out in phase one (see next section). Future Cities Catapult then produced an overarching narrative for the portfolio along with an investment case and led an innovation & digital steering group to oversee the drafting and submission of five additional SOCs for innovation projects led by members of the steering group. FCC also secured high-level commitments to match funding for the digital projects and led steering group meetings for key representatives of the projects (from all the local authorities involved and the two Belfast universities) under both the digital and innovation pillars of the City Deal.

Working with existing regional assets, Future Cities Catapult then defined a new digital and physical infrastructure for innovation that would integrate and supercharge the capabilities of the region, whilst also being rooted in local place-based economic clusters. Each of these local clusters was earmarked for development as a testbed for new technologies tailored to local sector strengths, supported by an existing innovation hub or centre of excellence.

Embedding innovation in the region

With this broad and ambitious scope of activity clearly defined and approved, Future Cities Catapult then successfully delivered four distinct programmes that together comprise the infrastructure needed to deliver the agreed vision for the Belfast Region:

- Regional Innovators Network – a network of innovation spaces and facilities providing problem-solving environments that foster creativity across the region, supporting local businesses and thereby involving communities in skills building.
● **Infrastructure Enabling Fund** – a fund to support the digital infrastructure needs of the City Deal projects set up to support the deployment of advanced and resilient connectivity infrastructure across the Belfast Region.

● **Digital Innovation Platform & Partnership (DIPP)** – a shared physical environment and digital platform where the academic research community, tech entrepreneurs and industrial partners can come together to address key challenges in business and society through the application of the internet of things and data science.

● **Smart District & Regional Testbed Network** – an ambitious flagship smart district and 5G testbed programme focused on encouraging innovation in the region’s core sectors, which act as hubs for development of advanced digital and physical infrastructure and foster early adoption of new digital products and services at large scale.

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### The impact – a long-term vision for growth

The benefits of this programme to the Belfast Region are wide-ranging and likely to seed further benefits over time. The nine digital and innovation projects delivered by the steering group that Future Cities Catapult led are estimated to create 10,000 jobs over the next 20 years, resulting in £2 billion of gross value added (GVA) over the period 2019/20 to 2039/40. Of these projects, the four for which FCC produced the strategic outline cases are estimated to bring the following benefits:

1. Through up to five state-of-the-art innovation spaces and facilities, as many as 720 jobs will be created through the Regional Innovators Network, delivering £91.5 million annually during the programme’s peak. This will result in £229.3 million of GVA over a 20-year period.

2. The Infrastructure Enabling Fund is expected to create 55 direct and indirect jobs, while generating around £360 million of GVA, representing a benefit-cost ratio of 8.5 to 1. Close coordination with other government connectivity programmes such as Local Full Fibre Networks has begun and will continue to ensure effective delivery of all activities and avoid duplication.

3. Ten high-paying jobs will be created directly by the DIPP, and a direct GVA of £10.1 million and an indirect GVA of £16.2 million over a 20-year period.
4. Up to 65 direct and indirect jobs will be created by the Smart District & Regional Testbed Network, with £20.46 million of GVA during the 20-year period from 2019/20 to 2039/40.

This work is just the beginning of what Future Cities Catapult sees as the unlocking of a bright, digitally enabled, highly competitive future for the Belfast Region.

'We had a vision for the city which looked at how we can improve the lives and health of our citizens, how we can make it a better place to transact and do business and continue to attract foreign direct investment. We realised we needed to start adopting new innovative methods and technologies from the private sector, [and] to take a more human-centric approach to how we deliver, how we design our services and how we interact with our citizens – and at that stage we started to work with Future Cities Catapult.' Deborah Colville, Portfolio Manager, Innovation and Smart Belfast, Belfast City Council

**Key elements in our success**

- The collaboration of local stakeholders was critical. Future Cities Catapult brought these stakeholders together where previous communication had been sparse.
- For example, the two local universities had no previous history of collaboration. FCC brought both universities to the table at the most senior level, helping them to develop a collaborative working relationship that is ongoing and supported by newly introduced systems and procedures for document sharing that ensure transparency.
- The outcomes and impacts could only be realised if private-sector funding was obtained for each project. The SOCs contained letters of intent from eight potential private-sector partners (B4B Telecoms; RF Proximity; BT; EE; Microsoft Azure; Telcom and Pinacl; Belfast Harbour; Procul-IOT).

**And if we were starting again...**

- We would base a team lead in the city on a full-time basis for the duration of the project.
- We would roll out engagement activities earlier to maximise the time available to initiate effective collaboration across a newly convened group of senior-level stakeholders.

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1 Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills 2013/2016 (http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/publications.htm)
5 Future Cities and Transport Systems Catapults have now merged to form Connected Places Catapult https://cp.catapult.org.uk/. The new organisation came into being on 1 April 2019. We have referred to Future Cities Catapult in this case study as the work at the time was done by FCC
6 Districts have defined boundaries and are smaller than council areas

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**Our key contacts**

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Matthew Fox, Project Management Team Lead, Future Cities Catapult matthew.fox@cp.catapult.org.uk

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**Erin Walsh**

Erin Walsh is Director of Market Intelligence at Future Cities Catapult, the UK’s foremost Urban Innovation Centre, where she leads a team of architects, urban designers, planners, strategists, analysts, and researchers to develop innovative approaches to strategy, markets and visioning. Most recently she has spearheaded the launch of a dedicated Future of Housing programme that aims to apply the ever-increasing capacity made possible by innovation to deliver meaningful change to the housing sector.

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**Matt Fox**

Matt Fox is Project Management Team Lead at Future Cities Catapult, where he leads a diverse team of project managers. Over the last ten years, Matt has led commercial and collaborative R&D projects across multiple sectors, most recently managing the Catapult’s contribution to the Belfast Region City Deal, resulting in a £350 million investment from UK government into the region. Matt has previously worked at UCL, the Home Office, and the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Organising Committee.
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Leicestershire’s Children’s Innovation Partnership

Developing a new model for delivering children’s social care
The headlines

- The Children’s Innovation Partnership aims to develop flexible and responsive co-designed services.
- The new model promotes ‘purpose-aligned’ collaboration.
- The partnership is underpinned by a new approach to procurement and contracting for children’s social care.
- Leicestershire’s work has proved the value of a partnership built on close internal and external relationships.

The Leicestershire context

Leicestershire County Council provides a wide range of services to over 600,000 local people, split between small urban areas, extensive suburban areas and rural settlements. Services are delivered by six departments: adults and communities; chief executive’s; children and family services; corporate resources; environment and transport; and public health.

