



University of the
West of England

Reframing, Realignment and Relationships

**Interim evaluation of the first place-based programmes
for Systems Leadership: Local Vision**



May 2015

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Evaluation team

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the commissioning team, members of the Leadership Centre and Systems Leadership Steering Group. With particular thanks to Debbie Sorkin, John Atkinson, Lucie Magill, John Jarvis, Seth Thévoz and Joe Simpson. We would also like to thank Enablers and stakeholders in localities, who have modelled the art of open enquiry and helped us to explore what works and why in relation to Local Vision.

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. Programme overview

- *Systems Leadership: Local Vision* was born out of the collective vision of the Leadership Centre and the Systems Leadership Steering Group, comprising of representatives from key agencies across local and national government, the NHS, social care, public health, the voluntary sector and the private sector. The context of this ambitious programme is set amidst the biggest recession since the 1930s coupled with a government policy of austerity and a spotlight on public service performance.
- *Systems Leadership: Local Vision* sets out to promote and facilitate radically different ways of leading transformation in public service to address complex social issues, such as alcohol abuse, dementia, food poverty, and service integration. The core aim of this initiative is to develop shared leadership capability to generate solutions to ‘wicked’ (complex and intractable) issues that are not in the gift of individual organisations or service sectors to solve.
- The commissioning of *Local Vision* was deliberate in its intention to explore the impact of systems leadership development in-situ, predicated on the principle of learning by doing, working with stakeholders, facilitated by a skilled and experienced ‘Enabler’.
- The first phase of *Local Vision*, initiated in 2013, selected 25 localities. Successful initiatives were awarded up to £27,000 to fund an experienced systems leadership development ‘Enabler’ through the life of the programme. Successful applicants also received access to a variety of learning events and networks hosted by partners.

1.2. Evaluation brief and approach

- In autumn 2014 the Bristol Leadership Centre at the University of the West of England Business School was commissioned to undertake evaluation of the *Local Vision* programme. The evaluation’s primary purpose is to support learning and development of the *Local Vision* approach, illuminating impact (or progress towards impact) and areas for development/improvement.
- The evaluation is designed in two stages. This interim reports sets out our findings for Phase 1, with a primary focus on exploring key criteria that may shape efficacy. This will inform the developing evaluation framework, collective ‘sense making’ and deeper exploration of efficacy planned for Phase 2 with a final report to be published in autumn 2015.
- As a systems-based evaluation we take the wider national context into account together with a thematic approach to the analysis and exploring the role of factors shaping efficacy at national as well as local level. In Phase 2 of the evaluation we will elaborate on learning and outcomes within individual localities. We employ a mixed methods approach, comprising a range of data sources available over the last 3 years as well as data collected specifically for this evaluation.

1.3. Systems leadership in context

- The concept of ‘systems leadership’ has gained increasing momentum in recent times as a potential response to the unprecedented challenges facing public services, with declining funding and resource set against increasing demand. The move towards integration of health and social care services in particular has been a major priority in the government’s agenda in the run up to, and following, the General Election in May 2015.
- Many argue that a paradigm shift is required in how public services are organised and delivered. These factors present a need to re-evaluate established approaches to the provision of local services and shape the environment in which *Systems Leadership: Local Vision* is implemented.
- The conceptual framework underpinning *Systems Leadership: Local Vision* emerges from a growing body of theory, practice and development stemming from a recognition that traditional hierarchical approaches to tackling complex interconnected problems do not work. Systems leadership recognises complexity is adaptive, and crosses organisational and civic boundaries, enabling people to go beyond their roles in order to harness collective capability for the common good.

1.4. Interim findings

- Interim analysis reveals a number of important factors that impact on the processes and outcomes of the *Local Vision* programme. Nine key themes are explored, grouped into three interconnected clusters (process, context and change) as summarised below.
- **Process:**

At its core, *Local Vision* is based on the assumption that systems leadership can be mobilised through the appointment of an ‘Enabler’ to work alongside partners to address a specific, shared problem/issue. The majority of project partners were very positive about the contribution of the Enabler, suggesting that their professionalism and support brought new energy and momentum to the partnership and helped people work through the challenges and uncertainties of the change process. Whilst the **enabler role and approach** may vary between projects key skills and tasks include:

- (i) building safe space, relationships and trust;
- (ii) surfacing hidden themes and patterns;
- (iii) fostering recognition and ownership of what needs to change;
- (iv) creating shared purpose and collective connection;
- (v) exploration and fostering recognition of the nature of systems leadership; and
- (vi) brokerage/acting as independent arbiter; encouraging reflection and learning.

Identified for their skill as facilitators and change agents rather than as subject experts a key part of their role is to facilitate a process of reflection and dialogue around **problem framing and analysis** amongst stakeholders, out of which more tangible actions and outcomes can be identified. In almost all cases Enablers reported that progress at the start was slow given the time it takes to build

relationships and trust amongst partners. The **timing** of projects can also be important in terms of aligning with organisational priorities and the engagement of important stakeholders. *Local Vision* projects often build on from pre-existing initiatives and more or less established partnerships, with start-up conditions having a significant impact on how the project develops.

- **Context:**

According to the *Local Vision* documentation and discussion with programme leads there are a number of key criteria for engaging localities and Enablers for the *Local Vision* initiative. Localities are juggling a range of priorities, funding streams and initiatives. Where the *Local Vision* project was not closely aligned to existing **organisational structures and priorities**, there was often difficulty maintaining momentum and managing a range of competing commitments. There was widespread agreement amongst key stakeholders of the importance of developing strong **networks and relationships** between partners, founded on trust and a shared sense of purpose. Whilst systems change requires active engagement from a wide range of stakeholders, significant value can be gained from having people with dedicated time allocated to supporting and leading the project. Perhaps the most widely cited barrier to *Local Vision* projects was insufficient **political and organisational support** for the project. There was a sense that whilst some senior leaders played lip service to a systems leadership approach, improvements are difficult to sustain without consistent, long-term support. Enablers frequently observed that whilst junior staff were quick to understand systems leadership and enthusiastic to get involved, without positional authority they struggled to be heard. In some cases there may also be a tension between organisational and political leaders – with the potential for elected members to override shared system approaches/objectives in favour of singular objectives.

