

# BEHAVING LIKE A SYSTEM?

THE PRECONDITIONS  
FOR PLACE BASED  
SYSTEMS CHANGE

**collaborate**

THINKING • CULTURE • PRACTICE

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# FOREWORD

## Coventry City Council and Lankelly Chase Foundation



Coventry City Council

# Lankelly Chase

Local authorities across the country face a time of unprecedented change, from continued and sustained cuts to our budgets, to increasing demand and changing expectations for services.

In Coventry, we see this as an opportunity to fundamentally re-think how local services are provided, by making better use of the assets and strengths found in our local community. Our Council Plan sets out our commitment to this: it is through having new conversations with residents, communities and partners that we can encourage residents to become active citizens and work together with our partners across the voluntary, public and private sectors to solve local problems.

Our work with Collaborate CIC and Lankelly Chase gave us the opportunity to delve deep into local services for people facing complex and multiple needs across the public, private and voluntary sectors. It has revealed the underlying pre-conditions that are required for collaborative working to succeed. In particular, the need to change as a system rather than change individual organisations; shining a light on why some of our interventions are more effective than others.

This is, however, only the beginning: the real strength is being able to build on the research to transform the local ecosystem of services. In Coventry we have made a commitment to apply the pre-conditions framework more widely, helping to improve the quality of life for Coventry residents. We would like to invite you to join us.

**Councillor Faye Abbott**

Cabinet Member for Community Development,  
Co-operatives and Social Enterprise

COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

Reading this report, I am reminded that of the quote “No man is an island, entire of itself.” Throughout, the idea of connection and collaboration is both implicit and explicit.

Individuals and families, communities, the voluntary, private and public sector agencies all co-exist with each other. Yet too often they operate as separate entities, with their own language, culture, measurements. When viewed from the standpoint of the individual experiencing multiple needs these systems can seem bewildering and overwhelming; often working against each other rather than to a collective vision. To create an environment in which individuals experiencing multiple needs can flourish we have to work together. The wider challenges such as budget cuts and rising needs also demand this collaboration.

But many times we launch into a change process without understanding what factors need to be in place to make it successful. We think about change as a linear time limited process with a neat start and end point. But the reality is far messier and more complex than that.

We were keen to support Collaborate to understand what the pre-conditions are for collaboration to happen across organisational boundaries rather than be limited to individual service areas. These should permit a learning process that supports systems to adapt and evolve and focuses as much on behaviours as the end goal. And we believe that this report shows what some of these ingredients are. Whilst this report is evolved from work with partners in Coventry, through our funding and wider discussions we believe that it has relevance to wider areas

**Alice Evans**

Director – Systems Change

LANKELLY CHASE FOUNDATION

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# Overview

Every system is different: the place, the players, the change you are trying to achieve. However, while reviewing services for people facing complex multiple needs in Coventry we discovered common elements across different parts of the system which we believe increased the likelihood of it operating in a collaborative way, that delivers change for individuals beyond organisational boundaries. Our work took a bottom-up approach, building frameworks based on what we saw and heard, but it also drew on the latest research into systems thinking.

Rather than identify the barriers to systems change (and because Coventry is making a conscious shift to a more asset based way of working) we focused on identifying the necessary 'pre-conditions' for systemic change. This grew out of our overview analysis of what was working well and less well in the city. These pre-conditions are emphatically not a checklist. You cannot say, "Well, we've got seven out of nine so we can probably do systems change". Instead, they are more something to understand, assess and develop in a place. They influence the chances of success, help diagnose where problems are likely to occur, and signpost those areas where assets exist to be utilised. Our findings – and our framework – focus on 'vision' and 'behaviours' (and to a certain extent on 'infrastructure'). However, sustainable change also requires, 'delivery', 'impact' and 'learning' and these will be the focus of future work.

We believe the approach set out in this report could be applied equally well to other parts of the country and to service areas other than complex multiple needs. However the need for systems change in this area, and the complexity of the changes required, is high so we developed our hypotheses and then tested them with these groups in mind. A focus on housing/homelessness and troubled families allowed us to test and refine frameworks, but also to understand the extent to which these pre-conditions actually existed and were being translated into the conditions for delivery of systems change. It is a framework focused more on social change than economic change and therein lie some of its limitations. Further work is required to consider both sides of that coin and so, to an extent, our findings mirror the separation of social and economic issues we observed.

Our Steering Group ([Appendix 1](#)) was made up of people from all sectors (public, private, third), with a variety of organisations and positions within the hierarchy represented, but all with a shared interest in the opportunity that systems change presents. Early on they identified the need for infrastructure to support collaborative systems change – processes, finances, contracts, skills. Our view is that, while this infrastructure is important, it is not fixed. There is no right answer to what should be in place (e.g. you don't always have to pool budgets or co-locate to achieve systems change) and it is more important that the infrastructure supports the change you want to achieve and is responsive and adaptable to the system it is supporting. Infrastructure is woven throughout this report but the focus is on vision and behaviours.

What next? If we want to achieve placed-based systems change then it is everyone's job to make this happen. But what does it mean in practice and where is the coalition of the willing to take the next steps?

Sarah Billiald

Collaborate November 2015

# PLACE-BASED SYSTEMS CHANGE: INTRODUCING COVENTRY

Coventry is England's tenth largest city, home to 337,400 residents and the centre of a sub-region serving half a million people. One of the country's most important medieval and industrial cities, Coventry has had to re-invent itself over the centuries, in times of peace, war and massive industrial and technological change. Following its devastation in the Blitz during the Second World War, the city grew significantly in the 1950s and 60s through its booming motor trade, attracting migrants from across the UK and around the world, before suffering high unemployment and rapid population decline in the 1980s as a result of industrial collapse and economic restructuring. Today, Coventry is a diverse, multi-cultural and young city: one in three residents is from a minority ethnic background compared to one in five in England as a whole; with a median age of 34 compared to 39 nationally. In the 21st century, Coventry is booming once again, with new residents and new businesses choosing to settle in the city, and with one of the country's highest rates of business and private sector job growth.

The history of the place presents Coventry with a particular set of challenges. The city is simultaneously home to two of the country's top 15 universities but also some of the country's most deprived neighbourhoods, as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation. This is perhaps best exemplified by the city's increasing number of highly paid skilled jobs juxtaposed with the second-highest proportion of unskilled workers of the UK's metropolitan areas.

Meanwhile, there have been very large cuts across the public sector since 2010, making it difficult for traditional public services to continue delivering services in the same way they did before. Local authorities have suffered disproportionately badly within the government's overall resource allocation framework. Reductions to Coventry City Council's core government revenue funding is equivalent to £55 million per annum (26%) between 2010/11 and 2014/15 with the prospect of further cuts of £50 million per annum over the next three years.

The report *Hard Edges: Mapping severe and multiple disadvantage*, published by the LankellyChase Foundation, sets out the overlap and clustering between homelessness, substance misuse, mental illness, violence and abuse and chronic poverty. The research shows that the average local authority area might expect to have 1,470 active severe and multiple disadvantages cases each year, with the most deprived local authority areas facing prevalence rates of two to three times the national average. As one of the more deprived local authority areas, the prevalence rates for severe and multiple disadvantage cases in Coventry are 1.81 times greater than the national average: 2.16 times greater for homelessness; 1.65 times greater for offending and 1.61 times greater for substance misuse.

## REFERENCES

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# GETTING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CULTURE OF A PLACE TO INFORM OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SYSTEM CHANGE

Early on in the Overview Diagnostic stage, to get a better understanding of what makes Coventry tick, we discussed a range of emerging issues with the Coventry Local Public Service Board that we thought could potentially act as barriers to systems change:

Are services provided in the interest of citizens or providers? A sense that citizen-centred services were not the norm in the city and that collaboration, both cross-provider and with citizens, was not where it needed to be. At its worst this led to the protection of organisations, departments and even individuals at the expense of outcomes and citizens.

Is there a culture of risk aversion linked to previous bad experiences? A feeling that the city had been brave on occasions but that, where this had not paid off, it had set individuals and organisations back years. How can we build individual and collective resilience?

Partnerships seem strong but are they characterised more by relationships than action? Many spoke of the strength of partnership working in the city but, when challenged as to what this meant, it was about the incredible asset that arose from good relationships and trust rather than from delivering outcomes together (although there were notable exceptions).

Are relationships across sectors under-developed in some areas? A sense from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sectors that statutory agencies needed to let go rather than 'own' or 'control' agendas that have a life of their own – enabling a more entrepreneurial approach is an emerging priority for the council. A lack of history of private sector involvement in core public services was felt by some to have contributed to a disconnect between economic and social issues (e.g. homelessness and housing being viewed as separate agendas).

To what extent does the history and demography of Coventry set the backdrop to how business gets done in the city? This was seen as both a barrier and an enabler, with strong relationships and a willingness to pull together in times of crisis versus a 'village mentality' that could appear closed to outsiders, to new ways of working and new providers.

