

# SHINE A LIGHT



**SYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY,  
LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY**

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### FIVE WORD STRESSECUTIVE SUMMARY:

You already shape the system.

### 50 WORD EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

You're part of a wider ecosystem, with strengths, assets and resources that can be used differently. It's possible to navigate the complexity of systems, organisations, stakeholders and expectations. But it's impossible alone. Look up and out from your own organisation. Help people and ideas to flow across organisational boundaries.

# FOREWORD

With reducing resources and escalating demand, sustainability is the number one concern for all non-profit organisations.

We published the Lasting Difference toolkit in 2016 to help address this. It defines sustainability as the capacity to make a lasting difference. (Both parts of that definition matter.)

In 2021 we followed this up with our guide to managing capacity, which describes the challenge in terms of a full bathtub with the taps left running.

Since then, more people are noticing that capacity is limited not just within their own organisations, but within the sectors and systems they are part of. Their bath is overflowing and flooding the neighbours. This guide takes a wider system perspective. Where is the water coming from? Where does it go?

It is aimed at anyone with an interest or role in managing capacity in the public and voluntary sectors, including membership and intermediary organisations, funders and commissioners, policy makers and planners.

There are some brilliant resources on systems thinking, referenced at the end of the guide. However, there's also a lot of fancy sounding waffle, disconnected from real lives and jobs. This is a practical guide for people interested in going beyond system thinking to system doing.

**Fittingly, absolutely everything here comes from practising what it preaches. It comes from partnership programmes and events we've been involved in since 2006, bringing people together with a shared interest in changing the systems they are part of. Thank you.**



**THIS IS A  
PRACTICAL GUIDE  
FOR PEOPLE  
INTERESTED IN  
GOING BEYOND  
SYSTEM THINKING  
TO SYSTEM DOING**



Graeme Reekie, Director,  
The Lasting Difference

## THANK YOU

- **The Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS)** for taking this journey with us since 2013
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# **PART ONE:** **BACKGROUND** **AND DEFINITIONS**

**INTRODUCTION**

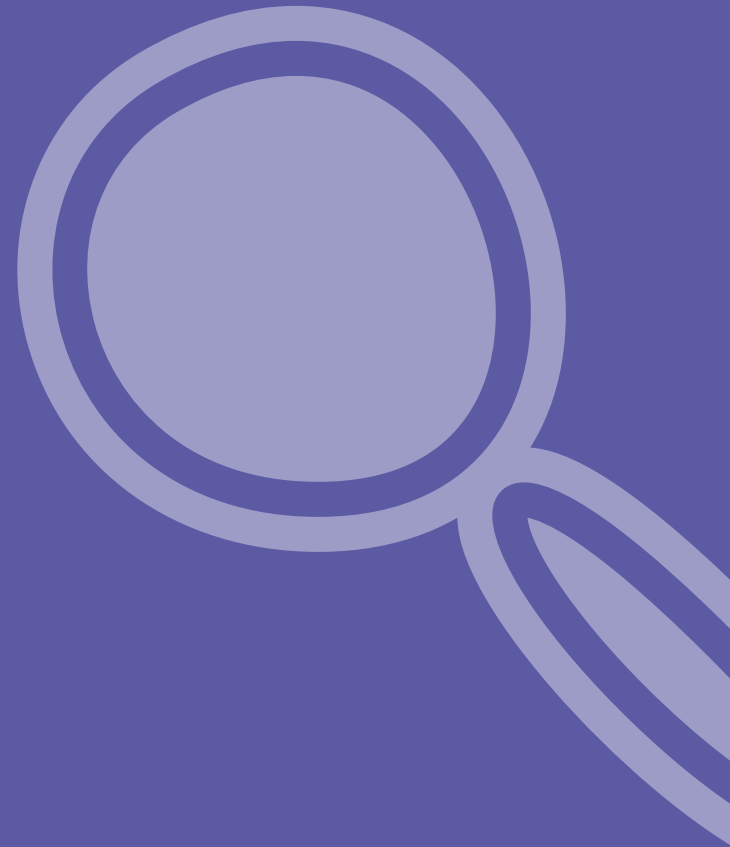
**6**

**THE PROBLEM**

**9**

**DEFINITIONS**

**11**



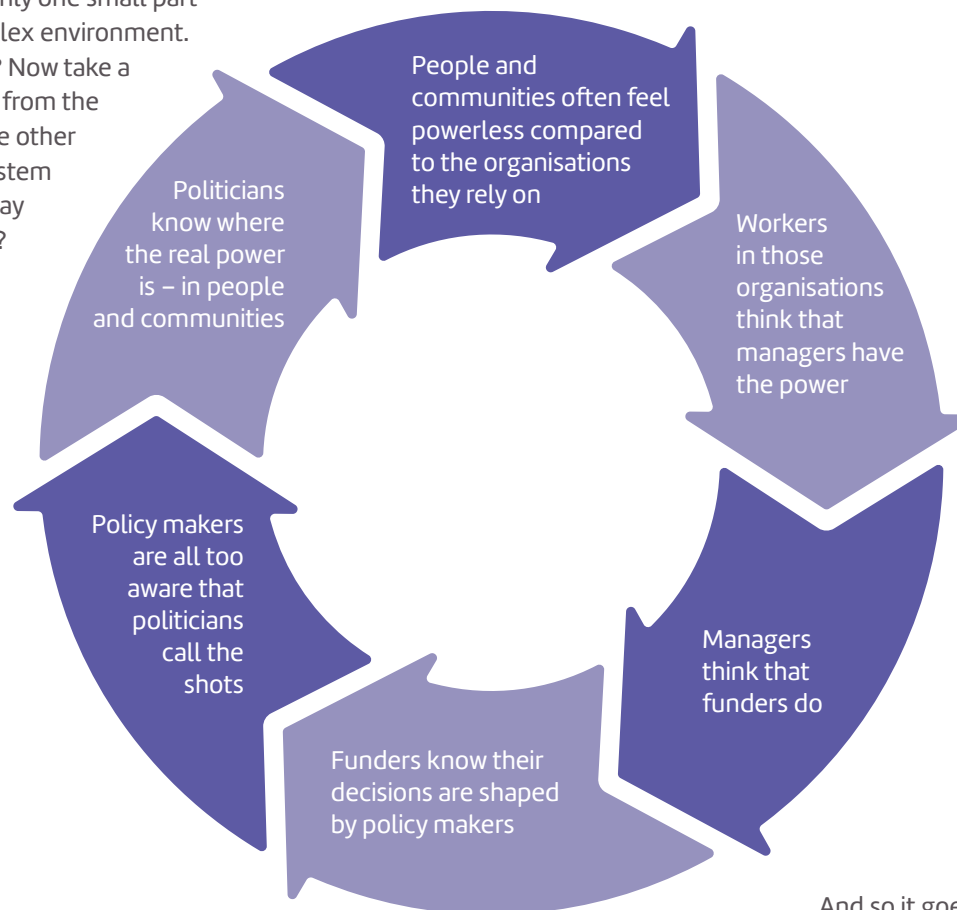
# INTRODUCTION

Wherever you work, you're part of a wider ecosystem. It's made up of other people, communities, partners, funders and policy makers.

You probably think that things would be better if that system would only change. And whether you work in social care, education, justice, housing, welfare rights or conservation, it's likely that everyone else in the system agrees with you on that. You're even likely to agree on what needs to change – other people.

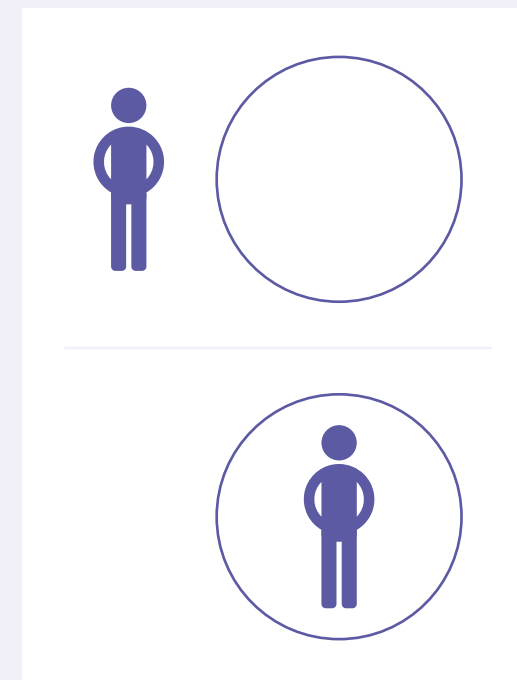
After all, you're only one small part of a hugely complex environment.

What can you do? Now take a moment to think from the perspective of the other people in your system – wouldn't they say exactly the same?



And so it goes on.