- **Change:**

There is evidence to suggest that *Local Vision* projects have facilitated a shift in **mindset** amongst partners, with realisation among many of the potential for collective leadership and accompanying intent for new ways of working. Some participants in the programme reported a refocussing on shared purpose as the basis of motivation, whilst noting that *Local Vision* had re-energised and empowered them to act as agents for change. Whilst there was some evidence of emergent shifts in **culture**, a number of Enablers commented on how the concept of systems leadership remains counter-cultural in many organisations. There was emerging evidence to suggest leadership **behaviours** are shifting from controlling (which prioritise the needs of the organisation) towards collaborative approaches (that seek to generate benefits for the collective system through more innovative ways of working). Some participants commented on the transformational effect of working more closely with citizens in the community, in particular around co-producing services. However it is not clear at this stage the breadth and depth of this engagement across all localities. Whilst some localities are achieving significant shifts in mindset leading to new behaviours, for others progress was limited or mixed. Factors shaping this suggest a lack of clarity about what systems leadership means in practice, and the role of senior level stakeholders in championing this approach. In the absence of these factors, responsibility for embedding systems leadership may remain with the Enablers and highlights a need to consider the exit conditions for them to withdraw from

their involvement in localities without the project coming to an end. These are issues that will be explored further in Phase 2 of the evaluation.

1.5. Conclusions and next steps

- This evaluation suggests that systems leadership begins with a shift in mindset or perspective rather than requiring fundamental change in structures or resources. This is both its main power and limitation as the potential to sustain and replicate success is also dependent on embedding new practices, processes and structures.
- In Phase Two of the evaluation we will explore in greater detail the similarities and differences between *Local Vision* projects in different localities in order to gain a better understanding of how local context both enables and/or constrains the potential for sustainable change.
- At present, our analysis notes the limited use of data in measuring progress for *Local Vision*, although some localities are considering the role of data as part of a wider integration agenda.
- *Local Vision* does not take place within a vacuum and it would be misleading to attribute success or failure without a clearer understanding of the relationship between this initiative and its wider context. In Phase 2 we will therefore also endeavour to explore the part that *Local Vision* plays within the wider regional and national context of health and social care reform.
- Systems leadership calls for a fundamental reframing of the nature and purpose of leadership in order to address complex, ambiguous, boundary-spanning, 'wicked' issues such as the integration of health and social care. Whether or not this is achievable in practice, will depend to a large extent on the ability of key stakeholders to reframe, realign and harness the collective synergy of relationship.

2. Introduction

2.1. Systems Leadership: Local Vision

The *Systems Leadership: Local Vision* programme sets out to promote and facilitate radically different ways of leading transformation in public service to address complex social issues, such as alcohol abuse, dementia, food poverty, and service integration. The context of this ambitious initiative is set amidst the biggest recession since the 1930s, coupled with a government policy of austerity and a spotlight on public service performance.

The core principle underlying *Local Vision* is to develop shared leadership capability - a capacity and desire to collaborate across organisational boundaries and systems to generate solutions to 'wicked'¹ issues that are not in the gift of individual organisations, or service sectors, to solve. The development of systems leadership capability within the *Local Vision* programme is predicated on the principle of learning by doing, focused on a collective problem, facilitated by a skilled and experienced 'Enabler'.

Local Vision was born out of the collective visionary experimentation of the Leadership Centre² and the Systems Leadership Steering Group, comprising representatives from across local and national government, the NHS, social care, public health, the voluntary sector, the private sector and leadership development. To date the group has pooled its resources to jointly commission research into what works in systems leadership, and to develop leadership programmes based on this intelligence across sectors³.

All too aware of the unprecedented challenges facing public service, and recognising that a paradigm shift was needed, the commissioners focused on a creating a programme that would move away from the traditional model of leadership development focusing on investment in individual talent and understanding during a residential programme. The commissioning of *Local Vision* was deliberate in its intention to explore the impact of systems leadership development in-situ, building on existing relationships and collaborations with the support of a skilled 'Enabler' as a facilitator and catalyst for change through action learning.

The stated aims of *Local Vision* are as follows⁴:

- To assist in the development of local solutions to a local 'wicked' / intractable issue through leadership development;
- To ensure that the leadership learning is left in place to allow it to be used for other issues;
- To draw together lessons and learning about leadership behaviours and development that will help resolve future wicked issues.

¹ A 'wicked' problem is complex and intractable, with no obvious solution – see Section 3.2.

² Formerly the Leadership Centre for Local Government - <http://www.localleadership.gov.uk>

³ See <http://leadershipforchange.org.uk> for more information.

⁴ <http://leadershipforchange.org.uk/systems-leadership-local-vision/>

2.2. Evaluation brief and approach

In Autumn 2014 Bristol Leadership Centre at the University of the West of England was commissioned to undertake evaluation of the *Local Vision* programme.

The evaluation is designed in two phases. This interim report sets out our findings for Phase 1, with a primary focus on identifying and exploring key criteria that may shape efficacy and impact. This will inform the developing evaluation framework, collective 'sense making' and deeper exploration of programme outcomes planned for Phase 2 of the evaluation, with a final report to be published in autumn 2015.

Across the two phases, the evaluation aims to:

1. Examine how *Local Vision* has raised awareness of systems leadership in individual places, and among stakeholders, including service users
2. Identify criteria for success and perceived benefits, anticipated value and impact from differing stakeholder perspectives
3. Gather evidence through a variety of routes to identify and map impacts (anticipated or not) and to gauge sustainability of any service transformation at a local systems level, through to service users
4. Identify any emerging patterns to help inform understanding of the ingredients of effective systems leadership interventions.