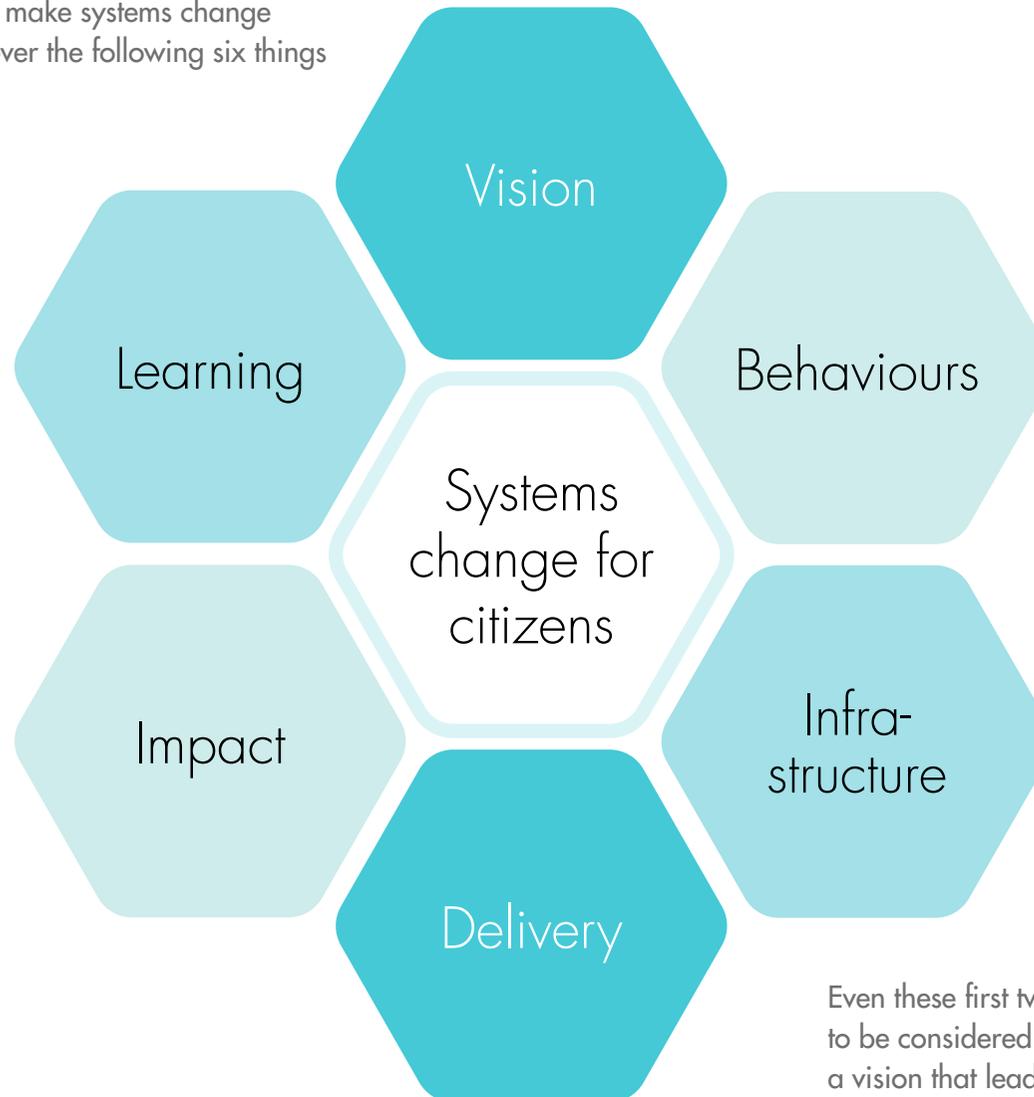
Are strong foundations in place to support an ambitious change agenda? A feeling that many public sector employees are not ready for the different relationship with citizens that so much of the change agenda requires – that citizen-centred services is still just a notion in some areas.

It was against this backdrop that we looked at Homelessness and Troubled Families in Coventry, conscious that this project may have fallen foul of some of the barriers to systems change identified.



# AN APPROACH TO SYSTEM CHANGE: SIX THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT

This report focuses on vision and behaviours: the extent to which pre-conditions in these two areas can make systems change more likely or more successful. However the following six things provide a useful framework:



Even these first two areas (the focus of this report) need to be considered in relation to the other four i.e. having a vision that leads to delivery, encouraging behaviours that embrace learning and so on. It is not a cycle in a linear sense as all six need to support one another.

# INTRODUCING OUR PRE-CONDITIONS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE:

## A FOCUS ON VISION AND BEHAVIOURS...

These preconditions are neither linear nor independent: they are adaptive and interdependent as people, relationships and priorities change.



# SUMMARY OF OUR NINE PRE-CONDITIONS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE:

## VISION

These pre-conditions are neither linear nor independent: they are adaptive and inter-dependent as people, relationships and priorities change.

**A. BENEFICIARY IMPACT OVER ORGANISATION FOCUS:** setting aside the boundaries of organisations and focusing on the outcomes for the place and people, above and beyond what it might mean for you and your organisation.

**B. CITIZEN-CENTRED: FROM CONCEPT TO DELIVERY:** getting under the skin of what we really mean by 'citizen-centred', where the system challenges itself to put the clients at the centre of its decisions and business approach.

**C. ISSUES ARE ACKNOWLEDGED AS SYSTEMIC AND REQUIRING COLLABORATION:** a genuine acknowledgement early on that the change being sought is systemic and will require multiple actors to work together.

**D. GROUNDED IN PLACE BUT OPEN TO NEW APPROACHES:** harnessing the assets of the place as the starting point but without being constrained by 'the way things are done around here' in order to learn, try new things and leapfrog traditional routes to change.

## BEHAVIOURS

**E. TRUSTED PARTNERS: UNDERSTAND AND ADAPT TO EACH OTHERS VALUES:** supportive relationships and ways of working that can aid delivery – honesty, trust and the ability to challenge one another being key – this is not about sharing values but about understanding each other's values and adapting accordingly.

**F. STRENGTHS BASED: UTILISING THE ASSETS OF PEOPLE AND PLACE:** focusing on the positive capacity of individuals and communities – rather than on their needs, deficits and problems – applying this way of thinking to the whole system and considering the place as well as the people.

**G. DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP: ENABLING, CONVENING, FLUID, NO EGOS:** LEADING from behind and building guiding coalitions across the system – rather than being 'owned' by a single person or organisation – recognising that this will change over time as the system evolves.

**H. RESILIENT & RISK EMBRACING: SAFE TO FAIL, ABLE TO BOUNCE BACK AND LEARN:** acting as a multiplier for other pre-conditions, this is about the ability to take risks – to fail fast, to learn and to try again – not letting individual or collective resilience be drained.

**I. ABLE TO LET GO: ACT AS A PLATFORM FOR INNOVATION:** moving from public servants as bureaucrats to public servants as entrepreneurs – receptive to disruption, able to seed and support innovation, sharing control and acting as a platform – rather than always delivering.

The first four pre-conditions fall under the heading of 'vision' because they speak to the ambition of the system. This is about more than a statement on a piece of paper, it is about setting the overall approach: a vision should define the behaviours, infrastructure, delivery, impact and learning of the whole system. The next five pre-conditions fall under the heading of 'behaviours' because they speak more to how systems change is likely to take place in an area given the behaviours of the actors in that system.

# Vision

## Pre-condition A

### BENEFICIARY IMPACT OVER ORGANISATIONAL FOCUS

This first pre-condition is something more than just being citizen-centred (see pre-condition B). It is about setting aside the boundaries of organisations or even directorates within organisations, and placing outcomes for the place and people above and beyond what it might mean for your organisation. It sounds selfless but it doesn't have to be – some of the best collaborations are 'selfish' ones where there is a win-win – the important point is that outcome or impact is the goal, recognising that there may be organisational winners or losers. This is hard because not only are egos involved (see pre-condition G) but risk is often involved. This pre-condition is not an excuse for letting things slip between the gaps – accountability remains critical.

#### WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN GENERAL TERMS?

- collaborating to maximise the service offer;
- organisations that are prepared to let others lead when they are best placed to do so;
- outcome-based commissioning driven by hard (shared) data;
- pooled budgets; and
- mergers of smaller organisations where this makes sense financially or for the service user.

It is often easier to spot when it is not happening, when there is protectionism of budgets, short-termism, departmental in-fighting and a blame culture. In Coventry there has been little competition in public services. While this has led to high degrees of trust and collaboration, it has also resulted in a naivety about what other providers can offer and a reluctance to let go of current models even if they aren't working. Resolving this doesn't necessarily require open competition but being able to find a way to draw from a wider pool of providers can stimulate new thinking.

For people in Coventry facing multiple complex needs, the potential for this pre-condition is there but the collective vision is not. Often, this pre-condition is more apparent where there is some positive initiative (e.g. becoming the next City of Culture or applying to be an Age Friendly City). These positive narratives act both as a convening vision but also provide the parameters for system change within which the place can work – putting boundaries to the system is an important starting point for action. By contrast, responding to austerity or a child protection crisis – whilst galvanising solidarity – tend not to galvanise outcome-based, pro-active visions. Sometimes, new government initiatives can provide a real opportunity to get this right. Troubled Families, whilst a national policy drive in the first instance, could have provided a shallow route into system re-design from first principles. The incentives were certainly intended to drive an outcome focus, although critics point to the fact that Payment by Results can drive a short-term, target-based focus, rather than a focus on doing the right thing for beneficiaries.

A bigger barrier can be around language and statutory frameworks – professions with different frameworks for assessment (e.g. clinical in health versus needs-based assessments in social care) which then develop a range of methods driven by this. This all becomes hard to unpick across a system even with the opportunity to design something new. Similarly accountability, budget management and risk can all act against this pre-condition. For example, a Director of Children's Services is, rightly, going to point out what might happen if anything falls through the cracks; the knowledge that you will be held responsible for failure acts as a strong disincentive to collaborate. What might more collaborative accountability frameworks look like, particularly in high risk areas?

# Vision

## Pre-condition B

### CITIZEN-CENTRED: FROM CONCEPT TO DELIVERY

This pre-condition tries to get underneath the skin of the concept of 'citizen-centred', a term often bandied about but less often understood. Put simply, it is about the system challenging itself to place the client at the centre of its provision, decisions and business approach. To do this properly in many cases you need to go back to first principles and potentially completely redesign the system from the user perspective, spending time and resources to gather data, ethnographic research, user experiences and so on. This may not always be possible, so how can actors in the system make incremental changes to what they do and how they do it? How can the infrastructure be adapted to put the beneficiary at the centre in a meaningful way? A whole-place approach is critical here: not just involving citizens as individuals facing complex needs but engaging the whole community in a place.

#### THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

- because the greater the sense of agency, the greater the likelihood of owned, sustainable change by individuals;
- because having these conversations begins a different relationship between State and citizen which might shift demands and how they are met;
- because they enable a more personalised service able to respond to diverse needs and situations.

The most important thing is to have a genuine understanding why this is important for the system. Not just paying lip service to the idea but keeping citizens front and centre, from concept to delivery. Our interviewees said it was important to combine lived experience alongside hard data to inform commissioning approaches. Indications that this may be happening include the use of personal budgets (the citizen as commissioner); co-production of new services based on journey mapping or ethnographic research; user input to specification design; community-owned assets/multi-stakeholder mutuals; mechanisms to gather (and use) feedback; peer-led services; a role for behavioural

science; 'team around the worker'; 'no decision about me without me'; 'no wrong door' – the list is long.

There are pockets of good practice in the homelessness sector in Coventry, with providers such as Whitefriars adopting a more community-based outreach model as a result of service user consultation. HOPE (an umbrella organisations for Christian faith communities) has a client-led (chaired and managed) group which offers practical support to the community such as refurbishing and decorating a local blind resource centre. This enables service users to gain the skills and confidence they need as well as building networks between citizens within communities. Other examples include Coventry City Council (as commissioner) setting up contracts that are flexible enough, for example, to add services for the most vulnerable post-contract mobilisation. In Troubled Families, access for individuals to inter-generational workers has maximized the chances of a holistic approach.

However, these examples are ad hoc rather than routine and there is a significant opportunity to build on these pockets to create a systemically citizen-centred place. For example, could service users and staff co-design and deliver training in a St Mungo's Broadway Recovery College model (a co-produced centre for learning and well-being)? Could service users meet with Boards regularly to help shape stretch and operationalise decisions? What is the role for peer mentors? How do we keep user input relevant by refreshing those involved?

There is, inevitably, a tension between individualisation and austerity. For Coventry, this is playing out in the debate about City Centre First, which has seen many services being re-located to the city centre. Is this good for service users because things are all in one place or bad because they aren't in the communities where they live? The best chance of system change lies not so much in the decision itself but in how it was made. Were citizens and communities involved? Were the system implications understood? Was it done with citizens or to them?

# Vision

## Pre-condition C

### ISSUES ARE ACKNOWLEDGED AS SYSTEMIC

While systems thinking has gained considerable traction in recent years it is yet another concept that is easy to say and hard to do. Even before you get to the practicalities of system change, you find organisations that do not acknowledge that the change they are seeking is systemic and hence not defining the problem systemically. This can lead to key players being overlooked or excluded. For successful systems change to take place there needs to be an acknowledgement early on that a wider set of capabilities and capacity is required to tackle an issue. Again, many will support this in theory even while their actions betray them. The report, *Systems Change: A guide to what it is and how to do it*, provides an excellent summary of the principles of system change and the importance of 'planning' before 'doing' systems change.

See page 27, <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/systems-change/>

In Coventry, the new homelessness contract tried to identify all the key players up front, although the omission of the police (since rectified) led to problems with the community around opening new facilities and closing others, which the police would have been well placed to help with had they been involved from the start. More positively, the new case management system incorporates touch points from other services, such as the Winter Night Shelter, producing a single record that supports more holistic service provision and prevents duplication – a refreshing change from the usual mantra of information sharing being too difficult. Homelessness managers have been ambitious in their systemic approach to the issue (see Case Study 1), which now gives them the opportunity to consider homelessness within the wider housing system and to establish the social and economic links that were previously identified as a gap for the city.

**A COMMON ISSUE FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS IS THE DESIRE TO KEEP THINGS MANAGEABLE, TO START SMALL AND EVOLVE. WHILE THIS HAS AN INTUITIVE LOGIC, THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE WIDER SYSTEM FIRST (INVOLVING SOME FORM OF MAPPING ) AND BRINGING IN A WIDER SET OF PLAYERS, EVEN IF PRACTICAL ACTION IS LIMITED INITIALLY TO JUST ONE PART OF THE SYSTEM.**

Troubled Families in Coventry started with key players from within the Council and gradually expanded, now including probation for example. However, the lack of a clear systemic vision from the start made it harder to bring in others as the momentum built.

There are some practical steps that can help build readiness for system collaboration and support individuals working within the system to make the links: secondments between organisations; multi-agency training; co-location; multi-agency governance and budgets. But there are also 'shallow routes' into systems change which genuinely allow you to start small because there are clear parameters. Focusing on transitions, for example from youth to adulthood, is an area where it is clear to all that there are inter-dependencies, and offers one such shallow route in. (A good way to map this sort of approach can be found in the report, *Bringing everything I am into one place*.)

See Figure 2.2, page 44, <http://www.dartington.org.uk/inc/uploads/Bringing%20Everything%20am%20Into%20One%20Place.pdf>

# Vision

## Pre-condition D

### GROUNDED IN PLACE BUT OPEN TO NEW APPROACHES

At Collaborate we have been working with organisations across systems to understand, together, the nature of the current demands that are occurring and then determine which of them might be preventable or avoidable by taking different actions upstream. New perspectives such as these can often provide an opportunity to create collaborative research and development products and then design changes as a system, thus increasing collaborative capacity and enhancing the likelihood of success. Together with the notion of utilising the 'assets' of a place, this was the rationale behind Lankelly Chase funding this report. What does systems change look like in a place and how can it go from one-off good projects to systemic change in that locality?

Our approach prioritised what it meant to live, work and deliver public services in Coventry. What we found was that place is important but too often the sense of 'that's not how we do things round here' acts as an inhibitor for change (systemic or otherwise). The pre-condition here is that place must be used to inform the starting point – alongside other parameters such as statutory responsibilities, national or European regulations, inspection regimes and so on – but that there needs to be the ability to learn from elsewhere, to try new things and leapfrog traditional routes to change.

This felt challenging for Coventry. The 'village mentality' – an asset when looking for partnerships, trust and community spirit – felt more like a barrier to new ideas and approaches. When combined with the need to be resilient and embrace risk (pre-condition H) this could, on a bad day, lead to real inertia. And yet, we came across lots of examples that challenged this, albeit in pockets rather than system-wide. One such example was the Citizens Advice Bureau which, using the asset of Severn Trent PLC on its doorstep, has entered into an innovative collaboration – the Big Difference Fund – to identify those most in debt and then fund services for them, overcoming worries of a mis-match in values between third and private sectors to see the win-win for both organisations and for beneficiaries.

[http://media.aws.stwater.co.uk/upload/pdf/BDF%20Leaflet%201%20\(VISUAL\)\\_1.pdf](http://media.aws.stwater.co.uk/upload/pdf/BDF%20Leaflet%201%20(VISUAL)_1.pdf)

However, this sort of private sector involvement in the public realm is the exception not the rule in Coventry, reducing the creative tension these cross-sector collaborations (and even competition) can bring. Instead Coventry is inventing its own version of this: services developed outside the public sector (rather than outsourcing what is already within the public sector) and trying to shift to a more enabling role (see pre-condition I). For example, the relationship with HOPE Coventry enables a vibrant multi-faith relationship to deliver services (the Winter Night Shelter) in different places (seven churches in the City Centre) staffed by church volunteers. For housing, the geographical constraint of city size and the green belt combine to prevent a different conversation about the future of housing for the city from emerging.

Collaborate's work in Sunderland has identified an appetite to have a city-based narrative that sets out ambition rooted in the context of the place, its history and people. This can help by developing a shared narrative of aspirations for a place. Done well it can create a place-based systemic vision for the future that acts as an overarching narrative which everyone recognises.

The recent successful bid to fund the Ignite programme is significant to the future of how Coventry can make inroads into the vision for its citizens. A collaboration between two organisations, Grapevine and Coventry Law Centre, there is a strong focus on the importance of both relationships and outcomes. This creates a robust vision for service delivery to those with complex needs. The approach taken by Ignite (see Case Study 3) evidences the existence of many of the pre-conditions in this framework including: an asset-based approach; building legal capability and networks; iterating; sharing what they learn with others in the city; allowing for mistakes then learning to improve; using competency-based recruitment; allowing team roles and responsibilities to evolve over time; all underpinned by a focus on early intervention.

# Behaviours

## Pre-condition E

### TRUSTED PARTNERS: UNDERSTAND AND ADAPT TO EACH OTHER'S VALUES

As a pre-condition this one jumped out early on. Not that everyone has to be friends but that there are established partnerships, relationships and ways of working that support delivery. Relationships need to be supportive (even if partners are unlikely always to be in agreement – a healthy tension can be a good thing) and there needs to be a mutual understanding of individual and organisational values, goals, skills, circumstances and risk appetites. On a good day this is about taking the time to really build teams across organisational boundaries. On a bad day it's the refrain of 'I don't know what they do': miscommunication, crossed-purposes and blame. The pre-condition is about having a level of understanding and openness to others, taking the time to work through what this means for a given system or change. It is not about sharing the same values (though great if you do) but about understanding each other's values, about taking time to build the system, finding the shared space and truly understanding what makes the other tick.

**FOR COVENTRY THIS IS A POTENTIAL ASSET, ALTHOUGH THERE IS A SHARED NERVOUSNESS THAT PARTNERSHIPS ARE TRADITIONAL AND COSY RATHER THAN ONES THAT SUPPORT, CHALLENGE AND DELIVER. INDICATORS OF THE POTENTIAL ARE THE WEALTH OF UNUSUAL PARTNERSHIP COMBINATIONS:**

- the Citizens Advice Bureau and Severn Trent (Big Difference Fund),
- the Citizens Advice Bureau and Whitefriars (Sorted Project),
- Coventry Law Centre and Grapevine (Ignite),
- Foodbank, H.O.P.E and the City Council.