In 2017, the council’s medium-term financial strategy set out that £66 million of savings need to be realised across the council by 2020/21, £4.3 million of which must come from children’s social care. The number of looked after children in Leicestershire is projected to grow, resulting in an estimated cost increase of £14.7 million by 2021/22. External residential placements currently make up 11.7 per cent of the total looked after children population.

In addition to the financial challenges facing councils such as Leicestershire, there is also a national ‘market sufficiency’ issue with providing good value-for-money residential placements for looked after children with a multiplicity of complex needs. As a result of inadequate supply in the market, providers can negotiate fees outside of already procured contracts and ‘cherry pick’ the less complex children.

Developing the partnership model

In response to these challenges, the council developed a ‘care placement strategy’ which is a whole-system approach to managing its interactions with children, from early contact through to their leaving care. The aim is to manage the looked after children system more effectively by diverting children to new, innovative forms of family support and keeping the numbers in care as low as possible.

In order to make a whole-system change, Leicestershire acknowledged that it would require the support of an external partner to provide additional capacity and expertise. It wished to design and procure a partnership model which would allow an external organisation to work jointly with the council to develop and deliver flexible, responsive and innovative services across the whole looked after children system.

The vision for the Children’s Innovation Partnership (CIP) model which resulted was to co-invest, co-design, co-produce and co-deliver services that meet the needs of young people, from those on the edge of care through to those leaving care – potentially any services within the scope of the care placement strategy.

The biggest challenge in developing this approach was converting the vision of a partnership with an external organisation into a contractual model compliant with procurement regulations. The CIP needed to be both flexible and able to react to changing circumstances, which created a challenge in defining the scope, defining the criteria for measuring value and quality, and agreeing the financial terms and length of any contract.

Procuring and contracting

In developing the CIP, Leicestershire explored what is possible within current procurement regulations, including a close examination of the ‘innovation partnership’, ‘competitive dialogue’ and ‘early contractor involvement’ procedures. This research into contracting models that are not normally used in social care led to discussions amongst internal and external experts, including the taking of counsel advice, and the creation of a detailed risk log during the development of the procurement.

The result is a partnership with a level of flexibility and innovation not usually associated with public contracts.
The result is a partnership with a level of flexibility and innovation not usually associated with public contracts. This has been achieved through taking a creative approach to designing the procurement process, fully using the flexibility of the ‘light touch regime’ to engage with the market to develop a partnership model and a tender which aimed to assess the suitability of potential partners rather than procure a specific solution.

For instance, a pre-procurement market engagement exercise was undertaken which involved a provider event, written submissions and dialogue meetings with a select number of interested providers. Since the completion of the tender process, feedback from the successful and unsuccessful tenderers was that the dialogue held with the market felt genuinely consultative, and also helped their organisational thinking and development.

Unlike traditional social care contracts, the CIP will operate on a two-tier contractual arrangement.

1. The first tier is underpinned by a ‘collaboration agreement’ which sets out the governance and design processes. There are no direct service delivery costs associated with this agreement, although there was an expectation that providers would give an outline commitment to co-investment in the CIP and that both parties would provide experts to form a joint design team. Under the agreement, the council issues a design brief to the design team who use their collective expertise to design innovative services to meet the issues outlined in the brief.

2. The second tier relates to the delivery of services designed by the CIP. This could include the partner delivering or sub-contracting services, the partner co-delivering services with the council, or the council procuring the services from another third-party provider. Each service delivered under the CIP will have an associated service contract. The Children’s Innovation Partnership Board will consider and approve the work package.

The contract was awarded to Barnardo’s in November 2018 with a contract start date of 1 December, which is when the board to govern the CIP was formally established. The first design brief was agreed and issued in January 2019, following the establishment of a specialist design team which is now actively progressing the initial priority of residential placements.

The contractual term is up to ten years and the contract value up to £704 million. The value is based on 2018/19 budgets for the whole of children’s social care. It is not intended that the full value will be spent through the CIP. However, setting the scope as wide as possible allows flexibility to design services across the whole social care system. Leicestershire anticipates that there will be a cycle of design briefs and work packages that will address new and emerging challenges within the overall care placement strategy.

‘We saw an ideal opportunity to work with a like-minded partner to achieve better outcomes for more children. And because Leicestershire were so open about what they were aiming for, it helped us better navigate the procurement process as we understood how their vision aligned with our own.’
Steve Oversby, Director, Barnardo’s East Region
‘We saw an ideal opportunity to work with a like-minded partner to achieve better outcomes for more children. And because Leicestershire were so open about what they were aiming for, it helped us better navigate the procurement process as we understood how their vision aligned with our own.’
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Involving partners
In developing the CIP, we consulted with a range of stakeholders and specialists.

Internally a cross-functional project group was set up with high-level and specialist representation from the children and family services and corporate resources departments. The remit of this group was to design the CIP model, oversee the development of the tender documents and evaluate the tender responses. This allowed a range of expertise and views to be taken into consideration including input from the director, assistant director and head of commissioning in children and family services, and from the finance, transformation, commercial services, legal and procurement functions in corporate resources.

The council’s cabinet members and corporate management team were kept informed on progress throughout the process.

The close working relationship between the children’s head of commissioning, the procurement specialist and the solicitor, along with commitment of their respective teams to provide full-time support to the project, was crucial in developing the CIP model.

We also shared and tested ideas with a range of external organisations as part of the process of designing the CIP model, including:

- the Government Outcomes Lab at Oxford University;
- the E3M Bold Commissioners Club;
- the E3M Social Enterprise Leaders Club; and
- Julian Blake, Partner (Charity & Social Enterprise Team) at Stone King LLP

What’s been the impact of our work?
Starting from spring 2019 onwards, the Children’s Innovation Partnership will be independently evaluated to capture both the impact of the collaboration agreement and the outcomes and value for money achieved through the service delivery contracts.

