RIPPLE EFFECT

THE SYSTEMS CHANGE PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF FULFILLING LIVES SOUTH EAST PROJECT

COMMUNITY FUND

Fulfilling Lives
South East Partnership

FOREWORD

This report summarizes eight years of hard work of the Fulfilling Lives South East (FLSE) Project, trying to change systems supporting people with multiple and complex needs in South East England. It shares the project's reflections on what enables and supports systems change and on methods that can be used to achieve tangible change.

As part of our legacy work, this is one of a range of reports and resources, including best practice studies, training resources, co-production toolkits and method reports.

Over the past eight years, the work of the project has been supported by many partners who have shared the aims and vision of Fulfilling Lives.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who has been involved. From the very outset, a group of over 70 voluntary and statutory organisations, and many people with lived experience of using services, worked together to shape the proposed project. Subsequently, a core group of representatives from partner organisations have worked with us to achieve the overall project aims, both in terms of our systems change projects and direct client work. Oasis Project, Equinox, Change Grow Live (CGL) and Seaview were our invaluable sub-contracted partners for the project's client work. Throughout the past eight years, people with lived experience of multiple and complex needs have consistently given their time, skills and expertise, with their commitment and decision making - both alongside and within the FLSE team - driving the priorities of this project.

We made a commitment at the very start of the programme to honour this partnership working, and to carry this throughout the duration of the project. I hope that all those involved feel this commitment has been upheld.

This report demonstrates not only the impact and legacy of the project's systems change work, but also the impact and legacy of working together, especially of working in partnership with people with lived experience.

Finally, we would like to thank the National Lottery Community Fund for funding the South East project, and the 12 Fulfilling Lives projects nationally, to make this work possible. It has been remarkable to see the plans in our original bid realised over the past eight years — both a unique challenge and an opportunity to make tangible differences to people's lives, both now and for the future.

Nikki Homewood
Director of Advice and Support Services, BHT Sussex

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INTRODUCTION

When looking back on the system change efforts of the Fulfilling Lives South East project (FLSE), we noticed there were common principles and methods that rippled through all of our systems change work. These have provided the foundations for the wide variety of projects and partnerships we have embarked on during our eight-year project (2014-2022).

We share these principles in this report, and encourage anyone looking to change systems to start with establishing these essential elements:

- **Drivers for change:** the factors that motivate the system changes.

- **Guiding principles:** the values, principles and practices that shape what we do, as much as how we do it.

- **Building trust:** the bedrock of all good partnership working.

This report outlines what these principles have meant in practice for FLSE, as well as the methods we have used to create ripples of change through support systems locally.

Alongside this systems change report, FLSE has published a companion report to summarise the impact of our thematic project work that strives to improve local support systems for people experiencing multiple and complex needs (MCN). This thematic report also shares what changes FLSE would like to see in the future. It includes reviews across each of the following six thematic system areas:

HEALTH INEQUALITIES

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND COMPLEX NEEDS

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND REPEAT OFFENDING

TREATMENT PATHWAYS AND COEXISTING CONDITIONS

UNSUPPORTED TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

REPEAT REMOVALS OF CHILDREN INTO THE CARE SYSTEM

Read the report here

What does 'multiple and complex needs' (MCN) or 'multiple disadvantage' mean in this report?

Multiple and complex needs (MCN) are persistent, problematic and interrelated health and social care needs which impact an individual's life and their ability to function in society. They are likely to include repeat street homelessness, mental, psychological and physical health problems, drug and/or alcohol dependency, and offending behaviour. People with MCN are more likely to experience violence and abuse, including domestic violence, live in poverty and have experienced trauma in childhood and throughout their lives.

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

The Fulfilling Lives South East (FLSE) Project emerged from a growing concern that support systems and structures were not serving some of the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Lankelly Chase's ground-breaking report, Hard Edges, helped to build a more comprehensive picture of the intersecting needs of people experiencing multiple disadvantage. In 2014, the National Lottery Community Fund launched a national programme of investment across England to:

1 Provide intensive support for people experiencing multiple disadvantage

2 Involve people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage at all levels

3 Challenge and change systems that negatively affect people facing multiple disadvantage

In Brighton & Hove and East Sussex, a partnership was formed of voluntary sector organisations and statutory departments, and a successful bid for funding to run one of 12 national Fulfilling Lives programmes was led by BHT Sussex. The eight-year project began in 2014.

The project has attracted a team of people who have a passion for social justice, co-production, partnership working and a belief that there are new ways of working that can be unlocked and discovered. FLSE has used this as fuel to shape, with external partners, a common purpose in pursuit of better outcomes with and for people with multiple and complex needs (MCN).

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RELATIONSHIPS OF TRUST ARE KEY – ALL IT TAKES IS A LEAP OF FAITH.

FLSE PROJECT LEAD

We have learnt that behind what may seem to be rigid systems and structures, people working in other parts of the support system share similar values and drive. Time and again, we have seen how systems and systems changes do not sit in untouchable spaces; they are tangible actions made by individuals and teams who connect with a shared purpose to try new ways of working. When these movements start to happen, policies can change, staff support mechanisms can evolve to benefit workplaces and clients, and learning from lived experiences can provide a platform for reviewing and re-directing support provisions. We have seen how open dialogue can give confidence to colleagues in different agencies to work together, build momentum and shift systems that were previously thought to be too fixed or too big to change. We have seen this take place on multiple levels: from small behaviour adjustments, such as changes in use of language, through to large-scale local and national strategy changes.

We want to explain and share our learning as widely as possible as well as give our views on where we think support systems need to further adapt, change and reform. Sussex is well placed to reflect on this learning: there are systems changers across the county who have shown

that it's possible to improve service provision to better meet the needs of people with MCN. Sussex has also been granted Changing Futures funding to continue to improve outcomes for adults experiencing MCN. In the past two years, the pandemic has shown us all how policies and practices can change rapidly when there is the energy, resource and partnership commitment to addressing some of the most challenging social issues in our communities. Now really is the time to clarify and reflect on the progress we have made and what can happen next.