**Illustration:** The problem is not separate. You are within it.



**ONE OF THE MOST  
HELPFUL THINGS YOU CAN  
LEARN FROM SYSTEMS  
THINKING IS THAT**

**YOU ARE PART OF THE  
PROBLEM YOU ARE  
TRYING TO SOLVE.**

**EVERYONE'S  
INFLUENCE IS LIMITED.**

**BUT WE ALL  
HAVE AGENCY.**

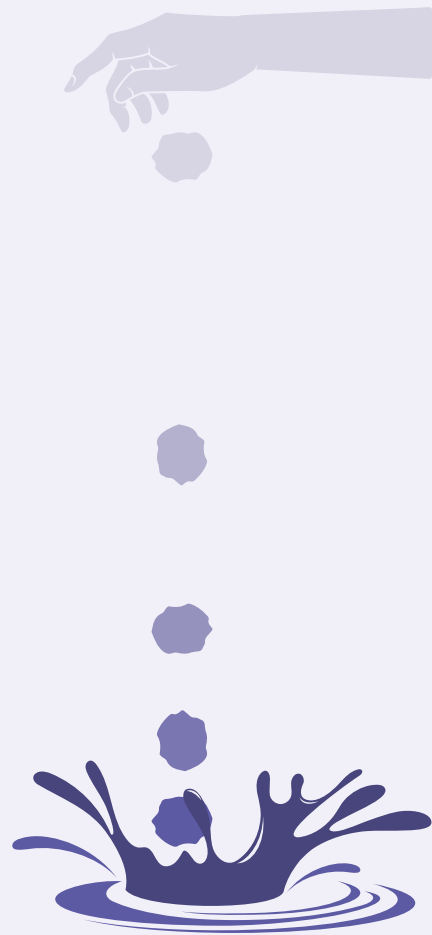
**WE HAVE SKILLS,  
EXPERIENCE AND  
VALUES.**

**WE CAN BE OPTIMISTIC.**

**WE CAN DO SOMETHING.**

**WE SHAPE THE SYSTEM.**

**WE CHANGE THE  
WORLD.**



“

**WE UNDERTAKE A  
CONTINUOUS AND ACTIVE  
PROGRAM TO MAINTAIN  
THE SYSTEM IN WHICH  
WE ARE INVOLVED...**

**THE EFFORT SPENT IN  
THESE MANOEUVRES MAY  
BE AS UNCONSCIOUS AS  
THE EFFORT OF KEEPING  
BALANCE IN A SMALL  
BOAT.<sup>1</sup>**

”

<sup>1</sup> Beyond the Stable State, D A Schon 1971



If people agree that a change is needed, but your role relates only to one part of system, how do you do it? If resources are scarce and everyone's capacity is pushed, people might need you to do things that aren't really your job. How do you manage that?

This guide aims to help meet these and other challenges. There are no answers, never mind easy ones. But there are valuable questions, principles and resources to guide the way. There are choices.

One of these is the discipline of taking a step back to see how things fit together. How the strengths, assets and resources in a system can be better used – including your own. How we all have power to shape the system and affect change.



#### PROVOCATIONS:

- **WHAT DOES SYSTEM CAPACITY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?**
- **ARE PEOPLE AND RESOURCES ACHIEVING TO THEIR FULLEST ABILITY?**
- **WHO DO YOUR WORK AND RESOURCES BELONG TO?**
- **DO YOUR WAYS OF WORKING ENHANCE OR DEplete SYSTEM CAPACITY?**



# THE PROBLEM

“We’ve addressed the waiting list problem three times in five years. We’ve not addressed the problem at all!”

– Workshop participant

## EQUALITY

The problems faced by the people or the issues that most charities support have systemic causes – inequality, racism, poverty, homelessness, climate change. Tackling these systemically can feel overwhelming – where to start? But simply tackling the symptom and not the cause is also overwhelming: it’s a sticking plaster. If we don’t tackle them now, the same issues will keep recurring. And charities will deplete their capacity and resources, burning out because they’re trying to put out an inferno with a glass of water.

## TREADMILLS AND REVOLVING DOORS

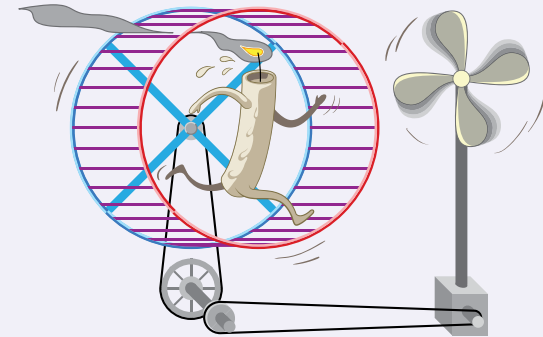
Much of the demand on services is what is known as ‘failure demand’: the demand caused by systems that don’t work.

Charity services are often either the first port of call or the last safety net. People are often at crisis point by the time they seek help. It is difficult for services to refer them to other support because other agencies also lack capacity. In situations like these, people end up being passed from one place to another, stuck in a loop caused by the wider system around them.

Alternatively, services see this gap and step in to fill it. They work beyond the scope of their role, capacity or expertise, jeopardising quality, safety and sustainable outcomes for all. The central issue is never dealt with and another treadmill begins. Similarly, organisations that provide an open door for people to return if transitions don’t work out, can find that they’ve created a revolving door instead.

### CASE STUDY

A local charity measures repeat demand (i.e. people returning to the service), allowing it to do what is needed on a case by case basis to build individuals’ capacity and increase their independence. See the **Guide to Sustainable Impact** for more on revolving doors.



**ORGANISATIONS UNDERSTAND THE NEED TO CHANGE.**

**BUT THE NEED TO KEEP DELIVERING IS KEENER.**

**IF THEY ONLY KEEP DELIVERING, THEY’LL NEVER CHANGE.**

**THEY’RE STUCK IN THE PROBLEM TREADMILL.**

**THE FASTER THEY RUN, THE FASTER THEY HAVE TO KEEP RUNNING.**

## THE FUNDING MERRY-GO-ROUND

A similar treadmill exists for charities who receive grants from funders who prefer funding new initiatives over repeat or continuation funding. There are good reasons for this: more organisations benefit, services are based on clearly identified need and new models are tested. Funders get to help interesting projects get off the ground. There's a fatal fallacy here though – that if the project is good enough, another funder will step in to sustain it. But of course, funders are interested in new initiatives, not continuation funding... Some funders perpetuate the myth that sustainability means the ability of an organisation to get funding from Funder B when Funder A's money runs out. In fact, this is a primary cause of the systemic sustainability and capacity challenges facing the sector, requiring organisations to expend time and effort keeping up with the merry-go-round.

## REARRANGING THE DECKCHAIRS

Systemic problems persist despite all the money that is put into policies, strategies, organisations and services. Likewise, problems get worse despite the best efforts of the people who work within the systems that are apparently designed to address them. When these things happen, it's easy to look for simple cause and effect answers: someone is to blame, processes need to change, more resources are needed (or more commonly, organisations need to do more with less). Rearranging the deckchairs is easier than changing the direction – or changing ship.

## THE BRAIN DRAIN

Working beyond capacity affects staff wellbeing. Stress, sickness and burnout are increasing. Knowledge becomes stretched as professionals deal with a wider range of enquiries. Professionals leave their jobs, sometimes exiting the system altogether. Knowledge is being lost. Services struggle to recruit experienced people on the pay rates available, so existing staff have bigger workloads. Needs go unmet. And so it goes.

The common elements of all these challenges are that:

- They involve a wide range of people and perspectives
- They are cyclical, not linear
- They are dynamic, not static
- There is a purpose, but there's no clear link between cause and effect
- And there are unintended consequences of actions

These characteristics feature in most definitions of systems.

**FUNDERS'  
PRACTICES  
ARE A PRIMARY  
CAUSE OF  
THE SYSTEMIC  
LACK OF SECTOR  
SUSTAINABILITY  
AND CAPACITY**



# DEFINITIONS

## SYSTEM

*"A set of things – people, cells, molecules or whatever – interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behaviour over time."*

Donella Meadows, Thinking in Systems

## SYSTEMIC

*"When the situation cannot be understood without looking at differing dimensions and features, and exploring how these interconnect."*

Boulton et al, Embracing Complexity

## SYSTEMS THINKING

*"Thinking about interconnectedness: how one's actions affect others and how we can draw on other parts of the whole for help."*

Lasting Difference programme participant

## CAPACITY

The amount of something that can be contained or managed, or the ability to achieve something (and the amount and quality of what can be achieved).

## LEADERSHIP

Taking and sharing responsibility for doing the right thing.



