Building Collaborative Places: Infrastructure for System Change

Anna Randle
Hannah Anderson
Lankelly Chase is an independent charitable trust that works to bring about change that will transform the quality of life of people who face severe and multiple disadvantage. It focuses particularly on the clustering of serious social harms, such as homelessness, substance misuse, mental illness, violence and abuse and chronic poverty. Its work combines grant making, commissioned research and policy analysis, and special initiatives. For more information see www.lankellychase.org.uk

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Collaborate is a social consultancy that helps public services collaborate to tackle complex social challenges.

Issues such as rising inequality, multiple needs, devolution and fairer economic growth require collaborative responses. We create partnerships that get beyond traditional silos to deliver credible change on the ground.

We are values-led, not for profit and driven by a belief in the power of collaborative services as a force for social and economic progress. Our clients and partners span local government, NHS, civil society and the private sector. For more information, see www.collaboratecic.com
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The Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond is clear: “To those who say Britain cannot afford to invest in infrastructure, I say we cannot afford not to invest in our future.” He is right, but he also misses a critical factor: the infrastructure gap facing our town and cities is not only physical or digital; it is social and public. The renewal of these places depends on us understanding and addressing that gap.

This report is our contribution to the debate about how this can be done. It draws on a year of action research supported by Lankelly Chase and hosted by local authorities and their partners in Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and the South East. It examines the ways in which system change in a place can improve outcomes for individuals and families with complex and multiple needs, and identifies the necessary infrastructure for whole-system change across local public services, anchor institutions and civil society. This ‘system infrastructure’ is comprised of nine interdependent building blocks which must be managed in concert, setting the challenge for ‘would-be’ system leaders.

This is the hard graft of building future public services today. The need for deeper connectivity with citizens, and systemic change in the public service offer, is more palpable than ever. Without working on the underlying infrastructure for change, the rhetoric of support for the ‘shared society’ and ‘places left behind’ will remain empty.

Local public service leaders must cut a path. Many are already doing so, and indeed our insights are drawn from their efforts to push against the grain in the places we worked with for this research. But others need help. Our offer is therefore to work with places that truly want to shift the system to benefit those for whom it needs to work much more seamlessly and effectively, using the system infrastructure framework as a way of supporting collaborative practice. Collaborate and Lankelly Chase will work in partnership in a small number of places over the coming year, and we will share the learning from this work and Collaborate’s broader practice as it emerges.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Henry Kippin
Chief Executive
COLLABORATE

Alice Evans
Director, Systems Change
LANKELLY CHASE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015 Collaborate, with support from Lankelly Chase, explored the vision and behaviours that public services should embrace to improve the experience and outcomes of people facing severe and multiple disadvantage. However, there is a gap between the vision − for future public services that are asset-based, integrated and collaborative − and the ability of public service organisations to put this vision into practice. Innovative projects tend to get stuck at the margins and don’t lead to real system change in local public services.

The reality is that growth, reform and the post-Brexit drive to reconnect with communities are impossible unless one gets the collaborative infrastructure right. It is the ‘hard-wiring’ that is needed to shift a set of siloed services to a whole-place model. It is what must sit behind headline-grabbing announcements on inclusive growth and industrial strategy. It is the key to building the human and social capital that enables our communities to thrive.

This report aims to close this gap by identifying the nine building blocks of infrastructure, or hard-wiring, that are required to translate warm words and ambition into fundamental changes in culture and practice. It is the result of a year of action research in Coventry, Oldham and Essex and engagement with expert practitioners from spanning the public, private and not for profit sector. Our argument is that improving outcomes in today’s context depends on strengthening the ‘system infrastructure’ that underpins services to the public in a place.

The need for a collaborative local system approach

Individuals and families with the most complex needs, those who face severe and multiple disadvantage, are at the hard edge of the challenges facing public services. They are least equipped to adapt to social and economic change and most impacted by welfare reform and service cuts. Lankelly Chase’s research has shown that, too often, individuals remain trapped in repeating cycles of intervention, and intergenerational patterns of deprivation develop.

A range of agencies and services are designed to support people facing multiple needs, but these are often ineffective as they are fragmented and designed to deal with a single issue. This requires us to reframe our thinking.

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This reframing of the problem leads to three shifts that we need to make in the way we think about public services and how we can improve outcomes in communities:

1. Change the assumption that public services alone can solve problems; recasting them as part of a local system (including people, families, communities, local organisations and institutions, the third sector and businesses) that can influence outcomes, and build local ways of working that consider the reality of people’s lives.

2. Consider how the collective power of the system can be mobilised to address a common cause, building collaboration between different public services, the non-statutory sector (such as community and voluntary organisations and business) and with communities; understanding the role all of these can play in improving local outcomes.

3. Use public money to invest in, build and influence the system, to support and enable other parts of the system to play a role in achieving positive change.

This report argues that there are three key local system perspectives underpinning these shifts: citizens and communities; local non-statutory organisations such as businesses, faith organisations and the third sector; and the statutory sector; all have a key role to play in achieving better outcomes.

Collaborative places enable local people and institutions – statutory and non-statutory – to work together to achieve positive change, contributing differently but coherently. But to support collaborative practice and culture, new collaborative infrastructure needs to be built.
The nine building blocks of system infrastructure

We have identified nine building blocks of collaborative local systems. They connect people and organisations and help align the incentives driving individual organisations, creating a gravitational pull that is towards collaboration for shared outcomes. Drawing on our research in Oldham, Coventry and Essex, we set them out below.

The question for system leaders is: to what extent are they all present in your place?

1. Place-Based Strategies & Plans
A vision for place, based on a shared understanding of local challenges and co-produced with the ‘unusual suspects’. Too often, these turn out to be works of fiction. But system leaders can make them stick and make them real.

2. Governance
A collaborative leadership governance structure that is cross-sector, cross-cutting and which holds the whole system to account. Turning up to meetings is not enough – governance needs to support collaborative purpose and system leaders need to invest time in building the capacity of the system.

3. Outcomes & Accountability
Local accountability through shared outcomes and metrics that have a direct line to the experience of citizens and communities. What is needed is shared responsibility and accountability among partners for what really matters in a place.

4. Funding & Commissioning
Collaborative commissioning platforms and local budgeting driven by social value and asset-based principles. This means a new code of conduct for commissioners, and an increasingly key role for independent funding.

5. Culture Change & People Development
Capacity to build collaboration readiness and hold the weight of profound change across agencies. Workforce development needs to emerge from the shadows as part of a more collaborative approach to performance management.

6. Delivery
Collaborative and integrated service models that blend a hard implementation focus with the need for trust-based working at the front line. Network building and social connection are just as important as service delivery.

7. Data, Evidence & Evaluation
Collaborative learning and evaluation, supported by shared data that supports insight-based working between statutory and non-statutory partners. This goes beyond data sharing to generating collaborative insight into the root causes of need and demand.

8. Collaborative Platforms: Digital & Physical
Shared spaces – online or in person – which function as the ‘junction box’ of the system. Public services should invest, enable and create space for others to come together and improve outcomes.

9. Communications & Engagement
Feedback loops within and between parts of the system which enable real-time collaboration and adaptive delivery. Today the risk of not collaborating outweighs single organisation delivery risk in many areas.
Building collaborative local infrastructure

Local conditions will determine the readiness of different places to begin a process of collaborative change. There are five steps that places should take, ranging from undertaking a diagnostic to create a social and economic portrait of a place, creating a future vision for the place and identifying new collaborative operating principles, through to building the readiness and the infrastructure to support collaboration.

Oldham represents a good example of a place which is building a ‘whole system, whole place’ approach to change, with progress on all nine infrastructure blocks to support it. The Ignite project in Coventry is an example of new principles for public services being translated into action through a small-scale prototype, with a view to driving system change across the wider system and place. Projects such as this risk remaining at the margins of the system unless a collaborative local infrastructure is built to support real system change.

Conclusion

In 2015, Nick Timmins of The King’s Fund wrote that “system leadership is an act of persuasion that needs to have an evidence base for change”1. This report is an attempt to help system leaders organise and align this evidence base. There are many ways to make change happen. But our evidence suggests that, for it to be sustainable and to effect a system benefit that individuals can feel, all nine building blocks are needed.