The evaluation's primary purpose is to support learning and development of the *Local Vision* approach, illuminating impact (or progress towards impact) and areas for development/improvement. In this interim evaluation we have employed a mixed methods approach, comprising a range of data sources including:

- analysis of academic literature and applied research
- qualitative in-depth exploratory interviews with *Local Vision* steering group members, enablers, and local stakeholders
- analyses of key documentation, such as contracting with enablers and localities and national policy documents
- survey data from the last 3 years.

As a systems-based evaluation we take the wider national context into account together with a thematic approach to the analysis and exploring the role of factors shaping outcomes at national as well as local level. In Phase 2 of the evaluation we will elaborate further on learning and outcomes within individual localities.

2.3. Structure of this report

Following this introductory chapter, the report is structured as follows:

- **Systems leadership in context:** a review of the wider context of the *Systems Leadership: Local Vision* programme in terms of theory, policy and practice. This section is informed by a review of scholarly, practitioner and policy literature and background documentation on the *Local Vision* programme.
- **Programme commissioning and design:** an outline of how systems leadership theory, policy and practice have influenced the commissioning and design of this programme. This section is largely informed by interviews with members of the Systems Leadership Steering Group, as well as with key contacts at the Leadership Centre.

- **Interim findings:** this chapter presents emerging findings from the evaluation to date. Nine key themes are explored, grouped into three broad clusters (process, context and change). This section is informed by interview and survey data, along with observation of key meetings and events.
- **Summary and conclusions:** an integrative summary of interim findings and their implications for Phase Two of the evaluation.

3. Systems Leadership in Context

3.1. What is systems leadership and why does it matter?

The conceptual framework that underpins the *Systems Leadership: Local Vision* programme emerges from a growing body of theory and research on systems change and leadership. A review commissioned by the Virtual Staff College in 2013 suggested that ‘systems leadership’ has two key characteristics: (a) ‘it is a collective form of leadership...’ concerned with ‘the concerted effort of many people working together at different places in the system and at different levels’, and (b) it ‘crosses boundaries, both physical and virtual, existing simultaneously in multiple dimensions’⁵.

According to Marshall Ganz, a Harvard academic and advisor to the Obama administration, “leadership is accepting responsibility to create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty’ and suggests that ‘leaders accept responsibility not only for their individual “part” of the work, but also for the collective “whole”’⁶. Ganz’s work frames leadership as social movement and identifies four key dimensions - building relationships, telling the story, devising strategy and catalysing action – which, taken together, permit leaders and groups to exert influence without authority.

Such perspectives challenge dominant theory and practice, which tends to focus on individuals in formal organisational leadership roles, and suggests that systems leadership is a ‘mindset’ rather than a set of individual skills or competencies that one either possesses or not.

The concept of systems leadership has gained increasing momentum in recent years as a potential response to the question of ‘what would it take to create more effective leadership of the whole governmental and public service system?’⁷. However, whilst these broad questions have been with us for the past half-century, the context that generates them has changed significantly over time. Whilst policy makers and practitioners throughout the 1970s and 80s were mainly concerned with coordination of services and shared standards for the provision care, since the turn of the century we have seen an increasing focus on whole systems working, people-centred design and integration of services.

The backdrop for current changes in the funding and organisation of the UK public sector is far from rosy. Public services are facing a generational challenge of declining funding and resources, against increasing demand, and ‘leaders’ navigating these challenges are challenged to think and act in new ways. Many argue that a paradigm shift is required in how public services are organised and delivered⁸. Systems leadership has been heralded as a way to develop leadership capacities in current times, bringing together a number of strands of thought in a new way, in order to respond to the unprecedented challenges of public service transformation in an age of austerity.

⁵ Ghate, D., Lewis, J. and Welbourn, D. (2013), p6.

⁶ Ganz, M. (2010), p527

⁷ Benington, J. and Hartley, J. (2009)

⁸ Ham, C. (2015)

3.2. What kind(s) of problem(s) does systems leadership address?

Traditional approaches to leadership development work on the assumption that a key responsibility of leaders is to solve problems and make decisions on behalf of groups and/or organisations. Whilst a systems leadership approach does not deny the potential value of these activities, it suggests that different kinds of problems call for different kinds of response. Systems leadership is concerned with the mobilisation of people to tackle challenges, creating the conditions under which groups and systems solve problems through collective learning, experimentation, and transformation – an approach predicated on the centrality of effective relationships built on trust, rather than role, hierarchy or title.

In the UK, the work of Professor Keith Grint has been highly influential in shaping the conceptual understanding and framing of problem solving in systems leadership. Grint's⁹ adaptation of Rittel and Weber's¹⁰ typology of 'tame' and 'wicked' problems has helped theoretically and practically in recognition of the complex nature of many of the decisions and problems that leaders and managers are ostensibly tasked with 'solving'.

A 'tame' problem is something that we've either seen before or can apply a specific logic to resolve. Grint suggests that the response to such problems is largely a case of organising a process to address the issue – effectively calling for 'management'. A 'wicked' problem on the other hand is complex and intractable, with no obvious solution. Such a situation, Grint suggests, calls for 'leadership' and is largely about asking questions and mobilising collective expertise to determine the real nature of the problem and weighing up the options. Such problems may appear 'messy' and solutions are often 'clumsy' as people navigate their way through a complex, ambiguous and changing landscape¹¹.

Grint, however, reminds us that problems are not necessarily 'wicked' or 'tame' in of themselves but are 'socially constructed' as such through processes of narrative and sense-making. An illustration of this can be seen in the differing approaches of George W Bush and John Kerry in the 2004 US presidential election¹². A decisive feature of this campaign was how the two candidates presented their approach to responding to the threat to US national security posed by the September 11th attacks of 2001 and the subsequent 'War on Terror'. Bush presented this as a 'critical' problem and himself as the commander-in-chief whilst Kerry suggested that it was a 'wicked' problem requiring a shared understanding of the underlying issues and collective debate on potential ways forward. Both candidates engaged in attempts to create a compelling narrative that voters would engage with and follow through the casting of their votes. The outcome of the election was incredibly close - 50.7% to 48.3% - yet the approach of the two candidates was in stark contrast to one another.