**A SYSTEM  
IS ANY ENTITY,  
CONCEPTUAL OR  
PHYSICAL, WHICH  
CONSISTS OF  
INTERDEPENDENT PARTS**



Russel Ackoff, Systems Thinking

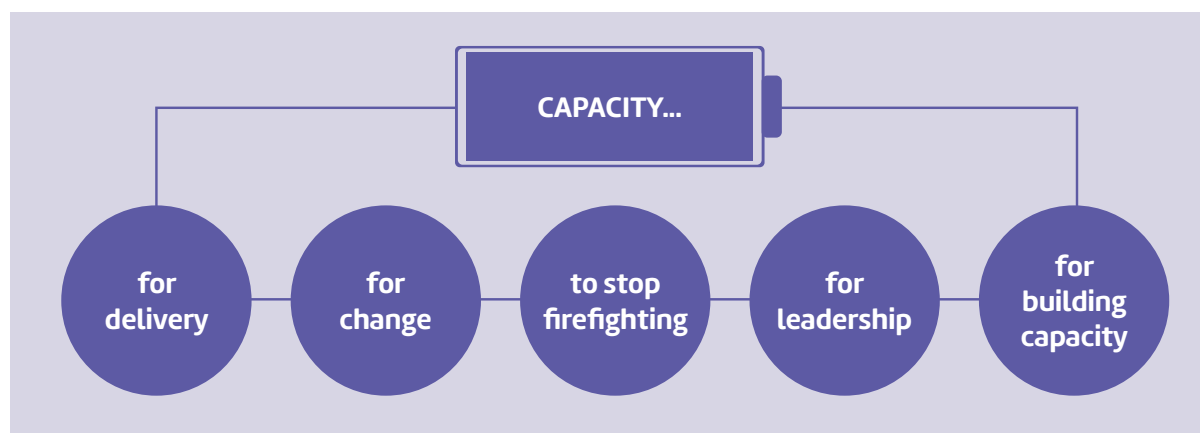
# **PART TWO:**

# **SYSTEM CAPACITY**

<b>1. ASSESS SYSTEM CAPACITY</b>	<b>14</b>
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# SYSTEM CAPACITY

“Are we telling the truth about capacity? Our sales pitch is that everything is fine. ‘We’re coping, we’re punching above our weight’. Our voice should be saying ‘I’m overwhelmed! We’re overwhelmed!’”



## IN THIS SECTION...

Five simple practices for understanding and developing system capacity are explored below.

1. **ASSESS SYSTEM CAPACITY**
2. **TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT CAPACITY**
3. **PROVIDE AND BUILD CAPACITY**
4. **CREATE FLEXIBILITY**
5. **LOOK OUT FOR FEEDBACK LOOPS AND TIME LAGS**

*“Not only do we need to be clear about what we can and cannot do, as individuals and services (which is easier said than done), we also need to communicate learning, to seek help, and to clarify our role.”*

– Workshop participant



## PROVOCATIONS:

- **HOW MUCH CAPACITY IS THERE IN THE SYSTEM YOU ARE PART OF?**
- **DOES IT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO KEEP ON DELIVERING AND TO CHANGE AT THE SAME TIME?**
- **IS YOUR WORK REALLY MAKING A DIFFERENCE? ARE THERE BETTER WAYS?**
- **CAN YOU BE HONEST ABOUT CHALLENGES WITHOUT ASSIGNING BLAME?**

# 1. ASSESS SYSTEM CAPACITY

“It’s an unsolvable dilemma – the system as it is, is driving perverse outcomes – waiting lists, lack of provision, lack of people, lack of funding. Then policy drivers changing on top of that. People are figuring out how to fix the acute problems they are facing now but with an eye to the long term, the true north – how we support people, how we give them what they need, not just fitting them into what’s there.”

– Workshop participant

Being able to evidence the amount of capacity within a system is critical for anyone who wants to support it – and influence change.

Before intervening in a system (e.g. by developing a new policy, funding stream or service), monitor its health. Is it ready for new developments? Does it have the capacity and resources to engage with them successfully?

The following indicators can help:

- **Level of resource** including:
  - Amount of funding in the relevant organisations or parts of the sector
  - Distribution and equity of funding and resource e.g. communities that aren’t reached (what funders call ‘cold spots’); the number and diversity of organisations that apply for funding
  - Workforce qualifications and knowledge; amount, range and quality of training available
  - Levels of staff turnover

## INDICATORS:



**LEVEL OF  
RESOURCE**



**LEVELS OF  
ENGAGEMENT**



**EXTENT OF  
COORDINATION**

- **Levels of engagement** including:
  - Levels of activism and the extent to which priorities are determined by those most affected
  - Extent of involvement and participation in decision making and data gathering
  - Levels of un/met need; diversity of people or communities being reached
  - Levels of use of information, services and supports
- **Extent of coordination** including:
  - Number, diversity and range of supports (organisations, services, choices)
  - Number and nature of joined up responses (networks, alliances, practice sharing)
  - Level of innovation and adaptability
  - Responsiveness of feedback loops e.g. time lag between strategy and implementation; how long it takes for evidence, practice and policy to influence one another (see further below).

Evidence is a vital part of service design and system capacity building. Data can be used to anticipate trends in demand, allowing organisations to get materials, resources and training in place early. For example, Citizens Advice Bureaux across England publish high quality, real-time data on advice trends.<sup>2</sup> Aimed at government departments, regional agencies, advice services and social policy organisations, this is an effective way to inform and influence policy and practice.

Gathering data helps to inform decision making and resource allocation. For example, in the field of homelessness:

- One organisation noted a big increase in presentations by single people, so developed a single persons' support pathway.
- Another service identified a pattern of people falling out of the temporary accommodation system and needing to return for support. A specialist role was recruited to help prevent people from being caught in a revolving door.
- In another area, partners involved in a homelessness forum carried out a mapping exercise, identifying that drug and alcohol services were part of the system but not part of the conversation. A directory of services was created to help identify and fill gaps across the system.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/our-work/advice-trends/advice-trends/advice-trends-on-tableau/>



**EVIDENCE IS A VITAL  
PART OF SERVICE  
DESIGN AND SYSTEM  
CAPACITY BUILDING**



## 2. TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT CAPACITY – SHINE A LIGHT

“What can we do to shine a light on what is/not happening, ask for help or talk about who does what in the system? Does this look like shirking?! Is the third sector being used to fill gaps? Yes, but what do we do to make that more collaborative?”

– Workshop participant

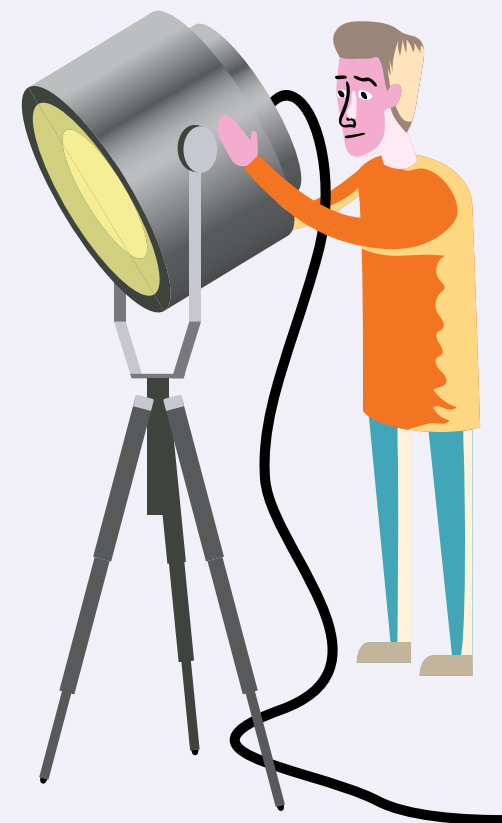
Telling the truth about capacity comes in three stages:

### KNOWING THE TRUE PICTURE

Having information on the indicators above will help you shine a light on system capacity and spotlight challenges, bottlenecks and resources.

Organisational capacity levels are just as important. **The Lasting Difference guide to Managing Capacity** identifies 10 key indicators and how to assess them,

- Resource availability
- Staff availability
- Cognitive and emotional capacity
- Size of caseload or workload
- Complexity of work
- Knowledge
- Organisational capabilities
- Levels of demand
- Extent of reach
- Levels of activity



## REMOVING THE MASK

The true picture of capacity is often hidden. It may be masked by things like working extra hours; ignoring workload limits; using waiting lists; accepting referrals when already full etc. Or it may be hidden by pretending that things are fine. For example, chief officers often feel the need to wear a brave face for their boards; organisations want to tell funders about successes not challenges, and so on.