Shifting from rhetoric to fundamental system change in local public services is the work of today’s public servants. This report forms a critical part of Collaborate’s contribution to thinking about how that can be done.
This is a moment of profound dislocation for people working in public services and anyone dedicated to achieving positive social change. The current system of local public services cannot meet the challenges being faced by the most vulnerable people in our communities.

In 2015, Collaborate (with funding from Lankelly Chase) examined what shifts public services need to make in order to provide better support for the most marginalised. This work, published in the report Behaving Like a System, started from the perspective of people with multiple and complex needs. It identified asset-based, collaborative principles and behaviours that public services should embrace to enable to improve service users’ experience and outcomes.

These principles of being citizen-centred, asset-based, putting beneficiary impact over organisation focus and distributed leadership (to name a few) have proven to be timely. In response to numerous pressures, many public service institutions across the country are asking themselves what a new account of the role of local public services would look like: less paternal, more empowering; prioritising local collaboration over centralised hierarchies; holistic not fragmented; and facilitating the contribution of citizens and a broad range of organisations and activities to improve outcomes.

However, it is clear that, for many, there is a gap between this knowledge and the tools required to make genuine shifts in practice. Working in this way challenges some basic historic assumptions about the role and value of the state and the sovereignty of organisations within it. It implies a different relationship between the state and citizens. Those of us working in public services are required to shift how we think, behave and work, to start from the perspective of the citizen, to build new relationships and, fundamentally, to develop a different understanding of how to create positive change in our communities.

Collaborate believe that such local collaboration will remain a pipe dream – or stuck at the margins as interesting but small-scale pilots and projects, of which there are many examples – unless public service organisations take the time to understand and purposefully build the local system infrastructure that provide the routes for aspirational words to become new practice. This ‘hard-wiring’ is critical to enable us to shift culture and practice across public services and place.

The focus of this report (and much of Collaborate’s larger body of work) is to identify the critical system infrastructure that is required to translate principles and behaviours into practice.

This report endeavours to do three things:

- In Section 1 we explore why building collaborative local systems is a route to improving the economic and social outcomes in places.
- In Section 2 we identify the infrastructure, that is critical to enabling collaborative local systems to function, and how existing organisational infrastructure (including funding, accountability, governance, delivery and workforce development) needs to be redesigned for this purpose.
- In Section 3 we explore how places can build collaborative systems.

Who this report is for

The nine building blocks of system infrastructure we identify in this report are the result of our research in Coventry, Oldham and Essex and engagement with an expert group of practitioners spanning the statutory, charity and social enterprise sectors. However, they are relevant and applicable to public services in all places.

This report will be useful to those responsible for designing and building local public services with the aim of addressing complex social problems. We believe that local authorities and statutory local public services, as the bodies with the biggest influence over local public services, will find a compelling argument for change within this report.

The report also speaks to the third sector, business, and social funders, because all these sectors have a critical role to play in a more collaborative and systemic approach to positive change in our communities.
SECTION 1

THE NEED FOR A COLLABORATIVE LOCAL SYSTEM APPROACH
Drivers for change in public services

Public services have traditionally been designed to solve society’s problems. A health service to treat illness. Social services to look after people who need support. Mental health services to treat the mentally ill. Police to step in when people are not safe. Drug and alcohol services to cure people of their addictions. And so on: a complex arrangement of publicly funded services, often designed and delivered through a narrow lens, with varying levels of control by the central and local state, and varying levels of central and local accountability.

Public services play a critical role in helping and protecting citizens. But we know that something is not working. Demand for public services is ever-increasing, driven partly by an ageing population, changing public expectations and the increasingly complex needs of service users.

More fundamentally, public services are not solving our most intractable social and economic challenges. Inequalities in health, education outcomes and economic participation are rising. There is huge variation in the social and economic outcomes of different towns and cities in the UK, and even within neighbourhoods. Communities where the most public money is spent continue to place the highest demand on our services over time.

And we know that individuals and families with the most complex needs, those who face severe and multiple disadvantage, are at the hard edge of these challenges. They are least equipped to adapt to social and economic change and most impacted by welfare reform and service cuts. Lankelly Chase’s research has shown that, too often, individuals remain trapped in repeating cycles of intervention, and intergenerational patterns of deprivation develop. A range of agencies and services are designed to support people facing multiple needs, but these are often ineffective because they are designed to deal with a single issue. The experience of the service user is disjointed, and people with the most complex needs are required to navigate the most complex systems.

A number of factors are prompting change in public services. The austerity agenda has resulted in local authorities in England cutting 27 percent of their spending in real terms between 2010/11 and 2015/16, with a further reduction of £9.5 billion in local authority spending expected by 2025. Such reductions fall disproportionately on people in poverty or those suffering complex and multiple needs. While the rate of the cuts has driven many local authorities to ‘salami slice’ their budgets and focus cuts on non-statutory services, increasing numbers are reflecting that ‘less of the same’ may not be a sustainable response in the long term.

Policy drivers from central government are also motivating a rethink of the local public service model. Integration of some local services, particularly health and social care, through initiatives such as NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plans, requires local areas to think about how to shift investment away from acute and reactive settings and towards more community-based solutions.

And devolution to combined authorities is based at least partly on the analysis that more control over local funding and services will enable a more systemic response to local problems, and a coherent approach to economic growth and public service reform. Even if the focus to date has been primarily on economic growth, devolution creates opportunities for public service reform as a route to better social and economic outcomes.

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It is clear that public services need to change. But how?

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Whole system, whole place collaboration

Collaborate and Lankelly Chase’s work with local authorities, other public services and the third sector across the country has reinforced two key insights that have implications for our understanding of the role of public services.

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Based on these insights, we think there are three shifts needed in how we think about public services and how we can change outcomes in communities:

1. Change the assumption that public services alone can solve problems; recasting them as part of a local system (including people, families, communities, local organisations and institutions, the third sector and businesses) that can influence outcomes, and build local ways of working that consider the reality of people’s lives.

2. Consider how the collective power of the system can be mobilised to address a common cause, building collaboration between different public services, the non-statutory sector (such as community and voluntary organisations and business) and with communities; understanding the role all of these can play in improving local outcomes.

3. Use public money to invest in, build, and influence the system to support and enable other parts of the system to play a role in achieving positive change.

A collaborative local system, then, is a range of organisations (including public services, anchor institutions such as businesses and universities and the third sector) and individuals in a place working towards shared aims.

“We need to create a system that enables all the energy and capacity here to be used”
– COUNCIL OFFICER

“...most importantly, [we] need to work more collaboratively with our residents, our partners, our communities and our businesses to shape the Essex we want to live in – an Essex where people can thrive and prosper without dependency on the Council and where the public sector is regarded as working seamlessly”
– ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL ‘100 DAY REPORT’

“We’ is everyone – beyond public services and not owned by the council”
– THIRD SECTOR LEADER

“System change is about changing behaviours and the way people see their organisation’s role”
– VOLUNTARY ACTION ORGANISATION

“Each agency has to work beyond its natural perspective”
– COUNCIL OFFICER
Building Collaborative Places

Working as a local system presents the opportunity to build new, collaborative routes to improved social outcomes, and how to do this is the focus of this report. Behaving like a system also unlocks new local routes to change:

a) From silo service delivery towards integrated public service reform and economic growth
   Many of the determinants of the ability to access and benefit from economic growth are social and cultural, and yet we tend to focus on the physical (such as transport infrastructure), the service-based (such as JobCentre Plus) or even the punitive (such as welfare reform). How could we use public service resources to build people's confidence and capacity to access jobs, creating the pre-conditions for inclusive growth?

b) From efficiency gains for one organisation to demand management across a system
   A whole system approach enables public service organisations to shift from focusing on efficiency gains (or cuts) for individual organisations to thinking about demand management across a whole system of services. How can we align the financial incentives of different parts of the public sector better? And what is the case for integrated, local investment in community networks and activity as a means of managing demand for services?

c) From services to outcomes in a place
   We can think much more holistically about how outcomes in a place are achieved. By moving beyond service and organisational silos, places can begin to explore what integration for outcomes would look like: frontline services as part of a local eco-system, coherent services that reflect the complexity of people's lives, well-aligned community engagement and programmes, and local councillors who act as community connectors and facilitators. Here the accountability of an individual public service would shift from the quality of the specific services delivered to the quality of the outcomes in a place.

d) From political vision for the council to political vision for the place
   Working as a system provides the opportunity to move from a focus on the political vision for the council, and towards a political vision for the place, with democratic accountability for a wider range of local services and investment to achieve the vision.