The impact will be considered in relation to the services that users receive and the views of internal and external stakeholders – and will be measured in terms of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Although the CIP is very new, and hard data on its impact is not yet available, there has already been some interesting feedback about how working in collaboration has made the county more agile and strengthened its ability both to offer flexible and responsive services and to identify and bid for external funding opportunities to improve outcomes for the families of Leicestershire.
‘The ‘innovation partnership’ concept was introduced, in 2015, through the European Commission’s Social Business Initiative, as a means of promoting purpose-aligned collaboration in public service reform and development. But no one in the UK took notice. Leicestershire County Council recognised the purpose and potentially transformative value of relational partnership and pursued the idea tenaciously and relentlessly, addressing each, of many, barriers and obstacles. Combining the similarly under-utilised procurement provisions of the light touch regime, purpose-aligned co-design, co-production and co-delivery principles were encapsulated in the appointment of an innovation partner within the UK, challenging the risk-averse line that it has not been done, so it cannot be done. That is true and courageous innovation, worthy of the name.’ Julian Blake, Partner, Stone King LLP

The key elements of our success

Key elements in our success have been:

- having a clear vision and believing in the ‘art of the possible’ throughout the whole process;
- very close and effective cross-functional collaboration across the different parts of the council involved in developing the CIP;
- genuine consultative dialogue with the market from concept through to implementation;
- designing a procurement evaluation which focused on shared values and suitability rather than an evaluation process focused on specific solutions;
- strong governance and communications at all levels, including councillors and senior managers, enabling an initial CIP meeting to be held within a week of the contract being awarded;
- identification of high interest/high influence representatives on the CIP board from both organisations, underpinned by clear terms of reference;
- speedy mobilisation from the successful partner, Barnardo’s, who had made internal preparations for an immediate start in the event they should be awarded the contract;
- co-location of Barnardo’s staff into Leicestershire County Council offices; and
- Barnardo’s strategic partnership lead integrated into the departmental management team of Leicestershire’s children and family services.

And if we were starting again…

If we were starting again, we would follow a similar process, since the learning at each stage is what enabled us to model the final outcome. Many of the issues we faced could not have been predicted or managed differently until they arose. We then considered and dealt with them in a solutions-focused manner, always with the end goal firmly in mind.

Liz Perfect

Liz Perfect is the Head of Commissioning and Planning in Leicestershire County Council’s Children and Family Services, where she has developed and manages a centralised commissioning and contract management team. Liz initially qualified as a nursery nurse and later gained qualifications in children’s social care, senior leadership and commissioning. Previous roles have included Family Support Worker, Community Development Manager, Every Child Matters Project Manager, Parenting Commissioner, Troubled Families Programme Manager and East Midlands Regional Project Manager.

Our key contacts

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The headlines

- Storyhouse prides itself on being the UK’s most accessible cultural centre, open 364 days each year from 8.00 am to 11.00 pm, and the second most visited in the UK with over 1,000,000 visitors annually.
- It is a model for both safeguarding and expanding library services in the UK, using a fully integrated blend of commercial, charitable and statutory services.
- An innovative community programming and management model sees 131 different community groups use Storyhouse for free each month: from choirs to Syrian conversation groups; board game groups to Spanish classes for the over-50s; and organisations offering mental health support.
- In total there are over 2,000 activity sessions per year aimed at marginalised communities.

The local context

Chester has a local population of 118,000. It is a proud county town as well as an important heritage and visitor city. The city had been struggling with a declining high street, falling tourism and a loss of sense of place and identity. Its theatre and cinema had been closed since 2008 and its communities were without somewhere to share their stories and come together. The city library, like so many, was open for restricted hours and as a result was struggling to attract younger customers.

Meanwhile, Storyhouse, a cultural and education charity, had been running community and staged programmes since 2006. Working closely with its partners at Cheshire West and Chester Council, it had been driving the development of a new venue for the city since that time. In 2010 it founded Grosvenor Park Open Air Theatre, one of the country’s leading regional outdoor theatre projects. The runaway success of that project gave the city a sense of confidence that something more ambitious might also be possible.

Our story so far

The result was the creation of a new cultural centre, the city’s largest capital project since 1976, with an inspirational £32 million investment from Cheshire West and Chester Council and unswerving cross-party political support.

Storyhouse opened the new building in May 2017 and is on course to exceed one million customers in each of its first two years of operation, equally split between people attending events and festivals, library customers, and those taking part in other activities. Storyhouse has a stated aim of ‘normalising’ its conversation about culture, avoiding barriers to participation. Its highly descriptive name has become synonymous with its combined activity, with the words library and theatre rarely used whether in the building or in the city.

Within the complex, Storyhouse runs the city’s central library, now with the longest opening hours in the UK for a public library. There are no lockable doors in the library, which is operated by 23 city librarians through its core hours, with assistance from Storyhouse’s 180 volunteers and 106 permanent staff, who also run the library outside these hours.

The organisation now runs a hugely diverse programme, supplementing the library with a 120-cover restaurant and café serving Levantine cuisine; an 840-seat proscenium theatre stage (which uniquely converts into a 500-seat thrust stage); a 150-seat studio theatre; and a 100-seat cinema. Fifty per cent of all the stage work in the building is created by Storyhouse.

The key partners

Cheshire West and Chester Council invested £32 million in the capital project. The council contributes 18 per cent of Storyhouse’s annual turnover and runs the city library in partnership with Storyhouse.

Storyhouse raised the remaining capital in collaboration with its local authority partners, including a 3-year, £600,000 commitment from local credit card provider MBNA. It also brought its existing customer base, funding streams and reserves to the new operation. Storyhouse raises 82 per cent of its £6.5 million annual cost from trading and fundraising.

Arts Council England invested £3 million in the project and has been supporting Storyhouse as a charity since 2007.

What’s been the impact of our work?

There is now a tangible sense of cultural pride in the city, which was fully on display in June 2018 when the building was formally opened by HM The Queen and the Duchess of Sussex.
The amazing popularity of Storyhouse is as much to do with the city’s sense of need for such a space, as it is to do with its design and operation. Storyhouse has responded to community demand by opening the creation of much of the activity in the building to the local community and volunteers, resulting in an ambitious, innovative, future-facing cultural programme, defined as much as possible by the local people themselves.

The pioneering library within Storyhouse, where members of the community work alongside city librarians, has the longest opening hours of any UK public library and is open every day until 11.00 pm. Storyhouse offers over 2,000 activities each year for local marginalised groups, including autism-friendly colouring sessions, sewing groups for refugees, and regular classes for isolated and older communities.

The organisation runs a nationally-acclaimed theatre company with home-produced stage shows each year, including the first ever version of Enid Blyton’s The Secret Seven. Alongside Grosvenor Park Open Air Theatre, and an open-air cinema, it also produces and is home to a number of specialist festivals each year, including Chester Literature Festival, WayWord Festival, Storyhouse Women, Blink Festival for early years parenting, Love Later Life and The Great Get Together for older communities, Kaleidoscope Festival for adults living with a disability, regular Young Takeover events, and Storyhouse Festival of Languages, celebrating diverse and immigrant speaking cultures.

The many awards won by the operation include two key national awards – as the overall winner in the 2018 Guardian Public Service Awards, and the Special Award for Community Impact and Engagement from the Civic Trust.

Storyhouse employs 106 permanent staff plus the 23 city librarians who are based in the centre. Of its £6.5 million turnover, over two-thirds is spent directly on people.

The key elements of our success
Our success has been based upon:

- a new model for designing library provision, wrapping books around retail activities and hence safeguarding the library’s extended opening hours;
- a model of community- and volunteer-generated content and management, built around statutory provision;
- the integration of commercial and charitable services in a model of mutual support; and
- no lockable doors, receptions desks or points of intervention – customers are in charge of their own journey.