## NAMING THE CAPACITY ISSUE

Years of austerity and real terms funding cuts have inured organisations to doing more for less: taking on funding that doesn't cover full costs, extending their reach, addressing issues beyond their core purpose. Then the pandemic hit and capacity was pushed beyond all previous limits. Online working increased the ability to reach new audiences; organisations stretched further beyond their core purpose to meet new needs. And after two years, they and their funders had become so used to this that they forgot the increased capacity was a short-term emergency response to a traumatic situation. Long-term resilience can come from these responses. But they are not sustainable in themselves. Transitioning out of crisis responses requires being honest about capacity.

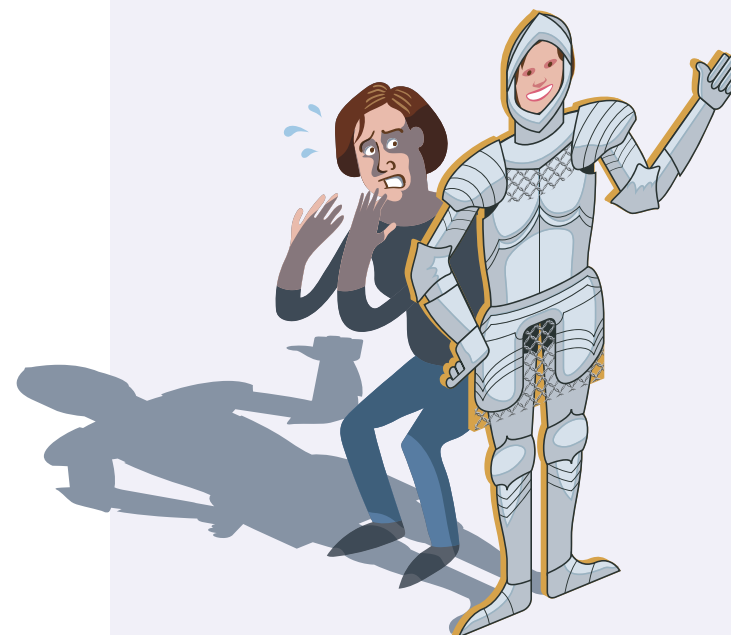
See the **Lasting Leadership Guide to Self-Care** for more on this.

### CASE STUDY: SHELTER

Shelter's telephone helpline advisers were meeting just over 10% of demand on average. To respond to such high demand, the helpline was repositioned as an emergency service, with analysis into where callers came to the helpline from and the nature of their needs. The analysis identified that the largest proportion of people were referred from an advice or support professional. Most (around 80%) did not have an urgent issue.

A dedicated product team undertook a series of experiments, focusing on improving the user experience of digital advice and increasing the chance of speaking to an adviser. User research identified that the service offering wasn't clear enough for those in need – self-service and switching between different service channels weren't easy.

A number of online advice pages now contain information, tools and templates to help clients resolve their most common emergency and non-emergency housing issues, including a **tenancy rights checker**, information on **tenancy deposits**, **complaints to agents** and dealing with **disrepair**; and housing benefit and other **welfare benefits**.



**EVERYTHING IS FINE,  
NOTHING TO SEE HERE!**

### 3. PROVIDE AND BUILD CAPACITY

“How inexorably we are drawn into gaps, when much needed help isn’t available. Too often, it is easier to make a quicker, partial response directly than it is to seek help from elsewhere. It guides us to step in, again and again, with the consequent impact on personal resilience and a missed opportunity to find what is sometimes a more durable solution.”

– Workshop participant

The **Lasting Difference Guide to Sustainable Impact** states that to develop your own capacity, you should concentrate on building other people’s.

For individuals, this means aiming for ‘second order’ outcomes that focus on empowerment and prevention. (Teaching people to fish, as the old saying goes). It’s initially more time consuming to support people’s resilience than just to do things ‘for’ them, but when it works it’s hugely effective and has a lasting impact. Second-order outcomes have a multiplier effect, vital for increasing capacity within society and systems, strengthening people’s ability to help themselves – and others.

For example:

- Helping families to develop parenting skills improves children’s lives
- Running training for volunteer trainers improves community capacity
- Developing peer researchers and community activism increases agency.

For organisations, building capacity means sharing your ideas, resources and ownership of an issue. Train or equip other people with messages and resources they can use in their own work or in their own ways. This spreads your message and increases your impact, giving you access to knowledge, expertise and effort that would otherwise be out of your reach – and budget. Sharing ideas and ownership of an issue helps you to ensure the voice of the people or causes you support gets heard.

Find out more in the **Lasting Difference Guide to Sustainable Impact**.



**EQUIP OTHER PEOPLE  
WITH RESOURCES TO  
USE IN THEIR OWN WAYS**

*“We provide system capacity by supporting other organisations, providing them some thinking space. Like a USB storage device, plugged into an organisation!”*

Workshop participant

## 4. CREATE FLEXIBILITY

“Design, don’t engineer  
Discover, don’t dictate  
Decipher, don’t presuppose.”<sup>3</sup>

Funding should create capacity, not deplete it. This is not always the case. For example, if funding only covers the costs of direct delivery not apparently frivolous luxuries like supervision, training, pensions, quality assurance and collaboration, it creates an unsustainable capacity problem. If contracts over-specify the scope of who can and can’t be helped, things might improve in one part of the system but be made worse in others (for example funding might specify exact time frames, age groups or even postcodes within which work can take place).

To build system capacity, organisations and their funders and commissioners can:

- **Work as partners not purchasers and providers:** share aims; be open to ideas; set mutual challenges; develop unrestricted funds; resist specifying outcomes and activities; use proportionate scrutiny and reporting requirements.
- **Focus on learning:** encourage honesty; seek flexibility and responsiveness; promote deviation when things change; publish impact and learning reports, sharing intelligence about the effectiveness of different interventions.
- **Invest:** Ensure the capacity and resources to lead change are in place; tolerate slack: allow spare capacity today to develop capacity for tomorrow; worry less about duplication and more about gaps; assess financial viability and reward prudent management (e.g. allow reserves); avoid the inefficiency of short-term funding; support full cost recovery.
- **Facilitate:** Work with communities to understand current, unmet and emerging needs; map existing provision and gaps; be intentional about diversity within funding portfolios; provide pre-contract information and support; provide training and networking opportunities.



<sup>3</sup> Surfing the Edge of Chaos, R Pascale et al, 2000

## 5. LOOK OUT FOR FEEDBACK LOOPS AND TIME LAGS

“We fund innovation – new ways of doing things, demonstrating effective practice. We then look on in a puzzled way if it’s not adopted – the model has been demonstrated and it works, why wouldn’t you just adopt it? What we learned is that you need to make a lot of small waves that add up to big waves. Throwing stones in different parts of the pool. It’s not easy or obvious. Continue to challenge the idea that everyone has to stay in their own field.”

– Workshop participant

### STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Leaders have to be able to operate in different time zones. It’s like looking through a camera lens: getting the horizon in focus, then refocusing on what’s in front of you, balancing what the organisation is doing now with what it might need to do in future. Visionary leaders will sometimes be a year or more ahead of their organisations or wider systems, anticipating what’s coming next and planning long term for a range of different scenarios (Figure 1).

This can create problems of coordination and buy-in. For example, it might mean that colleagues are just getting used to the last change, or the old strategy, by the time the next one comes along. It’s like when bands want to play their new material, but the crowd wants the familiar songs they can sing along with.

Of course, towards the end of a strategic lifecycle it’s equally likely that practice has caught up with the strategy that was defined 3 or more years ago. Planners need to catch up on practice developments and work out what they mean for the next plan (Figure 2).

Figure 1

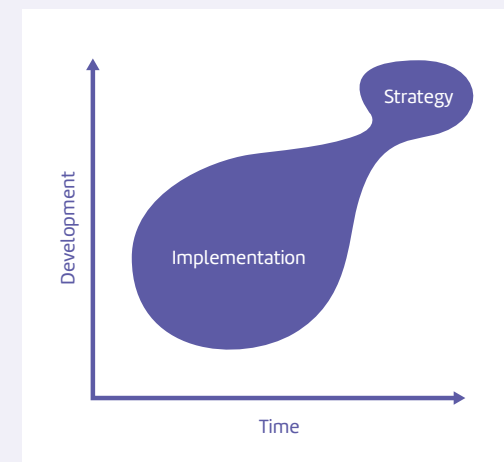
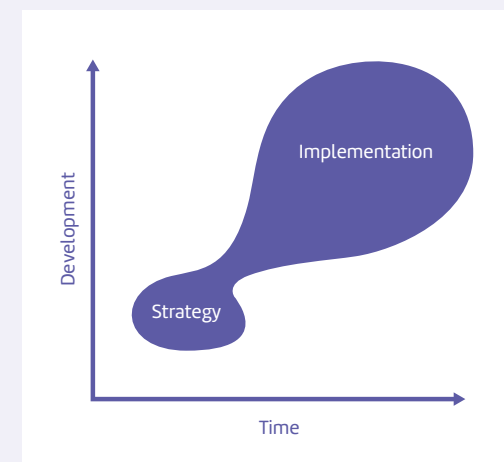


Figure 2



## FUNDING, POLICY AND PRACTICE

Funders and policy makers are sometimes seen as the lead influencers of a system, in the unique position of knowing what's best for the people or organisations within it. One of the risks of this assumption is a linear approach where resources are applied to a pre-defined problem through a set of pre-defined interventions. However, this approach:

- Is too slow to respond to the shifting problems, priorities and needs in the system
- Can't influence or adapt to change in multiple parts of the system (e.g. other policy developments)
- Can't detect and respond quickly when it turns out the plan isn't working
- Is often based on partial data and old evidence.

