





Introduction

This project is a further exploration into how to support places to work in a whole system way and sits alongside the work of the Local Delivery Pilots.



Background

The Navigating Local Systems (NLS) project began in the autumn of 2019 and focused on working with 3 localities, **Wakefield, Luton and Liverpool,** to enable people and organisations to better navigate local systems' by developing their knowledge, skills and capacity to **drive change in the system** in order to increase physical activity within local communities where need is the greatest.

Purpose

The purpose was to enable participants to better understand the system they work within; help them to develop strong, resilient and collaborative local partnerships; work collaboratively within the local commissioning and co-production landscape and help drive change across the system and within the place.

What we did

Working together, Sport England and the Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) selected three places and gave each a small amount of investment to work with an expert facilitator who could help them test and learn whether working in this way would allow each place to begin their system change journey.







If this purpose resonates with you, then you may wish to follow this approach in your own place.

Outcomes identified

As a result of the support we hoped to see the following outcomes: -

- An embedded strategic methodology that starts to tackle identified blockages and drives new ways of working.
- A reflective space where new learning can emerge and begin to be acted upon in each local place and collectively across the sector.
- People thinking about how they tackle inactivity in a different way.
- Improved strategic recognition of physical activity in a place.
- Improved collaborative leadership skills and understanding among local leaders.
- The start of changing behaviours in the system itself and among communities.

Do these outcomes describe what you are hoping to see within your place? You may wish to explore the use of an external facilitator to help you to realise some of these.

Foundation ingredients we were looking for in each place





A core group of senior leaders who have or could create the space, learning environment and remit to steer this work and its momentum.



The level of awareness and desire to better understand the needs of the individuals and communities and what impacts on their choices to be active; as well as what would support them to access activity opportunities and improve their activity levels.



An awareness of the key actors in the system, the advocates, influencers, resistors and any understanding as to why those perspectives are held and ability to build strengthened, collaborative relationships.



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Clarity about the specific things that need to change and what can be achieved as a result.



The ability to agree a common purpose for the work with a coalition of the willing based on a shared understanding of local challenges and needs.



An awareness of the 'boundaries' of the system and an ability to 'map' the system e.g. who and what are the assets? Where are the gaps? Strength of relationships?



Awareness of where there might be **points** of leverage in terms of what can be influenced.



A good place for you to start would be to assess yourself against each of these foundation ingredients. If there are some which you feel are not yet embedded these may be a good place to start your journey to whole system working.



Role of the facilitator / types of support

The primary role of the facilitators was to provide a focused "injection" of facilitated support that would be responsive and tailored around the context and needs of the place. For examples of the support provided view the facilitator videos.



If you are looking for a facilitator to help you in your place, review the support the facilitators provided in the video case studies as you may be able to use some of these ideas in your place.

Learning

The main hands on learning has been: -

That places need to have a clear focus and shared purpose to gain buy in from other stakeholders.

66 The Leadership style of the group and board is crucial to success. Learning has been overlooked as a luxury but should be at the heart of our strategy going forward."



Do you have a clear focus and a shared purpose?

- It takes time to build relationships.
- 66 Overall relationships are stronger; conversations are open and honest but there is still some frustration that others find it too easy to sit back and not take the lead unless 'pushed'.?



Are you prepared for this work to take the time it needs?

- You don't always know what's working.
- 66 We need to look out for the change we hope for and be open to seeing changes we don't expect. These may not always be measurable in traditional ways and so we need to continue to challenge our thinking around the measurement of success."



System change is not linear, are you happy to take an iterative approach through testing and learning, adapting and flexing in order to reach your final destination?

- Curiosity, experimenting, opportunism and learning.
- 66 When there is no route-map to the answers we are looking for we will look for the patterns we want to amplify or reduce and deliberately set out to learn about the work and ourselves, knowing that both will need to see changes."



These are all key behaviours necessary for a system change journey, would your place embrace these?