This report sets out how the FLSE team has approached putting systems change theory into practice. We hope it will be a useful aid for anyone wanting to support or instigate system changes in the future.

Alongside this, we have produced a companion report taking a closer look at how we responded to our six systems change themes, the impact this had, and the further changes we believe are needed to improve outcomes for people experiencing multiple and complex needs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

Systems change runs the risk of becoming a new buzz word in the sector. With Fulfilling Lives South East's (FLSE) commitment to co-production, we have aimed to stay pragmatic and ensure that when applying systems change theories, we seek inclusivity on every step of the journey. We have paired this commitment with a set of guiding principles to inform the wide range of our systems change work.

We take a 'stepping stones' approach, initiating projects and growing them over time. We believe that how we bring about systems change is just as important as the outcomes we achieve. We feel closely aligned to how Forum for the Future – a leading international sustainability consultancy – view systems change:

"

'We believe that creating the change we want to see in the world will require a growing number of people to think and act more systemically. So we see system change as both an outcome and a process.'
Forum for the Future

For us, systems change is about making bold decisions to deliver lasting change in the systems that underpin how services operate.

We are funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and use their guidance on what is and what is not, systems change to guide our work:

'System changes' *are changes to the people, organisations, policies, processes, cultures, beliefs and environment that make up the system.*

They are: *Beneficial, Sustainable in the long-term (i.e. resilient to future shifts in the environment), Transformational.*

They are not: *Tokenistic, doing the same thing under a different name, overly reliant on key individuals.*

Flexing the system (e.g. making a one-off exception) is not systems change in its own right, but a good first step towards sustainable systems change.

Throughout our systems change work, there have been golden threads that run through all we do – these have been both the result of our learning over time as well as a way of practising our values:

CO-PRODUCTION

Co-production is a way of working that involves sharing control with those using (or who have used) a service, and ensures they have equal influence over the design, delivery and commissioning of any service that affects them. People with lived experiences were fully integrated into FLSE teams, project groups, partnerships and systems change activities. They have been involved throughout the life of the project, from identifying gaps and barriers, to planning, designing and delivering activities that lead to system change (e.g. mystery shopping, training, and creating informational material). We aspired to move beyond consultation and involvement to co-production and were guided by the Ladder of Involvement.

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

Supporting clients with MCN and working alongside people with lived experience taught us the value of trauma-informed practice. It is a way of working that accounts for the impact that traumatic events may have had in people's lives. It benefits everyone but is especially valuable when working with individuals who have experienced complex trauma. The aim of trauma-informed practice is three-fold:

- Raise awareness among staff and services about the wide impact of trauma.
- Prevent re-traumatisation of clients in service settings that are meant to provide support.
- Develop policies and practices that assist healing from trauma.

At the centre of trauma-informed practice are five principles that should be used at all levels to guide service design, policy and practices. These are: safety, trust & transparency, collaboration, choice and voice.

NAMING MULTIPLE AND COMPLEX NEEDS (AND MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE)

We are wary of labels. However, when we started our work, we noticed a worrying absence of references to people facing multiple disadvantage in local policies, procedures and strategies. Highlighting the interrelated needs of people who experience MCN and calling for greater inclusion of such terminology in service specifications, policies and strategies has been a theme throughout our work.

USING PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS TO GUIDE ACTIVITY

Underpinning our work has been a set of tools that adopt common project management and change management approaches to help us translate ideas into action. Discussions are important but agreeing and monitoring actions are vital to achieving forward momentum in improving support systems to address the gaps and barriers identified. To guide activity, we have used detailed project plans and Gantt Charts, Theory of Change approaches, Responsibility Assignment Matrix (RACI), problem definition templates, as well as reflecting regularly on the Cycle of Change to inform our work.
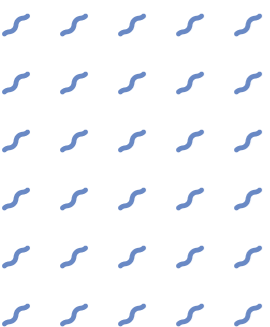
BUILDING TRUST

So much of our work centres around relationships with people – engaging and supporting clients, volunteers, partners and one another. The systems we work in and look to change are driven by people, and at the heart of change is an ability to trust.

When embarking on systems change activities, we recognise that we are often asking others to try something new. There is no guarantee that this new way of doing things will work, and a change in one part of a system could have a positive (or negative) impact on another part of a system.

> ## " A SYSTEM ISN'T JUST ANY OLD COLLECTION OF THINGS. A SYSTEM IS AN INTERCONNECTED SET OF ELEMENTS THAT IS COHERENTLY ORGANISED IN A WAY THAT ACHIEVES SOMETHING.
>
> **Donella Meadows, Thinking in Systems: A Primer, p.11**

TRUST HAS BEEN CRUCIAL TO UNLOCKING CONFIDENCE IN, AND EFFORTS TOWARDS, CHANGE.

When embarking on systems changes, the best outcomes achieved have come about through building trusting relationships with partners. We share our learning from building trusting relationships as we believe this is at the heart of achieving effective long-term systemic change:

ESTABLISH WHY YOU FEEL CHANGE IS IMPORTANT

it's no use walking into a room to demand a policy is changed. Identify clearly why the change is important and this will enable you to share the case for change well. Consider if your case for change has been sparked by common practices, behaviours, concerns around policy compliance or one particular incident. Sharing real life stories helps build a stronger case; the need for change arises from the challenges people have experienced in the current system. Understand these factors well to engage external agencies with your conversation about change.