Credit: [Coping with Complexity](#)<sup>4</sup>

Just like strategy, policy will be ahead of practice at some points in its cycle (Figure 1) and behind at others (Figure 2). Policy makers can:

- Be alert to the scale and pace of change in their sectors e.g. mapping other policy developments underway; identifying other policy and funding lifecycles; preparing people for transitions to new developments.
- Sustain attention on long term goals. Changing a large system takes sustained commitment and focus. People often make a start but then the environment changes and a new policy comes along even though the underlying problem persists.
- Assess their appetite for change – and risk (but remember that uncertainty and risk are very different things).
- Encourage system learning by enlisting partners' help in policy design and implementation.
- Seek emerging evidence from researchers, funders, partners, communities (for example, the Grampian Endowment Fund brings researchers and communities together to generate learning about what matters locally).

If funding, policy and delivery are evidence-based, they can only ever respond to existing evidence. Systems must therefore be designed that either accelerate the availability of data to decision makers, or that put decision making in the hands of people with direct access to the data. This has implications for systems leadership and system change (Part Three below).

<sup>4</sup> Coping with Complexity, Coalition of Care and Support Providers Scotland <https://www.wrenandgreyhound.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/cwc-publication-digital.pdf>

# **PART THREE:**

# **SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP**

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# SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP

“I have more agency than I thought I had. I’m part of things, I have agency. I have licence. I used to feel part of it but without feeling I had agency – that belonged to other people. But it’s also me.”

– Programme participant

## UNDERSTANDING SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP

It’s possible to navigate the complexity of systems, organisations, stakeholders and expectations. But it’s impossible to do it alone. Systems leadership means looking up and out from your own organisation and easing the flow of people and ideas across organisational boundaries. Which of course means collaborating with other people, only some of whom share your aims.

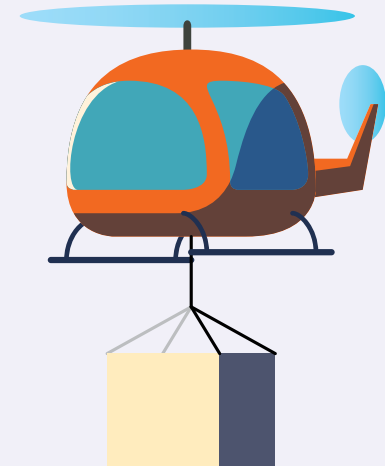
Organisations that behave as if there’s a solid boundary between them and the world they are part of create problems for themselves and others. The way you define boundaries:

- Affects the flow of people, information, ideas and resources to and from the organisation
- Influences who you see as ‘us’ and ‘them’
- Is decisive for organisational survival – sustainability comes from connection, not protection.

*“Sustainability is a property of an entire interconnected web of relationships.”<sup>5</sup>*

In Figure 3 below, Organisation A is a closed system. Only people within the organisation contribute to it. Things are kept in-house. The organisation believes itself to be self-reliant, in control of its destiny. Safe. Although this sounds exaggerated, it’s how organisations commonly approach sustainability. How can they find the resources they need to survive? How can they sustain themselves? Can they shelter from external forces?

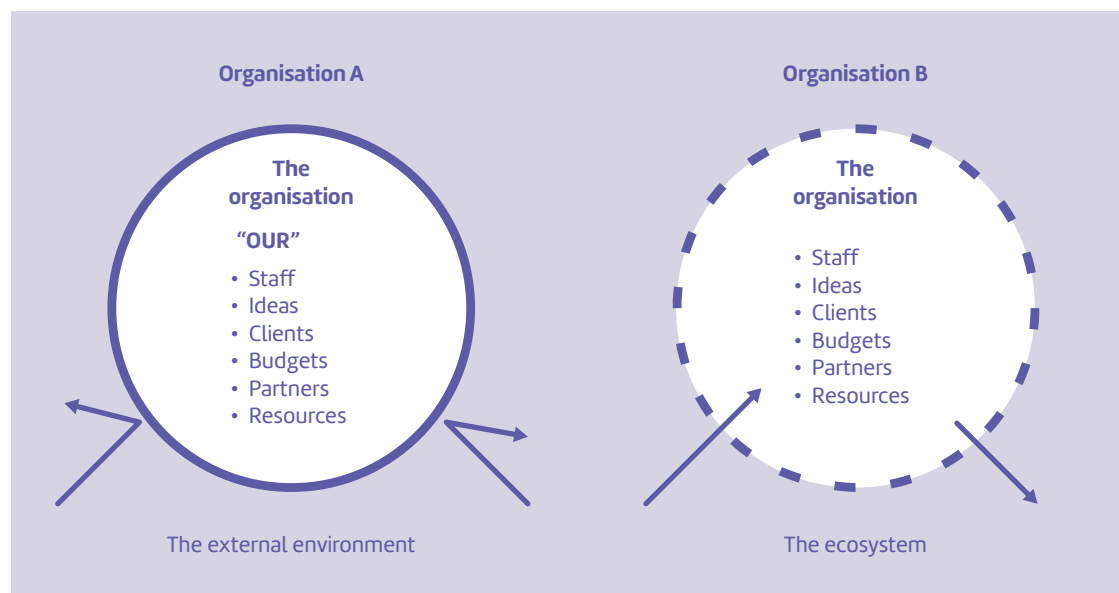
<sup>5</sup> Embracing Complexity, Boulton et al, 2015



### PROVOCATIONS:

- **WHAT IS YOUR ROLE IN THE WIDER SYSTEM YOU ARE PART OF?**
- **HOW DO YOU GAIN TRUST WHEN YOU DON'T ALWAYS KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING?**
- **HOW GOOD ARE YOU AT ASKING FOR HELP?**
- **HOW CAN YOU HIGHLIGHT ANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT'S NEEDED BY THE NEW/EMERGING ONE?**

Figure 3



Organisation B is part of an ecosystem, exchanging things with its environment. Organisational boundaries are permeable, allowing ideas, intelligence, people and resources to flow across them. This nourishes and replenishes the organisation's resources. It encourages change and growth, building resilience in response to a changing environment. Of course, this will mean letting some things go too. When times are tight, Organisation A is likely to clench up, ceasing investment and making false economies like reducing training budgets, pulling out of partnership meetings, not allowing staff to take part in conferences and events etc. It may focus so much on protecting its ideas and resources that it stops giving (and importantly, getting) anything back.

Systems leadership is about approaching things through a systems lens, not an organisational one, like in the table below.

6 Systems Thinking, F E Emery (ed) 1969



**THE PRIMARY TASK OF MANAGEMENT IS TO MANAGE THE BOUNDARY CONDITIONS OF THE ENTERPRISE...**

**THOSE LEVELS OF EXCHANGE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT WHICH ALLOW IT TO SURVIVE AND GROW.<sup>6</sup>**



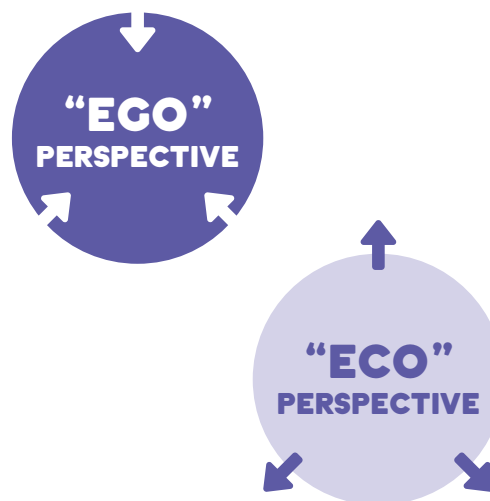
**Table 1:** How organisations look through different lenses