It has given access to senior leaders and engaged them collectively in the conversation sooner than would have happened without this support. ??

In complexity there is no blueprint, there is only experimenting and learning our way forward.

Learning

- Collaborate widely with diverse groups.
- 66 NLS has enabled us to create opportunities to now collaborate on new ideas on a 'safe to fail' basis."



Do you know the key partners you would need to engage and collaborate with for this type of work to be a success?

- Staff and stakeholders need to develop more appropriate skills.
- 66 Skill development will be needed for working with complex issues and systems."



Are you and your colleagues prepared to acknowledge where you are on your learning journey?

- You still need buy in from senior colleagues.
- 66 One place noted that whilst the theory of 'distributed leadership' is wonderful; the practicality is very often different! There is a feeling that they have only gone so far along the journey and without one leader pushing the impetus may be lost."



Do your senior leaders see the benefits of this way of working?

- Change is complex and needs to be seen as the day job.
- 66 It has been realised that if systems move at the speed of trust, sometimes the work might have to go slow to go fast, feeling a way through complexity and dynamic situations together so that solutions can emerge."



If your system change journey is just beginning this way of working may be completely new to you, be prepared to experiment and take risks.

Wakefield -

'Building Capacity & Sharing Learning'

Making physical activity everyone's business

Background:





Wakefield district is home to **325,837**

people living in a diverse range of city, urban and rural communities









Wakefield is the 54th most deprived district in England (out of 317 districts) 16% of the district's population are living in neighbourhoods amongst the top10% most deprived in England (IMD 2019) Wakefield District has a relatively small but growing ethnic minority population. The largest group born outside the UK are people born in Poland



Mental ill health, excess weight and smoking are prevalent and life expectancy and healthy life expectancy for both men and women is significantly behind the national average

What we set out to achieve:

We didn't want to repeat activities and behaviours in hope of a different outcome, this for us was about **moving on from the foundations of knowledge, practice and relationships that had already been built.** We had previously got people together successfully to discuss the challenge of physical inactivity, there had been some success, but it continues to **feel like the physical activity agenda is "not everyone's business".**

As part of this work we wanted to **build an increasing coalition of people,** beyond the usual suspects, that would engage. We wanted to **make our practices and behaviours real and sustainable,** understanding that complex change requires us to think and work differently. It was important for us to be able to **identify and articulate signs of shifting behaviours and action,** but we knew that this wouldn't be easy.

What we did:

Initially we identified the important agendas that colleagues were working on across the district and a quick analysis revealed that there were many cross cutting agendas at play such as poverty, mental health, loneliness and young people.

We also felt that is was important to identify some key principles for the work:

- **Helping people to help themselves** supporting a shift to an enabling role for public services.
- Understanding complex change is not linear –
 We have been using ideas of Adaptive Action and Design
 Thinking to frame our work.
- Focus on a part of the whole and go deeper, with an enquiry mindset.
- The best way to progress physical activity is by getting on board with **pursuing other agendas that physical activity can contribute to.**



CASE STUDY 1 Wakefield

We decided there was value in **learning from what had gone before**, so we had a round table discussion about work we had each been involved in that was complex or systemic in nature.

We noticed common and cross cutting themes from our work and chose three pieces to take a deeper dive into. Each person involved in that work was asked to think through some **scaffolding questions** to guide our knowledge and involvement towards insight and learning. (See Scaffolding within 'tools and techniques' section).

This formed the basis for the **affinity mapping activity** reflecting on three projects that had involved wider systems working. This has helped us to understand the **conditions needed for collaboration to happen across the system.**

This work has created different conversations from a different perspective and is beginning to develop a common language and reference point for system change. (For more detail on Affinity Mapping see 'tools and techniques' section).