START WITH A CONVERSATION THAT SEEKS TO UNDERSTAND

Share lived experiences, discuss current challenges and opportunities. Aim to establish a shared sense of the challenges and find out if you and your partners share a view that things could be different. It is important to give partners space to talk openly and confidentially with you to build trust and guide the pace and scale of change.

WHO'S IN THE ROOM?

Start with those who are interested. Ask them for help to understand who else may need to be involved and how best to support new people to connect with the discussions. Support the group of people who care about the area of change. Include people with lived experience in conversations from the beginning; they bring an authenticity that cannot be replicated.

BUILD ON THE CONVERSATION WITH FOLLOW-UPS THAT SEEK TO IDENTIFY WAYS FORWARD

Once conversations have started, it is important to clarify your goals and factors that may slow down or block change as you move forward. Look to agree your common purpose for the work, identify any time pressures that will impact on the work and draw up shared plans.

DO WHAT YOU SAY YOU WILL DO

Follow up and keep the communication channels open. This reassures those you are asking to change that you are reliable and easily contactable.

HOLD CONFIDENCE AND DEVELOP SHARED MESSAGES ABOUT THE WORK

Avoid surprises that would compromise a partner's feeling of safety.

HAVE A PLAN THAT BUILDS IN CELEBRATION POINTS

Change can be a long and slow process; it is important to capture small wins. Name and mark these together with partners and those involved. These build momentum for achieving larger changes together in the future.

SYSTEMS CHANGERS

Throughout our work, we have learnt and adapted our approach to changing systems. The FLSE team share some reflections below on what it takes to be a Systems Changer.

SEE BIGGER PICTURE
EXCELLENT LEADERSHIP
ABLE TO CHALLENGE
HAVE AN OVERVIEW
CAN-DO ATTITUDE
UNDERSTAND SERVICE USER NEEDS
SEE PROBLEMS FROM ALL SIDES
POSITIVE MINDSET
COLLABORATION
COMMUNICATE CLEARLY
GENUINE INTEREST IN SERVICE USER EXPERIENCE
COURAGEOUS
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

FIND 'MIDDLE GROUND'
DIPLOMACY
INSPIRING
DETERMINATION
PEOPLE SKILLS
PATIENCE
BALANCE
BEING POSITIVE
PASSION
UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE OF CHANGE
RESILIENCE
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
ACT ON FEEDBACK
EMPATHY

LESSONS LEARNT

Throughout our work, we have learnt and adapted our approach to changing systems. The FLSE team share thoughts below on what most enables system changes.

"For meaningful change to take place, strategic leads, influencers and commissioners need to be on board with the change process."

Data and Information Officer

"There is an appetite for change and there are individuals in services and organisations that are trying to achieve that change. A central part of systems change work is about galvanising these efforts and listening to the knowledge that is already there."

Systems Change Officer

"System change needs to be co-produced in partnership with those who experience services. This requires new ways of working and specific attitudes from all staff involved. We need to dig deeper into how we do this and continue improving. People with experience of using services are required in decision-making positions to truly achieve this. System change projects need to challenge themselves as much as we challenge the system, to be true to this ethos."

Service User Involvement Lead

"It's really important to: (i) work closely with people who have lived experience, so that system change is based on real-life experiences (ii) network and identify your target audiences, so that you can raise the profile of your work (iii) have a good communications plan in place, so that you can publicise ideas and proposals widely and in a targeted way."

Research and Evaluation Officer

"We've learnt the importance of forging good working relationships, which takes time. We need to know what's already out there that works, and most of all have the ability to see the other person's viewpoint."

Systems Change Officer

"For services and systems to change there needs to be a sense of hope that change is possible and that there is a safe space to try new ways of doing things. Change is best shaped by people with lived experiences in partnership with systems leaders."

Systems Change Lead

"It's about finding like-minded people and organisations to push forwards together like a team, ideally with experts by experience too. Systems are reluctant to change though, just like people, and different forces of power are at stake. That's why it's important to choose your battles and make the changes tangible and not scary."

Systems Change Officer

"Services are often too busy or underfunded/understaffed to enable them to change"

Data and Information Officer

"Relationships of trust are key; all it takes is a leap of faith."

Project Lead

SYSTEMS CHANGE METHODS

Fulfilling Lives South East (FLSE) has used eight methods to instigate, nurture and achieve systems change. This has led to positive changes in healthcare, housing, statutory support, criminal justice and treatment systems across Sussex. This chapter shares our experience and our suggestions about how each of these methods can be used, paired with a worked systems change example.

1 CHANGING SYSTEMS BY...
ENGAGING IN CONSULTATIONS

SPOTLIGHT EXAMPLE

THE PAN-SUSSEX STRATEGY FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT 2021-2024

In August 2021, the FLSE presented a report with a focus on the needs of women with multiple and complex needs (MCN) to the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner's office. Our report was written in response to their needs assessment consultation on support and safe accommodation for victims and survivors of domestic abuse across Sussex.

We wanted to highlight the voices of women with lived experiences of domestic abuse and MCN, and we integrated these voices and experiences throughout our report. We utilised learning from our direct client work and from experts-by-experience to detail women's experiences of refuge. We made explicit recommendations for the commissioning of new and additional services to improve access to support in safe accommodation for women with MCN.

On release of the draft Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support, the document underwent an eight-week public consultation period. Members of the FLSE team gathered and expressed impressions of the draft Strategy from across the team and collated this feedback into a further report which was shared with the consultation coordinators. Team members also completed the online survey conducted by the County Councils.

As a result of FLSE's engagement with this consultation, the finalised Strategy (published in January 2022) identified and named 'Responsive to Multiple Disadvantage' as a key strategic priority for Sussex. Local authorities made the commitment to establish specialist provision to support victims and survivors with specific needs, including MCN, and to ensure accessibility of services. FLSE's consultation feedback is referenced in the Strategy and the voices of women with MCN are captured in the document.