And if we were starting again...
If we were starting again:

- We knew at the start of the building phase that we were short of meeting and community space, but it is easy to design something out if you cannot see an immediate use. The level of demand for our services has put a lot of pressure on space for community-generated activity.
- We would have worked even harder at empowering local communities to take over our operation.
- One of our greatest successes has been in the number of young people working and gathering in the building and we would have liked to provide more space for their activities. We would encourage those looking to re-imagine libraries to focus hard on the things that support how young people gather and communicate.

Our key contacts
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Alex Clifton, Artistic Director, Storyhouse alex@storyhouse.com

Andrew Bentley
Andrew Bentley is the founder and CEO of Storyhouse, the charity that runs a community-focussed theatre, library and cinema hub in Chester, now one of the country’s most accessible cultural centres with over one million visits per year. His varied career, in and out of the third sector, has embraced running festivals, concert halls, theatres and community venues, and includes a very happy stint as a hotelier, Andrew having founded and built Liverpool’s well-known Hope Street Hotel.
Brent Council and i4B Holdings Ltd

Using a wholly owned council company to reduce temporary accommodation costs
The headlines

- i4B Holdings Ltd is a wholly owned Brent Council company set up to own, manage and let affordable private rented sector properties to households to whom the council has a homelessness duty.
- This reduces temporary accommodation costs and gives those in such accommodation permanent, affordable, high-quality housing with a secure landlord.
- As of January 2019, i4B had purchased 201 properties.
- i4B has housed 168 Brent families, including 411 children. Families were previously in unsuitable temporary accommodation.
- When completed, the programme will save the council around £600,000 per annum in temporary accommodation costs.

As of January 2019, i4B had housed 168 Brent families, including 411 children. Families were previously in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

The Brent context

Between 2010 and 2015 homelessness doubled in Brent. The unaffordability of private rented sector (PRS) accommodation in Brent for families on low incomes was the main driver behind 60 per cent of homelessness acceptances.

Brent Council is heavily reliant on PRS accommodation to house homeless households as a result of the lack of available social housing. The increased costs of PRS accommodation meant it was increasingly difficult for staff in housing needs to house families in temporary accommodation.

By October 2017 Brent Council had 2,542 households living in temporary accommodation, the fourth highest of all housing authorities in England.

This increased demand for temporary housing came at a time when significant reductions in government funding meant the housing needs budget was reduced by £2.3 million between 2015/16 and 2017/18.

The combination of increased demand, increased difficulty in securing accommodation for homeless households, and decreased funding meant the pressure on the housing needs budget was ever greater.

Addressing the problem

In order to resolve the problem, in November 2016 cabinet agreed to establish i4B Holdings Limited (i4B), a wholly council owned company. i4B was set up to own and manage a large portfolio of PRS properties, enabling the council to discharge its homelessness duty to households in temporary accommodation with an offer of affordable PRS accommodation and thus reduce costs. i4B’s initial 2017/18 business plan set out the ambition of purchasing 300 PRS properties.

i4B’s portfolio has been established through the purchase and refurbishment of existing street properties across Brent, Greater London, and the Home Counties. Properties are bought in consultation.
Properties are then refurbished, let to council nominees, and subsequently managed.

As of January 2019, i4B owned 201 street properties. The 2019/20 business plan outlines proposals to increase the portfolio to 778 properties through the purchase of new-build accommodation.

i4B’s business model aims to break even over the course of 30 years whilst providing the council with financial benefits. i4B is financed via a state-aid compliant loan from Brent Council which borrows funds and then on-lends them to i4B. Income generated through rents is used by i4B to repay the loan and fund running costs.

**Our key partners**

A number of partners are involved in i4B’s operation.

i4B has a board of directors that meets on a monthly basis. The board consists of an independent voting director, an additional independent director, a councillor, and two council directors.

i4B has a service level agreement (SLA) with the council to provide a range of services to support i4B’s operations, including:
- corporate and financial services;
- property purchasing and refurbishment; and
- housing management

The SLA enables i4B to operate with minimal staff and operating costs. i4B has encouraged new, cross-departmental partnership working, and enabled employees to work in a more commercially minded way to achieve improved outcomes for Brent residents whilst generating income and achieving revenue savings for the council.

In November 2018, the acquisition of homes moved to the Microsoft Dynamics CRM system. A central system with a core archive of documents has further enabled partnership working between the many service areas involved in the purchasing, refurbishment, and letting of properties.

Properties in the Home Counties are managed by external agents Mears and Pinnacle. i4B works closely with both to ensure issues are resolved efficiently.

i4B is also currently exploring new-build partnership opportunities with Brent Council, housing associations, and private sector developers.

**What’s been the impact of our work?**

As of January 2019, i4B had housed 168 Brent families, including 411 children. Families were previously in unsuitable temporary accommodation – for instance, 130 families were directed to i4B properties from bed and breakfast accommodation. When housing people, as much as possible is done to ensure that families have the best chance to resettle into their new accommodation, find or keep employment, and gain access to good educational opportunities for their children.

i4B has also increased the amount of affordable housing tenures in Brent and the Home Counties. i4B has successfully purchased private-sector homes and switched their tenure to an affordable private rented sector option. Three hundred new affordable homes will be created by April 2020.
by April 2020. All of i4B’s homes have a good standard of construction and management. Properties are refurbished to a high standard and i4B guarantees households moving into its properties that they will be well maintained, safe, and secure. Moreover, i4B has brought back into use previously empty council-owned homes.

i4B has successfully brought about revenue savings by enabling the council to move households in temporary accommodation into private rented sector property. Based on the first 300 properties being let, it is estimated that the council will save around £600,000 per annum in temporary accommodation costs. This number will grow further as i4B’s portfolio increases. Moreover, the ongoing annual income from the council on-lending to i4B is around £250,000 per annum.

The council has also received one-off benefits from the programme. These benefits stem from two sources: the loan to i4B and financial benefits relating to ownership of property and property price increases.

The one-off financial benefits from the loan for the first 300 properties are:

- loan arrangement fee of 1 per cent (£830,000); and
- loan non-utilisation charge (£620,000)\(^1\)

Although the council is investing capital to reduce revenue expenditure, it can also consider the capital outlay as a medium- and long-term investment. The housing market has historically provided good levels of investment growth.

The council can benefit from property price growth in the portfolio.

Through the SLA contract with i4B, the council has been able to increase staffing budgets. For example, the council’s property and legal teams have been strengthened with additional capacity and skills.