Professor Ralph Stacey adds weight to the importance of whether and how complexity is perceived and understood in his application of the science of complexity and adaptive systems to leadership. He too emphasizes the importance

⁹ Grint, K. (2005) 'Problems, problems, problems: The social construction of 'leadership''

¹⁰ Rittel and Weber, 1977.

¹¹ Grint, K. (2008) Wicked Problems and Clumsy Solutions: the Role of Leadership

¹² Grint, K. (2005) 'Problems, problems, problems: The social construction of 'leadership''

of social and indeed psychological construction of problematizing, problem solving, managing paradox and uncertainty, suggesting that “there is a major contradiction between the organisational reality of uncertainty and the beliefs that we have about the capacity of executives to know what is going on and be in control.”¹³

Local Vision has deliberately used language and framed its intervention to target ‘wicked’ issues that are contested, ambiguous and complex. This evaluation raises perhaps an additional question to consider, in respect of the degree to which recognition and tolerance of ambiguity in complex problem-solving is acknowledged in the initiatives’ localities?

One of the striking features of *Local Vision* is how the intellectual concept of systems leadership has been championed and developed by the Systems Leadership Steering Group that commissioned it. The Steering Group is made up of a broad consortium of highly experienced leaders representing a wide range of public service organisations that continues to build on and learn from the legacy of earlier interventions. Certainly the Steering Groups play a significant role in shaping the discourse and narrative of systems leadership at a strategic level and indeed could be considered as modelling systems leadership in action.

A further evaluation question for *Local Vision* then might consider exploration of the extent and way in which discourse and narrative of systems leadership are being shaped more widely at national level, and in the localities as a consequence of this initiative.

3.3. Implementing and evaluating systems leadership and service transformation

There are a number of influential ‘think tank’ organisations in the UK (such as Demos, the RSA, NESTA and the King’s Fund) that play a significant role in articulating and indeed pioneering new ways of conceiving, leading and delivering public services.

All produce thought-provoking and evidence-backed publications that illuminate challenges and opportunities within the current global, political, policy and fiscal landscape for transformative innovation.

The RSA’s recent publication ‘Managing Demand: Building Future Public Services’¹⁴ articulates the notion of a new social contract or shift in relationship between the general public, state and public services focused towards the root causes of demand for services and centred around the holistic needs for citizens. Many of the pioneering examples cited, such as tackling complex and multiple needs of chronically excluded adults, point to the need for imaginative solutions to complex problems and the role that (systems) leadership can play through focusing on building community leadership and citizenship, rather than solely on delivering service.

The power of data analytics and ‘customer insight’ are underlined as central to what is termed a ‘new science’ of using data to understand the needs and behaviour of

¹³ Stacey, R. (2012) ‘Tools and techniques of leadership and management: Meeting the challenge of complexity’.

¹⁴ Randle, A. and Kippin, H. (2014). See <http://bit.ly/1xk8wse> for further information.

citizens in a holistic way and impact on efficacy over time. The UK government for example established a behavioural insights team to look at how behavioural change theory can be applied to meet current policy challenges. Drawing heavily on data and on ethnographical research the team seeks to create new ways of delivering enhanced and tailored services and products and open up new possibilities for innovation. It has been variously applied to reframe the relationship between citizens and the state, for example in order to reduce crime, tackle obesity and reduce littering¹⁵.

Many of these practice and policy reports point to the inadequacies posed by the traditional bureaucracies of public service and indeed of our current political process. We are living through an era of significant uncertainty and restructuring in which globalisation, technology, social enterprise and volunteers outside of statutory provision, and indeed citizens are shaping new relationships with statutory services and ways of delivery (as they are in our social, cultural and business worlds). There are a myriad of radical innovations happening in these spheres, such as through the work of In Control, Participle, New Key, and Shared Lives¹⁶.

These new ways of working thrive on the creative abilities of leadership without the constraints of political accountability, position or bureaucracy. Some are small-scale, whilst others have had national or international impact. Our review of the literature suggests that there is scope for the evaluation of *Local Vision* to pose the question of what can be learnt from innovation of services outside of statutory provision and beyond usual sectorial confines. For example, what can be learnt about systems leadership and service innovation from addressing economic poverty amongst women in rural India?¹⁷ Or from organisations looking to utilise systems leadership approaches in helping governments and NGOs tackle food security issues¹⁸.

Of course we need to consider the role of context. For example, is it possible to transfer learning from the developing world to the UK? Or from one sector in the UK to another? We begin here at least in a more focused way with an exploration of the UK landscape in relation to public service transformation.

3.4. National political, fiscal and regulatory environment

3.4.1. Politics and Policy

Both the evaluation and leadership literature underline the significance of understanding the role that context plays in shaping efficacy. Our analysis of the national political, policy and fiscal landscape highlights significant changes in interpretation over the last three decades of the relationship between the citizen and the state, and the role of public services. The political interpretation of this relationship through policy and fiscal choices plays a fundamental role in shaping the environment in which leadership is enacted.

¹⁵ Cabinet Office (2010). See <http://bit.ly/1lOptJw> for further information

¹⁶ See for example: In Control (<http://www.in-control.org.uk/>), Participle (<http://www.participle.net/>), New Key (<http://www.newkey.org.uk/>), and Shared Lives (<http://www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk/>)

¹⁷ Nesta (2015) Building social enterprise ecosystems in India, lessons from Sankalp (<http://bit.ly/1Fr11U7>)

¹⁸ E.g. Sustainable Food Lab (2015) Annual Summit: Leading into the Future (<http://bit.ly/1dluYrR>)

Our analysis shows that ‘neoliberalism’, with its expression through emphasis on market forces and the view of the citizen as a customer of services, is a paradigm that has shaped the approach of the last three successive governments, representing a major shift from the post-war settlement with the creation of the NHS and other public services. The tension of collaboration and partnership, together with inclusion instigated during Blair’s platform of the Third Way, sits uneasily alongside the belief in the value of competition.