What changed as a result:

- We are consciously taking a different approach to projects from the outset. For example, including more players in the system earlier on to contribute to thinking and also taking a **shared ownership approach**.
- The idea that no one organisation holds, or should hold, all the answers is evident and there is more of a readiness to consider how we **better share knowledge**, **skills and ownership**.
- It's enabled **more open challenge** about the way things are done in Wakefield around physical activity and opened up opportunities for **candid conversations** about this.
- This will lay a better **foundation for building the relationships needed** for progressing work around
 improving physical activity and has helped us explore
 long held beliefs about who should be involved in the
 conversation, established ways of working and how they
 will approach things in the future.
- We have applied these working principles through the recent application to the Football Foundation which involved forming a **coalition of organisations**, who wouldn't all necessarily see themselves as having a role to play in sport and physical activity, to act as **equal contributors in the design of the activity, decision making and delivery.**



What did we learn along the way?

- The **approach** is key and can help create the right conditions to join up parts of the system to get better outcomes for our shared objectives.
- Having **capacity** is important. Whilst some senior leaders did not have as much capacity as they would have liked for consistent involvement, they worked sufficiently together to understand there would be changes to how they might work in the future.
- Partners are sometimes kept at arm's length because the situation or the **ask is not sufficiently clear.**
- Funders, of sport and physical activity work often still look for clear and numerical indicators of success. **Growing confidence in the system** to talk about the nature of Wakefield communities and what the work is that is required, even if it doesn't fit the boxes of funders, feels like a significant step forward.
- If there is funding to resource whole system thinking and working, there needs to be **flexibility on spending timeframes** as this work takes time.



The approach is key and can help create the right conditions to join up parts of the system. ??



Liverpool -

'Tackling Inactivity at Scale'

Making physical activity and sport truly accessible for people that need it the most

Background:





Liverpool is a vibrant maritime city in the northwest of England. About

478,600 people live in Liverpool





varying levels of

deprivation and

inequality



Approximately 15% of people identify themselves as part of a minority

ethnic group

45% of the
Liverpool
population live
in the 10% most
depri<u>ved areas in</u>



Whilst innovation and good practice has emerged from the city, inactivity levels are still significant and contributing to the stubborn inequalities seen in many communities

What we set out to achieve:

We wanted to **build on the work to date** in the city to fully embed physical activity as a strategic priority more systemically, so we can scale up the outcomes for people living and working in Liverpool through a sustainable approach to **improved coordination** and strengthened collaboration.

What we did:

Our facilitator independently conducted **17 semi-structured interviews** with a cross-section of stakeholders from across the system, inside and outside the council.

Most had first-hand but varying degrees of experience of the strategic network established to deliver the city's physical activity outcomes. This process revealed several opportunities but also a number of **barriers to achieving the city's physical activity vision.**

The Physical Activity and Sport (PAS) Stakeholder Group held a very productive workshop in March 2020 to discuss **priorities** and next steps. There was some commonality regarding reviewing the membership, defining roles and accountability,

learning from each other, reviewing the Super Stakeholder arrangements, improving communications and reiterating the task.

The beginning of 2020 saw a significant change in leadership within the PAS Executive Board and due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Board's transition has not yet been completed, nor have the PAS Stakeholder members had capacity to drive the priorities forward.

However, the NLS findings will provide a timely and relevant framework to achieve the transition needed and enable city stakeholders to move forward as intended.



CASE STUDY 2 Liverpool

What changed as a result?

- There is an emerging shift from 'doing' to 'doing and learning'. This has been influenced by the NLS work in tandem with local and national narrative, plus other leadership development opportunities facilitated by Sport England and the Local Government Association.
- There is even more focus on the system and embedding physical activity, and less on 'projects for projects sake'.
- Real reflection is happening about the strength of relationships, leadership and organisational culture.
- This work has taken on wider meaning beyond physical activity and is considered a **key part of other systems work** within Liverpool.



What did we learn along the way?