Increasingly these relationships are broadening from bilateral and trilateral arrangements to full multi-agency approaches. In the case of the homelessness contract it has also created a

'partners not providers' approach to the supply chain, leading to more responsive services for those most in need. The unhappy corollary to this, however, was the breakdown in collaboration that occurred as part of the tendering process for this contract. This undermined trust between some key organisations which, in a place with Coventry's partnership approach, will take some time to repair. The city's 'village mentality' means it can take a while to become part of 'Team Coventry', with outsiders often viewed with suspicion. For example, years after substance misuse services were moved out of the Council (something that is commonplace elsewhere) the successful bidder, the Recovery Partnership, is still not part of the 'inner circle'; not yet considered the 'go to' service for developing the substance misuse offer. This means the service providers that are typically well linked in other parts of the country (housing, substance misuse and mental health) are not yet part of the same system in Coventry.

More positive indicators that we observed in Coventry included: the ability to share information (and have developed workarounds for all the reasons not to!); coming together in a crisis rather than blaming each other or passing the buck; collaborative contract management approaches that hold to account but treat providers as partners; and commissioners who are grown up about conversations with providers, recognising their role in service design and strategy (supported by procurement teams who procure accordingly). Spending time with other teams, shadowing or understand each others worlds – especially processes and languages – is critical to building deeper trust. Asset-based approaches applied to employees (as well as beneficiaries) can also build understanding and the ability to adapt as a partnership. For example, Ignite uses asset-based approaches as a way of creating networks of trust between people and communities, not just organisations, to enable a sustainable way of working across sectors (see Case Study 3).

# Behaviours

Pre-condition F

## STRENGTHS BASED: UTILISING THE ASSETS OF PEOPLE AND PLACE

Asset-based approaches have been used in community development for a long time and are now starting to be applied more widely, for example in health and social care. These approaches take the knowledge, skills and lived experience of those in communities to facilitate a more participatory approach to change, drawing on the human, social and physical capital that exists. Critically, they start from an assessment of the assets that people possess rather than the deficits they suffer. So in health this would be 'what makes us healthy?' rather than 'why are we ill?' They focus on the positive capacity of individuals and communities rather than solely on their needs and challenges. There are a range of techniques used to support more asset-based approaches: Asset Based Community Development (ABCD); Head, Hands and Heart asset mapping; appreciative enquiry; and co production. Language also plays a critical role in a strengths-led approach. A good summary of the difference between an asset-based approach and a deficit-based approach can be found in the Health Foundation report, Head, hands and heart: asset-based approaches in health care.

See Table 1, page 14, <http://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/HeadHandsAndHeartAssetBasedApproachesInHealthCare.pdf>

### INDICATORS THAT ASSET-BASED APPROACHES ARE BEING USED INCLUDE:

- the language people use;
- how solution focused they are;
- whether there is a good understanding of the key players (via community asset maps, skills audits or other techniques);
- commissioning for outcomes such as 'wellbeing' rather than a reduction in a negative behaviours;
- evidence of participatory budgeting and appraisal processes;
- timebanking and co production.

It often requires significant investment to train people in these approaches as they unpick (for many in the public sector) traditional mindsets based on a deficit mode. However, because the evidence base for asset-based approaches is not yet strong, the business case can be hard to make. In Coventry we explored the application of asset-based approaches, considering what they might mean, not only for individuals or communities, but also for organisations, partnerships and systems.

This pre-condition is fundamental for any place-based systems change because techniques like ABCD draw out strengths and successes in a community's shared history as the starting point for change. There is a real appetite for this in Coventry (and the pre-condition is certainly nascent in the city and is exemplified in projects like Ignite) and work is already underway to develop the concept further. Coventry was one of the first to do 'signs of safety', a strengths based approach to children's social care. The question is how this can be built upon in other areas (like adult social care) or across safeguarding systems, rather than just within one organisation. In work funded by LankellyChase, Grapevine and Coventry Law Centre have used asset-mapping to help build a more nuanced understanding of communities, the people that live in them and the placed-based resources available. This is leading others, such as Whitefriars and the Salvation Army, to follow suit by positioning their organisations as community assets.

There is an opportunity for Coventry, not only to consider this approach within the parameters of projects or organisations, but how it might apply to everything the city does, particularly in a partnership or system context. Asset-based approaches provide a way of bringing together the social with the economic, finding new 'resources' from different places in a time of austerity, and creating a narrative grounded in place and people but with a positive aspiration rather than as a reaction to cuts and problems.

# Behaviours

## Pre-condition G

### DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP: ENABLING, CONVENING, FLUID, NO EGOS

A lot has been written about system leadership. [Footnote: "See for example, Practice of Systems Leadership by Nick Timmins, [http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field\\_publication\\_file/System-leadership-Kings-Fund-May-2015.pdf](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field_publication_file/System-leadership-Kings-Fund-May-2015.pdf) For this pre-condition we have identified specific facets of system leadership that seem important to Coventry, in particular that leadership should be 'distributed' rather than held by a single person or organisation. This was highlighted early on in our work as something Coventry is conscious of wanting to do but with mixed views from stakeholders about its success so far. We saw strong foundations to build on – not just from executive functions but also from political leaders. These signs included:

- the existence of 'leaders' at all levels of the organisation, leading from behind;
- guiding coalitions formed to lead work rather than the model of leader as hero;
- councillors not sitting on every board;
- credit taken by the system not by a senior individual;
- more 'unusual suspects' taking the lead based on their capability or capacity rather than the traditional leader;
- an approach to leadership development that crossed organisational boundaries; and
- a high degree of trust between people within a place, enabling people to feel safe to 'let go', seeking 'forgiveness not permission'.

One of the things that systems leaders are typically more comfortable with is the idea of disruption and disruptive innovators – that they can exist and add value, and that they should not be silenced or ignored. In Coventry these disruptors can be found mainly outside of the large statutory organisations. Indeed it is the

very fact that they are outside statutory agencies that allows them to play this role, raising the profile of issues and escalating them for resolution in what some would see as an adversarial way. The question for Coventry is whether there is some way of incubating positive disruption from within? One model is the School for Health and Care Radicals, developed by Helen Bevan (from NHS Improving Quality). This is an attempt to harness internal disruptors, acknowledging that 'the art of rocking the boat whilst staying in it' is something that needs to be learnt and nurtured. [See http://www.theedge.nhsiq.nhs.uk/school/](http://www.theedge.nhsiq.nhs.uk/school/)

There is a time and a place for a more distributed leadership style. Not taking credit worked well for the Council in the establishment of the Winter Night Shelter, where it played more of an enabling role. The positive commissioner-provider relationships that characterise the homelessness contract could mean it is now ripe for a more distributed leadership approach. By contrast, in Troubled Families, there has been an absence of leadership per se rather than the wrong kind of leadership. Getting this right is the priority going forward and presents an opportunity for reform in the context of wider systems change, linked to Ignite and wider safeguarding issues.

**ACHIEVING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP MEANS INCENTIVISING AND REWARDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF BEHAVIOUR. FOR SUCCESSFUL PLACED-BASED SYSTEMS CHANGE IT IS EVERYONE'S JOB TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN. BUT WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN PRACTICE AND WHO MUST BE IN THE COALITION OF THE WILLING TO TAKE IT FORWARD?**

# Behaviours

## Pre-condition H

### RESILIENT & RISK EMBRACING: SAFE TO FAIL, ABLE TO BOUNCE BACK AND LEARN

This pre-condition runs deeper than any other for Coventry, underpinning and reinforcing them. On a good day it can act as a catalyst to the other eight pre-conditions; equally when it is not in place its absence can have the single largest negative impact on the system. Risk is commonly talked about: the ability to take risks, to fail, to fail fast (and cheap) and try again. However, our ecosystem work revealed that it was system resilience (as a response to risk taking) that was the critical factor. Individual and collective resilience in Coventry is like a pot which, once drained, is hard to refill. How can the system keep itself constantly topped up? Risk cannot be eradicated. Things will go wrong. The question is how to switch from a culture of failure to one of learning?

#### WHAT MIGHT SUCH A CULTURE LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE? AT BEST, IT WOULD INCLUDE:

- a high degree of challenge and comfort with this challenge;
- the default answer to new ideas being set to 'why not?' rather than 'why?', to 'yes' rather than 'no';
- evidence of failure, learning from that failure and, at best, celebrating the ability to fail;
- safe spaces to try new things in areas where there is less tradition of innovation or the stakes are high (e.g. highly regulated, statutory services);
- strong support networks between individuals (learning sets or the like);
- multi-agency risk processes, training, and definitions;
- solution-focused, reflective practice training for practitioners (linked to asset-based techniques, see pre-condition F).

For Coventry this is the pre-condition that is least apparent in certain parts of the system. This is problematic for the city because a lack of resilience risks undermining the other pre-conditions, not least those around letting go and distributed leadership. It also links to the culture of the place – the 'village mentality' mentioned

previously – which means that when things don't work out, people feel bruised, grudges are nursed and trust takes a particularly long time to rebuild. There is, of course, a good reason why Coventry is struggling with this. The tragic death of a child in 2012, and the resulting serious case review which found systemic failings across several professions, is understandably fresh in people's minds. Ofsted's finding that Children's Services was inadequate in 2014 has depleted the pot of resilience further, even though the system is rapidly improving its services. The impact of this terrible event on the city has been immense: every single interviewee, whatever their sector, profession or organisation mentioned the legacy of the case. All did so in a negative way in terms of the behaviours it was driving – risk aversion, bureaucracy, mistrust. In addition, the system has now lurched to the other extreme with a sharp increase in the number of child protection cases (increased by almost 50%) reducing resilience further.