ORGANISATIONAL...	ORGANISATIONAL LENS	SYSTEMS LENS
<b>BOUNDARY</b>	Solid – them and us	Permeable – us
<b>INSTINCT</b>	Protecting; gatekeeping; protection against exposure	Sharing; releasing; protection through connection
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	Within organisational boundary	Across organisational boundaries
<b>VIEW OF SELF</b>	From the inside out	From the outside in
<b>VIEW OF ENVIRONMENT</b>	Hostile, threatening	Open, enabling
<b>VIEW OF RESOURCES</b>	Scarcity	Abundance
<b>RELATIONSHIP WITH ENVIRONMENT</b>	Taking from; competing	Exchanging with; collaborating
<b>SAYINGS</b>	<i>“If we don’t take this opportunity, someone else will.”</i>	<i>“If we don’t take this responsibility, no-one else will.”</i>
<b>RESULTS</b>	Unsustainable organisation or impact	Sustainable organisation and impact

Otto Scharmer describes these lenses as the 'ego' perspective and the 'eco' perspective.<sup>7</sup>

*"The solution is taking a system view, not 'my organisation does this', asking some searching questions about how to focus your particular resources in tune with the competence and people in the wider network. And most importantly, having that conversation with the people you're there to serve. And that's vital, because without it, you might see a solution or role in the system but it doesn't mean a thing because other partners see it in a different way. Having courage to go into those difficult conversations transparently is something we need to think about."*

– Workshop participant



## IN THIS SECTION

Five systems leadership behaviours are explored below, along with the straightforward principles and practices that support them:

1. **CLARIFYING: BEING INTENTIONAL, FACING UP TO HARD DECISIONS**
2. **CURIOSITY: MAKING SPACE FOR UNCERTAINTY AND CREATIVITY**
3. **CONVENING: GENEROUS LEADERSHIP ACROSS ORGANISATIONAL BOUNDARIES**
4. **CHALLENGING: COURAGE AND PERSISTENCE**
5. **CHAMPIONING: VOICES FOR CHANGE.**

<sup>7</sup> The Essentials of Theory U: Core Principles and Applications, O Scharmer, 2018

<sup>8</sup> Systems Thinking and Systems Leadership, NHS Education Scotland. This was a fantastic web resource that seems to have gone offline. Please tell us if you know otherwise though.



**SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP  
NEEDS TO COUNTERACT  
OUR NATURAL TENDENCY  
TO AVOID THE REALLY  
DIFFICULT WORK –**

- **BY BLAMING OTHERS FOR THE PROBLEM,**
- **BY PRETENDING THE PROBLEM COULD BE SOLVED IF ONLY THERE WERE INCREASED RESOURCES,**
- **OR BY ASSUMING THAT IT IS THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE 'SENIOR MANAGERS' TO MAKE THE DIFFICULT DECISIONS.<sup>8</sup>**



# 1. CLARIFYING: BEING INTENTIONAL, FACING UP TO HARD DECISIONS

“This is the way I think a leader should be, so I’ll be it.”

– Programme participant

Everyone will have their own views about the purpose of the system they are involved in, often with strongly held values they think others should share. Unless these really are shared, conflict and wasted effort will be inevitable as each person or organisation pulls in different directions to help achieve their vision of the system’s goal. If we want to understand a system, or change it, it is fundamentally important to begin by exploring its purpose.

## EXPLORE SYSTEM PURPOSE

**Individually:** living your values and being clear about your intentions when entering into partnership or dialogue.

**Organisationally:** being clear on core purpose and making hard decisions about what will and won’t get done, not getting pulled out of shape by different stakeholders’ expectations. See the **Lasting Difference Toolkit** for much more on this topic.

**Partnerships:** defining purposes and expectations together:

- **Are we talking about the same thing when we talk about ‘the system’?** Remember interconnectedness and intersectionality – there may be systems within systems (e.g. young, homeless LGBTQ+ people may have to navigate more than one system to get what they want).
- **What is the shared goal?**<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Thinking in Systems, D Meadows, 2008

<sup>10</sup> System mapping and logic modelling are simple but powerful processes for partnerships to generate new insights into systems, their purpose and their interconnectedness: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/science-maths-technology/computing-ict/managing-complexity-systems-ap-proach-introduction/content-section-9.3> <https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/ess-support-guide-1c-developing-a-logic-model/>



**ARTICULATE, MEAN,  
REPEAT, STAND UP  
FOR AND INSIST UPON  
SYSTEM GOALS.<sup>9</sup>**



- **What are you trying to change – and what you are able to?** It's fruitless to fix the individual parts of a broken system.<sup>11</sup> However, small changes in how the parts interact (e.g. individual people, teams or organisations) can make a big difference to the people and issues you support, e.g. clear referral pathways, ease of access, knowledge exchange, joined-up responses.
- **What are your respective roles and responsibilities?** Clarify mutual expectations: what happens if you don't meet in the middle? Who are partners accountable to? Make clear public commitments and seek people who will hold you to account for them: how can partners hold each other to account, free of blame, helping each other to learn? Show what good collaboration looks like, don't just say it.

### CASE STUDY: FUTURE PATHWAYS

Future Pathways is a partnership of four organisations working together to enable people who experienced childhood abuse in care in Scotland to live happier, healthier and more independent lives. The alliance was established in 2016, and includes work with more than 70 delivery partners who provide services to survivors.

Future Pathways has been faced with understandably hard decisions – not just about having enough resources, but also considering whether the right resources are available, in its service and in the communities it works in.

Alliance Manager Flora Henderson reflects on systems thinking and capacity in this way:

*"I have appreciated and been challenged by systems thinking, which invites thought about how one's actions affect others. It also invites thought about how we can draw on other parts of the whole for help."*

*"It strikes me that we are all working against the headwinds of complexity, the pandemic context and, at times, chafing against traditional ways of doing business which are based on competitive principles. It's the system working against itself! Sometimes, the most valuable work we have done is collaborative work. It's not always funded, it tends to take time and when it works, it's highly effective – but it gets harder and harder when time is limited."*

*"We are learning that ongoing dialogue is hugely important– sharing what we are learning, even when it is a difficult conversation because there isn't enough of what is needed. So, investing energy into developing and sustaining that shared understanding has emerged as a priority; to direct resources well, and also to avoid stepping into gaps where one's resources don't enable a truly effective response."*

<sup>11</sup> 'If we have a system of improvement that is directed at improving the parts separately, you can be absolutely sure that the performance of the whole will not be improved.' Russell Ackoff <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqEelG8aPPk>

## GATHER INTELLIGENCE AND USE DATA

You can't understand or make decisions about systems without data, for example levels of demand and available resource say a lot about system capacity (see 2.1 above).

## MAKE DECISIONS

Systems leaders offer (and seek) support to make decisions, knowing that the right, most effective thing to do is often the hardest thing too. What is going to be prioritised? Are the right people involved? Are the right resources available? Do resources need to be used differently?

## PRINCIPLES

- The stated purpose of a system might be very different from the purpose it achieves.
- Partnership isn't about using others to achieve your goals. It's about creating shared outcomes and doing whatever it takes to achieve them. Partners are reliant on and accountable to others to achieve results.
- Partners will all have different perspectives on the same things. These perspectives may all be right.
- The most difficult work is often the most effective.
- Small changes can have a big impact.

## PRACTICES

- Be clear with yourself and others about your intentions.
- Work with others to explore system purpose.
- Agree roles, responsibilities and accountability.
- Gather intelligence and use data.
- Make choices and hard decisions, and support others to do the same.



## 2. CURIOSITY: MAKING SPACE FOR UNCERTAINTY AND CREATIVITY

“Bouncing ideas off colleagues and hearing how other organisations approached similar challenges was helpful in challenging me to look at things through different lenses...with each session our relationships became stronger and so too did the impact of our time together.”

– Programme participant

The things that are put in place to manage uncertainty are sometimes the very things that limit system capacity (and change the system’s purpose – see above). Things like regulation, procurement procedures, funding arrangements and performance targets.

The role of a system leader here is to help other people live with uncertainty for long enough to allow problems to be explored properly before reaching for solutions. Long enough to let tentative new ideas take shape before being crushed by judgment. There’s a myth that innovation is about producing amazing outputs. It’s actually about seeking a wide enough range of inputs to develop and choose from, then testing and iterating to see what comes out: the artist’s sketch book, the musician’s demos.

System leaders may need to stop avoiding disequilibrium and start to facilitate it, upsetting the organisational or system’s status quo for long enough to allow new patterns and processes to emerge. This will be uncomfortable for all concerned. Effective system leaders acknowledge the discomfort they feel when other people are uncomfortable but resist the urge to jump in or take control. They understand that providing ‘just enough’ information and careful facilitation helps others to exercise their own autonomy. They’re wary of quick fixes, knowing that the system will only change when the pain involved in sustaining it is greater than the pain of changing it.