Understanding system perspectives

One message emerged clearly from our research: the right place to start is not to look at the current public sector or even place-based infrastructure and think about how to ‘lift and shift’ it. Rather we should begin by exploring different system perspectives, including citizens, and ask what we would design to support system actors to contribute to improving outcomes.

To do this, places need to understand:

- Who those different actors are – the key perspectives within a local system (people and organisations)
- The unique role they can play in achieving a positive change in outcomes
- The collaborative local infrastructure that will enable them to act as part of the system, working towards shared objectives

In the context of place, we think it is simplest to think about three perspectives within the system and the unique role they can play in achieving social change:

<table>
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<th>System perspective and actors</th>
<th>Role</th>
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| Statutory agencies and public service providers (local authorities, health bodies, police and so on) | System leaders  
Lead work to determine the vision and behaviour of the system  
Recognise, convene, invest in building in a local system  
Deliver collaborative public services |
| Local non-statutory organisations: third sector, business, universities, places of worship | The ‘junction boxes’: organisations, groups, associations, businesses that contribute to ‘good’ things happening in a place  
Draw people together in shared purpose or interests, provide spaces and opportunities for interaction  
Connect strands of social capital and networks |
| Citizens and communities – people who live in a place | Mutual help, networks, neighbours who know and help each other, informal ‘self-organising’ – the ‘first line of defence’ against social problems |

“We need networks, not hierarchies”

– VOLUNTARY ACTION ORGANISATION
In collaborative places this range of system actors - local people and institutions, both statutory and non-statutory, are supported to work together to achieve positive change, contributing differently but coherently.

Our previous report (Behaving like a System) examined the ‘vision and behaviours’ required from people working in public services (defined broadly, including the third sector) from the perspective of people facing complex and multiple needs. Taken together these represent a new set of operating principles for local public services and places. We think they should be brokered locally with citizen input, and agreed by local partners. Then they can be knitted into the system through collaborative infrastructure.
Not only would the experience of engaging with public services change if these principles were at play, but also the actual experience of living in a place. Principles such as working with local assets, being citizen-centred, acknowledging issues as systemic and acting as a platform for innovation provide the starting point for designing a local system to help people live well. They require the contribution of different system actors, enabling this wider set of local resources to be recognised as part of a system.

The diagram on the following page illustrates what a collaborative place would look like. It highlights the role and contribution of the key organisations and actors in a place (statutory services, local non-statutory organisations and citizens) and how they can come together as part of a coherent system.

We need to build local collaborative systems to improve social outcomes. However, as we found in the research, which is also backed up by Collaborate’s experience supporting places on the ground, this is easy to say and hard to do. Translating new vision and principles for collaborative, place-based change into real shifts in collaborative culture and practice requires the hard graft of system change: building the new collaborative local infrastructure that will support it. We explore the new infrastructure in Section Two.
An illustration of the roles of system actors in a collaborative place
SECTION 2
THE NINE BUILDING BLOCKS OF COLLABORATIVE LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE
What do we mean by collaborative local infrastructure?

Collaborative local (place-based) infrastructure acts as the ‘hard-wiring’ of the collaborative system. It connects people and organisations, and it helps align the incentives driving individual organisations, creating a gravitational pull towards collaboration for shared outcomes, rather than away from collaboration and towards narrow organisational drivers.

All organisations currently have their own versions of this infrastructure. It determines how they work: the strategies they are guided by, the way they are led and governed, the outcomes they are held accountable for, the way that money flows, what staff are trained to do, and so on. A key insight from our research is that, in the main, this separate, silo infrastructure tends to undermine collaboration, thereby fracturing the local system. Furthermore, the role of collaborative infrastructure to enable system change is often overlooked, misunderstood and underplayed.

To achieve change through whole system, whole place collaboration we must redesign and repurpose existing institutional infrastructure so that it becomes collaborative and local – a shared infrastructure for shared endeavour. And to ensure that we are being genuinely systemic – enabling all organisations and individuals to contribute to shared purpose – we must consider what role the infrastructure has to play to enable them to make a contribution.

In this section we explore the nine building blocks of infrastructure for local collaboration that we have identified.

Taken at face value, there is nothing surprising about these nine blocks of infrastructure. However, when they are considered through the lens of local collaboration, across sectors and with citizens, it becomes clear that traditional infrastructure is not fit for purpose.

This section of the report will help local authorities, other local statutory partners, third sector organisations and others working in places to think about the current state of the local infrastructure, the ways in which it needs to be redesigned to enable whole system, whole place collaboration, and the future state that the ‘system builders’ should be working towards.

It takes each of the nine blocks in turn and describes:

• What the infrastructure traditionally looks like from two key system perspectives: the statutory sector (public services) and the non-statutory local organisations (such as the third sector, business, universities and places of worship)

• What the infrastructure would look like if it were collaborative and local – blending the system perspectives to reflect the principle that collaborative infrastructure should enable more equal relationships between different stakeholders

• Examples of collaborative infrastructure that are being developed in the three research locations

“There are many problems with current systems, including dependence on the traditional infrastructure”

– COUNCIL OFFICER

“We’re still too reliant on personal relationships. The system is fragile”

– COUNCIL OFFICER
We would like to acknowledge our debt to original imagery created by Indy Johar and Immy Kaur. See it here.
PLACE-BASED STRATEGIES AND PLANS

A co-produced strategy that sets out the social and economic vision for place as a shared challenge among local partners and citizens, and core operating principles for local public services. In practice, the place-based strategy is likely to form the foundation for local collaboration, on which the other collaborative infrastructure parts are built. Other plans may fall out from this, but this remains the primary reference point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Collaborative, Place-based</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statutory sector:</strong></td>
<td>A shared social and economic long-term vision for place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A range of overlapping, and at times contradictory, strategies and plans for separate organisations across a place.</td>
<td>The ‘place’ is clearly defined and the local social and economic challenges are understood as drivers for change. Key priority areas are outlined and responsibility is shared by all partners, statutory and non-statutory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In some cases, there is a single plan for the place, but this often sits above, and is disconnected from, separate organisational strategies and delivery plans. Such plans tend to fit around existing ways of working, rather than requiring the building of collaborative, local infrastructure.</td>
<td>Co-produced with local people and organisations, drawing on a range of perspectives and experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-statutory local organisations:</strong></td>
<td>Delivery of outcomes is explicitly acknowledged as requiring collaboration across sectors and with citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies and plans are disconnected from other organisational strategies and activity plans. They are often based on an organisation’s priorities rather than the needs of a place.</td>
<td>Outlines a set of operating principles for collaboration to underpin all work going forward.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples

Oldham’s Five Year Forward View

Oldham Council already has a borough plan that links directly to the Greater Manchester reform ambitions and expresses how Oldham’s ambitions will be achieved through a cooperative approach that sees public services and citizens working together.

The Oldham Leadership Board, which includes all the key public service partners and other key organisations such as third sector and business leaders, is now leading the development of a Five Year Forward View for the whole borough. The Five Year Forward View will set out how the shared vision for the place will be realised through three key strands, achieved through whole system collaboration.

These are:

- **Cooperative services** – radical system change that embeds social value, collaboration with citizens and cross-agency working as the default across Oldham. This builds on deep existing relationships, with the board becoming a working group that both adds value and unpicks system blockages.

- **Thriving Communities** – an ambitious programme of work that invests in the social capital of communities and the capacity of public services to enhance and support it – led by a range of partners including the voluntary, leisure, further education and health sectors as well as the council. This ‘demand-side’ work is critical to the success of integrated health and social care arrangements for Oldham within the Greater Manchester devolution agreement.

- **Inclusive Growth** – a much more granular model of inclusive growth for Oldham that builds on the success of the Get Oldham Working initiative, and which sees growth, public services and social action as indivisible and mutually reinforcing.

Essex Vision

Essex partners are developing a long-term vision for Essex through a process of partner and public engagement. The aim is to create a bold story for Essex that can help promote the county on the national and international stage; develop a shared understanding of the key things partners want to achieve together for Essex; and project the vision confidently and collectively. The Vision for Essex was initiated by the Essex Partnership in response to several reviews, which all suggested that the lack of a shared vision was a key barrier to partnership working.