In addition to the financial benefits described above, i4B has contributed to the council’s vision of ‘making Brent a borough of culture, empathy and shared prosperity’.

The key elements of our success

- i4B’s annual business plans have given the company and board clarity on the expectations of the shareholder, as well as clear targets on acquisitions and performance.
- i4B places great emphasis on partnership working. Monthly SLA meetings are held which ensure service areas are aware of key performance indicators and any issues. The new Microsoft Dynamics system has also streamlined performance from purchase to letting.
- i4B’s independent chair means that the line between council and company interests is clear.

And if we were starting again...

Initially, performance was adversely affected by difficulties in getting council services to work more commercially. In hindsight, more could have been done to prepare services to work in a more commercially minded way.

However, these difficulties were overcome through increased management of the end-to-end purchasing process, supporting work across services, and a series of deep-dive reviews focusing on the conveyancing, payments, and refurbishment processes.

Microsoft Dynamics has also improved commercial performance. This new way of working has produced learning which will be fed in to other commercial opportunities.

Our key contacts

Sadie East, Head of Transformation, Brent Council
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Sadie East heads up the transformation team at Brent Council. The team was established in 2017 to deliver and support change, improvement and transformation across the council. The team’s work includes a programme of Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs), implementation of the council’s digital strategy and support to run and develop the council’s commercial companies. Before joining Brent, Sadie worked in roles encompassing change management, communications, policy and strategy in central government departments and public bodies including the BBC, Home Office and Independent Police Complaints Commission.

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\(^1\) This is a fee charged on the undrawn balance of the committed loan
Commercialisation and social outcomes in Hounslow Parks

Can LATCOs help in delivering both in local authorities?
The key challenge of this transfer has been to keep the focus on the social return and social outcomes in line with the commercial focus of the LATCo without compromising the two. The key element is transparency and harnessing the relationship between the LATCo and the council.

The headlines
- Transferring services to a Local Authority Trading Company (LATCo) – the benefits and considerations
- Social returns and commercialisation – can we marry the two?
- Establishing clarity in priorities and taking back control
- Involving the community – co-design and community needs
- An ongoing process of co-production

The Hounslow context
The London Borough of Hounslow has progressed with the transfer of a number of services to a LATCo called Lampton 360. A range of subsidiaries were created for different services, including waste and recycling and parks and open spaces.

This case study explores the journey towards the design of the new services through the delivery of a LATCo and the lessons learnt during the transfer. This transformation process has enabled the council to redefine its priorities and regain control. The transformation journey is still ongoing but has already delivered changes and established a strong system for continued development.

Our story so far
Hounslow’s parks and open spaces were managed by Carillion up to January 2017 when Carillion collapsed. The relationship with Carillion was no longer effective because the two organisations’ priorities were diverging. An option appraisal for a new delivery model was at the time in progress and the transfer was accelerated due to Carillion’s demise.

The time with Carillion had shed light on the necessary changes for the future shape of the service – in particular the recognition that it was best to step back from the market and focus on maximising social return. Seven options were investigated to meet the needs of the council and deliver transformational impact for the parks and open spaces service. Central to the decision process was looking at the balance of risk. Managing the risk of loss of control was a primary concern of the council and going with a LATCo was the best approach to minimise and manage this risk while keeping the council’s views at the forefront.

As part of the transfer three separate working groups were created, one at officer level to guarantee business continuity, one at Member level to maintain buy-in, and one at community level with friends of parks to discuss issues and encourage co-design.

The LATCo created was called Greenspace 360 (GS360), part of the wider Lampton 360 group.

A year on, there has been a full governance and specification review focusing on what GS360 can achieve, the role of the council and the role of the community groups and friends of parks.

This transfer also dovetailed into further reviews within the council, including an enforcement review that created a better integrated approach between GS360, the enforcement team and the commissioning team.
The key challenge of this transfer has been to keep the focus on the social return and social outcomes in line with the commercial focus of the LATCo without compromising the two. The key element is transparency and harnessing the relationship between the LATCo and the council. A common issue in all transformation journeys and their development is balancing the competing priorities of the delivery models and leadership initiatives, with this case being no different. As a result of the change in our relationship with Carillion, the council was forced into making explicit its priorities so there was a greater clarity when establishing the LATCo relationship. The LATCo model has allowed the organisation to work alongside the council’s objectives and not contradict them.

Understanding the process of agreeing what goals were to be achieved and why the council wanted to achieve them was originally challenging, but has ultimately proved to be pivotal in keeping the strategy in focus throughout the transformation journey.

The council is now looking at integrating the parks commissioning team into a wider neighbouring team that can form part of a wider public realm offer and deliver much more integrated and comprehensive co-design with the community.

The role of partners
London Borough of Hounslow is responsible for parks and open spaces, working alongside the LATCo to provide the service. This partnership must marry the objectives of profit-making with the real social outcomes required to deliver what the community needs and demonstrate how the community will benefit.

‘Friends’ of parks are crucial to keeping the focus on social return. These groups have been an important aspect in ensuring community engagement. Members of the groups have been active throughout the project and look forward to their input continuing to be a part of the development and refinement of the service. Sitting between the council and the LATCo delivery model, the friends of parks provide a unique checks and balance system to deliver social responsibility.

‘Forming a Friends group is one of the best ways to see your local area through a different perspective and to meet with near neighbours and other local groups with similar aims, whilst achieving something worthwhile. Parks and open spaces are an increasingly precious asset – we need to look after them.’ Vanessa Smith, Chair – Friends of Northcote Nature Reserve

‘In our view the Friends group model is the most effective means of engaging local people in their open spaces and improving these for the benefit of communities and wildlife. Ideally, we would like to see every open space having its own Friends group, linked together as part of a broader network of positive community action.’ Rob Gray, Chair – Friends of River Crane Environment

‘As part of the Brent Lea Recreation Ground (BLRG) Friends Group we feel our views can be listened to and that they matter. Our Friends group has been instrumental in creating a voice for the community for the use of the park and because of this, the council has listened and agreed to enhance the space for public use.’ Friends of Brent Lea

Third sector charities and other council departments are also important in generating continued engagement for long-term impact. Examples include SMEs that are working with public health in delivering outcomes for vulnerable groups and free activities in parks, small charities that are helping in creating community gardens, and the transport team delivering sustainable transport and physical activity projects in parks.

The work so far has demonstrated that, for transformation to really take place, it is about sharing the journey rather than simply presenting the results. The community and key
stakeholders must be involved, so they better understand their contribution to the transformation and feel encouraged to communicate their views.

What’s been the impact of our work?
The analysis required to develop the specification and push forward the transformation of the service has allowed for far leaner services that have generated an efficiency saving of £1.1 million. After a grant savings review the council realised it could deliver the same level of service – with potential for improve – and still deliver savings in the end. Efficient relationships in the council between the operational and commissioning teams enabled the contract to be manageable and ensured that the expenditure was going to be delivered in line with agreed objectives.