Without in any way wanting to minimise the horror of a child's death, it is fair to say that every locality has an equivalent cause célèbre – all different but all some single event that has had a disproportionate impact on how the system recovers and develops. We need to devise accountability mechanisms that are strong and capable of holding the system to account rather than individual actors within it. The opportunity for Coventry is to re-situate Children's Services within the context of a wider system approach to safeguarding and Troubled Families. There is appetite to do this but, in the midst of national performance improvement, achieving this longer-term system change is almost impossible. For now, being honest about risk appetite in these areas has become the holding position. Interestingly, there is a much more bullish approach to risk in the homelessness sector (see Case Study 1). This demonstrates that the pre-condition is definitely there in parts in the city. Learning across parts of the business might help speed up recovery times and replenish resilience.

# Behaviours

## Pre-condition I

### ABLE TO LET GO: ACT AS A PLATFORM FOR INNOVATION

This pre-condition started out as one of the core themes we were exploring, alongside homelessness and troubled families. The deeper we delved, however, the more relevant 'an entrepreneurial approach' became to systems change. It is about a place's ability to seed and support genuine entrepreneurialism. In Coventry's language it is about 'letting go': being comfortable that you don't have to deliver everything yourself but that you can act as a platform for others to deliver, allowing greater innovation and risk taking. In other contexts you might see the term 'power sharing'. What we saw in Coventry was that the ability to let go had created the space for thinking about complex problems from different perspectives. Projects like Foodbank and the Winter Night Shelter have a different kind of relationship with the system and are therefore able to respond and act differently. In this space, there was more room for those dissenting voices, more willing to 'disrupt' things (without fear of consequence). We also found that there was a closer relationship with citizens because services had been designed solely to address the needs in the community.

The idea of the State letting go may be a version of this pre-condition that is more important for Coventry as a place because of the tradition of in-house delivery and the degree of risk aversion within some of the larger public sector agencies linked to recent events. Perhaps the solution is not to re-invent your organisation as more resilient and risk embracing (pre-condition H) but to accept that service delivery may happen better outside the organisation and that your role is to enable it. Foodbank, the Winter Night Shelter, the Ignite project, the ambition to be a Social Enterprise City, a thriving ecosystem of capable and commercially astute third sector organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Coventry Law Centre, Age UK and the Salvation Army (and even this work funded by LankellyChase). These are all evidence that

Coventry is a city that is comfortable in its skin, up for challenge and ambitious about the future. The Local Public Service Board has strong private and third sector people on it and the Local Enterprise Partnership is increasingly considering the social alongside the economic. To its credit, the City Council wants to do even more. It wants more provider-led solutions in housing; financially creative but sustainable solutions to the large sums of money spent on independent living; more alternative delivery vehicles; more visibility for social enterprises. The challenge for Coventry is to understand what its role is in this: to be a platform for change rather than try to do things itself.

What might 'letting go' mean in practice? It certainly doesn't mean *not* caring about outcomes, or having no control or influence. What it can mean is: being less prescriptive in contracts; being receptive to original ideas from providers rather than keeping commissioner and providers separate; publishing your strategic intent and allowing the market to respond; and encouraging disruption, disruptors and community leadership.

At the moment there are very few organisational incentives to act as a platform and regulators act as a strong disincentive: 'why should I be arms length when I am used to clear levers and a strong performance management culture?' There is also a shift in the skills of the workforce, from public sector bureaucrat to enabling entrepreneur. This links to organisations' people development plans and a shift in how people are recruited and trained. It also sets expectations as staff move into management roles.

*Details of a project Collaborate did with UNDP outlining what some of these shifts in workforce might look like and mean for public service workers the world over can be found at <http://collaboratei.com/2015/06/collaborate-undp-work-in-the-public-service-of-the-future/>*

# VISION PRE-CONDITIONS:

## WHAT COULD THEY MEAN FOR AN INDIVIDUAL FACING COMPLEX NEEDS?

Up to this point, system pre-conditions have been discussed from the perspective of organisations and those delivering public services. What would it feel like for an individual facing multiple complex needs when these pre-conditions are in place? What would it feel like when they aren't? And how could the presence or absence of these pre-conditions act as a lever to re-design services with individuals at the centre?

### PRE-CONDITION

A. Beneficiary impact over organisational focus

### SITUATION

My accommodation is not fit-for-purpose so I need to move

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS IN PLACE MY EXPERIENCE IS....

I am asked to describe my needs once, at point of assessment, and I am involved in choosing the right property for me.

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS ABSENT MY EXPERIENCE IS...

I am placed in accommodation that not only fails to support my personal needs, but exacerbates them. As a 65 year old with limited mobility, I am placed on the tenth floor of a building with a lift that breaks down regularly. As a result, I am regularly stuck in my flat for days at a time.

### PRE-CONDITION

B. Citizen-centred: from concept to delivery

### SITUATION

As a citizen I am the commissioner of the services I need

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS IN PLACE MY EXPERIENCE IS....

My lived experience is valued and there are mechanisms for me to influence service design and delivery through telling my story. In doing so, I help to shape what commissioners value and will pay for. The service I receive reflects this synergy.

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS ABSENT MY EXPERIENCE IS...

Commissioners focus on price and 'value' is monetised. Their decisions do not reflect my needs and they do not value my knowledge or lived experience. I do not get what I need and the service fails to achieve what is has been contracted to do.

### PRE-CONDITION

C. Issues acknowledged as systemic

### SITUATION

I need to access multiple services within the City to support my multiple needs

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS IN PLACE MY EXPERIENCE IS....

I tell my story once and relevant details are shared appropriately. Services are linked and provide joint outreach/clinics that are accessible. I can choose how to tell my story or access these services (online, phone, in person) so am able to self service when desirable.

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS ABSENT MY EXPERIENCE IS...

It is difficult for me to understand how I access different services. I spend a lot of time travelling to services far away from where I live, spending money I don't have and often being passed from one to another in so called 'signposting' activity. Sometimes these services are useful, most of the time they are not.

### PRE-CONDITION

D. Grounded in place but open to new approaches

### SITUATION

I have had to leave my home with my children due to domestic violence but with no money, food or clothes

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS IN PLACE MY EXPERIENCE IS....

There is a network of services to help me find my feet. The Foodbank helps me to feed my family and I can go to the food union for a cooked meal every day if I need to. I am referred to DV services that are great. They offer a bedspace for me and my family for the night; in the morning they only ask for information I haven't already given them.

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS ABSENT MY EXPERIENCE IS...

I am offered Foodbank support but the accommodation is miles away from my family support network and my children's school. When I get to the refuge, I cannot access social care in Coventry because I am out of area and no longer considered to be at risk.

# BEHAVIOUR PRE-CONDITIONS:

## WHAT COULD THEY MEAN FOR AN INDIVIDUAL FACING COMPLEX NEEDS?

Up to this point, system pre-conditions have been discussed from the perspective of organisations and those delivering public services. What would it feel like for an individual facing multiple complex needs when these pre-conditions are in place? What would it feel like when they aren't? And how could the presence or absence of these pre-conditions act as a lever to re-design services with individuals at the centre?

### PRE-CONDITION

E. Trusted partners: understand and adapt to each other's values

### SITUATION

My family has multiple complex needs. I have been told I can access a personal budget.

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS IN PLACE MY EXPERIENCE IS....

Services help me to manage different appointments for my family. I am asked which agency should take a lead in coordinating my care. I am offered a personal budget for different parts of my needs: some from Social Care, some Health, some Children's Services

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS ABSENT MY EXPERIENCE IS...

It is difficult to manage different appointments in different buildings. No-one talks to each other although I am sure they all know my family has high support needs. The personal budget is difficult to access. The money needs to come from different budgets but I don't really understand the details.

### PRE-CONDITION

F. Strengths based: utilising the assets of people and place

### SITUATION

I would like to be involved in the design or delivery of services I either use now or have used in the past.

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS IN PLACE MY EXPERIENCE IS....

Service managers treat me as an asset and value the strengths and skills I have. There are opportunities to share these skills in the community and I can also learn from others and create networks.

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS ABSENT MY EXPERIENCE IS...

I have skills and interests that nobody asks or cares about. I want to share but don't know how. I need help in my home but don't know who to ask. I want the opportunity to connect with others and make a difference but don't know where to go.

### PRE-CONDITION

G. Distributed leadership; enabling, convening, fluid, no egos

### SITUATION

I am part of the Community Engagement Network. Changes are taking place that affect the local community. Closure of the libraries is my most immediate concern.

The City Council asks CEN to sit on strategic planning forums for libraries. We lead discussions with local residents and facilitate community ideas meetings. We help to shape and drive plans together with the City Council and other local partners. The council acknowledges our contribution and welcomes our leadership and contacts with the voluntary sector.

### PRE-CONDITION

H. Resilient & risk embracing: safe to fail, able to bounce back and learn

### SITUATION

I have a setback in my recovery. My case was closed six months ago. I am not sure I will be supported again. I feel like I have let myself down.

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS IN PLACE MY EXPERIENCE IS....

I call my old service team and am told they are happy to provide ongoing support. My community-based worker visits me at home and reassures me that it's okay to fail. We look at the things that led to the setback and plan how to deal with it if it happens again. I am asked what I need to cope now.

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS ABSENT MY EXPERIENCE IS...

The old service does not provide on-going support to cases they have closed. I am told, reluctantly, that there is a drop-in centre but I am not a priority because they have existing 'clients' to deal with. I feel like a 'problem'. I don't go to the drop-in centre even though my setback could have implications for my family.

### PRE-CONDITION

I. Able to let go: act as a platform for innovation

### SITUATION

I have been out of work for 18 months, I need new skills to find a new job. I would like to set up my own business

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS IN PLACE MY EXPERIENCE IS....

I access a new Back To Work programme, funded and led by the local SME forum. I gain new skills and build professional networks and learn from others in similar situations. I consider myself an entrepreneur

IF THE PRE-CONDITION IS ABSENT MY EXPERIENCE IS...

There are limited opportunities for me to develop my skills set or to make connections with potential employers in the city. Setting up my own business is seen as something beyond my abilities.