WHAT

Formal consultations are a structured process designed by organisations to gain stakeholders' input on a specific social problem and proposed course/s of action, which often take place as a step between policy design and decision-making.

Consultations offer the opportunity to engage with national governmental agencies, public bodies, local authorities and commissioners in a dialogue to help them better understand your needs and opinions, when considering development of policies and services. A governance framework often underpins consultations and offers the opportunity for decision makers to connect and engage with people who have lived experiences and others close to the consultation issue. It can take the form of completing online questionnaires and surveys and producing reports in response to calls for evidence.

Effective engagement in consultations and advocacy for the needs of specific groups can lead to positive policy decisions and service development relevant to those groups.

Limitations to this method include: dependency on the national or local political landscape to instigate the consultation, using a framework pre-designed by traditional forms of power, and the pace of subsequent change can be slow. However, consultations are valuable opportunities for marginalised communities and voices to be heard in spaces which are not traditionally accessible, and whose outputs are published externally thereby reaching a wide audience. Published outputs also allow you to monitor your impact on changes within a system and offer transparency that can be publicly accounted for.

HOW

- **Allocate time and resources** to track local and national policy developments to identify engagement opportunities in consultations. Desktop-based research is a quick way to keep up-to-date with current events.

- **Decide on explicit calls to action and recommendations.** The production of a formal consultation indicates that a need for change has already been identified, so do not be afraid to be bold in your feedback, views and calls to action.

- **Ensure you have data** to evidence your calls to action. This is best achieved by giving prominence to the voices of those with lived experience e.g. through in-depth case examples.

- **Follow up** on your contributions and hold responsible agencies to account.

- **Action Groups** of people with lived experience have shaped our calls to action and key messages to use in consultations. A group who shares a common purpose can help make your engagement in consultations more impactful.

2 CHANGING SYSTEMS BY...
SPEAKING WITH TRADITIONAL SEATS OF POWER

WHAT

This method involves mapping governance structures to understand where traditional decision-making takes place. The mapping process enables you to identify points in the system where changes can be requested, debated, and engaged with.

Traditionally, these system points can include national parliamentary democratic structures through to local commissioning practices and relationships. For example, local MP constituency surgeries, local authority committee and board meetings, and specific roles that hold decision-making responsibilities, such as commissioners or directors of local authority departments.

Once mapped, calling for change will often require formal requests for time to meet with decision makers, or to table a formal question or call-for-change in traditional decision-making spaces. It is likely you will need to share information ahead of meetings in the form of a succinct document clearly stating what you would like to discuss, why you feel the issue is important and data (qualitative and quantitative) to support your case for change.

Limitations of this method can include the slow pace of the process, requiring consistent engagement and repeat presentations of the case-for-change – this can take years, rather than months. Traditional seats of power can feel unwelcoming to marginalised groups and your case-for-change needs to be succinct and to stand out to leaders who receive many requests with shrinking public budgets. However, if supported, high-level decision makers have the power to implement change, monitor new ways of working and allocate money to support long-term changes, leading to long-term sustainability that can be publicly accounted for.

HOW

- **Equip yourself** with a good understanding of the governance structures for the support system you want to change.

- **Establish a group** of people prepared to work together for the long-term to champion this change and share the workload.

- **Have a clear case for change** and a compelling call to action to help busy leaders readily see the value in what you are calling for.

- **Build a robust evidence base** in the form of qualitative and quantitative data to reassure leaders that the changes you are seeking have been thoroughly understood and considered.

- **Seek support** from other influential leaders who can support your call for change behind the scenes.

SPOTLIGHT EXAMPLE

THE EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION CHARTER OF STANDARDS

FLSE collaborated with Justlife and the Brighton & Hove Temporary Accommodation Action Group (TAAG) to write a Charter setting out reasonable standards for emergency accommodation. Conditions and practices in some emergency accommodation were concerning and the Charter captured our collective view on what a basic minimum standard should look like. We were inspired by the work of Citizens Advice Eastbourne who drafted the first Charter of Standards for Temporary Accommodation following research in 2018 which highlighted worrying standards of accommodation locally. FLSE discussed this approach with Justlife (who chair the Brighton & Hove TAAG) and we agreed a Charter could be helpful. We presented the draft content to the TAAG who refined and supported the Charter. FLSE and Justlife then began discussions with leaders at the local Housing Department. From these conversations, we learnt that adopting the Charter would require the authority of elected members. So, FLSE and Justlife presented a deputation ('speech') at a Housing Committee meeting in November 2020. Councillors supported the Charter and we made subsequent deputations in 2020 and 2021 to ensure the Charter remained on their agenda. Throughout 2021, we continued discussions with the Housing Committee Co-Chairs and Housing Department leaders to integrate the Charter standards into new emergency and temporary accommodation provider contracts. In November 2021, the Brighton & Hove Housing Committee confirmed that:

"The next emergency accommodation contract will both include higher standards aligned to the emergency accommodation charter and will for the first time be awarded 50% on quality and 50% on cost. To allow this to happen, the 2020/2022 budget includes £0.230m extra investment to enhance the level of service in the re-procurement of emergency accommodation. We hope this will lead to improvement in both conditions and practice."

Public minutes, Brighton & Hove Housing Committee meeting, November 2021.

3 CHANGING SYSTEMS BY...
GALVANISING OPINION AND DEBATE

WHAT

This method helps to break down barriers in the system when long-standing challenges have been widely acknowledged and there is a lack of optimism that change is possible. This approach involves sparking a new debate and re-framing issues so that a wide range of stakeholders feel comfortable discussing and debating the challenge and topic.