*“You’re driven to put on the sticking plaster, doing something yourself quickly. It doesn’t quite help, but you’re being asked for it. Then you’ve missed a real opportunity to do the hard thing well, which is take the time, negotiate, talk, talk, talk until you get through it. That’s the sort of work it’s hard to do when you don’t have enough staff, or you’re trying to serve more people than you have capacity for.”*

Workshop participant

There's a balance to be found here: having just the right amount of uncertainty, and just the right amount of organisation. Being sharply focused on your goal, like a swordfish, but busily exploring, like an octopus.

## PRINCIPLES

- Nobody should need permission to do the right thing.
- Leaders can't expect or be expected to know the answers. Good leaders accept that they can't always give people the certainty they want.
- Leadership is experiential – we learn from doing and taking leaps of faith.
- It is more empowering to involve people in understanding the stress in the system than to buffer them from it.
- Sometimes people won't step 'up' or step in until other people make space by stepping away.

## PRACTICES

- Keep the focus on the outcome, especially when the process is unclear.
- Find the bottlenecks that stop outcomes being achieved; develop ideas about how to respond to these; design experiments to test them.
- Make room for uncertainty and remove fear of mistakes by prioritising learning. Be congruent: show your own vulnerability and openness to feedback.
- Equip yourself with the right questions and the courage to raise them.
- Help others understand the value of making and learning from mistakes.

As you develop the discipline of not seeking quick fixes you start to create the conditions for solutions to emerge.

*"It feels like bad performance not to get a result. That's hard for individuals, who then feel impelled to do something, anything to help, because what is needed is unavailable or too complicated to face just now."*

– Workshop participant



**SWORDFISH:  
SHARPLY  
FOCUSED  
ON AN END  
POINT**



**OCTOPUS:  
SOFTLY  
REACHING  
OUT IN  
DIFFERENT  
DIRECTIONS**

### 3. CONVENING: GENEROUS LEADERSHIP ACROSS ORGANISATIONAL BOUNDARIES

“Using the resource we have to convene other people, then collaborating to explore the purpose of our work together – who are the people or what are the issues we all have in common?”

– *Programme participant*

Everyone has power and resources – and constraints on those. It is easy to overestimate other people’s power, resources and influence, while underestimating your own. One of the most powerful things you can do is one of the simplest: bring people together.

Within organisations, encourage lateral leadership, bringing people from different roles and functions together to explore and develop new ways of working. The **Lateral Leadership Guide** helps you unlock this powerful potential.

Working across organisational boundaries, invest in bringing others together: convene a new group or set up a safe collaborative space. Accept that organisations have different cultures, sizes and approaches. Allow time for learning how to work together effectively, then provide space where opportunities for change can be explored and new experiments designed.

Inviting people together to work on something that they need and want to achieve is easy, though it requires generous leadership on the behalf of the convening organisation. The trickier bit comes next: identifying the resources available collectively and prioritising these on where they have the most impact.

The simple answer would be to remind organisations that most of their resources aren’t theirs at all, but come from public funds, for public benefit. Sadly, these resources are generally allocated on the



basis of competition (e.g. competitive tendering and grant making), leading to the protectionism and mistrust shown by Organisation A in page 24 above. As long as these resources are limited by artificial constraints (like short term, restricted funding), they can't easily be invested or shared to address systemic issues.

New structures and systems can help change this, simple things like:

- Partners sharing their understanding of the issues they're tackling and agreeing their respective roles in doing so. (See 'Clarifying' above)
- Bringing in an independent neutral chair, helping partners take an equal seat at the table.
- Carrying out joint development activities, not just meeting for business and negotiation. How you work together is just as important as what you work on.
- Co-locating individual staff or whole services.
- Creating multi-disciplinary teams to focus resources on the key issues, unconstrained by organisational boundaries.
- Redeploying people so their skills are used in the most beneficial way.
- Short-term funding being used to gather evidence to inform future development.
- Funders creating balanced funding portfolios with short-life projects and longer-term interventions, for example unrestricted 'challenge funds' to explore new responses to deep-rooted challenges.

*"Our resources are deeply unevenly distributed. Our expertise and ability to lead and support in a systems way is very limited. We've found ourselves facing unforeseen demand for support, and a real difficulty in leveraging that help from other services, not because they don't want to, it's a question of having the resources in the right place and what's the perceived role of your organisation. Do people feel able to trust you?"*

– Workshop participant

### CASE STUDY: HACKNEY COUNCIL

Having identified a system capacity issue, with a revolving door of people going in and out of hospital, Hackney Council and partners refocused on meeting needs together, not separately, creating:

- A dedicated Pathway Team, giving people one point of contact
- Shared support plans
- Shared accountability between partners.



**SYSTEM LEADERS FACE THE SAME ISSUES AS EVERYONE ELSE. THEY JUST COMMIT TO DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY.**

## PRINCIPLES

- Collaboration helps harness resources – and use them more efficiently – to achieve things you couldn't do alone.
- The resources are there in the system. They are just not distributed evenly across the system or applied intelligently to where they can make the most impact.
- Generous hosts make others feel comfortable, using their resources to spark learning and facilitate collaboration.
- It's better to be valuable than precious. Your organisation's resources belong to the people and purpose it serves.
- System leaders face the same capacity and resource issues as everyone else. They just recognise when existing approaches aren't working and commit to using their resources differently.

## PRACTICES

- Acknowledge that you don't have the answers.
- Provide protected time and space away from operational issues, for sharing difficult issues, testing ideas and having assumptions challenged by critical friends.
- Recognise when progress is not being made. Work around immovable stakeholders.
- Identify the resources available and start sharing them. How do you collectively turn resources (money, time, people, knowledge, data) into the power needed to change things?
- Help yourself and your organisation by working towards achieving what's best for the wider system. Healthy organisations need healthy systems to flourish.



**WE THINK THERE ARE  
FIXED RESOURCE POTS  
FOR WHAT WE DO AS  
A SOCIETY. THAT'S  
NOT TRUE. WE MAKE  
A SERIES OF CHOICES.**



Workshop participant

## 4. CHALLENGING: COURAGE AND PERSISTENCE

“Design and bring into being the institutional processes through which new problems can continually be confronted and old structures continually discarded.”<sup>12</sup>

When seeking to lead change within systems, it is possible to be too polite, skirting around the subject of accountability and avoiding difficult conversations about changes in the way people and systems behave. Systems leadership takes the courage to name the problem and the persistence to pursue a vision of something better. How will unhelpful behaviours and structures be challenged?

As with system capacity, telling and facing the truth are vital. How are you contributing to sustaining the current system or changing it? Committing to real change helps to show others the way. Shine a light, spotlighting the differences between the current system and what’s needed next. Raise the emerging issues in partnerships, for example about what you are learning from your work.

Use up-to-date data and real-life stories to provide actionable evidence of what’s needed (see ‘Championing’ below). Keep pointing to the systemic issues behind individual cases. If necessary, keep finding new ways to say the same thing (new evidence, research etc.). Demonstrate the value of change, using pilots, case studies and evaluations to show what’s possible. Empower people to understand the ways in which, by their action or inaction, they are already shaping the system.

Persist. Change takes time. Expand the time horizon you’re working towards, with a focus on long term decisions and goals. At first, people may only see what’s being lost, not what’s being created. They will challenge you for trying to change something they are familiar with or value. Look beyond the behaviour and resistance you encounter, to understand what might be driving them. Sustain your resilience by using your values and vision, and other people’s voices, as a compass.



<sup>12</sup> Beyond the Stable State, D A Schon, 1971

## PRINCIPLES

- Systemic changes aren't made on paper or in a vacuum – but into an active system that will absorb or attack efforts to change it.
- Avoiding challenge is not a form of respect. Courtesy is important, but when seeking to make change, courage matters too.
- It feels amazing when other people start getting excited about doing things differently.
- Little things, like changing the language you use, can really help to embed new ways of thinking and acting.
- Accountability is not about success, failure or apportioning blame, it's about taking responsibility for addressing challenges.

## PRACTICES

- Shine a light on the current problem and highlight what's needed next.
- Don't avoid conflict. Learn to bring it to the surface and work with it as a source of creative energy.
- Use evidence and examples to inspire possibilities.
- Use deadlines, public scrutiny and other people, movements and events to sustain the challenge.
- Keep believing in yourself by believing in others, your shared vision and what can be achieved together.



**IF YOU WANT SOMETHING  
TO HAPPEN, IT WILL. IT'S  
ABOUT HAVING THE WILL  
TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.**



Workshop participant



## CASE STUDY: ABERDEEN

Third sector providers of social care have been highlighting the problems of competitive tendering and promoting collaborative alternatives for years.

In Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), commissioners listened, working with providers of care at home services to devise a new partnership model of commissioning. However, when it was launched, the uncertainty and loss of established ways of working became real for providers, generating real discomfort. Where had this model come from? Why couldn't they just keep the existing process?