Several private meetings happen before we are invited to join. Even then the offer seems tokenistic and smacks of a 'consultation' that isn't really a consultation, where decisions have already been made and it's a done deal. We may have been able to leverage support to keep our library open but we weren't given the chance to influence the decision-making process.

# HOW DO THESE PRE-CONDITIONS COME TOGETHER IN COVENTRY?

## CASE STUDY 1: HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING IN COVENTRY

We looked at various types of provision for homelessness services in Coventry for those with multiple complex needs. These included:

- the Winter Night Shelter: a relatively recent project providing night-time accommodation in churches across the city;
- the provision of social housing and associated wraparound support by the Whitefriars Housing Group; and
- the delivery of the recently-awarded homelessness services contract (managed by Coventry City Council with the Salvation Army as prime contractor).

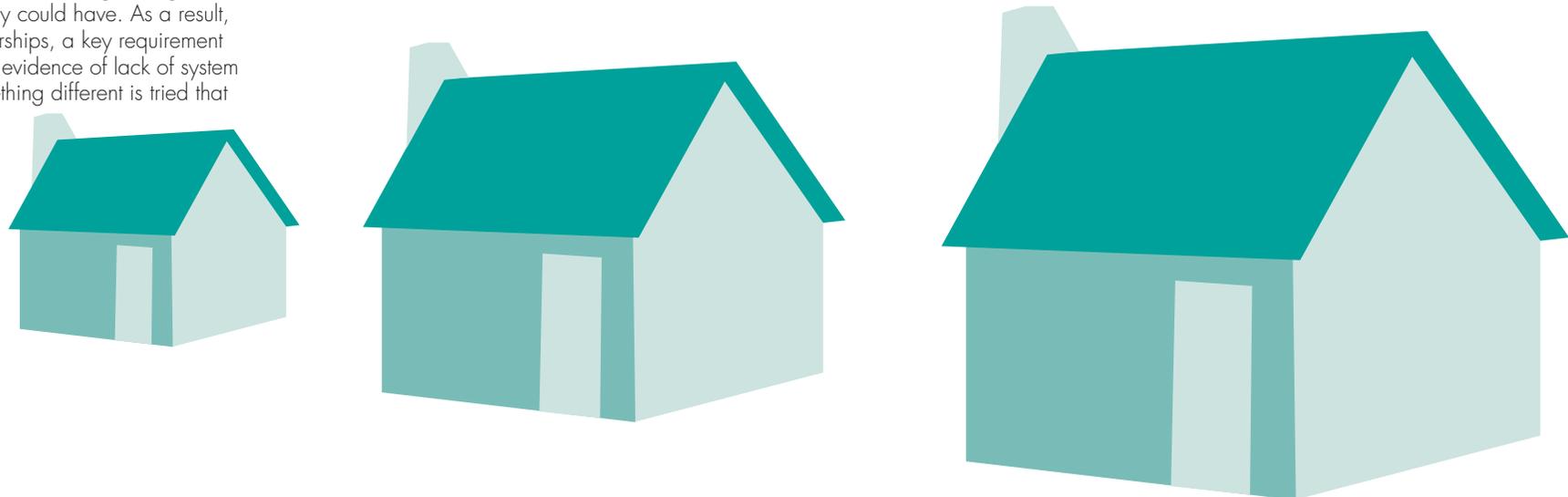
In designing the specification for the new homelessness contract (which sought to bring together existing piecemeal provision) Coventry City Council worked with its **trusted partners** ([pre-condition E](#)) to co-create the specification. This meant the work initially had a provider focus rather than citizen-centred one. The Council **acknowledged homelessness issues as systemic** ([pre-condition C](#)) and took the decision to aggregate provision into a single contract, to ensure there could be no buck-passing and requiring the successful provider to take a systems approach. Trust was initially undermined when, instead of going with a consortia of third sector providers, the contract was let to a single provider. There remains a strong feeling that one organisation benefited where many could have. As a result, the pre-condition around trusted partnerships, a key requirement for collaboration, took a knock. This is evidence of lack of system **resilience** ([pre-condition H](#)) when something different is tried that doesn't work out as planned.

The presence of more **resilient and risk-embracing behaviour** ([pre-condition H](#)) by the commissioner includes:

- annual contract payments up front, with flexibility about how the money is spent as long as outcomes are achieved;
- collaborative contract management focused on key outcomes rather than a raft of performance measures;
- a shared case management system that provider and commissioner can access and integrate into other service provision.

This degree of **trust** allows the commissioner to **let go and act as a platform** ([pre-condition I](#)) for the Salvation Army to innovate, which allows them react flexibly to requests for additional services, for example by providing additional camp beds as part of the core offer rather than returning to commissioner cap in hand. Such behaviour by the commissioner is viewed as positive but unusual.

The partnership approach and holistic contract means that the Salvation Army has been able to develop a **citizen-centred** ([pre-condition B](#)) service that values **beneficiary impact over organisational** impact ([pre-condition A](#)), for example by bringing in Midland Heart to provide a service for the most complex cases. The flexibility in the prime contract is replicated in the sub-contractual relationships with other, smaller providers. An extension clause built in to the contract with Langley Manor ensures that contract monitoring conversations are citizen-centred and outcomes-focused. Partners gave positive feedback about the homelessness single provider arrangements in Coventry, which they see as a way of incentivising outcomes as opposed to 'passing the buck'. If an individual isn't ready to be housed with one of the smaller provider services, the nature of the contract ensures that they don't fall through the cracks but are accommodated elsewhere. If they end up on the streets of Coventry this is still within the Salvations' Army's remit to resolve.



# HOW DO THESE PRE-CONDITIONS COME TOGETHER IN COVENTRY?

## CASE STUDY 1: HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING IN COVENTRY

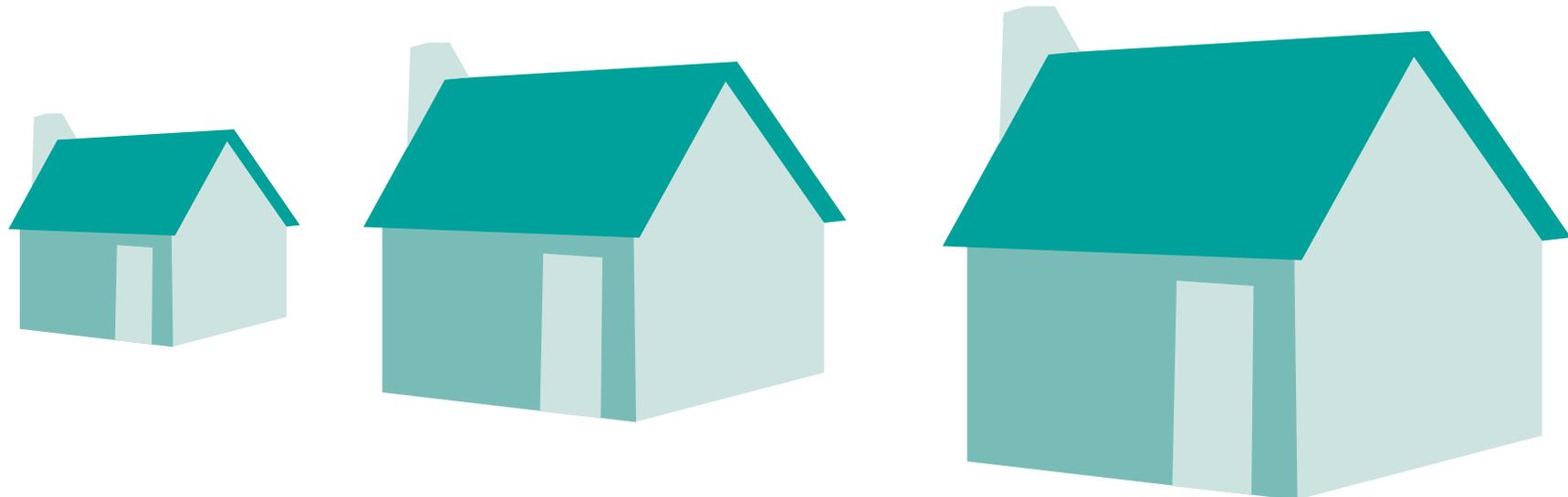
Collaborative infrastructure supports a more systemic way of working. Coventry homelessness providers all use the Outcomes Star™ which is linked into the shared Inform support management system. The same system provides the data for the weekly reports to the Council so any decisions made counter to contract specification can be discussed openly and based on the data.

With regard to housing provision more generally for those with multiple complex needs, a citizen-focus ([pre-condition B](#)) is evident in the Whitefriars Housing Group. Significant changes have been made to their service delivery model in response to customer consultations. So although neighbourhood office services will be based in the City Centre office, the service itself will be more responsive, with previously office-based staff spending more time in the community and visiting customers in their homes. This approach aims to re-deploy existing resources more effectively, supporting customers to be more independent for those who can, while providing a more personalised service for those with complex support needs.

Though some parts of the system work well together there are other parts where issues have not been acknowledged as systemic ([pre-condition B](#)). For example, the links between homelessness, mental health and substance use providers are weak. These three services should be closely inter-linked since issues and clients usually overlap and feed complexity. Instead, the Dual Diagnosis working group has no representation from homelessness services, leaving the city's strategic approach for this group without a key voice and perspective. Similarly, whilst the homelessness sector is making good inroads into the personalisation space, provisions in The Care Act 2015 increase this imperative by extending and embedding personalisation within social care, with an emphasis on wellbeing and prevention. Providers will increasingly need to demonstrate a commitment to person-centred, strengths-based practice.

The establishment of the Winter Night Shelter has seen the Council play an enabling role, letting go and acting as a platform for innovation ([pre-condition I](#)), with significant success in successful provision led by faith groups and run, in the main, by volunteers. What are the system implications of this sort of approach if it could be applied to the provision to something larger such as emergency accommodation? How could the Council create a relationship with providers that is one of setting parameters and providing support? Could it build a relationship that catalyses market-led solutions and draws in other funding sources?