“We believe in doing this together”

– HOUSING PROVIDER

“We need clarity of vision and outcomes to do our bit”

– VOLUNTARY SECTOR PROVIDER
**GOVERNANCE**

Leaders of organisations and groups who guide and support the place-based system. The focus is on curating a collaborative way of working as well as the stewardship, building and sustaining of the system and collaborative infrastructure.

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</table>
| **Statutory sector:**
Disparate and top-down governance structures across a place. Boards such as Local Strategic Partnerships and Public Service Boards view their role as safeguarding and running good public services, which are principally organised around service silos.

Usually undertake light touch, often informal, engagement with other local organisations. |

A forum of collaborative system leadership (including statutory, third sector, and community representatives) which builds shared understanding of the principles and practice required to achieve the place-based vision, and invests time and resources to create this.

Cross-sector partners take on the role of stewards, investors and builders of the system in a place. They share a commitment to create the conditions for designing and delivering the collaborative infrastructure.

They have oversight of different parts of the system infrastructure, such as accountability for the place-based strategy.

They lead public service reform to embed new shared operating principles for public services. They create the conditions to stimulate problem-solving and the generation of new ideas and collaborative solutions. They are guided by the place-based strategy and outcomes and take investment decisions based on its priorities.

Non-statutory representative organisations (such as voluntary action organisations) act as connectors that bring people from the statutory sector and non-statutory bodies together. |

**Non-statutory local organisations:**
Have a traditional but often tokenistic representative role on governance boards, which tend to be controlled by statutory partners.

Representative and membership organisations (such as voluntary action or third organisations, or business organisations such as Chambers of Commerce) bring together people and organisations, but tend to play a traditional role as representatives of the sector to the local authority and other statutory agencies. This can become something of a parent-child relationship, in which the representative organisations advocate on behalf of their members for funding and recognition.
Examples

Essex Partnership

The Essex Partnership involves a range of public sector organisations, the voluntary sector, businesses and universities. Its mission is to tackle so-called ‘wicked issues’, i.e. those issues which are complex, cross-cutting and drive poor outcomes and high costs in public services. This work is led by the Essex Partnership Board and supported by the Essex Public Service Reform Unit. The Reform Unit focuses on developing whole-system and innovative approaches to tackling wicked issues, developing shared system capability (in particular, regarding data sharing and analytics) and also developing solutions that are grounded in and led by communities. Essex has developed a strong evidence base around this work. A horizon scanning exercise identified key trends and wicked issues. Evidence of what works is developed through being a pilot area in the Community Budgets programme and subsequent projects.

Oldham Partnership

Partners in Oldham have invested a great deal of time and effort in recent years to reforming partnership arrangements and relationships with the aim of building meaningful collaboration. The Oldham Partnership includes leaders from across the statutory and non-statutory sectors, including the third sector, business and anchor institutions. The collaborative function of the Partnership is supported by three cross-cutting Commissioning Clusters: 10, two of which are chaired by local partners:

- Economy and Skills
- Thriving Communities (Cooperatives and Neighbourhoods)
- Health and Wellbeing

The commissioning clusters enable the Oldham Partnership to lead, influence, collaborate and commission across partner organisations in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for residents. They are not talking shops; they are functional units that have developed collective investment agreements, including the award-winning Warm Homes investment agreement which addressed the causes of fuel poverty in the borough.

Voluntary Action Coventry

Working closely with Coventry City Council and other statutory partners, Voluntary Action Coventry has fundamentally changed its view of its role within the system of public sector and voluntary sector organisations in Coventry. Traditionally acting as a representative body, it has refocused its purpose as a “change agent and catalyst” by connecting people and organisations with different perspectives to find new solutions to shared problems. It is attempting to “disrupt the parent-child relationship” between the statutory sector (particularly commissioners) and the voluntary sector. It brings them together in a more equal partnership, for example by holding action-orientated networking workshops to share information and ideas across agencies and sectors in key areas of service transformation. Voluntary Action Coventry is positioning itself and the wider sector as part of the solution, rather than a consultee, by providing opportunities for problems to be shared and explored early on in the commissioning cycle.

“The council’s role is the coordination of equals”

– VOLUNTARY ACTION ORGANISATION

“All partners speak the same language”

– HOUSING PROVIDER

“It’s very difficult to change from hierarchical leadership to shared endeavour”

– THIRD SECTOR LEADER

“When you’re a part of a system, you have to put something in”

– NON-STATUTORY PROVIDER

“Leadership has to come from more than one place”

– CHARITY

“We are unlearning how the voluntary sector works”

– VOLUNTARY ACTION COVENTRY INTERVIEWEE
OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Place-based outcomes representing shared goals that set out the social and economic changes that will be achieved over a period of time through systemic collaboration. Mutual system accountability is based on shared responsibility and reciprocity.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Statutory sector:</strong></td>
<td>A shared, place-based outcomes and accountability framework is driven by the social and economic challenges and vision for the place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations are working to different priority outcomes across a place.</td>
<td>Place-based outcomes are prioritised according to the needs of the place and community, and inform the delivery and design of services across the place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes are viewed as being driven by the delivery of high quality services, but delivered in silos.</td>
<td>The outcomes are co-produced and owned by partners across the system – third sector, business, citizens and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is an uneven democratic accountability across local public services; for instance, council leaders are held accountable for council services, not place-based outcomes. Other public services’ accountability (such as health, jobs and skills services) are primarily to regulators and central government.</td>
<td>Organisational outcomes are aligned with place-based outcomes, creating stronger incentives for collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In some places, there is an aspiration to share outcomes, but organisations are frequently drawn back to silo working because the incentives to collaborate aren’t strong enough and shared ambition hasn’t been translated into other areas, for example shared delivery and accountability.</td>
<td>The place-based outcomes framework drives the shared accountability of all local partners, statutory and non-statutory. ‘Whole-borough’ and ‘whole place’ metrics are developed that help hold the system to account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-statutory local organisations:</strong></td>
<td>Accountability is shared throughout the system, with engagement and co-production between people with different perspectives helping to challenge stereotypes about organisations and roles, change behaviours and build relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are generally not recognised as part of the place-based system that is a route to improved social outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regarded by the statutory sector as important and good to have in a place, but operating outside of the statutory system, except where organisations are commissioned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The current commissioning environment encourages competition rather than collaboration, and often forces third sector agencies to think in terms of outputs rather than outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-statutory organisations feel accountable to organisational boards or shareholders focused on narrow outputs; they don’t feel incentivised to collaborate and contribute to place-based outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some types of organisations, such as private businesses, are not widely recognised as having an important role in supporting place-based system outcomes (for example through employment practice, job creation, employee schemes, social value).</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example

Shared accountability across the Oldham Partnership

Place-based accountability is hard to implement and sustain, which is why the Oldham Partnership Board has begun a process of not only developing a ‘Five Year Forward View’ for the borough, but working on the terms of engagement between the group and those things that will drive shared priorities forward outside of the meeting room. A critical element of this (and defining characteristic of a Cooperative Council) is clarity on the relationship between services and the public – which needs to be more co-productive, and more grounded in a listening culture led by elected members and civic partners.

“The way it works is: ‘You do your bit, I’ll do mine’”
– COUNCIL OFFICER

“The collective responsibility is the same – but all the partners have their own unique role in making it happen”
– POLICE OFFICER

“We need more alignment of incentives and accountability across all partners”
– BUSINESS LEADER

“Our accountability is about outcomes for the place, not only things like domestic violence and robbery. Performance measures are important, but we also have to look beyond them to making the place better”
– POLICE OFFICER
FUNDING AND COMMISSIONING