Creating and holding a space where different points of view from a diverse range of people can be shared, enables us as systems changers to draw together common threads and themes. Gathering ideas and opinions can: generate new ways of looking at an issue, draw out new solutions, produce new learning in any under-researched areas, and give credence or challenge to a systems change project idea.

Translating debates into actions is a challenge of this method; without action there is a risk that the exercise becomes a 'talking shop'. Further challenges include feedback which can disrupt the course of planned projects, limiting the time and space needed to thoroughly consider how this impacts your trajectory. However, benefits include gaining valuable learning and reflections on long-standing systemic issues that have felt 'immovable'. Also, asking to share opinions is gentler than asking for change to a policy or practice and can attract new and unexpected stakeholders to the work. This group are also more likely to champion the changes as they emerge and progress.

HOW

- **Establish a clear topic** and target audience for the debate and engage with a wide range of stakeholders who can see the topic from different perspectives.

- **Write a brief** for stakeholders to help them understand the parameters of your conversation and feel more comfortable sharing their views.

- **Develop a learning framework** for the collaboration. We have learned from an experienced researcher, trained in social research methods, to structure the over-arching approach, focus groups, interviews, content analysis, and presentation.

- **Publish reports** in collaboration with your contributors. This assigns value to the work, and enables you to share it widely to galvanise further debate.

- **Use the opinions** of your most influential and expert stakeholders to pose questions about the status quo and encourage engagement from a wide range of voices to shape next steps. This is your action plan to take forward.

SPOTLIGHT EXAMPLE

THE PERSPECTIVES PROJECT

During 2020, FLSE facilitated conversations with 17 professionals – both specialists and non-specialists – from across mental health and substance misuse services, ranging from clinical psychologists and commissioners to leaders of organisations, service managers, and frontline workers. The topic under discussion was 'What does good psychological support look like for people with multiple and complex needs (MCN) who are entering formal substance misuse treatment?'. Following the discussion, we facilitated further conversations with people who had experienced substance misuse support services and had contact with mental health services during their recovery journeys. Our interest in this area came from our commitment to supporting people with MCN who have 'coexisting conditions' – mental ill health and substance misuse.

We wanted to further explore the area of psychological support with those working in the field and those with experience of accessing these services, collecting a range of perspectives, to help spark debate and to see if ideas and reflections from contributors could point us in the direction of new ways of working. In 2021, FLSE hosted a learning event to share and debate this learning.

These conversations enriched and challenged our thinking. We took the learning forward locally to test new ways of working informed by the views and ideas shared in the Perspectives Project. Our work was picked up and included in Turning Point's new sector toolkit for professionals The SUMH Resource Pack: Working with people with coexisting substance use and mental health. The Perspectives Project also showed us that there is a large research gap in the area of psychological support and our work could add value to inform future service provision. The project encouraged FLSE to invest in a Pre-treatment Trauma Stabilisation pilot role in Brighton and Hove. The role works with clients using a new approach that tests a form of psychological support for women experiencing MCN; early outcomes from the pilot are positive.

4 CHANGING SYSTEMS BY...
FOSTERING NEW COLLABORATIONS AND CREATING NEW SPACES

WHAT

This method of systems change involves creating new connection points to bring together previously unconnected representatives of agencies who hold the power to change the way the system is structured and operates. The process for this can include mapping existing multi-agency meetings and identifying gaps where it would be beneficial to bring unconnected stakeholders together in a new forum.

These new forums should nurture collaboration, foster learning, and result in tangible positive actions that impact on the recipients of support systems.

Challenges of this method include: time and resilience to establish the forum as an effective catalyst for change, an initial over-reliance on key individuals, and breaking down barriers to sharing information viewed as commercially sensitive. However, the benefits of this approach include: increased cross-agency partnership working, increased access to new skills and knowledge, a shared access point for raising systems gaps and barriers, and joint problem solving. This is particularly useful when responding to new systemic challenges that are unlikely to have existing forums for conversations and nurturing collective action.

HOW

• **Map the system** you are trying to change and the key stakeholders by placing the client group in the centre. This will help identify those to approach and engage.

• **Have a clear vision** for the forum that can be 'sold' to relevant partners. Frame this as work in progress and invite feedback to promote engagement.

• **Draw on existing structures and formats** for multi-agency working and have conversations with those involved to better understand the approaches.

• **Decide on an operating structure**, draft terms of reference and identify a chair who has knowledge of the system in question and is experienced in chairing what might be a challenging space.

• **Co-create a common purpose and action plan** with all group members building on the initial vision that brought stakeholders to the forum. This helps connect the group and provide a shared focus for activity.

• **Do not lose heart** if, to begin with, some key agencies do not engage. Once the forum becomes more established and its benefits emerge there will be further opportunities to bring them on board.

• **Involve people with lived experiences** in the new forum, to help provide frontline feedback and inform future changes.

SPOTLIGHT EXAMPLE

THE EAST SUSSEX TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ACTION GROUP (TAAG)

An example of this systems change approach is the formation and facilitation of the East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Action Group (TAAG).

FLSE saw that many people experiencing MCN were placed in unsupported Temporary Accommodation (TA). We had concerns about the placement processes, standards of accommodation, and had noticed a lack of support for people placed in TA. We also saw that TA staff teams had little understanding of the specific needs of clients with MCN or the distinct needs of women.

In 2019, FLSE hosted a learning event on TA in Eastbourne, inviting key players in this field to speak. This included Justlife (who had established TAAGs in a number of areas across the country), local authorities and TA providers, with a view to gauging interest in setting up a local TAAG. A few months later, the East Sussex TAAG held its first meeting and was attended by TA providers, third sector providers and local authority housing representatives.