The existence of many of the systems change pre-conditions has allowed for creativity and risk taking in homelessness services. The opportunity now is to locate homelessness in the wider system of multiple complex needs, making better links with mental health and substance misuse but also better bringing together the social with the economic to ground homelessness work in the wider housing growth agenda for the City with much stronger links to the Local Economic Partnership. It is here that the assets of Coventry are not recognised as such: existing housing stock is the wrong profile and the green belt is seen as a barrier to development. On the whole, social conversations about homelessness and economic ones about housing development are happening in different places with different people. What might happen if they were brought together as part of a single system?



# WHAT HAPPENS WHERE FEWER SYSTEM PRE-CONDITIONS ARE IN PLACE?

## CASE STUDY 2: TROUBLED FAMILIES IN COVENTRY

Coventry's Troubled Families has been a successful standalone project (as recognised by the Department for Communities and Local Government and through the achievement of national targets), with a local vision, integrated into the work of the wider Children and Families First Team. However, there has not been a whole systems approach with a high-level vision agreed by all partners from the start. Troubled Families is clearly seen by interviewees as something done in Social Care, by Social Care, for Social Care – with Payments by Result going to Social Care. It is not something where everyone has an input and shared responsibility. "Troubled Families operates in a bubble", was the phrase used.

The Troubled Families programme is a national scheme which began in 2011 to provide a multi-agency approach to turning round the lives of whole families to reduce the high costs these families place on the public sector each year. It focused particularly on getting children back to school, adults back to work, and reducing youth crime and anti-social behaviour. Central government provided funds once certain indicators of successful family turnaround were met. The programme was initially rolled out through local councils with each locality developing its own version of the programme. While there are many critics of the vision, approach and measurement/payment mechanisms, there can be no doubt that it has acted as a catalyst for areas to think systemically about the issues these families face rather than as individual problems to be dealt with by separate organisations.

For Coventry, when looking at their Troubled Families work and trying to identify the existence or otherwise of the pre-conditions for system change, the single most significant thing was the lack of a system-wide Coventry vision. Interviews with those delivering the programme, partners, and senior leaders from across public services revealed that none believed an over-arching system vision had been developed for the programme, despite there being a project Phase 1 Vision. This lack of a wider vision impacted on the behaviours we would have expected to see when trying to observe whether the various pre-conditions were in place. Without system parameters it is hard to assess behaviours in a system. This in itself provides useful evidence of what happens if, early on, the issue is not seen as systemic nor collaboration acknowledged as essential ([pre-condition C](#)).

The Payment by Results funding model should provide financial incentives to ensure a beneficiary impact over organisational focus ([pre-condition A](#)), although in many places across the Coventry interviewees felt it had instead driven a tick-box mentality, doing what will get the money rather than what families may actually need. Many of the Coventry partner interviewees agreed that although the service is focused on delivering outcomes but worried that, in pursuing this, the ability to deliver a truly citizen-centred ([pre-condition B](#)) service was being lost. An example given was the (lack of) functionality of the project's Strategic Board. The Board's attention was overwhelmingly focused on ensuring it was hitting targets to draw down money, rather than developing a more strategic approach to service delivery. Trying to develop a longer term vision when activity was already underway to achieve targets has proven difficult if not impossible.

Delivering a successful approach working for complex families in Coventry relies on trusted relationships with partners ([pre-condition E](#)), some of which are clearly in place (e.g. police, probation and education) but often only because of the strength of the prior personal relationships. Troubled Families has made use of co-location arrangements to strengthen organisations' understanding of each other's roles and values. This has helped overcome the common system barrier of lack of a common language (clinical versus needs-based, different definitions of risk and so on).



# WHAT HAPPENS WHERE FEWER SYSTEM PRE-CONDITIONS ARE IN PLACE?

## CASE STUDY 2: TROUBLED FAMILIES IN COVENTRY

However there are critical areas where a lack of understanding and adaptation to each other's approaches and values ([pre-condition E](#)) has been a major barrier, particularly the relationship between Troubled Families and Social Care. One partner agency said "they (Social Care services) don't know what we do and we (Troubled Family services) don't know what they do", despite the aims of these two services being similar in operational terms and seen externally as being one and the same. There is little evidence of that Troubled Families services and Social Care services (both children's and adults) are operating as trusted partners in our view because a vision has not been developed that involved the social care system and created a shared understanding of the synergies possible between the two. A 'them and us' mentality is affecting service delivery with, for example, Social Care holding onto cases referred by Troubled Families for short periods of time only to refer them back to Troubled Families with no understanding on either side of why the case was referred in the first place or why it was returned with no action.

The lack of resilient and risk embracing ([precondition H](#)) behaviour in this part of the system underpins many of the issues. It is clear that the fallout from the high profile serious case review continues to affect these services deeply even with mechanisms in place to support decision-making processes (e.g. a joint escalation policy where managers discuss risk thresholds on a case by case basis). This shows that even with the right infrastructure in place, it can be difficult to change behaviours without a shared vision or shared accountability for systemic failures. Unsurprisingly, fear of reprisal against individuals inhibits progress when Children's Services is classed as inadequate by Ofsted (although the Children and Families First Team was viewed positively by Inspectors). Inspection spotlights such as this may work for performance improvement but they do not encourage risk embracing behaviour. Staffing gaps and high turnover also affect the ability to form trusted partnerships. In many ways, this contrasts starkly with the way homelessness providers in Coventry reacted to the failure of the consortia bid. Although bruised by the experience, providers found ways to work together, cementing relationships through sub-contracts and often collaborating on person-centred service design to rebuild trust.

Despite the challenges that exist for the Troubled Families Programme, there is still a clear sense that frontline staff are driven and committed. User feedback describes a service that takes risks and 'goes the extra mile' to ensure it delivers beneficiary impact over the organisational focus ([pre-condition A](#)). The Department for Communities and Local Government commented on the hard work and dedication put into making the scheme a success and increasing the number of families turned around. Case workers ensure they take children to school when a parent isn't able to do so; they support families to re-decorate their homes over the weekend (i.e. in their personal time); some even sit waiting on the doorstep until a parent opens the door. Trusted partnerships are important not only between organisations but also between services and service users.

While the infrastructure needed to support Troubled Families is significant, several people felt that Coventry needed a city-wide strategic approach to supporting all vulnerable children, rather than an isolated service bearing the weight of delivery and accountability. Acknowledging the need for systems collaboration ([pre-condition C](#)) could drive a more shared model of accountability. One interviewee described a need for focused leadership, which has proved challenging in an environment which many professionals describe as being in a constant 'state of flux'. This can lead to many paying 'lip service' to the ideology of change without clarity or parameters for making it happen or, when it does happen, making the change sustainable. Understanding how the style of leadership may need to change over time is also critical.

Is distributed leadership the right model, right now? Other Troubled Family schemes have used data to underpin both their approach and the business case for collaboration. This approach could help Coventry going forward, as long as there is transparency in how that data is collected and used.



# MAKING THE MOST OF THIS SYSTEMIC OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN THE DOTS

## CASE STUDY 3: IGNITE

The recent successful Early Action Neighbourhood bid to fund a collaborative initiative between the Coventry Law Centre and Grapevine seeks to make a significant difference to Children's Services and Housing for Coventry. Called 'Ignite', it takes an assets-based approach to the programme's two key aims:

- To grow legal capability in people who impact on local services the most (those with entrenched needs and recurring crises). It will do this by increasing knowledge, confidence and skills to deal effectively with every day law-related issues.
- To build the web of individual, family and community relationships that are needed to move forward into stable futures (so they cost less to services and contributing more to the community).

Ignite will apply asset-based thinking and practice working with two 'pathfinder services': Children's Services (supporting the improvement programme) and Whitefriars Housing (supporting the redesign of patch-based housing management).

Ignite also aims to influence those services and organisations delivering services to the public through an iterative process: extracting learning as the programme is developed and embedded, and then sharing and feeding this back into the programme and to other partners in Coventry. Grapevine and Coventry Law Centre have already laid the foundations for this through a competency-based approach to recruitment for the programme. Staff will have the right competency and skills to deliver this work but will also continue to shape their roles and responsibilities so that they adapt to support communities based on the needs and resources within those communities.

Several of the system pre-conditions we present in this report can be found in the way the Ignite programme has developed to date:

- a wide network of cross-sector partners were involved in advising and guiding the development of the bid (trusted partners – [precondition E](#));
- the programme will respond to the needs of the citizens in the pilots neighbourhoods – it will look and feel different depending on the assets, needs and resources in each area (citizen-centred and strengths based – [preconditions B and F](#));
- the collaboration of the public sector and voluntary sector will work inter-agency and across traditional silos (issues seen as systemic – [precondition C](#));
- the iterative approach to service design and develop show a resilient and risk embracing approach – [precondition H](#);
- an openness to learning means a certain amount of acceptance that sometimes mistakes will be made ([precondition H](#)).

The Ignite programme recognises that for the success, mistakes will be made but must be part of a learning process. This will hopefully be the beginning of a city-wide approach to delivering services in partnership with the citizens.

If, as the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child, a networked approach must lie at the heart of that.