There has also been a focus on the returns in line with Hounslow’s values and the commissioning team has been shaped with these values in mind.

Identifying clear roles and responsibilities meant there were coherent priorities defined for the delivery of the new operation. This clarity allows for longevity and the continued efficient development of the service.

The key elements of our success
The partners are still building on the model but there have been marked improvements since management was taken over from Carillion namely:

- a specification focused on outcomes;
- the Executive Management Team working better as a team;
- the right balance between expenditure on services;
- friends representative meetings and a memorandum of understanding with the groups;
- establishment of a councillors’ working group;
- greater transparency and a higher degree of devolution with better relationships with the community, charities and council departments;
- better facilitation for community interventions; and
- a decrease in inquiries and complaints from the community.

And if we were starting again…
The sudden demise of Carillion meant that the transfer was focused more on business continuity and looking at the key operational processes that needed to be maintained rather than the strategic set-up and new roles and responsibilities. A subsequent piece of work had to be done to rebuild the service, with a consequent review of the governance and monitoring mechanisms.

However, the transformation process is still ongoing with continued input from friends of parks and regular meetings with involved partners, allowing for the fine-tuning of the methods to strengthen the balance between commercialisation and social outcomes.

Our key contacts
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Stefania Horne
Stefania Horne has over 18 years’ experience in the leisure and culture sector, specialising in parks and open spaces and transformation. She worked very closely with the GLA in developing the East London Green Grid, an infrastructure strategy for green spaces that was then rolled out at regional level across London, and later project managed the operational transfer of Redbridge’s leisure services into a trust. Currently Head of Parks and Leisure at the London Borough of Hounslow, she has led the transformation of the council’s parks service, including the transfer of the service to Hounslow’s own local authority trading company.
The Suffolk Libraries story

Developing a new model for library provision
The headlines

- All of Suffolk’s 44 libraries have remained open and all libraries are run by paid staff.
- Suffolk opted for an alternative model to closures back in 2011 – an industrial and provident society.
- The model has helped to deliver significant successes and innovations, including longer opening hours in some locations, a diverse range of events and activities, and significant savings.
- The vision for the next few years is that Suffolk Libraries will have an even bigger impact on the local community and therefore show others how important libraries can be.

The Suffolk context

Many libraries have closed across the country in the last five years and many services are facing future cuts or closures.

Faced with public opposition to possible closures of several libraries, and following a service review, an options appraisal of possible alternative delivery models, and extensive public consultation during 2011, Suffolk County Council decided to ‘spin out’ its library service. The aim was to give the community a voice in the governance of the service, while ensuring that the county discharged its obligations as the statutory library authority.

By December 2011, the council had decided on an industrial and provident society (now known as a registered society) as the most appropriate form for the new organisation that was available at the time.

The new organisation launched as Suffolk’s Libraries Industrial and Provident Society in August 2012 but is now known simply as Suffolk Libraries.

An important early decision by the county was that any externalisation of the service must be reversible and that the council would retain ownership of the infrastructure, including:

- buildings;
- IT infrastructure and devices; and
- mobile library vehicles

A needs assessment had recommended that the county council ‘employ sufficient library expertise within its strategic commissioning functions to ensure that its providers comply with the statutory duties that they are providing on the council’s behalf’.

In practice, as well as briefing specialist cabinet and shadow cabinet members throughout the year on how the county council is discharging its statutory duties and how libraries fit into the council’s strategic plans, the commissioner has played a crucial role in:

- leading both the initial contract negotiations, which included the development of the specification for library services and associated key performance indicators, and the continuing annual negotiations around the contract price and specification;
- managing the TUPE process as the outgoing employer, including presenting the plan at a series of meetings to which all staff employed by the service were invited;
- balancing the potential for savings with the equally important need for future sustainability of the service;
- ensuring that where changes to the specification and contract price have been proposed, there is sufficient understanding of the effect on the services;
- determining whether there is a need for consultation if there are material changes to the service delivered;
● acting as a contact point for other council colleagues in property, IT and procurement services, while also acting as a consistent point of contact and advocate for Suffolk Libraries within the county; and
● offering feedback to the library service on its performance against the agreed key performance indicators and suggesting areas of improvement, based not just on KPI data but also on regular library visits.

Both the Suffolk County Council cabinet member responsible for the library service and the commissioner have an observer place on Suffolk Libraries’ board.

Our story now and into the future

From the outset, the new and independent organisation was able to harness the passionate support for libraries among the local community. Each library has a community group (often known as Friends groups), who are official members of the registered society and directly support their library. Representatives from these groups come together at the AGM to vote on key decisions and inform the society’s direction of travel.

These groups have supported extensions to opening hours; have raised funds – for instance, to carry out refurbishments; have promoted service innovations; and have helped to increase the number and diversity of events and activities run in the county.

As Bruce Leeke, Chief Executive Officer of Suffolk Libraries, comments:

‘In the early days some customers may have been concerned about how our model would work and that being independent would mean we wouldn’t be as accountable or responsive. We have worked very hard with our Friends groups and the wider community to build and maintain trust in Suffolk Libraries and our vision.’

Having established trust and built its reputation both within and outside the county over the past few years, Suffolk Libraries is now looking to the future. There is a new strategy, with a vision that places greater emphasis on increasing the impact in the community, challenging people’s perceptions of libraries, and getting them to understand their true value to society.

A key part of the new strategy is a focus on raising more independent income through initiatives such as local and county-wide fundraising drives and partnerships with other local services that can make a financial contribution to shared space and room hire. The ambition is to make Suffolk Libraries stronger as an organisation in the years ahead and less reliant on council funding.

‘We have developed a resilient, honest and flexible relationship with Suffolk County Council and by giving us a fixed-fee contract for five years they have given us the opportunity to look at ways that we can become even more community-focused and at the same time more self-sufficient.’

Bruce Leeke, Chief Executive Officer, Suffolk Libraries
The role of partners

Suffolk County Council is still legally responsible for the county’s library service, but Suffolk Libraries has a long-term contract to deliver it. The current budget from the county is just under £6 million per annum (including the stock budget) – around 30 per cent less than the total library budget in 2011.

The county council set up and supported the new model from the start and Suffolk Libraries continues to have a healthy relationship with the county. This has led to an automatic five-year extension to Suffolk Libraries’ contract, with an agreed level of funding now guaranteed until 2022, giving the organisation the stability to take stock and plan for the future with confidence.