The commissioners acknowledged the discomfort but kept their eye on the end goal, working with providers through the challenges that came up. During the pandemic and its accompanying staffing and resourcing issues, the new partnership approach had created a more resilient system with more stable services than many other areas.

*“ACHSCP took the brave decision to commission a completely new way of delivering care at home. The consortium formed through the shared ethics and values of the founding members, and a desire to be part of creating something different for the citizens of Aberdeen. There is still work to be done, but with the collaborative relationship we have with ACHSCP we are in the best place to drive that work forward.”*

– Mike Burns, Granite Care Consortium

## 5. CHAMPIONING: VOICES FOR CHANGE

“If we want to design things to increase the capacity of people and the systems around them, we need to start from a different point.”

– Workshop participant

Curiosity and Convening help to create the conditions for change. Challenging helps to make the case for change. However, being part of the system doesn't help you to be recognised by those within it or trusted by those without.

The single most important role that people who are out there changing systems have in common is championing voices for change. They put people 'at the start and at the heart' of everything.<sup>13</sup>

Like any good leader, people seeking to lead systemic change start by finding out where people want to go. Meet directly with people affected by the systems you are part of and the decisions you make. Find out what they want and what you should be doing – or doing differently. Keep people informed about what you do in response. This means that when you make decisions, they and their consequences are grounded in reality.

Take the necessary time to build relationships and trust. Work with people to identify their individual or collective strengths and assets. What can be built upon? Provide the training, tools and techniques that will help communities come up with their own strategies for change. Help people to identify the power at play in a situation – and the power and resources they have. Use yours to amplify their voices. Use your privileged access to facilitate links between voices that don't get always heard loudly enough and ears that don't always hear clearly enough.

You won't always agree, and you may not always be able to agree to everything that people put forward. Power and decision making need to be navigated and negotiated, particularly where structural or power imbalances exist. Again, clarifying roles and responsibilities will help.



**THE SINGLE MOST  
EFFECTIVE WAY TO  
CHANGE THE SYSTEM  
IS TO CHAMPION  
VOICES FOR CHANGE**

<sup>13</sup> With thanks to Meg O'Neill, Shelter Scotland

## PRINCIPLES

- Championing voices for change is the single most effective way to change established systems.
- People who are represented are more likely to have their rights fulfilled than those who are not.
- Everyone has power and resources that can be applied to the system at hand.
- The ideas and energy for systems change are already out there. They are just suppressed by the way things are currently done.
- People in positions of power are still people.

## PRACTICES

- Invest in finding out what people want. Take time to develop mutually trustful relationships.
- Be prepared to change as a result.
- Facilitate access to voices that don't normally get heard.
- Provide resources to help people find and use their voice, power and other assets. [Download the **Guide to Sustainable Impact** here]
- Name and navigate power differences between different people and organisations [for example between communities and charities; funders and funded organisations; public and voluntary sector; managers and colleagues].

### CASE STUDY

Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) works to tackle prejudice and discrimination, celebrate diversity, build positive community relations, and provide evidence to change policy and practice. One of the ways it does this is to gather data from casework and other frontline services and community engagement, collating it to identify systemic issues and raise these with partners.

This helps tackle the systemic causes of inequalities, preventing issues being addressed in a piecemeal, case by case way. Importantly, GREC feeds data back to its communities about what it has done about the issues. It also tracks outcomes as a way to learn about the effectiveness of different influencing tactics.



**PEOPLE DON'T  
RECOGNISE THAT  
THEY CAN INFLUENCE  
CHANGE. WE EXPECT  
THAT SOMEONE MORE  
SENIOR NEEDS TO TAKE  
THE LEAD. WE NEED TO  
START CHALLENGING  
THIS THINKING.**



Workshop participant

# FINAL REFLECTIONS

“You don’t change paradigms from within. You point to the anomalies and failures of the old one. You speak and act loudly and with assurance from the new one. You insert people with the new paradigm in places of public visibility and power. You don’t waste time with reactionaries. You work with active change agents.”<sup>14</sup>

I once picked up a hitchhiker on his way to climb a Munro. ‘The hills are beautiful,’ he told me, ‘The trouble is all the hikers.’

We all do this. We sit in cars complaining about traffic. We use competitive tendering then wonder why people don’t collaborate. We give out short term funding and wonder why organisations apply again next year. We take on funding that doesn’t cover costs and wonder why we have sustainability problems. We know things would be better if only other people would change.

**Systems change starts with us. We’re already part of the system – and responsible for shaping it. We might as well get good at it.**

Of course, change is a journey not a destination. We’ll never fully arrive at a point where no more change is needed. But knowing what needs to change and focusing on what we’re able to change is a good start. Knowing the signs and milestones to look for along the way, like the indicators of system capacity in Part Two, helps us to take manageable steps and sustain momentum without being overwhelmed.

Perhaps counterintuitively, the growing trend since the start of the pandemic has been for longer rather than shorter term strategic planning. This is because systems leaders know that planning isn’t about predicting, it’s about having clarity on their purpose and confidence in their role of leading a way through long-term change. As Donella Meadows said, ‘The longer the operant time horizon, the better the chances for survival.’<sup>15</sup>



**WE  
ALREADY  
SHAPE THE  
SYSTEM...**

**...WE MIGHT  
AS WELL  
GET GOOD  
AT IT.**

<sup>14</sup> Thinking in Systems, D Meadows, 2008

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

# READING AND RESOURCES

## AVAILABLE FROM THE LASTING DIFFERENCE.COM

The Lasting Difference toolkit: tools for organisational sustainability

Managing Capacity

Sustainable Impact

Lasting Leadership: guides to

- *Succession and Knowledge Management*
- *Lateral Leadership*
- *Sustaining Energy, Focus and Self Care*
- *Equalities*

## OUR OTHER SECTOR-SPECIFIC RESOURCES FOR SYSTEMS LEADERS

Coping With Complexity (Social care)

Embracing the Chaos (Social care)

Making the Change (Community justice)

Promoting Variety (Commissioning in social care)

System Capacity (Housing and Homelessness)

## LIFECHANGING READING

Beyond the Stable State, Donald A Schon

Embracing Complexity, Jean Boulton, Peter Allen and Cliff Bowman

The Fifth Discipline, Peter Senge

Learning For Action, Peter Checkland and John Poulter

Surfing the Edge of Chaos, Richard Pascale, Mark Millemann and Linda Gioja

Systems Thinking, F E Emery (Editor)

Systems Thinking for Social Change, David Peter Stroh

The Essentials of Theory U, Otto Scharmer

Thinking in Systems, Donella Meadows

## WEB RESOURCES

Developing a logic model, Evaluation Support Scotland

If Russ Ackoff Had Given a TED Talk, YouTube

Introduction to systems maps, Open University OpenLearn

Power As a Health and Social Justice Issue, Glasgow Caledonian University

Top Tips for Sustaining Homecare, The Local Government Association, United Kingdom Homecare Association and ADASS

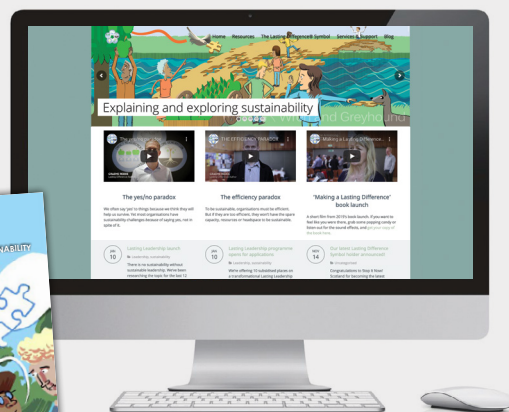
# ABOUT THE LASTING DIFFERENCE

We are the creative management consultancy behind the popular suite of Lasting Difference and Lasting Leadership resources. We provide a range of services to charities and other non-profit organisations, including:

## The Lasting Difference

Workshops, elearning, conferences and consultancy, sustaining organisations with effective strategies for:

- Involvement
- Income generation
- Impact measurement
- Innovation and improvement.



The Lasting Difference Toolkit® is available as a free download from [TheLastingDifference.com](http://TheLastingDifference.com)



## Advance Retreats®

Calm, engaging facilitation and away days for boards, leaders and teams.



## The Lasting Difference Symbol

Awarded to organisations working towards Lasting Difference principles.



## Making a Lasting Difference book

We wrote the book on charity sustainability.



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**Graeme Reekie**  
**Director,**  
**The Lasting Difference**

Graeme Reekie is a complex adaptive system, whether he likes it or not.



**Wren and Greyhound**  
Create it • Plan it • Measure it • Sustain it

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## MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

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