Since then, the TAAG has met regularly, with more frequent online meetings since the start of the pandemic. Membership has grown and an action plan has been developed and followed. Successes have included development of a TA Charter for minimum standards considering MCN guests staying in TA, and training for TA provider staff to improve their understanding of MCN, trauma, professional boundaries and safeguarding.

The TAAG has enabled new partnerships and has provided a space for learning and improvements in TA provision.

"Over a long period of time TAAG has helped groups to gather information and network. It has been a vehicle for raising awareness on issues which cut across different stakeholders and help to drive positive improvements for those living in temporary accommodation."

East Sussex Housing Provider, Justlife National TAAG Survey 2022

5 CHANGING SYSTEMS BY...
INVESTING IN NEW RESOURCES

SPOTLIGHT EXAMPLE

PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT PILOT ROLES

An example of this systems change method is FLSE's investment in Practice Development roles. These pilot roles have been established in partner organisations, including CGL, Oasis Project, BHT Sussex and East Sussex Adult Social Care, to support improvements in service responses and offers for people with MCN. These roles test new creative ways of working, and the learning is shared with partners to inform long-term changes in service delivery and design.

One of these investments has been the Looking Forward pilot role that is delivered by our partners, Oasis Project in Brighton & Hove.

Looking Forward is a specialist service for women who have had one or more children permanently removed from their care and are at risk of the trauma of going through this process again.

The service started eight years ago as a partnership between the Oasis Project and Brighton & Hove Children's Services and employed three staff who supported women through an assertive outreach model. Looking Forward's effectiveness was evidenced in the Local Authorities' 2016/17 own report which found women working with the service had no known pregnancies or care proceedings from 2014-17 (BHCC & Oasis, 2017). However, a restructure in 2020, led to a decision by Children's Services to withdraw funding with the loss of two of the three practitioners.

Recognising the benefit and value of the service to women with MCN (and the lack of any alternative service), FLSE stepped in to retain the remaining practitioner and support evaluation and development of the service alongside Oasis Project.

Evaluation of the Looking Forward pilot from April 2020 to March 2021 showed that a relationship-based and trauma-informed model had positive impacts. This included: improvements in the relationships between mothers and children not in their care, increased use of long-term contraception, reduced drug and alcohol use, reduced disclosures of abuse and violence against women, and improved social networks and relationships.

Women find themselves in the chasm between children's services and adult social care and it is in this space that Looking Forward operates, offering practical as well as psychological/therapeutic support to promote stability, maximise engagement and help establish routes into additional support services.

Investing in this approach and strong partnership working between FLSE and Oasis Project has enabled the delivery of a service that has a direct positive impact for the women it supports and provides evidence of a new way of working for the wider support system.

WHAT

This method involves investing in resources to test new ways of working in organisations and systems, instigating 'demonstration pilots'.

This approach often includes financial investment in new roles to address gaps in provision. With a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, pilots can provide evidence for decision makers that investment or broader practice changes are needed to improve outcomes for people with MCN who have difficulty accessing mainstream services.

Other forms of investment can include sharing expertise and existing human resources across a support system for a coordinated effort to pilot new ways of working. The sharing of resources can also provide evidence to the sector of better ways of working with the resources already in place, leading to new connections, improved efficiencies, and improved outcomes for clients.

Securing investment for new initiatives can be challenging as you cannot guarantee improvements in ways of working or outcomes. Testing and disrupting existing ways of working is prone to resistance as it may feel uncomfortable to step outside of known practices. However, this approach is a pragmatic way to try and improve systems that feel 'stuck'. When paired with a strong monitoring and evaluation framework, the learning can be fed back into the system to support future changes. Designing something new can be very energising and can attract people to your work who are highly skilled and engaged with the vision of the pilot or intervention.

HOW

• **Be clear from the start** about the best hopes for a pilot or new intervention. This will inform what you communicate and what you measure and evaluate.

• **Know the system you are seeking to disrupt** – ensure a solid understanding of who the key agencies are and who are the best contacts within those agencies.

• **Be organised** – ensure an effective administration of the method of testing the system is in place, ensure feedback is collected along the way and that all those involved are communicated with when needed.

• **Use lived experience voices** as the basis for presenting evidence when talking to decision makers after the end of the pilot.

• **Build in regular check points** to reflect on learning to date and share results.

• **Remain focussed** on the reasons for testing new ways of working in the first instance, with the desire to enable better outcomes for people with MCN at the heart.

6 CHANGING SYSTEMS BY...
SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WHAT

Organisational development and implementing change can be a lengthy process and it is good to have some core goals to strive for:

- **Continuous improvement:** Although culture change can be difficult, it opens valuable opportunities for staff to feed into the change process and have ownership of new ideas.

- **Workforce development:** Through providing high quality learning and development, staff will be equipped with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to work within the new approaches.

- **Improving service provision:** By researching thoroughly and obtaining staff and client feedback, the quality of the service offer can be greatly increased.

Challenges of this method include the length of time for organisations with large structures and workforces to deliver on change initiatives; changes may need to be worked through layers of the organisation and commitments to changes may dilute the further away from the starting point; and your plans for change may stop if key individuals who foster a strong connection to the development leave. However, benefits of this approach include creating cultures where change is viewed positively as an opportunity to review and move forward in a way that reflects the organisation's values and client needs. These organisations can also inspire others to embark on wider changes in the system.

HOW

- **Identify the area to improve:** Draw on the voices of people with lived experience of the organisation's services, paired with staff and partner agency feedback.

- **Conduct research to build your evidence base for change:** Take time to learn more deeply about the area for improvement, what the obstacles to change might be and, if previous attempts have been tried, why these initiatives failed or did not last.

- **Build a project plan:** Include actions for clear communication with staff and stakeholders.

- **Motivate and set out the vision:** Support leaders of the change process to communicate the vision effectively to staff and stakeholders, setting out why this is important and the intended impact.