Place-based funding models and commissioning practice that reflect place-based plans and outcomes and support new forms of collaborative delivery.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Statutory sector:</strong></td>
<td>Collaborative funding models and decisions are driven by an understanding of the needs and assets of a place and the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disparate central funding streams going to different statutory agencies in a place.</td>
<td>Funding is underpinned by collective impact investment principles, meaning that funding models are designed to support the collaborative achievement of shared outcomes across a place (for example whole-place commissioning budgets).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited flexibility to pool resources and silo-based funding carries the risk of duplication.</td>
<td>A new code of conduct to guide public service commissioning, based on engagement with service users, collaboration between providers and ongoing learning and adaptation. The introduction of collaborative commissioning from a place-based budget reinforces co-production and delivery, allows money to be invested more coherently through the system and helps reduce duplication and waste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment is weighted towards reactive interventions; few incentives for agencies to share the benefits of preventative work.</td>
<td>The funding relationship between statutory and non-statutory agencies shifts from a top-down hierarchy to a partnership within a place-based ecology. This shift focuses on understanding the role and value of different funding streams and assets (statutory, philanthropic, community etc.), and looking for opportunities to collaborate and leverage resources – for example via partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory agencies spend resources on complicated and costly tendering and commissioning processes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioning is focused on outcomes driven by services, rather than the strategic priorities for the place.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-statutory local organisations:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisations are competing for limited funding streams, contracts and resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioning practices (e.g. application, monitoring and evaluation requirements) often exclude or overwhelm small third sector organisations. Resource is wasted in responding to complex tendering processes, and there is limited incentive for collaboration built into the commissioning and tendering process. The funding is often based on short-term contracts and with limited flexibility.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social value is not clearly understood as maximising impact on social outcomes through the activities of partners (e.g. employment opportunities for residents) – leading to missed opportunities to leverage the potential of the wider system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent funders and private CSR initiatives supporting communities are unaligned and often driven by immediate need, with little vision for long-term impact.</td>
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Example

Oldham’s integrated commissioning and investment agreements

Oldham’s joint investment approach began with the investment agreement for Warm Homes, jointly funded by the CCG, the council and Oldham Housing Investment Partnership which helps people in Oldham who struggle to heat their homes. In its first year the Warm Homes Oldham scheme lifted 1074 people out of fuel poverty, won the sustainability award at the 2016 Guardian Public Service Awards for its “completely new way of thinking” about the relationship between health, poverty and energy efficiency.

Oldham has also developed integrated commissioning arrangements in health and social care and is developing integrated commissioning in new areas to support the Five Year Forward View.

Oldham – like the other nine boroughs of Greater Manchester – developed a Locality Plan outlining its plans for health and social care integration as part of the GM devolution programme. The Oldham bid includes significant investment in the integrated commissioning of preventative out-of-hospital services and interventions to support community resilience.

“Place-based funding is a big opportunity if it leads to more flexible commissioning”
- VOLUNTARY SECTOR PROVIDER

“We need to invest in creating ecosystems of hyper-local activities”
- GP AND CCG MEMBER

“It shouldn’t be a transactional conversation about contracts but about the best services for citizens”
- THIRD SECTOR PROVIDER
CULTURE CHANGE AND PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

Building capacity to create leaders, organisations, workforce and communities that are ready to work collaboratively.

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| **Statutory sector:**  
Organisational development approaches are not creating the conditions for the shifts in culture and practice that are needed to work collaboratively.  
Organisational culture in the public sector does not encourage or enable systemic innovation – new ways of working are tested at small scale, but tend not to drive wider change.  
Workforce development is specific to individual organisations. Collaborative skills and practice are not generally developed or recruited for through organisational development programmes. Job descriptions and staff performance management approaches do not incentivise or reward collaboration.  

| **Non-statutory local organisations:**  
As above. Additionally, collaboration is often based on opportunity or one-off relationships, not driven by place-based change or system design. It often exists within small-scale projects, but is not shifted into a wider ways of working.  
Place-based culture change and organisational development programmes are designed to grow collaboration readiness, skills and capacity.  
A cross-sector approach to workforce development is prioritised throughout the system; for example system leadership support for senior leaders through to middle managers and frontline staff. At the frontline this includes redesigning the way that people working in services engage with residents, and uncovering citizens’ ability to collaborate, for example through asset-based community development.  
Development of different roles and behaviours of frontline staff is supported by reformed performance management processes and techniques. |
Examples

Essex leadership development programme

The Essex Partnership Board has invested in a collaborative leadership development programme that takes 50 leaders from the public and voluntary sectors and supports them to think and work across organisational boundaries. The programme also helps participants to understand what it means to work from the perspective of the assets as well as the needs of communities. It focuses on twelve ‘wicked issues’: cross-cutting challenges that need a cross-cutting response, such as social isolation, skills and productivity.

‘Systems changers’, a Lankelly Chase programme

Systems Changers is a 12 week programme delivered by the Point People and Snook. Its focus is on knowledge development, observation and visits for frontline staff which addresses the question of how those who work with people facing complex and multiple disadvantage can influence system change.

Oldham frontline staff development programme

Oldham worked with an external training provider to develop a bespoke new offer for staff training and skills development which was provided to over 600 local council staff, police, housing officers, schools and GPs. The training was designed to support Oldham’s Neighbourhood Early Adopters, in which integrated frontline teams work closely with residents to provide a coherent service offer alongside community participation opportunities.

“Culture change is the biggest barrier”
– COUNCIL OFFICER

“Managers are trained to be responsible for the service as it is, not how it could be”
– COUNCIL OFFICER

“We had to train officers to engage with people better”
– POLICE OFFICER

“This can’t just be driven by council PSR [Public Service Reform] teams. You need the frontline to own it”
– CHARITY PROVIDER
Collaborative, integrated service delivery that puts into practice the principles for collaborative public services outlined in the place-based strategy.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statutory sector:</strong></td>
<td>Collaborative, integrated and multi-agency service delivery at the frontline, for example mental health services, social care and housing working together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silo delivery by different agencies and services.</td>
<td>Intervening early and managing demand by preventing people recycling through the system. Staff take time to understand the root causes of people’s problems, responding in a more holistic and coherent way to the interconnections between them, particularly for people with multiple and complex needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple interventions for individuals and families, often uncoordinated. A tendency to respond to the presenting problem rather than explore the root causes of need. This is especially problematic for people with multiple and complex needs.</td>
<td>Lead officers act in more ‘permeable’ (less specialist) roles and assist with navigation of the system on behalf of the beneficiary, reducing the number of professionals that individuals and families need to liaise with. Co-located teams work alongside community development capacity, the third sector and communities in neighbourhoods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not asset-based: services tend not to ask what people can do to help themselves, or explore the role of the community in supporting recovery or wellbeing.</td>
<td>The ‘route to better outcomes’ for citizens is explicitly acknowledged as a combination of ‘service delivery’ with community connecting and capacity building. Frontline services work with partners to actively connect people to other people and activities in their neighbourhood, including those run by the third sector. It is understood that improving outcomes requires partners to understand the local ‘ecosystem’ of services, community networks, organisations and activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration, integration and co-location are the exception, not the norm.</td>
<td>This shift in delivery is supported by leadership that works across organisations, and operational frameworks at the delivery level that manage risk across the system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-statutory local organisations:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some duplication of activity because organisations are working in isolation from each other.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A tendency to respond narrowly to one problem, rather than considering the root causes of people’s needs and collaborating with others to provide more holistic and coherent support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often recognise the benefits of collaborative delivery but are not incentivised to act in this way or supported to build relationships with other organisations or sectors.</td>
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Examples

Ignite project in Coventry

Ignite is a collaborative attempt to shift public service systems, processes and cultures towards earlier and more effective action. It is led by Coventry Law Centre and Grapevine (Coventry and Warwickshire), working with partners Coventry City Council and WM Housing Group. It is funded by the Early Action Neighbourhood Fund, which aims to reduce future demand for public services by supporting innovation in early help.

The aim of Ignite is to transform how needs get met, shifting the focus of the system so that it acts earlier, tackles root causes and mobilises personal and community capacity. The Ignite team find and build on the strengths and assets of people, families and communities. They combine their expertise in resolving issues that have a legal solution with their skill in building aspiration and networks of support for people, helping them manage their lives and become less reliant on services. They do this from within public services, always co-working alongside a family or child on a problem, not prescribing but building solutions grounded in the strengths and ambitions of the families themselves.

This ‘learning by doing’ is then reinforced by a regular joint cycle of planning, doing and reviewing which generates more formal learning about how systems, processes and staff need to change in order for their vision to succeed. These iterative cycles include other players in the system, not just frontline staff, with the aim of catalysing whole-system change.

Oldham multi-agency service teams

Oldham has built on the principles of integration and co-production to develop two neighbourhood-based early adopter projects in which integrated frontline teams (drawn from across different partners) work together to create a more coherent service offer to residents, and integrate this with community participation opportunities that help people to get active in their community and build new relationships.