# FROM PRE-CONDITIONS TO CONDITIONS – FROM VISION TO DELIVERY

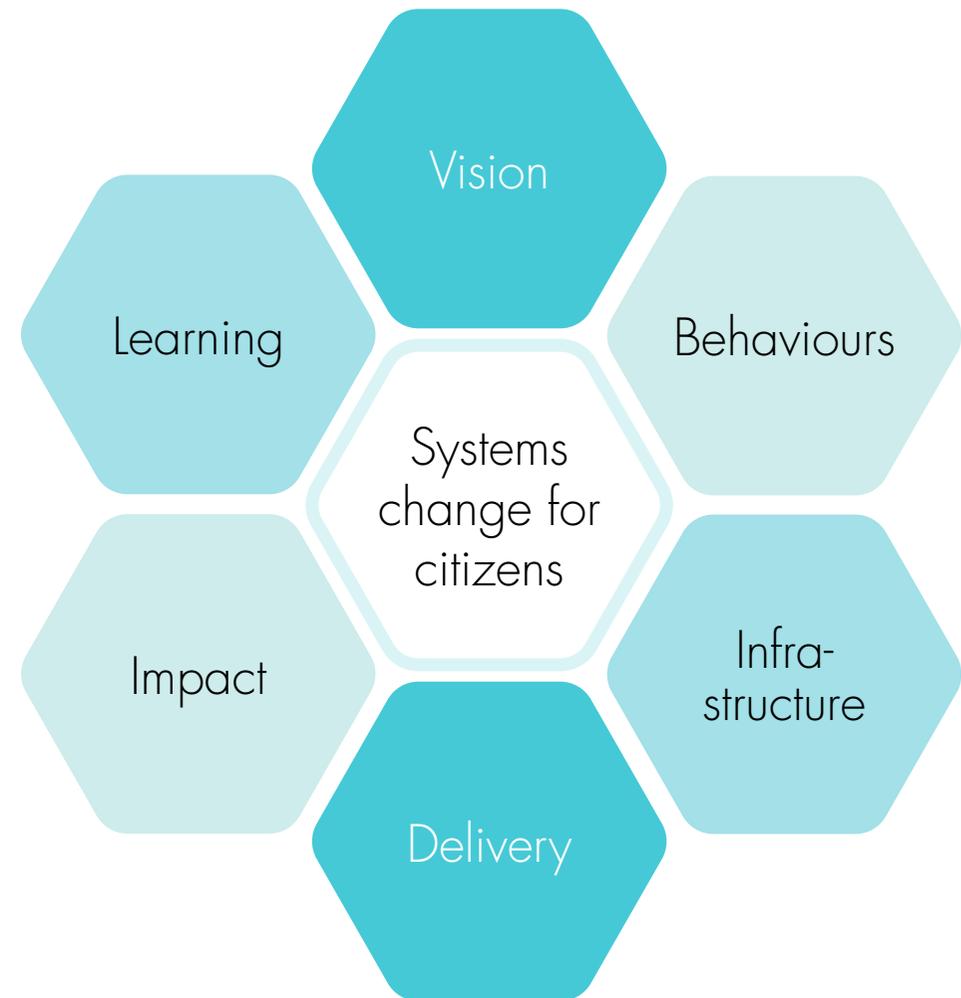
The nine pre-conditions of [vision](#) and [behaviours](#) identified in this report need to be sustained over time and underpinned by collaborative infrastructure in order to achieve successful systems change and real impact for citizens, and to ensure learning is captured and used.

So 'pre-conditions' become 'conditions' which, supported by the right infrastructure, enable the delivery of genuine systems change. This may appear on the surface to be little different from other more linear change, in that there is a process from vision to delivery, with impact, learning and iteration. The difference however is that the nine pre-conditions may or may not be in place and can change over time, so the system must adapt accordingly. For example, when trusted partnerships are in place, a different set of governance and budgeting options are available compared to when they are not. To this end we see that vision helps to drive delivery, behaviours (particularly in front line staff) to drive real impact for citizens, and infrastructure to embed learning so that the system continues to adapt and evolve.

This report focuses on vision and behaviours, and although the pre-conditions are neither linear nor a checklist we do think that they only have merit as the underpinning for a different form of delivery – collaborative delivery! In future we would like to work further with Lankelly Chase to develop this analysis and deepen our understanding of 'infrastructure', 'delivery', 'impact' and 'learning' in the context of place-based systems change, combining it with the learning from our earlier work with the UNDP on collaborative delivery frameworks – see [http://collaboratei.com/wp-content/uploads/UNDP\\_CollaborativeCapacity1.pdf](http://collaboratei.com/wp-content/uploads/UNDP_CollaborativeCapacity1.pdf). Most of our work as set out in our recently published report "Collaboration Readiness: Why it matters, how to build it and where to start"

<http://collaboratei.com/wp-content/uploads/Collaboration-Readiness-Digital.pdf> shows that alongside collaborative behaviours the other big gap is collaborative infrastructure to support delivery – what sort of collaborative infrastructure would support systemic change?

This will be our focus in coming months.



# HOW MIGHT A PLACE USE THESE PRE-CONDITIONS?

ONE THING THE PRECONDITIONS ARE NOT, IS A CHECKLIST: SOMETHING TO TICK THINGS OFF FROM AND MOVE ON IF A CERTAIN NUMBER ARE ACHIEVED. INSTEAD, THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME WAYS THE PRECONDITIONS ARE BEING USED:

1. As a diagnostic tool to understand the prevalence of the pre-conditions in a given system before beginning a new piece of work in or with that system. Alternatively, as a diagnostic tool to understand why something is or isn't working well or to help design infrastructure to support systems change.
2. As a shared language to help build systems understanding across organisational boundaries and between people.
3. As a framework to broker conversations with those who do not yet consider themselves as part of a system or as a broader introduction as to what systems change means in a place.
4. As a set of connectors (vision, behaviours, language) between different smaller systems (or rapid prototypes) to allow larger scale system change in due course as the different mini-systems connect together.
5. As a set of things to consider before embarking on a major policy change (e.g. new legislation or a new national or regional initiative), using these nine issues to frame the debate rather than turning immediately to the payment mechanism or regulatory framework to set the approach.
6. To consider strategies beyond the immediate system. For example, once homelessness is 'working' as a system, it could be considered alongside housing, and then as part of the wider growth agenda for Coventry, and then as part of West Midlands region.
7. As a framework for those brought together via a governance structure (e.g. a Health and Well-Being Board) to consider how well they are placed for future system changes, what they need to do to build capability and what role they can play to enable a systems approach
8. As a set of behaviours or competencies to recruit people to (or appraise people against) to ensure a set of incentives and behaviours based on systems above and beyond individual organisations

# APPENDIX 1: STEERING GROUP MEMBERS

To support this work we formed a Steering Group in which we aimed to combine usual and more unusual suspects. It was, therefore, overtly cross sector, cross hierarchy and cross system.

This group helped us: refine our methodology; decide upon the topics of focus (homelessness, troubled families and entrepreneurial approaches); iterate our thinking, and; challenge our findings. We are very grateful for their time, expertise, honesty and thoughtfulness.

*Sarah and La Toyah*

Name	Organisation
Alice Evans	Lankelly Chase
Angela Tellyn	Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
Carmel McCarthy	The Whitefriars Housing Group
Claire Bell	West Midlands Police
Claire Morris	The Recovery Partnership
Clare Wightman	Grapevine
Cllr Abbott	Coventry City Council
Cllr Singh	Coventry City Council
Jane Moore	Public Health Coventry City Council
Jemma Sorro	The Salvation Army
Kobina Hall	Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company
Leanne Draycott	Coventry City Council
Louison Ricketts	Coventry City Council
Nobby Clarke	Coventry Winter Night Shelter
Ruth Tennant	Coventry City Council
Si Chun Lam	Coventry City Council
Simon Brake	Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group
Stephen Banbury	Voluntary Action Coventry
Sue Bent	Coventry Law Centre

## APPENDIX 2: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND FOCUS GROUPS

Name	Organisation
Alison Quigley	Coventry City Council
Anne White	Coventry Law Centre
Ayaz Maqsood	Coventry City Council
Bal Basi	Whitefriars Housing Group
Bruce Harrison	Langley House Trust
Carl Pearson	Grapevine
Carmel McCarthy	Whitefriars Housing
Charley Gibbons	Orbit Housing (previously CEO Coventry CAB)
Cllr Abbott	Coventry City Council
Daksha Piparia	Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau
David Shortland	Shortland Horne
Debbie Carter	Coventry City Council
Dr Vicky Hancock	Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust
Gavin Kibble	Foodbank
Grace Haynes	Coventry City Council
Ian Harrabin	Complex Development Projects
Joe Reeves	Midland Heart
Jon Murray	Recovery Partnership (Addaction)
June Jeffreys	Community Engagement Network
Keith Jeffrey	Coventry University Social Enterprises (CUSE)
Kevin Rogers	Whitefriars Housing Group
Kobina Hall	Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company
Lesley Meade	West Midlands Police
Liz Welton	Coventry City Council

Name	Organisation
Melanie Goolding	Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company
Michael Vincent	Coventry Age UK
Nathan Slinn	The Salvation Army
Nobby Clarke	Coventry Winter Night Shelter
Paul Green	Lyng Hall School
Paula Bunn	The Salvation Army
Paula Deas	Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Pete Fahy	Coventry City Council
Rebecca Farr	Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company
Ruth Tennant	Coventry City Council
Sara Roach	Coventry City Council
Sarah Newton	Coventry City Council
Sinead Ouillon	Coventry University
Tim Rees	Foleshill Baptist Church
Trevor Seeley	University of Warwick

**WE ALSO CONDUCTED SERVICE USER FOCUS GROUPS AND CONVERSATIONS: WITH HOMELESS PEOPLE; TENANTS, AND; FAMILIES. FACING MULTIPLE COMPLEX NEEDS AS ARRANGED BY THE SALVATION ARMY, WHITEFRIARS HOUSING GROUP AND COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL.**

**WORKSHOPS WITH: COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL KICK STARTERS AND COVENTRY PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD CHAIRED BY MARTIN REEVES/JENNI VENN**

A huge thank you to all those who made this report possible and gave their time so generously to develop, challenge and refine the thinking. In particular, thank you to Si Chun Lam of Coventry City Council without whom this work would not have been possible.

The logo for Lankelly Chase is a white hexagon with rounded corners, centered on a teal background. Inside the hexagon, the words "Lankelly" and "Chase" are stacked vertically in a bold, grey, sans-serif font.

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