The underlying principles of the modernisation agenda made explicit the need to devise policy across sectoral boundaries and so alongside this developed a focus on integration of services and new forms of delivery with the role of the State positioned as enabler and regulator. The role of management and increasingly the discourse of leadership gained new visibility¹⁹.

The current government’s platform of Big Society argued that citizens and communities should take further responsibilities and powers with a reducing State provision facilitated through the fiscal agenda. The vision of power being devolved to to communities has been translated through renewed focus on the role of the third sector, alongside a focus on facilitating individual control of health and social care budgets and emphasis on customer choice.

The policy context has shown increasing recognition of the inter-connectedness of health and social care. Examples of initiatives to facilitate greater integration include joint inspection of health and social care providers; extending incentive payments to providers to encourage and reward joint working; and developing integrated mental health services across health and social care. Currently the Department of Health is funding integration (as outlined in the following section), as is the Department for Communities and Local Government through its Public Service Transformation Network²⁰ and plans for more collaborative leadership.

These developments are occurring in a context that puts service user interest at the centre of policy and practice, creating the possibilities of new forms of citizen engagement and public leadership.

The evaluation of *Systems Leadership: Local Vision* takes place at a significant moment in political history, with the first phase coinciding with a coalition government fighting for survival, political parties other than the dominant two sharing a media platform for the first time in political debate, and the NHS at the heart of much of the public campaign²¹.

3.4.2. Fiscal and regulatory environment

Local leaders in the NHS, Local Authorities, Public Health and social care continue to face the challenge of providing public services where demand is growing but resources are flat or diminishing. All governments, local politicians and health and social care organisations will continue to have to grapple with this ‘wicked’ issue for many years to come.

¹⁹ For an elaboration of this argument see Brookes and Grint, 2010

²⁰ <http://publicservicetransformation.org>

²¹ Since this interim report was written the Conservative party won a majority in the General Election on 5th May 2015, with significant implications for the agenda of integration of health and social care and the devolution of budgets to localities.

NHS England’s *5-Year Forward View* sets out a view of the choices that are available to the next Government, with stark recognition of the fiscal shortfall:

“In order to provide the comprehensive and high quality care the people of England clearly want, Monitor, NHS England and independent analysts have previously calculated that a combination of growing demand if met by no further annual efficiencies and flat real terms funding would produce a mismatch between resources and patient needs of nearly £30 billion a year by 2020/21. So to sustain a comprehensive high-quality NHS, action will be needed on all three fronts – demand, efficiency and funding. Less impact on any one of them will require compensating action on the other two.”²²

In simple terms if the current settlement remains unchanged, over the next five years a gap of 30% will grow between resources needed and resources available to sustain a comprehensive tax-funded NHS.

This reality may provide a burning platform of opportunity for some partner agencies to reach outwards to collaborate effectively with others in their locality, or they may be driven by regulation and internal pressures to concentrate on their own organisational agenda. This leads the evaluation to consider the role of finance and regulation in hindering or enabling systems leadership for *Local Vision*: will the tensions inherent in fighting for resources pull local organisations apart, or bring them together to optimise the use of local resources?

The position of Local Authorities is arguably even more challenging. The Barnet “Graph of Doom” (see Figure 1) is a graphic illustration of the financial prospects for Local Authority services over the next few years. In fewer words than the NHS England *5-Year Forward View*, it poses a real and unanswered question as to what the future may hold for Local Authority services.

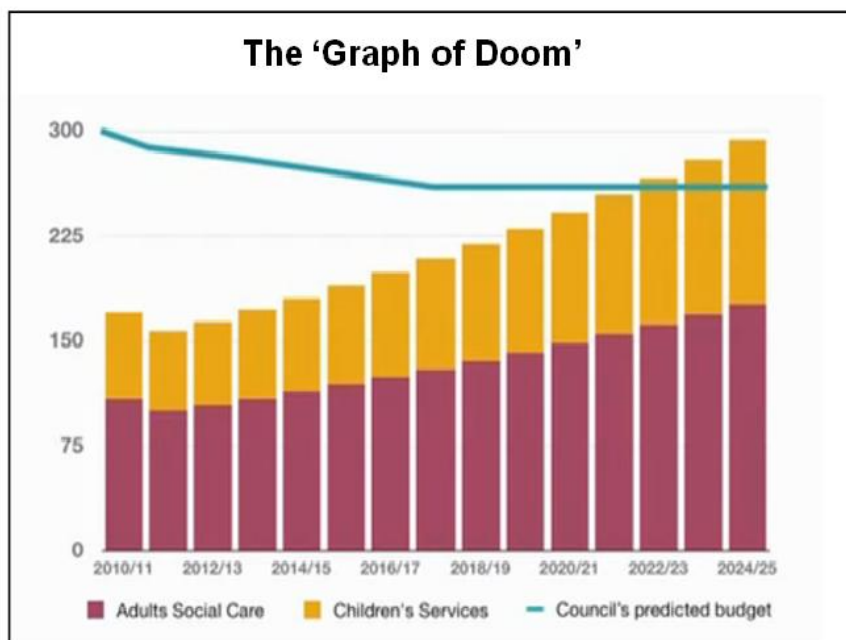


Figure 1 - 'The Barnet Graph of Doom'²³

²² NHS England (2014). For report see: www.england.nhs.uk

²³ Image Source: <http://inlogov.com/2012/05/23/barnet-graph-doom/>

In recent years, the obvious downward pressure on social service provision, and the immediate and direct impact of this on increasing the hospital stays of vulnerable elderly patients, has led to national initiatives to transfer NHS financial resources for use in the social care sector.