The approach uses an Early Help self-assessment tool to help people identify the appropriate sources of help and support. It aims to demonstrate that if working in this way improves community resilience and thereby helps to manage service demand, then ultimately it may lead to lower service and staffing costs. This is being scaled up and combined with community resilience building activities as part of Oldham’s Thriving Communities programme.

“We are changing the behaviour and practice of the frontline. People need to go beyond their usual remit. The police’s job is to work collectively with others to improve lives in the area”
– POLICE OFFICER

“We need a more integrated frontline – or at least better coordination”
– CHARITY PROVIDER

“Delivery ‘stress-tests’ the commitment of different organisations to really collaborate”
– HOUSING PROVIDER
Data, Evidence and Evaluation

Collaborative and adaptive learning and evaluation, supported by shared data that provides the foundation for collective understanding into the root causes of need and demand, and insights about the impact of shared investment decisions.

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<td><strong>Statutory sector:</strong></td>
<td>A culture of adaptive learning and enquiry underpins and guides investment decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited data sharing among partners.</td>
<td>Data is shared among statutory and non-statutory partners to create a common and coherent understanding of the place: long-term trends, patterns and shifts in population, outcomes and neighbourhoods and the connections and correlations between a range of issues that are traditionally dealt with by different services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data is collected in silos, interpreted in line with individual organisational objectives, and not used to build insights into the root causes of problems.</td>
<td>Shared data feeds into the collective understanding of the ‘place’ and strategic priorities. It includes both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ data (the views of people within the system).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the effectiveness of services is driven by outputs, not outcomes.</td>
<td>A shared data platform is developed to ensure transparency and to support place-based investment decisions. Our research shows that the simple practice of sharing data and interrogating shared data is enough for partners to begin generating new insights and a collective understanding of a place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data is not generally triangulated with other sources of insight about what is happening in a place and what interventions are effective – for example qualitative data from the frontline and service users.</td>
<td>A sophisticated approach to evidence allows for a flexible response to interventions and provides input into collaborative services as they evolve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-statutory local organisations:</strong></td>
<td>Over time, robust data sharing protocols among partners are established, where legally possible, to support predictive data modelling and proactive investment as part of early intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject to monitoring and compliance where there are contracts, but generally required to evidence outputs rather than the impact on shared outcomes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Many organisations collect their own data, but this data is not routinely shared with statutory partners as part of the collective data set about a place and effective interventions.</td>
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</table>
Examples

Joint data for the Essex Partnership

The Public Service Reform team that supports the Essex Partnership is building a joint data hub to support greater collaboration and investment decisions. As an example, data can be used to predict areas of the county in which school readiness is weakest, enabling proactive and early investment and intervention, through both public services and support for community-based solutions.

Ignite Project, Coventry

The Ignite project is building on the Re-valuation model from NHS Change Day, creating new ways for stakeholders within the system to share the value to them of working differently or being involved. As part of Ignite’s iterative model of change, these views are gathered using workshops that include all stakeholders. The perspective offered by those experiencing the change is an integral part of this work. This is seen as a critical piece of data, used to guide decision making and to drive new ways of working that put people and place first.

“We need shared data to inform commissioning and help us manage demand across the system”

– COUNCIL OFFICER
COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS: DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL

Platforms are physical or virtual spaces that bring together people and organisations, enabling them to connect, develop networks and share information. They are the ‘junction boxes’ of the place-based system.

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<td><strong>Statutory sector:</strong></td>
<td>Spaces and places, both physical and digital, are invested in and built as platforms where local partners and residents can connect, identify common goals and develop solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations tend to design solutions to problems in isolation from each other. Historically, collaboration occurs through formal channels and is more focused on information sharing than collaborative working (for example, governance platforms such as Local Strategic Partnerships and Public Service Boards).</td>
<td>Public services are physically co-located where possible, supporting collaboration among staff and the design of joint solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The physical location of services is often not prioritised when reviewing systems, or it is thought of at the last stages of a restructure. Public services are often run from different buildings; there is some co-location, but this is the exception, not the norm.</td>
<td>Residents are encouraged to use publicly-owned assets such as parks and libraries, as well as spaces held by anchor organisations (for example businesses, the third sector and universities), as collaborative spaces in which people can come together both formally and informally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual organisations hold their own asset register. There is not a public asset register for the whole place.</td>
<td>The statutory sector invests in collaborative spaces such as Impact Hubs to enable people in the community to set up new projects, activities and social businesses. They also fund insurance for spaces used by the community but owned by others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector organisations run their own websites, generally focused on service information and transactions, not creating opportunities for interaction or connecting, or finding out information about local activities that are not formal services.</td>
<td>There is a place-based and publicly-available asset register and asset transfer policy, to enable people to identify spaces that can be used for collaborative purposes by different people and organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-statutory local organisations:</strong></td>
<td>The public sector actively encourages the use of public space for collaboration (for example, inviting communities to grow food in green spaces).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend to operate out of separate buildings and run their own websites with information about their services and activities. It is therefore difficult for citizens to find information and local directories quickly become out of date.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are often one-off events and meetings that bring together different organisations, but few platforms that deepen relationships and develop collaborative ways of working.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples

Birmingham Impact Hub

Birmingham Impact Hub describes its role as “a place to collaborate and discuss, challenge and be challenged”. Its aim is to “empower a collective movement to bring about change in our city... innovating to solve systemic challenges”\(^{14}\). As with the global network of impact hubs, it is simultaneously a collaborative workspace and a community of people interested in bringing about social change. Birmingham Impact Hub is now working in partnership with Birmingham City Council’s newly formed Improvement Team to help establish and support culture change workstreams in the council.

Oldham Library

Oldham Library is a public resource that has been reimagined as a non-commercial, neutral and enabling collaborative space. While a traditional library service is provided, the library also provides free access to meeting spaces for the community, a means of connecting people who may suffer from social isolation, a place where council staff from different services can engage with residents across a range of issues including signposting them to services (such as education, health, skills and early years) and community support, and access to professional advice. The role of library staff has shifted from ‘customer service’ to ‘engagement’, and staff have been trained in making a connection with library users and helped to think in a new way about their job. Multiple services are run from the library on a flexible basis, using the space for events such as early detection health events, enabling users to access services they may not access otherwise.

“We need places and spaces that can enable people to solve the things they want to change in their lives”
- IGNITE PROJECT

“We need spaces to do things together!”
- RESIDENT

“We need ways of enabling people to find what’s out there and link into it”
- COUNCIL OFFICER

“We want to be a platform for civic innovation”
- LIBRARY MANAGER
COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Communications and engagement practice reinforces the sense of shared endeavour and ensures that people throughout the system can inform and understand the collaborative principles and strategy. It enables people to pass information and insight throughout the system: vertically (top-down and bottom-up) and horizontally (across sectors), enabling real-time collaboration and adaptive delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Collaborative, Place-based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statutory sector:</strong></td>
<td>Communications and engagement practice embodies the principles for public services set out in the place-based strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-sector communication is principally through Partnership Board papers or bilaterals between senior leaders. Public documents such as the local Strategic Plan are available publicly on websites etc.</td>
<td>Co-production involves a wide range of stakeholders in generating an understanding of the local context and defining the direction of travel and principles for public services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events for local organisations – statutory and non-statutory – are sometimes held, for example to communicate a new strategy. However, they tend not to be held regularly when implementation is being developed.</td>
<td>Once defined, the direction of travel is clearly communicated, so that residents and partners understand how local investment is being used and their role in helping achieve local outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-statutory local organisations:</strong></td>
<td>Communications and engagement is both proactive and reactive. This allows people to contribute insights, and makes space for feedback and learning that can inform other parts of infrastructure such as delivery and governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is some top-down communication of the place-based strategy and outcomes to other local partners. However, this tends to be information-sharing, rather than mutual engagement that would enable partners to influence these strategies and outcomes or explore the role they might have in achieving the objectives.</td>
<td>Non-statutory partners often do not understand how different strategies fit together. They sometimes see the strategies as irrelevant, or simply do not view them as fundamental drivers for changes in practice or engagement. Engagement between statutory and non-statutory sectors is principally through commissioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-statutory partners often do not understand how different strategies fit together. They sometimes see the strategies as irrelevant, or simply do not view them as fundamental drivers for changes in practice or engagement. Engagement between statutory and non-statutory sectors is principally through commissioning.</td>
<td>Non-statutory local organisations tend not to share information about their services or what is happening in a place other than via informal or infrequent forums.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example

Coventry Council

Coventry Council have made a commitment to shape and improve local services by developing solutions with residents. As part of this process they have been exploring different models of resident engagement in local areas, with the intention of moving away from single consultation towards a more conversational relationship. The police recently led a pilot engagement model in which they focused on understanding the assets of a specific place and how they could be leveraged to help solve local issues. This approach involved bringing together a wide range of local partners and facilitating conversations with over 200 residents. The exploratory process revealed to the police and council that community leaders and local partners are willing to invest time and resource if the issues are relevant to residents. They also found that the asset-based approach resonated with younger residents, who found it easier to be involved in conversations about local issues.

