



HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21ST MARCH 2017

SUBJECT: SYSTEMS THINKING WITHIN ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To give members a brief over view of the Systems Thinking methodology and outline its application to the reshaping of services and working practices with Adult Social Services.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Systems Thinking is a methodology for understanding and improving services, which is widely used across the public sector. This approach is based on redesigning services around the needs of citizens, improving process flow and design and eliminating waste and inefficiency. It aims to focus on what's important for citizens and how to recognise and eliminate barriers that prevent staff from providing a better service. This approach requires a real understanding of how and why we do something, before considering how to do it more effectively and applying a different methodology to how we reshape services.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- 3.2 Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Vanguard approach is based on both systems and interventionist theories. It looks at the psychology of organisations and seeks to move behind what could make organisations more efficient into challenging the thinking that sits behind the design of the existing services. It also seeks to take people on a collective normative learning experience where they have first-hand experience of the services they are responsible for, often resulting in the identification of areas of necessary improvement.
- 4.2 The vanguard method combines two main components:
- Systems theory – how organisations work
 - Intervention theory – how to make successful changes
- 4.3 In order to understand how an organisation works in order to be able to make successful changes. This is undertaken through a three-step cycle of **check – plan – do**.
- Understand the current organisation as a system
 - Identify levels for change
 - Take direct action on the system.

4.4 In order to 'check' the system an understanding of the system in terms of:

- Purpose: what is the purpose of this system?
- Demand: what is the nature of the customer?
- Capability: what is it predictably achieving?
- Flow: how does it work?
- System conditions: why does the system behave this way?
- Thinking: underlying assumptions about how work is managed.

4.5 Once the system is checked, it enables plans to be identified and these plans to be implemented as experimental approaches to the system.

The approach encourages and supports the process of emergent learning where arising questions and reflections are the drivers for continuous review and improvement.

Specifically in relation to human centred systems, such as social care:

4.6 Study with those who do the work:

1. Find out "what matters" to citizens about what you do for them;
2. Ask individual citizens "what does a good life look like for you?"
3. Listen to demand - how many referrals are from people known to the system, and how many are back because we did not help them achieve their good life the first time;
4. Determine the purpose of the system from the citizens' point of view;
5. Map the flow of work from somebody contacting the system, through to them achieving their good life. Determine which steps are value steps from the citizen's point of view;
6. Gain clarity of new work design principles;
7. Solve the problems that stop people achieving purpose and what matters;
8. Help citizens work out how they can achieve their good life, with specific solutions tailored for them - do not use a menu of services, rather look to the community to provide a wealth of solutions;
9. Measure whether you have helped people achieve their good life.

4.7 Social Services commenced the use of Systems Thinking within Adult Services in 2014. The purpose of the intervention then was to:

- Reshape and improve the citizens journey through the Assessment & Care Management process
- Release capacity from the existing system to allow for further improvement in and reshaping of services and working practices
- Give due regard to the implementation of the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SS&WB Act) whilst reshaping services and working practices.

4.8 Initially the System Testing And Redesign Team (START) was set up as a small experiment to test different approaches to how a social care team could work differently. This involved:

- gathering evidence to inform what works and what doesn't work
- what are the barriers to current practice
- what do we need to change to enable staff to work differently to achieve positive outcomes for citizens
- what would a different system look like
- what skills do staff need to work in a different way.

4.9 During the testing phase, a substantial amount of learning took place with regards to the citizens 'journey' through the social care system. Through the system thinking process START were able to recognise the differing levels of bureaucracy in place that hindered them from providing a good service. Working differently and reviewing the system demonstrated a number of areas of 'system failure', resulting in capacity being absorbed potentially inefficiently. Recognising this along with other learning gained, gave START the knowledge and understanding needed to redesign the service with a positive shift away from the rigidity of local bureaucracy and unnecessary barriers which adds no value to the citizen, to a service that was more focused on achieving positive outcomes

- 4.10 During this time, it became more evident that getting it right at the point of initial contact with Social Services played a significant part in being able to resolve issues in a more timely manner and improve the experience for citizens. It was therefore acknowledged that we would need to change the service being provided by the 'front door', namely the Information, Advice and Assistance Team (IAA).
- 4.11 The IAA service needed to be reconfigured to respond to the requirements of SS&WB Act and as such it was agreed that a Systems Thinking approach would be applied. At the time, IAA undertook a significant proportion of 'administrative tasks' which through the system thinking process have been dramatically reduced without any negative effect on the service being provided to individuals. Such changes have had a significant impact on capacity and enabled staff at IAA to spend more valuable time to engage with callers to talk through presenting issues, explore options, provide individually focused information and advice, signposting to appropriate preventative and well-being services in the community to enable people to better help themselves and others.
- 4.12 During this time demand at IAA was studied to get a better understanding of the skills and knowledge required by staff to ensure an effective service was delivered. It soon became evident that a high proportion, (approx. 70%), of calls were in relation to low level equipment and minor adaptations to assist with daily living. As a result, staff were up-skilled to better respond to and resolve such calls. Additionally, a Senior Occupational Therapist has now been appointed to the Team on a fixed term basis to support and improve service delivery in this area, the impact of this post will be monitored and reviewed.
- 4.13 Work is still ongoing with IAA, but evidence to date has shown that with the correct knowledge, skills and support, staff are able to provide appropriate and timely information, advice and assistance that reflect the situation being presented. This is resulting in more resolutions being achieved at IAA without the need for further intervention by Area Teams, this figure currently stands at around a 30% reduction. This will help to ensure that referrals to Area Teams for a further assessment are only actioned where appropriate, after all other options have been considered.
- 4.14 The system thinking approach to reshaping services has also been applied in the following teams
- Community Occupation Therapy Team (COT)
 - Brokerage Service
 - Protection of Vulnerable Adults Team (POVA)
 - Client Finance & Property Team
 - Physical Disability Team
- 4.15 This implementation has led to significant reduction in bureaucracy, duplication and hand offs in the system improving the outcomes for individuals. It has also enabled back office posts to be deleted as part of the MTFP with no impact on front line services to the public. Staff working in these areas have reported feeling better able to do their jobs.
- 4.16 One of the consistent factors being evidenced since we started this journey back in 2014, is that there is a significant amount of demand put upon the service which is preventable. We have in many cases successfully identified what the route cause of predictable demand is and methods for switching off or reducing this demand. However, this process also highlights that not all factors can be fully addressed without redesigning interfacing services.
- 4.17 Systems thinking methodology is being applied across the region in collaboration with health colleagues, Blaenau Gwent are testing different ways of working with people with a learning disability, via the BOLD team, in north Caerphilly we posed the question is there a different way of working with people with a mental health problem, via the LEAP team. In Torfaen they ran a small multidisciplinary team in Blaenavon and have now successfully rolled this out across the borough working on a patch based system. Monmouth have for many years embraced Systems Thinking and have constructed their teams around it with expertise up front.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 This report contributes to the Well-being Goals as set out in Links to Strategy above. By its very nature, Systems Thinking is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report, hence no impact assessment has been completed.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In 2015/16 the budget for Adult Services Duty Information Team (ASDIT) was reduced by 52K and management and fieldwork across Adults Services was reduced by 107K which can be attributed to the system thinking work.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To advise Members of the progress made to date in relation to applying a system thinking approach to the reshaping of services and working practices with Adult Social Services.

12. STATUTORY POWER

- 12.1 Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

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