



WHOLE SERVICE CHANGE PROGRAMMES

Workshop hosted by Spring Consortium

25th January, 2017 in London

In January 2017, the Spring Consortium held a workshop focusing on whole service change programmes. 16 representatives from local authorities from within the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme and beyond who have been engaged in similar initiatives shared their experiences of implementing large-scale whole-system change. Hampshire County Council and the London Borough of Islington shared their stories to start an enlightening learning conversation.

[Hampshire County Council](#) has been implementing a large-scale service change programme which aims to create capacity for social workers through dedicated administrative support, co-locating specialist workers from a range of agencies and organisations and harnessing the skills and capacity of volunteers.

[Islington Council](#) is undertaking whole-service transformation designed to make social work practice more skilled, purposeful and effective. The project has two strands:

1. Doing What Counts by embedding Motivational Social Work.
2. Values-based tools to make sure we are Measuring What Matters to children and families.

For more information about Islington's project, read the [project storyboard](#)

Acknowledging and working with complexity. An overriding theme from the discussions was identifying and clarifying the nature of the problem. An early emphasis on developing a robust theory of change for the projects certainly helped with this as most problems being tackled by all the leaders present, while not technical, were complex and complicated. Acknowledging this complexity was paramount as it opened the space to see issues from a new perspective and consequently to develop new solutions. In Islington, Doing What Counts & Measuring What Matters was not a problem that could be diagnosed and solved by applying established know-how and procedures.

Adopting a systemic perspective. Taking care to pay attention to defining internal and external systems and the many and varied relationships between and across them was described by many of the participants as necessary. We heard examples of deliberately bringing external partners, such as courts or drug treatment services, into system-wide discussions. Within change programmes, the importance of integrating planning across multiple domains such as leadership, recruitment, supervision, practice, meeting styles and decision making was a dominant theme. In addition, the need to pay attention to other internal change programmes, external partners' own transformation efforts and wider system impacts, all added to the complex nature of this work in Hampshire.

Agreeing a unifying ethos and the power of simple rules. Research into what makes for effective practice in Children's Social Care tells us that a wide range of practice models



work. What is important is a clear and unambiguous commitment to a particular model, so that social workers, families and partners are clear. This theme was developed further in the afternoon, where colleagues emphasised the importance of an overarching ethos, defined as the characteristic spirit of a culture or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations. Simple rules – such as ‘measure what matters’ in Islington – provide direction and guiding principles, and open up new conversations. Embedding researchers in programmes to really understand practice in the otherwise private space of family homes has unlocked new ideas about the underlying principles of social work practice, too.

Addressing organisational habits. A major stumbling block for all the change programmes that were discussed was the need to face up to and shift prevailing habits. These were present at all levels of organisational life, starting with individuals but also embedded in team, department and organisational ways of working, and ranged from ways of meeting and relating, to decision making, goal setting and performance measuring. Step one was to acknowledge these habits and then to explore the cues and routines that drove them. Re-thinking supervision in Islington grew out of a desire to break habits and instil new ones.

Activating new resources and building new narratives. The power of creating a ‘story of us’, where the ‘us’ includes new and different players – over 200 volunteers in Hampshire – was evident in the stories we heard. A ‘story of us’ communicates who we are: our shared values, our shared experience, and why we do what we do. Whether that is to bring to life ‘Active Agents for Change’ in Hampshire or ‘Doing What Counts & Measuring What Matters’ in Islington, developing a strong and inspiring narrative remains vital work in progress for many of the change leaders present.

Architecting child- and family-centred design. The language is all too familiar and the intent is widely held, but genuine co-crafting of new services and support is all too rare. Participants shared many examples of feedback and consultation but there was a real desire to explore new and better ways of working alongside children and families to build something new and relevant, together.

So what next? Participants shared a collective view that there was an appetite to build a learning community around these topics, so that we strengthen our collective ability to continue to innovate and successfully implement change for the benefit of children and families. If you’d like to be part of this, email us at innovation@springconsortium.com.

Spring Consortium