“Communication enables collaboration”
– VOLUNTARY SECTOR PROVIDER

“People in the community want the council to engage with what they do as part of the way to help people in the area who need it”
– COUNCIL OFFICER

“We need good communication up and down – otherwise things get lost in translation”
– COMMUNITY SUPPORT WORKER

“Local participation is about building the cumulative impact of many small things”
– COUNCIL OFFICER
How the infrastructure supports local collaboration

Each of the nine building blocks of infrastructure is important, but our research has highlighted that it is how they combine and relate to each other that is critical to local collaboration and system change. For example, new forms of delivery are enabled by new approaches to culture change, workforce development and shared data; and collaborative strategies and governance provide the direction and framework from which new approaches to funding, commissioning and delivery can be developed. The true power of the collaborative local infrastructure emerges from the interaction between the nine components.

It is also important to understand how the infrastructure is enabling different system actors - people and organisations – to contribute to local change. The graphic below takes examples of the system perspectives from the graphic in Section One and illustrates the relationship between those and the enabling collaborative infrastructure.
### System perspective and actors

| Statutory agencies and public service providers (local authorities, health bodies, police and so on) |

- **System leaders**
  - Lead work to determine the vision and behaviour of the system
  - Recognise, convene, invest in building in a local system
  - Deliver collaborative public services

- **Statutory services such as Police can connect people with the services and support they need and work with other agencies**

### Roles

- **System leaders**
  - Lead work to determine the vision and behaviour of the system
  - Recognise, convene, invest in building in a local system
  - Deliver collaborative public services

- **Local leader**
  - Local businesses are supported to be responsible employers in their area

- **Anchor institution**
  - Anchor institutions are supported to help grow social networks and improve the wellbeing of their communities

- **Citizens and communities**
  - Mutual help, networks, neighbours who know and help each other, informal ‘self-organising’ – the ‘first line of defence’ against social problems

- **Residents**
  - Residents have the tools, relationships, and platforms that allow them to influence decisions that affect where they live
  - Residents can get to know people in their area through informal and formal networks

### Example

- **GP Surgery**
  - GP surgeries offer social prescribing

- **Police**
  - Statutory services such as Police can connect people with the services and support they need and work with other agencies

### Collaborative place-based infrastructure

- **Governance**
- **Outcomes & Accountability**
- **Culture change & workforce**
- **Data, evidence & evaluation**
- **Communications & Engagement**
- **Platforms**
- **Delivery**
SECTION 3
BUILDING COLLABORATIVE LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE
Routes to change: how do we build collaborative places?

The question that remains is how do people working in the field of social change – in public services and beyond – begin to build collaborative places?

Much of Collaborate’s work is about helping places to do this, and it’s certainly true that there is no quick route to changing culture and practice in local public services, or more broadly in a place. Our research and experience has emphasised that building collaborative places not only takes an investment of time and financial and non-financial resources, but a willingness for system actors, such as local authorities, to allow their traditional roles and sector boundaries to shift and blur.

The context will vary from place to place and the conditions for change will depend on a range of variable factors – local politics, local needs and assets, the history of a place, the quality of relationships across different sectors, and so on. Collaborate refer to these conditions as the ‘readiness’ of the system to collaborate, and much of our work is about helping places to build that readiness. A solid diagnosis of the current state of play is a crucial starting point, followed by a collaborative process which brings together a range of partners, explores the incentives and drivers for collaboration, builds shared vision and principles for reform, and invests in creating the readiness to work in new ways. The language used to describe a new approach must be inherently local, and the nine building blocks of collaborative infrastructure must be intentionally built throughout this process.

Through this research and Collaborate’s practice, we have developed five steps that represent the key elements of a collaborative place-based change process. All these steps should be undertaken collaboratively, with partners and residents. Some elements of this process, such as strengthening the readiness to collaborate and building parts of the system infrastructure (for example, a place-based strategy), can be developed throughout the process; others will need to be built at specific points in time once the incentives and drivers are aligned (for example, delivery models). This is not always a linear process and it is important that places spend time stress-testing the system, helping to reveal the pieces of infrastructure that cannot be built until other parts are in place and the system is ready to work collaboratively.

“We are shifting from functional silos to a functional system”
– BUSINESS LEADER

“If some of the ideas we test at the frontline could be extrapolated then wider change could happen”
– FRONTLINE COUNCIL OFFICER
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Understand the local context</th>
<th>2. Co-create a future vision for the place</th>
<th>3. How you will get there</th>
<th>4. Build the readiness to deliver the change</th>
<th>5. Delivering the change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand your place economically and socially. Co-create a social &amp; economic portrait of a place informed by: • citizen engagement • data analysis • partner engagement • political engagement Understand the drivers for change, such as: • national policy • economic drivers • rising demand • poor outcomes</td>
<td>Work across organisational and sectoral boundaries to co-create a common vision for the place and the community. Hold the tension of different viewpoints and incentives as this vision is brokered. Identify the components of a new place-based strategy.</td>
<td>Co-produce a collaborative action plan which flows from the common vision and is not defined by organisational and institutional boundaries. Explore how the role, behaviour and practice of public services needs to change in order to achieve it. Agree operating principles that will guide a new collaborative approach.</td>
<td>Understand your readiness to collaborate and invest in creating the culture, relationships and buy-in from partners and citizens. Expertly unpick the barriers and enablers to the change and formulate strategic and tactical responses which are built on shared value.</td>
<td>Support and ‘hard-wire’ changes in practice and culture by building the collaborative place-based infrastructure described in this report (i.e. governance, outcomes, funding, delivery, workforce development etc). Agree how these will be developed to support whole system, whole place collaboration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of collaborative local system change

In some places, the conditions will be right for ambitious ‘whole system, whole place’ approaches. To build system change at scale requires a shared commitment to collaboration from all local partners and a collective responsibility for building the infrastructure. Oldham is a good example of this. In others, change may start at a smaller scale – such as through neighbourhood prototypes, or through work with a particular cohort of people (for example people with multiple and complex needs, or the elderly), or within a particular service (children’s services for instance). In cases such as these, the drive for system change may come from outside public services – for example from the third sector, as in the case of the Ignite project in Coventry. The challenge here is to deliberately build the collaborative infrastructure that provides the route to move initiatives from small-scale prototypes to wider local system change.

Drawing on our research, below are examples of two different routes to collaborative system change.

Whole system, whole place:
Oldham’s Cooperative Borough

Oldham is a good example of a place that is clear about its ambition to build a collaborative borough in which public services, non-statutory organisations and residents work together towards better outcomes for the borough. Oldham’s Cooperative Council ambitions, which began with a new political vision and narrative, have, over the past five years, been developed into a whole borough approach, translating political vision into new operating principles for public services across different sectors.

As illustrated in Section Two, Oldham is already developing collaborative, local infrastructure such as new forms of governance, strategy, delivery and organisational development. While Oldham’s approach has arguably always been driven from the centre – with clear political leadership and strong drive from the council – the design of new approaches has involved working closely with local partners, developing a sense of shared ownership and endeavour.

New delivery models have been prototyped at small scale (such as integrated teams in neighbourhoods) before being developed further. This has meant that while the overarching strategy and ambition has always been clear, the shifts in practice and delivery that result have been deliberately developed and tested within that framework.

Oldham is approximately five years into its cooperative borough development and, as we saw earlier, is now reviewing and re-setting its new five-year strategy, a process which sees the partnership further deepening its culture of collaboration and public service reform. As part of that process, the council will be using the infrastructure framework described in this report to help identify areas for further development.