Over the past three years a rising proportion of the NHS budget has been earmarked at a national level from local NHS Commissioner budgets to be spent on the provision of social care in their localities. In 2015/16 £5.3bn from the NHS budget has been set-aside for the “Better Care Fund” (formerly known as the Integration Transformation Fund). This is designed to create a single pooled budget across the NHS and Local Government to “work more closely together around people, placing their well-being as the focus of health and care services.” Arguably, the most tangible measure of the success of the fund will be the extent to which it can reduce demand on the acute hospital sector.

Another highly significant move is the push towards greater devolution to cities and regions, exemplified in the recent agreement reached between the Department of Health and Greater Manchester Combined Authority that proposes to give the latter the responsibility of running its own health and social care budget, worth £6bn²⁴. The hope is that it will enable better ways of meeting the needs for long term support (arising out the rising number of older people with complex health and social care needs), ending the health and social care divide that is now recognised universally as wasteful and ineffective. Other localities are following suit.

The transfer of such a sizeable financial resource to be spent on provision previously the responsibility of Local Authority Social Services Departments brings with it some real local tensions and risks.

If the objectives of the Better Care Fund are not met in a particular locality, what will the implications be for local co-operation? Of course, it can equally be argued that the Better Care Fund is a significant driver for integrated delivery and systems leadership as suggested in the preliminary evaluation report for *Local Vision*²⁵. However, when all sectors of a local system are under great financial and service strain, the need for the Better Care Fund to deliver is likely to become an imperative which will more than likely create substantial inter-organisational tensions unless strong local partnership relations are already in place. In order to transfer NHS funds to the social care sector, NHS providers have been required to find up-front efficiency gains. NHS England is clear on its analysis of the necessary conditions, which include integration across systems and focus on prevention to underpin this.

A substantial proportion of NHS Foundation Trusts and NHS Trusts are reporting financial deficits and projecting deficits into the coming year. Many providers are now not meeting the nationally mandated targets. Failure to meet these puts Boards in jeopardy. The aforementioned *5-Year Forward View* identified potential gains from “innovation through the creation of new organisational forms in the provider landscape”, variously combining GPs, primary, community care and acute hospital organisations²⁶. The implications for radical organisational and systems change alongside the need for leadership beyond organisation are substantial. Against this

²⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-31615218>

²⁵ Vise, R. (2014) *The Revolution will be Improvised*.

²⁶ NHS England (2014) *Five Year Forward View*.

fiscal and regulatory backdrop, it can be argued that it will take a great deal of determination and visionary 'systems leadership' to raise the sights of individual organisations beyond today's very tangible pressures. The evaluation of *Local Vision* explores the role and effects of this context in shaping efficacy.

4. Local Vision Programme Commissioning and Design

4.1. Framing and approach

The first phase of *Local Vision*, initiated in 2013, invited proposals from across the UK generating some 40 responses. Of these 25 place-based projects were selected focusing on a wicked issue of the localities' choosing, and involving a range of partners accordingly.

The criteria for selection included:

- The extent to which the project related to a 'breakthrough' issue across a locality that involved a range of sectors and stakeholders
- Ability to demonstrate new ways of working in support of delivering integrated services
- Evidence of seeking to achieve measurable achievements in health, care and wellbeing.
- Commitment to applying what they learned about Systems Leadership to other issues, and to sharing their learning so that other areas could benefit
- Senior-level political support and a funding commitment of £10,000 from their local Health and Wellbeing Board.

Successful initiatives were awarded up to £27,000 to fund an experienced systems leadership development 'Enabler' through the life of the programme. Those selected also received access to a variety of learning events and networks hosted by the Kings Fund and other partners, including contributions of consultancy expertise from the private sector²⁷.

The stated aims of *Local Vision* provide an obvious starting point for exploring explicit and implicit assumptions around the model of change for the initiative within the political and fiscal landscape as outlined in Section 3.4. This supposition can be summed up as:

- Skilled facilitation and development of systems leadership capability in a locality, where there is engagement through focusing on a difficult relevant issue, will lead to different leadership behaviours
- The investment in collective systems leadership capability will lead to transferable learning and skills to address similarly complex issues, thereby ensuring sustainability and informing future learning.
- That enhanced collected leadership capability is necessary to drive more effective service provision for service users against a backdrop of increasing financial austerity.

This supposition has been 'translated' into action through the commissioning of *Local Vision* (amongst other programmes and initiatives, such as the NHS Integrated Care Pioneers) with the engagement of localities and identification of a difficult shared problem coupled with recruitment of highly skilled and experienced 'Enablers', as summarised in Figure 2.

²⁷ See <http://www.localleadership.gov.uk/place/lvinvitation/> for further details.