- **Implementation:** Support and train staff with new skills, knowledge, and confidence to effectively transition into new ways of working.

- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Capture information to test if the change has led to service improvement and identify learning that can inform future change.

SPOTLIGHT EXAMPLE

EMBEDDING TRAUMA-INFORMED MODELS OF WORKING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF WORK AND PENSIONS

FLSE and the local Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) team in Brighton Job Centre Plus (JCP) forged a partnership with a joint goal to develop services so that people with multiple and complex needs (MCN) are best able to access, engage with and benefit from their local Job Centre Plus centres.

Firstly, the Brighton JCP engaged with the local community to ask how the JCP was perceived by its customers. It emerged that the building itself and front of house at the Brighton JCP was a significant barrier to engagement. Rather than looking for short-term quick fixes, the management team decided to use this as a platform for organisational development.

In 2019, led by people with lived experience of MCN, FLSE conducted a mystery shop and environment assessment of the spaces and services at the Brighton JCP. The learning from these exercises was fully shared with JCP staff and was taken forward through two DWP-led working groups to address 'space' developments in the building and 'service' developments including supporting staff to embrace changes.

During 2020-21 FLSE developed and delivered a programme of training to DWP work coaches. Sharing practical tools and techniques, this training strengthened staff skills and confidence in working with clients with MCN.

The success of this workforce development programme led to the training offer being distilled into an eight-part video training resource, and this has been embedded into DWP staff induction and training across Surrey and Sussex.

When reflecting on the collaboration, the local DWP wanted to encourage other leaders to embark on large scale collaborative systems change:

'We would say with a very high level of conviction "seize the opportunity and you have nothing to lose and everything to gain". Also, we would say it is so important and powerful to begin to better understand how our services can be prohibitive, and the benefits of removing barriers for people with multiple complex needs.'

Misha Harrison, Partnership Manager, Department of Work and Pensions
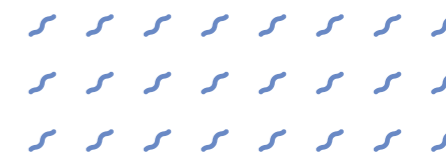
7 CHANGING SYSTEMS BY...
FINDING, NAMING AND SUPPORTING BRIGHT SPOTS

WHAT

This method of systems change has a focus on looking for what is working well despite the challenges in a specific locality or context. It seeks these Bright Spots, learns from them and uses the learning to encourage a wider adoption of these practices.

This method is rooted in the Positive Deviance Model, an approach developed by the international development sector to identify and scale-up Bright Spots. It also pairs well with an Appreciative Inquiry approach that can help structure interviews and feedback techniques to extract the learning from Bright Spots that help decode their practice and behaviours.

Challenges of this method include protecting time and building trust to enable authentic co-production – people with lived experiences are well placed to identify Bright Spots. You need a good understanding of a systemic issue to be able to identify where better outcomes are occurring. Solutions are often place-based, with limitations on their ability to be scaled up beyond the location where they were identified. However, this approach can be uplifting as you look for what works well, rather than what is going wrong. This strengths-based approach is often attractive to external stakeholders generating a hopeful message that change is possible and can identify tangible local solutions already in place that need support to be scaled up.

HOW

- **Identify the local/national system or service** you want to influence or change.

- **Set up an internal working group**, including experts by experience and client-facing workers to identify and define what classifies as 'good' quality practice for a specific client group.

- **Use the Positive Deviance Model** to map local services with the working group. This involves looking for the best outcomes in the local setting and homing in on the services and contexts that are enabling those better outcomes. This will help you find the Bright Spots.

- **Use the Appreciative Inquiry approach** to formulate interview questions for the identified Bright Spots. This will tease out the details of what they are doing to nurture better outcomes.

- **Record and publish your findings**. Share them widely and celebrate your positive deviants in the system to help encourage a wider adoption of their ways of working.

SPOTLIGHT EXAMPLE

BRIGHT SPOTS IN HEALTHCARE

FLSE has used the Bright Spots approach when looking at ways to shift practices in healthcare systems.

We used this collaborative approach with the Intermediate Care Step Away Service Steering Group where we created a safe space for professionals from different teams to come together, share ideas and ways of improving clinical pathways. The Step Away services support patients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to recover in the community following an in-patient hospital stay. These conversations highlighted the importance of introducing frailty scores as a clinical assessment tool. This has been implemented in the Step Away service and results indicate how frailty is of significant relevance to people experiencing MCN – many patients have high scores usually associated with a much older population.

Frailty scores traditionally unlock entry to rapid access assessment clinics and treatment centres; the use of this score with patients with MCN could enable better access to healthcare services. This work has led to an invitation for FLSE to speak on this topic at the 2022 Pathways from Homelessness Conference and we are collaborating with our partners to present the learning to local healthcare leaders. FLSE are supporting the Step Away team to capture and analyse the learning from this work to present to the healthcare Trust.

Our hope is that decision makers will see this approach and the use of frailty scores as an efficient and fast way to increase access to healthcare. By highlighting existing tools and practice, decision makers can be reassured that there are services in the system that can meet the needs of people with MCN, with further investment to scale up their work.

8 CHANGING SYSTEMS BY...
LEARNING AND EDUCATING

WHAT

Increasing awareness and improving understanding of an issue to promote change in behaviours, practice and ways of working is an important part of changing systems. When done well, this approach can help stakeholders gain access to information that enables them to think critically about the issue at hand, reflect on behaviours and practice, and enact changes.

In utilising this method, it is important to ensure that people have the skills and the space to enable new attitudes and behaviours. Training sessions, toolkits, guides, and videos can provide practical advice, guidance, and tips on applying the principles of the learning you have shared to their work and activities.

