

Strategies in a Complex World

Gary Wallace
Lead Manager
Plymouth HDRC
ODPH Plymouth City Council

Some systems work in Plymouth

- **Alliance for complex needs**
- Blue and Green space – council as curator of place
- Understanding asylum Seekers and refugees
- Community relationship managers and recovery post mass shooting
- Compassionate approach to health and weight for CYP
- ‘No Strings Vape Offer’ for vulnerable poor smokers
- Chronic pain and distress
- Understanding C-19 compliance/impact/vaccines

Some systems work in Plymouth

- Eco Therapy Experiment CAMHS/Natural Infrastructure
- Sexual Health Services Commissioning
- Learning Exchange
- Belong in Plymouth – listening and learning to reduce loneliness in older people
- Avoidable Deaths Approach
- Assertive Alcohol Outreach
- Trauma Informed Network
- Thrive Plymouth

Method (sort of)

- Start with **purpose** ‘What is this system set up to do, is it doing it?’ – often obvious from data
- **Use listening to understand**/surface/amplify/create dissonance
- **Listen to everybody** in the system – this builds shared endeavour
- Create, iterate and **value learning spaces** – continuous learning is crucial – no learning, no change
- **Be bespoke** – what you did in one system might not be salient in another
- **Take a curatorial role**, rather than command and control
- Focus on ‘**value**’ rather than targets
- Focus on **assurance**, rather than performance management

An Alliance is ...



- A vehicle to share risks, responsibilities and opportunities
- A way of working based on alignment around the outcomes and commitment to the principles and behaviours
- Not a legal entity; participants retain own identity and internal controls

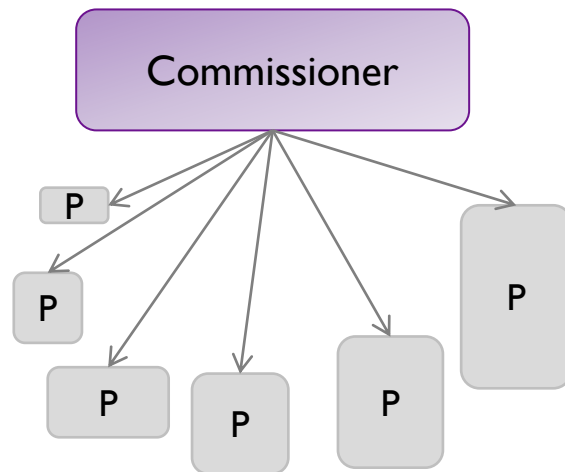
Lhutchinso

Alliance contract

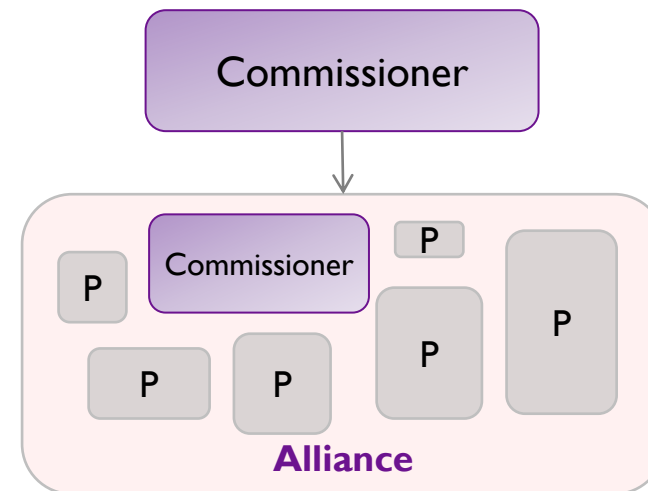


PLYMOUTH

Traditional contract



Alliance



Alliance principles



All of Us commit to working to Alliance Principles which are:

- (a) to assume collective responsibility for all of the risks involved in providing services under this Agreement;
- (b) to make decisions on a 'Best for People using Services' basis;
- (c) to commit to unanimous, principle and value based-decision making on all key issues;
- (d) to adopt a culture of 'no fault, no blame' between the Alliance Participants and to seek to avoid all disputes and litigation (except in very limited cases of wilful default);
- (e) to adopt open book accounting and transparency in all matters;
- (f) to appoint and select key roles on a best person basis; and
- (g) to act in accordance with the Alliance Values and Behaviours at all times.

together the "Alliance Principles".

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

Complex Needs



- Process started 2012 with lottery bid – involved over 70 services, 400 people using services and their carers, elected reps, key decision makers
- Meetings, themed groups, market events, twitter, webpage, 1:1, published evidence.
- Produced a very rounded picture of the problems and a very comprehensive vision of the best way to overcome them
- Refreshed 2015 and 2016 - led by services and people using them. We do these every two years
- We undertake continuous appreciative enquiry across the systems with all actors

Commissioning – broad themes



- Seen as top-down, opaque, and disempowering process
- 'Master – servant' relationship rather than an inclusive, partnership between commissioners, services and service-users, as well as their families and communities
- Commissioning carried out in silo's with little regard to what other 'silo's' are doing. No system focus
- Commissioning for near horizons, rather than as part of a long term strategy
- Commissioning as a problem setter, rather than a problem solver

Service Provision



- Service users often feel 'done to', rather than 'worked with' and, as a result, they feel disempowered and marginalised
- There is a mismatch between what workers value about their work and what consumers value – specialisms and expertise vs authenticity, warmth, persistence
- Services were largely unaware of the detail of what other services provide
- Services in silo's cannot respond inclusively to people with complex needs
- Labels and Thresholds have become barriers to access, rather than enablers. Often driven by targets.