Prototyping new ways of working at small scale, with a view to building broader system change: the Ignite project in Coventry

The Ignite project represents a good example of a project which is founded on the type of principles for public services identified in Behaving Like a System (indeed the two organisations behind Ignite, the Coventry Law Centre and Grapevine, were instrumental in that work). It aims to influence how public services are funded and delivered, away from crisis and towards early action. Working alongside two public services in two neighbourhoods (children’s services and Whitefriars Housing in Willenhall), Ignite is exploring how the public sector can engage and partner with communities in new ways: acting earlier, building people’s strengths and releasing capacity.

The project was developed with the support of Coventry Council and Whitefriars Housing, part of WM Housing Group, and they continue to be involved both at an operational level (through the work with frontline staff such as social workers) and at a strategic level, sitting on the programme board and offering leadership perspective at regular intervals. However, the project was initiated and is led by two local non-statutory organisations working in partnership, and is externally funded by the Early Action Neighbourhood Fund. The council and Whitefriars’ interest is in learning how a different approach to public services can help turn lives around, manage demand and save money.

Ignite demonstrates that this innovation can come from different places in the ‘system’ – voluntary sector as well as statutory – and highlights the ways in which external funders such as social funders can help stimulate and support innovation by investing and carrying some of the financial risk in the short term.
Through the reference group for this research we also explored other models of routes to change. An example is the West London Children’s Zone 15, which aims to create collaborative local system change in one neighbourhood (White City) through the creation of an independently funded ‘backbone organisation’ that helps organisations provide a more targeted, coordinated and asset-based approach to working with children and young people. Another is the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition 16, which works alongside public services to help them develop better coordinated interventions for people facing multiple and complex needs. Initiatives such as these are exploring different ways of instigating and building system change, often within a suite of services or a neighbourhood.

In each of these examples, prototyping new approaches at small scale, or within part of a place-based system (a neighbourhood or a set of services) is seen as the route to broader and deeper system change across a whole place. However, as Collaborate have explored elsewhere 17, the risk is that working in this way can leave innovative public service reform projects stuck at the margins of the wider system, testing and developing new ways of working that are ultimately unsustainable because the ‘system conditions’ are not right – or not being created – for the principles and learning to be applied more broadly.

Our research suggests that it is critical that the council and other partners in a place explicitly recognise and value these small scale projects as prototypes of new ways of working, with a strategic view that links the insights gained to broader questions about the future model of change in a place.

The success of projects such as Ignite will therefore depend not only on a strong evidence base and case for change, but on the ability of the wider system to understand and learn from initiatives that are trying to drive system change from the margins. This is not about public institutions ‘giving permission’, but brokering the engagement and building the infrastructure to enable this to take place – the local strategy which incorporates new principles for public services, new financial investment models, new approaches to delivery, culture change and staff development, and so on. Without this, we believe the evidence shows that activities which are prototyped from the edge of a system will fail to achieve system change by influencing ways of working more broadly. Places that already have examples of these types of projects however, have a valuable asset – local energy and drive to work in new ways, commitment from partners, and an active prototype that can provide a route to wider system change.

“Faced with rising demand and an unprecedented reduction in local government funding, it is easy to say that ‘people and communities will need to do more for themselves’. I believe that Ignite’s approach offers a big chance to show how this might actually be done”

~ MARTIN REEVES, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

Conclusion

Summing up research published by the King’s Fund in 2015, Nick Timmins wrote that “system leadership is an act of persuasion that needs to have an evidence base for change”18.

This report is an attempt to help system leaders build this evidence base. We have set out an ambitious and wide-ranging vision for collaborative local services and places, and the infrastructure that will be required to support and enable this change. We have drawn on the perspectives of citizens, third sector and private sector organisations and the full range of local public services in places that are already moving in this direction.

However, many places are not ready to work towards a whole system, whole place approach to social change. The relationships between partners are not strong enough; sector leaders are overwhelmingly focused on their own immediate priorities; and the system incentives are not designed – or not acknowledged – for people to begin to unpick and re-wire the system behaviours and infrastructure. This is an issue we cannot ignore. We cannot rely solely on small-scale innovation to change outcomes for people who currently rely on services most. And ambitious statements about reform and re-connecting with communities post-Brexit have a hollow ring if places are not working through how to shift and build the underlying infrastructure for collaborative system change.

Shifting from rhetoric to fundamental system change in local public services is the work of today’s public servants. It requires system leaders to acknowledge the task ahead, deal with complexity as part of the day job, and think and behave like a system.

Our report Behaving like a System, together with this report, provide critical pointers about the behaviours and infrastructure that will build systems and shift outcomes in a place. There are many ways to make change happen, but the evidence suggests that for it to be sustainable and to effect a system benefit that individuals can feel, all nine interdependent building blocks outlined here must be managed in concert.

This infrastructure is the hard-wiring that is needed to shift a set of siloed services to a whole-place model. It is the key to building the human and social capital that enables our communities to thrive. And the places and projects that we worked with for this research – and other places and organisations that Collaborate support every day – show that with collaboration, commitment and willingness to challenge the status quo, it can be done.


3. ibid. p. 9


7. Perspectives drawn from Julia Unwin’s speech on social capital in cities, April 2016 https://www.jrf.org.uk/why-we-need-build-social-capital-cities


11. Funding approaches should also embed the learning from other initiatives such as the Troubled Families programme and Payment by Results. This collaborative funding needs to go further by building real incentives to collaborate at a strategic level and at the front line, with clarity around outcomes, and shared risks and rewards among local partners.


15. https://westlondonzone.org


This report is based on observed practice in the areas we have been working, but builds on a body of work to which many people and organisations have contributed. Below is a suggested rather than comprehensive further reading list, including reports we found helpful for this work.


APPENDICES

To support this work we formed a Reference Group which helped us: test and iterate our emerging thinking, draw on experience of places, and challenge our findings. We are very grateful for their time and expertise.

Appendix 1: Reference Group members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Danny Kruger</td>
<td>West London Children's Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica Ballman</td>
<td>Haringey Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immy Kaur</td>
<td>Impact Hub Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma Bates</td>
<td>Ignite project, Coventry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Paul Probert</td>
<td>Essex County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Evans</td>
<td>Lankelly Chase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Shankster</td>
<td>Coventry City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ollie Hillberry</td>
<td>Making Every Adult Matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Garrad</td>
<td>Making Every Adult Matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles Piercy</td>
<td>Locality Matters and the White City Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicky Sugars</td>
<td>Oldham Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tom Lewis-Renier</td>
<td>Catch 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We would also like to thank Susan Ritchie (Mutual Gain), Anthony Zacharzewski (The Democratic Society) and Simon Burall (Involve) for their feedback and insight at the early stages of the research.

Appendix 2: List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelle McGinty</td>
<td>Coventry City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete Fahy</td>
<td>Coventry City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue Frossell</td>
<td>Coventry City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail Quinton</td>
<td>Coventry City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabir Zazai</td>
<td>The Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gareth Bunn</td>
<td>Crisis Skylight Coventry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gavin Kibble</td>
<td>Coventry Foodbank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh McNeil</td>
<td>Coventry Foodbank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobby Clarke</td>
<td>Coventry Winter Night Shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Kirkman</td>
<td>Coventry Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Tambling</td>
<td>Coventry Law Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue Bent</td>
<td>Coventry Law Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare Wightman</td>
<td>Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Fowler</td>
<td>Coventry Cyrenians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila Bates</td>
<td>Coventry City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine McNaught</td>
<td>Foleshill Women's Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Allison</td>
<td>Voluntary Action Coventry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Banbury</td>
<td>Voluntary Action Coventry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyson McGregor</td>
<td>Altogether Better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Guthrie</td>
<td>Essex County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Saunders</td>
<td>Essex County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz Martlew</td>
<td>Essex County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Higgins</td>
<td>Oldham Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr Barbara Brownridge</td>
<td>Oldham Cabinet Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cath Green</td>
<td>First Choice Homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Stannard</td>
<td>Oldham Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayne Clarke</td>
<td>Oldham Sixth Form College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Yates</td>
<td>Oldham Citizens Advice Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill Beaumont</td>
<td>Oldham Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise Worth</td>
<td>Greater Manchester Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave Benstead Group</td>
<td>Oldham Business Leadership Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Ian Wilkinson</td>
<td>Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also observed and participated in focus group sessions and workshops in Coventry with local voluntary organisations, statutory providers, colleges, police, and other support services. We would like to thank all those who gave their time so generously to talk about their experience and challenge and develop our thinking.