‘We have developed a resilient, honest and flexible relationship with Suffolk County Council and by giving us a fixed-fee contract for five years they have given us the opportunity to look at ways that we can become even more community-focused and at the same time more self-sufficient.’ Bruce Leek, Chief Executive Officer, Suffolk Libraries

However, Suffolk Libraries also has strong relationships with many other key partners including other local councils, the health service, a range of voluntary sector organisations and Arts Council England. Part of the success of the Suffolk Libraries model has involved fruitful partnership projects, such as working with district councils to co-locate services or information in libraries in return for rental income. This type of initiative has the added benefit of bringing in additional customers and providing cost-effective public access for the district councils.

What’s been the impact of our work?

The main impact of the model is that all libraries have remained open – in some cases offering higher levels of service – while also making significant savings. Long Melford Library, for example, recently amended and increased its opening hours as a result of small changes in staffing arrangements, all at very little cost and after consultation with customers.

Professional staff have been maintained at all the libraries.

Financial savings are only part of the story – the value generated for local people and the impact made on their lives is the other side of the coin.

In 2017, a review of staffing at the larger libraries – the first since the 1990s – resulted in a small number of redundancies. Apart from this, there have been no reductions in staffing since the service was transferred to the new organisation.

Suffolk Libraries has bucked the national trend in relation to lending and attendance, which are both falling in the UK. Lending in 2017/2018 was just over 3.1 million – an increase of 1 per cent on the previous year against a drop of almost 7 per cent in the UK across the same period. Reinforcing this positive momentum, the number of specific events and activities held within Suffolk Libraries has increased from 9,534 to 11,120 to 12,659 over the last three years and attendees at these events have increased from 155,876 to 175,561 to 182,298. Suffolk has also seen a large growth in e-library lending.
The county’s continued ownership of the library infrastructure has not stopped Suffolk Libraries from making financial savings in this area. For instance, the society has been able to employ local contractors, including suitably skilled volunteers, to maintain the internal repair and decoration of its buildings. Similarly, the county’s ownership of the computers used by both staff and the public has not stopped Suffolk Libraries from procuring more innovatively and savings have been made through the society establishing its own HR, finance and IT systems.

However, financial savings are only part of the story – the value generated for local people and the impact made on their lives is the other side of the coin.

The community model has increased engagement with the 44 community groups representing hundreds of local volunteers, all working to enhance and support their local libraries which are still run by professional and trained staff.

This has resulted in a wide range and diversity of new ideas and activities including:

- an Arts Council-funded programme providing digital arts screenings in some libraries;
- innovations such as lending e-reader devices and iPads, in some cases linked to additional training sessions for older people on how to make the most of this technology;
- live music events in some libraries;
- the continued development and expansion of a unique library-based mental health and wellbeing information service – New Chapters;
- the co-location of district council customer services in some libraries, bringing in additional rental income and footfall; and
- the co-location of a post office in one library, also leading to greater library use.

Suffolk Libraries is also a ‘National Portfolio Organisation’, with funding from the Arts Council to engage with young people. The successful bid focused on literature, storytelling and information, with the aim of using arts activities to address the most important issues for young people in Suffolk, including building digital and information skills and developing wellbeing and resilience strategies.

Suffolk Libraries projects have been shortlisted for the EDGE Libraries Conference awards four times, winning twice, and in 2017 its Chat n Chill sessions at Ipswich Library were shortlisted for the CILIP (the UK’s library and information association) Libraries Change Lives award.

‘It’s been a transformation having Friends groups in Suffolk Libraries and, in our case, apart from raising funds to be able to do all this, we’ve actually opened the doors for young people and older people in so many ways. They’ve come to enjoy all sorts of activities from ancestry groups to bike maintenance, to Lego, manga club sewing bees, book sales. And we provided equipment for people to use in the community, in their homes.’ Richard Fawcett, chair of the Friends of Thurston Library.
The key elements of our success

Our success has been based upon:

- support from the community: the ability to engage and build relationships with already established local groups which were formed to campaign against closures;
- a positive approach to communication and engagement: consulting staff on changes and keeping them informed; and
- flexibility and freedom: savings and income generation have come from new ideas – for instance, from commissioning a bespoke self-service web app and engaging in partnership with local businesses and other organisations to develop ideas to attract new income and visitors.

‘From the start of our life as an independent organisation we have always taken an entrepreneurial approach. This is best illustrated by the development of our own bespoke self-service technology that can run on off-the-shelf tablets and has been designed with simplicity of use and maintenance in mind. This was a project supported by the county council and delivered by us, that effectively saved hundreds of thousands of pounds. We have also now had several conversations with the wider sector about reselling this new technology.’ Bruce Leeke, Chief Executive Officer, Suffolk Libraries

And if we were starting again...

If we were starting again, we would take even greater account of:

- the time and resources required to set up a new organisation – this is a marathon not a sprint and requires an effort well over and above the day job;
- the need to ensure that both staff and key stakeholders are involved and briefly fully and honestly at every stage;
- the reality that negotiating with former council colleagues can be challenging; and
- the fact that working outside the council will involve library leaders in mastering new areas of expertise – from contracting, to understanding cashflow and different types of governance.

Building an entrepreneurial organisational culture is a particular challenge for any new organisation spun out of the public sector and the senior team at Suffolk Libraries had to think carefully about how to market and brand the new society, encourage staff to develop new services, and ensure the organisation was fully ready to meet its new contractual obligations.

In practical terms, the organisation has had to address issues such as:

- how to set up its systems to handle any income generated;
- how to exploit to the full the potential of its building assets to generate revenue while taking into account the service’s social responsibilities; and
- how to design new supporter and membership schemes that would offer the potential for e.g. gifting.

Our key contacts

For initial enquiries, please contact James Powell, Marketing and Communications Manager, Suffolk Libraries james.powell@suffolklibraries.co.uk

Bruce Leeke

Bruce Leeke joined Suffolk Libraries as Chief Executive in February 2017 and is proud to be part of such a passionate, impactful and resourceful organisation. Bruce started his career in conferences and events working for international media companies Emap and Lexis Nexis amongst others. He moved to the charity sector as Director of Events at the Institute of Fundraising, where he became the organisation’s first Chief Operating Officer and later its Chief Executive. After nearly ten years, Bruce moved to St John Ambulance where he was a Regional Director before moving to Suffolk Libraries.
The Public Service Transformation Academy

The PSTA was established as a not-for-dividend social enterprise partnership in 2016 to drive better outcomes by developing the capability of organisations that deliver public services to collaborate, innovate and lead – to transform themselves.

The PSTA came together as the delivery partner of the Cabinet Office Commissioning Academy (on behalf of DCMS) and the custodian of the Public Service Transformation Network’s knowledge resources.