Our understanding



- Quantitative proxy targets ALWAYS create gaming and do not capture value
- Targets have little or no relationship to lived experience and their performance management was simplistic, misleading and divisive
- Commissioning practice was driving out cooperation
- In complex areas services cannot deliver outcomes, at best they can deliver outputs
- Much practice is routinised and happens with little thought and no flexibility (again, attributable to target culture)
- We need to incentivise cooperation, develop ways of including all actors in systems and work harder to understand value, rather than targets.

Continued



- 'Best Practice' is always changing because systems are always adapting
- 'Scaling' in the traditional sense is unlikely to work because complex systems all behave unpredictably
- 'Lift and shift' is almost always a fools errand – complex adaptive systems, even with identical components, behave differently
- Outcomes are emergent properties of systems, they are not produced by single interventions or services
- Experimentation, thoughtfulness and learning are our key assets
- Commissioners as facilitators, learners, problem solvers, servants, colleagues and equal partners

What shifts did we want to make?



From

- Paternalism
- Competition
- Problems, negatives and deficits
- Dishonesty, fear and frustration
- Negative identities and labelling
- Dependency
- Routinised governance and practice

To

- Shared responsibility
- Collectivism
- Strengths and self direction. Person as partner
- Honesty and fearlessness
- Defined by people living complex lives
- Services are not a label for life
- Shared responsibility
- Shared decisions when to disengage



PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

UNDERSTANDING THE SYSTEM

Starting Question



In an ideal world (and within available resources) what would the system for people with complex needs look like from the perspective of 'system users' and how would we know?

Approach



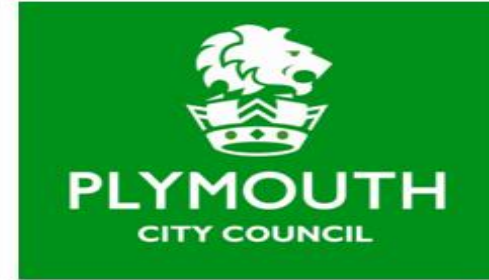
- **Workshops** provided theories, tools and time to plan action together.
- **Fieldwork** gave support to explore ideas in more depth, gather new information and test new ideas.
- **Learning labs** offered coaching individually and collectively to reflect on our learning as systems leaders.
- **Mass co-production** gave representative feedback
- We are constantly trying to build **empathy, insight** and **understanding** for everybody in the system

The process in steps (exploration phase)



- Sharing why we are where we are – ‘truth and reconciliation’
- Introduction to systems and system leadership
- Identifying the value we wanted to add to the system
- Creating ‘empathy maps’ – building understanding of life in a complex system
- Agree areas of focussed enquiry
- Planning fieldwork to build relationships with people through the enquiry (witnessing)
- Sharing our fieldwork stories

The process (exploration phase)



- Reframing enquiry questions from a persons perspective
- Fieldwork round 2
- Synthesis of enquiry learning
- Horizon scanning – data, money, policy, research etc
- Repeat until all feel we have a rounded understanding

**AGREE WHAT WE WANT TO
ACHIEVE**

Reaching Agreement and co-design



- There is no 'magic' to this phase
- Iterative discussion
- Referring back to fieldwork
- Engaging decision makers
- Identifying cultural differences that need work
- Checking back with each other and with our people
- Identifying rapid prototypes to test ideas

Experimentation



- Not so much a phase, more a constant process
- Good ideas are not an artefact of hierarchy, anybody can have one
- Our practice is to encourage everybody to try things – it is infectious
- Minimal governance around this. Is it legal? Is it safe? If yes then go for it!
- Gather the learning (good and bad, it's all learning) and repeat or try something else
- Embed what has worked well (but be prepared to change it if learning or circumstances change)
- This is as much about introducing thoughtful (as opposed to routinised) approaches as the experiments themselves

Some Key Principles



- Change is a cultural project, rather than a structural project
- Culture change takes time and work
- Public Servants want to do good in the world
- And they need Mastery Autonomy and Purpose
- People are often highly affiliated with their service, our role is to build bigger affiliations
- Learning through Listening is a key principle
- Dissonance is necessary but not sufficient
- Every system is unique – bespoke approaches are necessary
- Model want you want see – humility, transparency, mutuality, generosity etc

Some stuff



- We still collect data on mandatory targets but we treat them as aids to learning, we do not performance manage them
- We are constantly wrestling with metrics that tell us about how the system is functioning and how we understand 'success' in asset based ways
- We have a relentless focus on what actually matters to people
- We are working to develop assurance mechanisms rather than accounting mechanisms/governance
- In HLS you reach a point where it is hard to communicate with NPM because we have no familiar landmarks for them. It requires a lot of work, transparency and openness to overcome this.

Acknowledgments



- We used the Leadership Centre to facilitate our system exploration
- We used Linda Hutchinson to facilitate our work around alliance contracts and there is information here <http://lhalliances.org.uk/> on alliance contracts. I used three of her slides on Alliance contracts.
- A number of us undertook the Sante Fe Institute distance learning on complex adaptive systems