There is a need to **go further to embed physical activity at a greater scale:**

- Within the council: by increasing the breadth of reach and coordination capacity across Council directorates and services, utilising their highly leveraged impact on the contribution of other stakeholders, partners and commissioned providers.
- Beyond the council: there is a lot of activity and willing partners, but not enough coordination to make the sum greater than the parts - this could be achieved by building collaborative capacity; mobilising resources and taking advantage of the strength of partners and partners understanding their contribution to strategic objectives.

There is a need to **go faster by accelerating the city's efforts** to achieve the impact the city wants and needs by;

- Focusing on the council's role as an enabler (not just a doer) and strengthening its **role as a system steward.**
- Prioritisation based on evidence.
- Consistency of focus and not pulling resource away into other projects.
- Involving new allies that exist but are perhaps not connected to the work.

- Strengthening links between money flows (such as individual support budgets) and effective support people want.
- Connecting top-down strategy with bottom-up activity.

In summary, there are two key systemic "nodes" that could be prioritised:

- Coordination capacity in the Council, which has a highly leveraged impact on the contribution of others.
- The PAS Stakeholder Group, which is the key body for mobilising and coordinating the activity of a wide range of partners, needs reinvigorating in order to re-affirm its purpose and understanding of its contribution to the strategic objectives.

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It was important to create the spaces and opportunities for partners to learn from each other about effective interventions. ??



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Luton -

'Reigniting Relationships'

Creating change for children in troubled circumstances or on the edge of care

Background:





Luton is a large town, borough and unitary authority area of Bedfordshire, with a popu<u>lation of</u>

214.700





Luton has a proportionately large younger population with 5% more 0 -19 year olds than the national average







Luton has four Lower Super Output Areas in the top 10% most deprived nationally with a further 29 in the top 11- 20% (IMD2019)



We want to change mindsets, engage and convince people that physical activity is everyone's business.

What we set out to achieve:

To develop a system approach that would **embed the use of sport and physical activity** to support and **improve the lives of primary school children in troubled circumstances or on the edge of care** e.g. troubled families, children not attending school or at risk of offending. We wanted to **change mindsets**, engage and convince people that physical activity is everyone's business. We wanted to map the system, build new relationships, reignite existing ones and find a way to **turn personal commitment into systematic action.**

What we did:

A **system mapping workshop** explored the factors involved in supporting children aged 5 to 12 and their families in difficult circumstances. The workshop engaged colleagues in key roles relating to children's services including social services; police; education; support workers; public health and the sport and physical activity sector.

There was also representation from the elected member with responsibility for Children's Social Care and the Director of Public Health & Wellbeing. The workshop was designed in such a way to encourage **cross service working and the development of new relationships.** Each table had representation from each service.

This approach not only led to the development of new relationships but also **improved understanding about the**

positive impact of sport and physical activity among people working in children's services. This has resulted in several actionable ideas and opportunities to build sport and physical activity into the systems used to support children and young people in Luton. It was important to speak directly with young people to better understand their lives and experiences and explore how the system could be changed to better support them to be physically active.

Spending time listening to a group of Luton Care Leavers was illuminating and uplifting and only helped to reinforce the importance of this work in creating change. We then went on to develop an **informal Systems Leadership "thinking group"** that would oversee the systems mapping work and used this to re-energise the Physical Activity Strategy group.

What changed as a result?

- Individuals have developed the knowledge and confidence to apply system leadership and facilitate system mapping.
- The development of relationships has helped to broaden understanding of the opportunities and challenges which are shaping different opportunities and solutions.
- The work has resulted in the agreement of key actions that will **embed physical activity in support arrangements for children and families** who come to the attention of professionals and are approaching the edge of care.
- Learning from the NLS work is supporting the development of a Community Health bid, which if successful will focus on mapping out and seeking to enhance the community's involvement in decision making and accountability across the Public Health system in Luton.

What did we learn along the way?