This approach has a focus on educating, providing safe spaces for challenge and inspiring new thinking around a particular issue or group of people in society.

One challenge of this method is translating learning into change. Improving understanding in an engaging way does not guarantee the adoption of new behaviours and the impact is dependent on the audiences reached and the individual interpretation of the information provided. This method is also reliant on leaders approving training for their teams and some organisations may not have the resources to support far-reaching learning efforts. However, if training and education is supported and paired with adaptations to policies and procedures this will protect what the learning has encouraged and enable long-term change. Further benefits include the potential for marginalised groups or individuals to be more visible within a given community and their wishes and needs better understood, empathised with and responded to.

HOW

- **Identify your target audience** whose action or behaviour change will be the most important in achieving your goal.

- **Establish which awareness-raising methods** will be most accessible to your target audience e.g. a training programme, or an academic research study.

- **Network and connect with other organisations** who have experience in your field or good links with your target audience. Find allies who can help spread a unified message.

- **Ensure people with lived experience** inform and deliver efforts to raise awareness and understanding. This builds empathy, connection and breaks down stigma.

- **Create compelling messages** which define achievable and tangible calls to action. Focus on what can be gained from a behaviour change.

- **Ensure your evidence base is robust** so you can reassure your audience that you are well informed. This may involve research to capture lived experiences, conducting academic literature reviews, or local policy reviews.

SPOTLIGHT EXAMPLE

TRAINING STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

In 2020, FLSE reached out to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Brighton to offer training on working with people experiencing MCN who also have experience of repeat child protection procedures. Social Workers play a key role in providing support to this group of people. The aim was to develop students' understanding of what we define as MCN, understand stigma surrounding MCN clients, and principles of trauma-informed practice, before they start practising social work as their profession.

FLSE delivered two guest lectures on 'Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP) and working with people experiencing MCN' to undergraduate and postgraduate social work students. These sessions were co-produced and delivered by client-facing staff, engagement and co-production workers, volunteers, and experts by experience. The training received positive feedback and the sessions were repeated in the following academic year.

The training package we developed for students on the Adult Social Work courses at the University of Brighton empowers this future workforce to better support people with MCN. The package establishes a greater understanding of the impact of trauma, as well as an introduction on how to support and work with women with MCN who are experiencing repeated removal of children into care. By embedding these resources into the curriculum this upskilling is now sustainable into the future. It also places newly qualified social workers in a position where they can influence further social work practice in this area.

"This session has been hugely beneficial, and I will take a lot away with me into my future practice."

Student, post-training

RESOURCES

BOOKS, BLOGS, ARTICLES, WEBSITES AND OTHER RESOURCES THAT HAVE INSPIRED US

BOOKS

Rachel Botsman: Who Can You Trust? How technology brought us together – and why it could drive us apart

Steven de-Souza and Diana Renner: Not Knowing: The art of turning uncertainty into opportunity

Henry James Garrett, This book will make you kinder: An empathy handbook

Chip and Dan Heath, Switch: How to Change things when change is hard

Meadows, D. H., 2009. Thinking in systems: a primer. White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Erin Meyer, The Culture Map

David Peter Stroh, Systems Thinking for Social Change: a practical guide to solving complex problems, avoiding unintended consequences, and achieving lasting results

GUIDES & REPORTS

NPC's Systems Change: A guide to what it is and how to do it, Rob Abercrombie, Ellen Harries and Rachel Wharton, June 2015

The Water of Systems Change by John Kania, Mark Kramer, Peter Senge (2018, FSC)

Systems Intervention model, Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM Coalition)
System Intervention - MEAM Approach

Behaving Like a System?, Collaborate and Lankelly Chase: https://lankellychase.org.uk/publication/behaving-like-a-system/

Juliette Hough, Nottingham & Gateshead, Fulfilling Lives Microsoft Word - NGFL systems change report Sept 2017 v2.docx (tnlcommunityfund.org.uk)

Why Women's Centres Work: An evidence briefing, The Tavistock Institute: Women-and-Girls-Briefing-Report-Final-_web.pdf (tavinstitute.org)

BLOGS, ARTICLES & WEBSITES

Psychology Today website: Psychology Today UK: Health, Help, Happiness + Find Counselling UK

Sternin, J. & Choo, R., 2000. The power of positive deviancy. Harvard business review, 78(1), pp. 14-15.

Introduction to Systems Thinking – ONE DAY 2021

Anna Birney: Systems change — What term should we use? | by Anna Birney | School of System Change | Medium

Vienna: The City That Solved Homelessness: https://crosscut.com/2017/06/homelessness-housing-crisis-seattle-vienna-solution

Million Dollar Murray: https://housingmatterssc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Million-Dollar-Murray.pdf

Housing First Finland: https://scoop.me/housing-first-finland-homelessness/

Using Story to Change Systems (ssir.org)

Power and systems change. Power is one of those terms that is… | by Anna Birney | Living systems and change | Medium

What's in a Frame? | FrameWorks Institute

Power, Love and Justice (reospartners.com)

Elizabeth Segal - Social Empathy: A model built on empathy, contextual understanding, and social responsibility that promotes social justice (article): Social Empathy: A Model Built on Empathy, Contextual Understanding, and Social Responsibility That Promotes Social Justice: Journal of Social Service Research: Vol 37, No 3 (tandfonline.com)

VIDEOS

Seth Godin: The tribes we lead | TED Talk

Clarissa, Groundswell

Online course – Systems Learning - Schumacher Institute

IDEAS, ART & PEOPLE

Banksy's Balloon Girl: Banksy Girl and Heart Balloon (2840632113) - Girl with Balloon - Wikipedia

The Leadership centre – Systems Leadership – Debbie Sorkin

Simon Sinek – Golden Circle

Brenee Brown – the Power of Vulnerability

Toby Lowe – Human Learning Systems

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