Realising outcomes collaboratively
The diverse membership and ethos of the PSTA reflects our recognition that, to realise better outcomes, the different professions and operations that serve the public must speak each other’s languages and create shared understanding. The work of transforming systems to realise better outcomes is inherently and inevitably multi- and inter-disciplinary.

Partners in the PSTA include charities, social enterprises and commercial businesses – each bringing their own networks of expertise and insight: RedQuadrant is the lead partner and delivery partners include the Whitehall & Industry Group (lead delivery partner), NCVO, E3M, TSIP, Basis, the Alliance for Useful Evidence (part of Nesta), LocalGov Digital, Collaborate, Browne Jacobson LLP, and members of the former Public Service Transformation Network. This year we welcome a new strategic partner, the Connected Places Catapult.

To drive better public outcomes, we enable public services to transform themselves. We build capacity and work primarily with leaders in the emergent space between ‘cutting edge’ ideas and commoditised, codified methods.

We aim to:
- ‘do ourselves out of work’: create the capability and capacity so that we are not needed any more;
- develop organisations and sectors – not just individuals (but, of course, we work first with individuals); and
- build self-supporting networks of public service leaders.

We work for public services not just the public sector, and with all those who can be influential in achieving positive outcomes.

We seek to be influential to steer effective public service transformation.

Our space is unique:
- we don’t represent anyone or any sector, we don’t have government mandate beyond our Commissioning Academy concession contract, we don’t need to ‘defend territory’; we can be collaborative not competitive.
- we actively support and promote everything, every organisation, and every event that’s useful to enable public service transformation.

PSTA partners are selected for their unique offers in this space, and we support and promote aligned organisations.

We aim to be a successful, self-funding social enterprise – we cannot distribute surplus, so we will reinvest in-year.

Based on a survey of participants in past programmes:
- 98 per cent of those surveyed reported making useful connections
- 91 per cent said it was a good or excellent use of their time
- 88 per cent said that the Academy was either good, or excellent value for money
- 91 percent report the academy was either relevant or highly relevant to learning needs
- 87 per cent said they would recommend the academy to their colleagues and peers.
Commissioning Academy

The Commissioning Academy is designed to give organisations the tools, techniques and confidence to approach the most challenging issues facing communities in a collaborative, creative and evidence-driven way. The Commissioning Academy is delivered through two models:

● National Commissioning Academies – run three times a year, any organisations delivering service to the public may apply

● Custom Commissioning Academies – are designed with a sponsoring organisation to focus on a locality or theme.

Each Commissioning Academy takes place over five full days spread over four months comprising masterclasses, expert speakers, a site visit, peer-to-peer challenge and practical action planning to apply commissioning practices to the pressing issues facing each organisation.

‘It’s a worthwhile investment. I found it a really useful experience. Coming into it with other people from your organisation, makes a big difference in terms of being able to go back into the office and think about what you’ve taken from each of the sessions and each of the site visits and translate that into what might you do differently within your organisation.’

Assistant Director, Adult Social Care and Health, Barnet

Leading Transformation Programme

The Leading Transformation programme is designed to give participants all the theory, models, tools, and learning you need to be a successful transformation leader. The 24 learning modules take you on a journey through all the key skills for leading transformation, including system thinking, behavioural insight and demand management. The online learning is supported by webinars, action learning to apply the thinking, in-business support, learning review, a simulation, and hundred day play implementation.

‘What I liked about the programme particularly was that I could study at my own pace and fit it around my work. Revisiting the things I have done in past courses and picking up new hints and tips about what is being done today, as supposed to what I have covered several years ago is beneficial for my day-to-day business.’

Ed Ashton, Deputy Chief Office, Social Security Department, States of Guernsey

‘Thank you so much for an inspirational programme that has allowed us to think differently to provide innovate projects to engage volunteers – where they feel valued and supported. You definitely helped to get rid of the ‘cob webs’ by introducing new methods and ways of driving forward and presenting change in a positive and acceptable way.’

Senior Manager, East of England Ambulance Trust

Regional Transformation Academies

Calling all change-makers! Our Regional Transformation Academies are for you if you are:

● responsible for driving transformational and cultural changes across services

● keen to apply the latest thinking and approaches to realising outcomes

● eager to bring to bear the ideas, assets and energy of all parts of the system

● committed to making a difference

The Academy will immerse you in the latest and proven practices on leading change across complex systems to enable you to bring to bear the ideas, assets and energy of all parties to realise better outcomes for the people you serve.

You’ll benefit from masterclasses, workshops, expert speakers, peer challenge, a virtual site visit and practical action planning to apply the learning to a real challenge in your organisation.

New commissioning simulation

Would you like to take your commissioning expertise to the next level with our new commissioning simulation learning experience?

The simulation offers immersive experiential learning and the opportunity to face the
consequences of decisions in a live but risk-free environment.

Participants will learn how strategy and operations interact, and the social outcomes of management decisions. The two-day simulation was developed by Fractal Consulting and has been tried and tested, with past participants recommending it as a unique and highly valuable learning experience:

‘It was the most useful workshop I’ve done (of any training I’ve had); they challenged us and really made us think about every aspect of what we were doing.’

Service Transformation Programme
The Service Transformation Programme is designed to develop organisations’ internal capability to deliver sustainable change and address the challenges facing public services. Learning is achieved through simulations, exercises and live examples.

‘I speak for the management team when I say that we have found your advice, support and inexhaustible energy and optimism hugely helpful over the past few months in identifying several of our problem areas and implementing solutions.’
Head of Service, London Borough of Waltham Forest

Digital Analytics Programme
The digital analytics programme is a peer-to-peer knowledge sharing network for local authorities aimed at helping members implement new customer contact and service delivery models and realise benefits from digital technology.

‘One instant change is that we have used the data to make a case for changing some of our service KPIs that are outdated, but have been seen as ‘not to be touched’ by senior figures. The benchmarking data has helped make the case.’
Andrew Fellowes, Sheffield City Council

Coaching, mentoring, and shadow consulting for transformation

The PSTA’s coaching practice supports individuals to improve their thinking, behaviours and performance. It is rooted in the latest discoveries from neuroscience and focusses on helping individuals become aware of their mental ‘hard wiring’ and learn how to make new connections. Working with a coach can give individuals the really powerful lift that they need to get the results that they want.

‘The response from managers has been overwhelmingly positive. Not only are we seeing direct improvements in leadership behaviours but managers have valued the coaching experience as an opportunity to develop personally and as a leader; and this has positively affected their view of the authority.’
Paul McChrystal, Head of Workforce Development, Leicester City Council

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Delivering the Cabinet Office
Commissioning Academy

On behalf of and through

Civil Service Leadership Academy
Civil Service Learning
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

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