- Officers, members and physical activity professionals will engage if there is a **clear and strategically relevant purpose** for doing so.
- A senior "hands on" individual heading up the communication and playing a part is very important in securing initial engagement.
- Systems are complex and there are many factors that influence them. Change is therefore not easy to deliver and **takes time.** Setting initial priorities and quick wins that support positive outcomes for as many parts of the system is vital in building relationships, respect and trust.

- Those involved need to be supported in their work and have it identified as a **strategic priority** for their organisation and an important part of their job role.
- In the scoping phase, the process of **one-to-one interviews** worked well as a way of engaging the Clinical
 Commissioning Group and Council Officers and the lead
 elected member in Luton, providing people with an
 opportunity to reflect on their own leadership role in this.









Advice for others attempting the same type of work

I always knew relationship building was key, but I'm doing this with a greater awareness of the why and the how. I see colleagues changing their approach to connecting up the system, having conversations earlier in a process, inviting people in early, being open to others' perspectives and being up for some experimentation.

- **Be realistic** about the changing levels of interest and involvement in the process, notice it and use it as an opportunity to reflect and involve new players.
- Accept that your starting point might not be where you expect it to be! You don't know what you don't know until you start somewhere and see where it leads. You might find that your activity feels circular but that process of trying something, reflecting and trying something different is valuable learning.
- Involve people early, even when it feels uncomfortable and unformed the process of sharing what you don't know, as much as what you do know, builds trust.

- Recognise your own leadership skills and enable those of others.
- Think about who has ownership of the current Physical Activity and Sport objectives in your place and if they need to own it even more, to let go a little.
- **Believe in your stakeholders** they have skills and resources to contribute.
- **Be honest about where you are** and don't be scared to admit if things are not where you want them to be in your place.
- **Embrace the mirror!** Reflection is scary but so rewarding!
- Involve your allies if you don't know who they are, draw a map!

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Don't rush it - systems are unwieldy and take time to navigate. >>



Making sure that those involved directly in delivering the project are given the time and support to ensure that it has the best chance of success. ??

- Having a suitably **qualified and experienced facilitator** from outside the area to come in and lead the initial process is invaluable. They come in with no preconceptions and baggage that enables them to stand back, listen and evaluate objectively.
- Giving senior leaders an opportunity to **identify and** prioritise an area of work to be tackled by the process gives it value and 'buy-in' which is invaluable when it comes to bringing people together.
- Challenging those involved to think differently about how they value their time together and how they work together in the future has also been very helpful. It encouraged more openness, honesty and creative thinking.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Wakefield

Facilitated support generated greater willingness to engage with the physical activity debate particularly by senior individuals and stakeholders across the wider system, although there was still a need to overcome some reluctance through influence and persuasion. The support has also enabled the places to **refresh and refocus tired relationships, decision making structures and processes.** But in doing so it has also exposed skill and competence limitations within teams in each place.

66 Throughout the process the added value of an external facilitator pushing the places to retain focus had been invaluable. The mix of challenge and support provided had allowed them, and often forced them to retain focus on the core aims of the project. ??

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Liverpool

In terms of the **personal changes** people have noted, some of the key ones include:

- A willingness to involve a wider group of people earlier in change processes and a greater willingness to share knowledge and skills.
- Changing personal leadership styles and behaviours.
- Relationships getting stronger and conversations becoming more open and honest.
- A greater **self-awareness** about the wider system.

66 I am adapting my approach to the way I chair/manage meetings."

66 I am thinking much more broadly and inclusively when seeking to find solutions to problems."

66 More of my time is spent encouraging others to take a lead."

66 I am prioritising more the need to engage with others working outside of the sport and physical activity landscape."

66 Increased group collaboration rather than a series of 1:1 meetings."

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Luton

The support has helped in a wide range of ways but the most important appear to be: -

- Providing access to senior leaders and opening the door to more candid conversations with them about how things are done now.
- Helping to lay **foundations for better relationships** and how each place and their partners work together in the future.
- Recreating a **clearer focus** and **sense of purpose.**
- Mapping and understanding better the wider system.
- Being able to **observe and learn from the facilitators.**

Where are we going next?