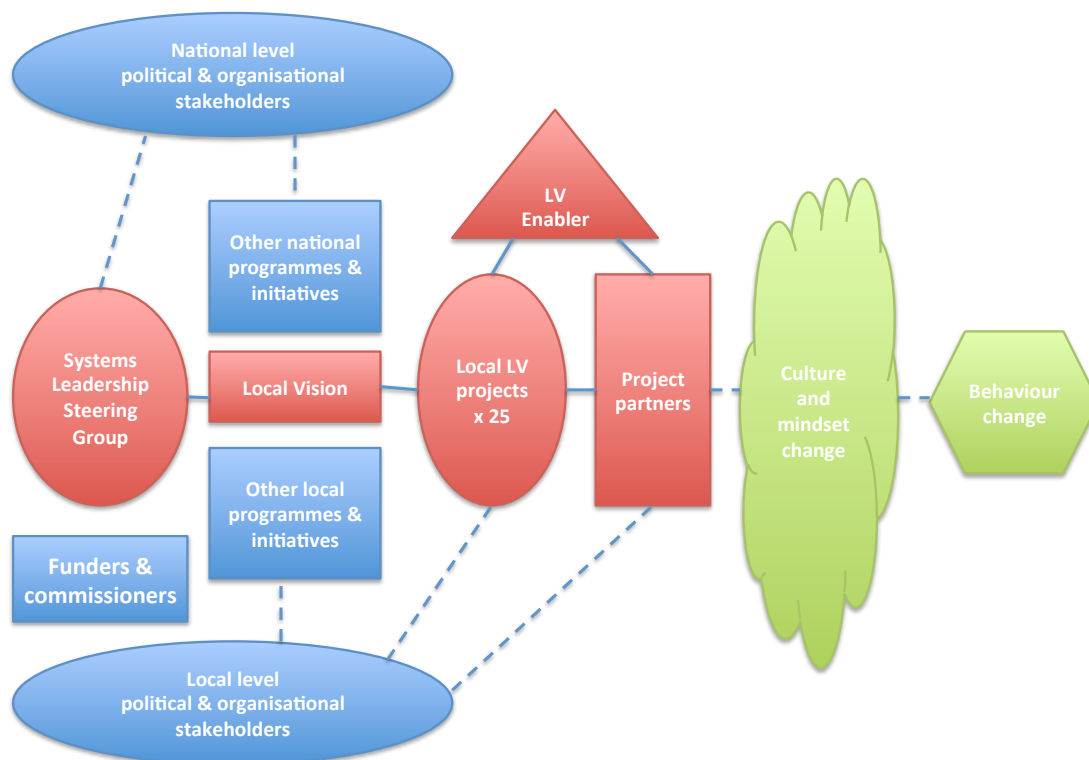


Figure 2 – Preliminary mapping of the Systems Leadership: Local Vision landscape

4.2. Aims and objectives

Interviews and notes from Steering Group meetings, alongside the design team at the Leadership Centre, highlight a strategic focus on an experimental approach to systems leadership development, with *Local Vision* positioned as a break from traditional models of delivery and with an emphasis on learning through action.

However, as several members of the Steering Group explained, there were varying views across the board on the significance of taking an inherently difficult issue (e.g. the integration of health and social care services) and adopting a systems leadership approach.

There is shared and palpable sense of financial urgency and impetus across members of the Steering Group of the need for change among some leaders and repositioning of the relationship with citizens and service – towards co production and shared responsibility.

The messiness, and recognition of the nature of tackling a difficult shared problem was highlighted - in particular the challenges of addressing ‘wicked’ issues with no clear solution:

“You can make progress on the issues but they cannot be resolved, and everything you do is likely to have knock-on effects, some of which will be intended, but some of which would have been unseen and unintended.” [SL Steering Group Member]

A number of Steering Group members commented on the significance of the integration agenda for service transformation for better outcomes and on the significance of delivering a ‘place-based’ programme of systems leadership ‘in-situ’.

For some members, the role of place is about providing psychological safety for experimentation, and ownership in building on the value of the relationships in the locality to create change:

“You have to choose some artificial certainty e.g. place, which is not hermetically sealed but it fixes a point, because people are more able to tolerate an experiential relational approach and so building that as a vehicle for change” [SL Steering Group Member]

The role of the Enabler as a skilled facilitator of learning for systems leadership through action is seen as central to the LV approach:

“One part of our approach was providing really good experienced facilitators to work with people who wanted to work in a new way. We have a system where the people want to work together but perhaps aren’t quite sure how to do it, or it needs to be accelerated; this is where the facilitation comes in.” [SL Steering Group Member]

Taking care in matching Enablers to place and recognising that the role cannot be prescribed as a one-size fits all is a key aspect of the Steering Group’s understanding:

“...part of the dark art of who goes to work where, is getting somebody who pitches at the right level for the place because all the Enablers, all of us have got different things that we’re good at. There’s no formula really.” [LV Programme Team]

There is also recognition that whilst the Enablers are critical in facilitating top-level engagement and learning, pre-conditions may be important and the role carries the obvious danger of heroism and dependency:

“Whilst I think good facilitation is a pre-requisite unless you’ve already got a very well-functioning system, it would definitely be worth probing whether any (localities) have abdicated to the facilitator.” [SL Steering Group Member]

“And you know there’s a number of places I think who hire the Enablers afterwards because they value what they do. However, there has rarely if ever been a case of a place carry on doing it without the support of the Enabler. That’s the thing working for me.” [SL Steering Group Member]

The Steering Group also highlight leadership behaviours that they believe are critical to the success of *Local Vision* and anticipate seeing evidence of as a result of the initiative. These include:

- focusing on outcomes and results rather than processes
- basing the work on strong but honest relationships
- putting service users and carers at the centre of those relationships
- allowing for experimentation – and therefore allowing for risk
- being willing to genuinely listen to others and see their point of view
- being able to adapt, going with ‘good enough’ solutions and building on them rather than waiting until you have the perfect service/solution.

While some members refer to behaviours, others refer to the importance of fostering an adaptive mindset:

“Part of our role has been spreading the message that behaviours have to change, and that old style behaviours just won’t work any more.” [SL Steering Group Member]

“If we could sow a way of working that was much more adaptive, particularly into the mindset of public service leaders therefore organisations, that thing would be successful and I don’t see why we shouldn’t.” [SL Steering Group Member]

The preliminary *Local Vision* evaluation report²⁸ identified a number of key factors for collaborative success - the majority of which involve mindset or are behavioural. The focus on shaping behaviour and mindset chimes with the system’s leadership literature as a distinguishing feature but does not take into account the real contextual ‘systems’ tensions and complexity experienced in enacting leadership as outlined earlier in this report.

A question that stems then for the evaluation’s articulation of the model of change for *Local Vision*, and for further exploration, is to what extent does context matter and how might this be taken into consideration? This theme is explored further in the next section of this report.