Despite the arrival of Covid-19 towards the end of the initiative, it appears that lots of the **learning is being embedded.** In terms of what next, key to this is being able to complete clear action plans. One place expressed an intention to use the disruption to the established system caused by Covid-19 as a means of building **better connectivity on a permanent basis** and another stressed that it had created opportunities to now **collaborate on new ideas on a "safe to fail" basis.**

Each of the three places has made a great start on their whole system journey and all have committed to continuing this work with their new system partners to try and move further forward and embed some of the practices they have been learning during this phase of the programme.



Tools and Techniques

These are some of the tools and techniques the facilitators introduced to the three places.



If you are interested in working in this way you may want to do some further research into some of the following tools and techniques and give them a try in your area.

The ultimate goal is to develop competent thinkers and doers who can not only use knowledge in new ways but also construct their own ways of working.

Scaffold questions

Scaffolding is a term used in education to describe the process by which people learn by building their knowledge and understanding and then applying it to problems. Psychologist and instructional designer Jerome Bruner first used the term in this context back in the 1960s.

Scaffolding questions enhance learning and aids in the mastery of concepts by systematically building on knowledge and relevance. The ultimate goal is to develop competent thinkers and doers who can not only use knowledge in new ways but also construct their own ways of working.

Myron Rogers took the concept of using questions to help people to work in groups to discuss and share ideas in a more structured way.



Scaffolding is often used in education settings, and so this article relates the practice to working with students. However it splits the information into 3 steps that might help you apply the technique to your work.

Myron's Maxims



On page 13 of Total Place: A Practitioner's guide to doing things differently has an overview of each of Myron's maxims, and includes information on how the Leadership Centre developed Total Place using the maxims.



Myron Rogers has written pages 22 and 23 of The Art of Change Making about his ways of understanding the ways in which social organisations work, and part of this are his 5 maxims. There is also a case study from the Leadership Centre about how helpful they found using the maxims in their work.

Cynefin framework



A comprehensive guide to the Cynefin Framework that has been synthesised from this academic paper on decision making.



This is a brief guide to the Cynefin framework, but you are able to use a template of the framework to put it into practice.

Affinity mapping



This is a blog with a 5-minute read on affinity mapping. It has a good overview on the best practices, and some examples of how it can be used. As you scroll further down there are also three examples of different kinds of affinity maps you can use.



This is another good overview of affinity mapping, or an affinity diagram as it's called in this article. Again there is a template that you're able to use by signing up.



World Café



This was developed as an approach by Juanita Brown and David Isaacs. Drawing on seven integrated design principles, the World Café methodology is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue. Each element of the method has a specific purpose and corresponds to one or more of the design principles.



Page 126 of Total Place: a practitioner's guide to doing things differently talks you through the process of how to run your own World Café.



As well as a good overview, pages 263 and 264 of The Art of Change Making also includes some case studies of people using the World Café themselves.

Adaptive Action



This outlines some of the reasons to use the method's three key auestions.

Design Thinking



This article gives an introduction to the practice of Design Thinking, and its **five stages.** There are also links to further reading.

Website reading list



Trying to effect change on a whole area is not simple - so here's our recommended reading to help you along the way. In developing the local delivery pilot approach, we explored the world of whole-systems approaches and systems leadership - here, we're sharing some of the reports and documents we found useful. These may be of use to you if you're interested in understanding and taking forward a whole-systems approach to your own work.

Local Delivery Pilot – People and Places The story of doing it differently



Navigating Local Systems is a further way we have been exploring systems change with other places in addition to the Local Delivery Pilots (LDPs). Read more about the journey of the LDPs and the emerging principles and practicalities that have helped to unlock progress along the way.

Thankyou



CLOA and Sport England would like to thank the following for participating in this work and enabling such rich learning to come to the fore.

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