²⁸ Vise, R. (2014) *The Revolution will be Improvised*.

5. Interim Findings

5.1. Emerging themes

Preliminary analysis of evaluation findings reveals a number of important factors that impact on the processes and outcomes of the *Local Vision* programme. Whilst data collection is not yet complete, we present the emerging findings to help inform programme developments. In this section we explore nine key themes that have so far been identified from our research, grouped into three broad clusters (see Figure 3). It is important to note that each of these items are closely interconnected and should not be regarded as stand-alone.

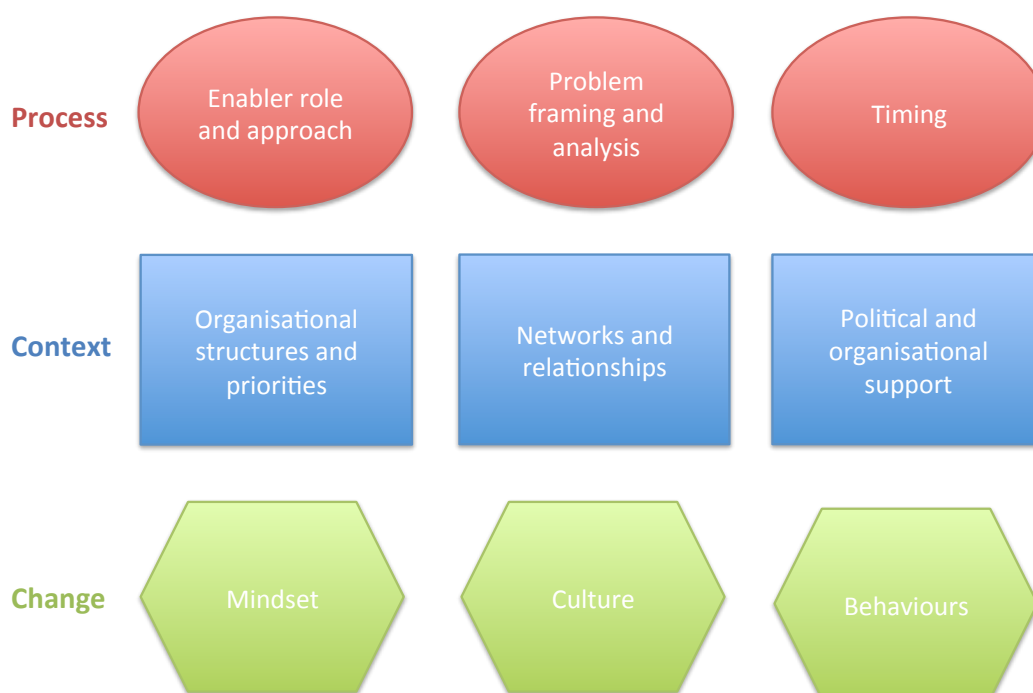


Figure 3 – Emerging themes from the *Local Vision* evaluation

5.2. Process

We begin with the *Local Vision* process and approach, focussing particularly on the role of the Enabler, problem framing/analysis, and timing of interventions.

5.2.1. Enabler role and approach

At its core, the *Local Vision* approach is based on the assumption that systems leadership can be mobilised through the appointment of an ‘Enabler’ to work alongside partners in a locality for a finite period of time to address a specific, shared problem/issue. Enablers are highly experienced facilitators, usually with extensive experience of working at senior level in public service alongside a proven track record as an independent change consultant.

Enablers play a key role in working with stakeholders to facilitate change, and draw on a wide range of techniques and processes to do so²⁹. From the evaluation to date, key skills of the Enabler are seen to include:

- building safe space, relationships and trust;
- surfacing hidden themes and patterns;
- fostering recognition and ownership of what needs to change;
- creating shared purpose and collective connection;
- exploration and fostering recognition of the nature of systems leadership;
- brokerage/acting as independent arbiter; encouraging reflection and learning.

This broad set of skills can be likened to Egan's three-stage model of a Skilled Helper³⁰ (frequently used in mentoring and coaching) which focuses on enabling individuals to see afresh 'what is going on'; to consider what they want instead; and to work out how to get there. It is used to both solve problems and to create opportunities. There may be value in considering Egan's model and exploring its potential use as a frame in the second phase of the evaluation.

The appointment of Enablers is based on recognition of factors such as 'fit' with the locality, local ownership and the need to foster agency and sustainability, building in and allowing for emergence. A consequence of this fluid, action-learning approach, however, is that it can create tensions and challenges around perceptions of the role and the willingness of partners to work in an emergent way, as indicated in the following quotes:

"There were no clear aims/outputs or agreement with facilitators at the start, which led to internal tensions managing expectations and change of project lead. The conclusions of facilitators after the first round of meetings were controversial and not evidenced, leading to some tensions." [LV Project Partner]

"The involvement of the CCG was not good. They may have had a different impression, but I was not there to run the project for them, I was there to facilitate others to run it." [LV Enabler]

Despite occasional ambiguity about the Enabler's role, the majority of project partners were very positive about the contribution of the Enabler, suggesting that their professionalism and support brought new energy and momentum to the partnership and helped people work through the challenges and uncertainties of the change process.

"Our *Local Vision* Enabler is fantastic. Her energy and professionalism, getting people to think outside boxes and doing things in different ways has added a value that's immeasurable, that's difficult to do." [LV Project Partner]

"There is a real value in allowing an external facilitator to come in and support staff to try to do things differently. It gives them a license and it gives them some cover." [LV Project Partner]

²⁹ See the *Art of Change Management* for key concepts used by Enablers.

³⁰ Egan, G. (2007). 'The skilled Helper'.

Enablers are also able to play an important role in challenging entrenched ideas and approaches, particularly amongst senior-level leaders, in ways that would have been difficult for those employed in partner organisations. In some cases, Enablers also acted as role models through enacting a systems leadership approach themselves.

“[X] was a fantastic Enabler: we couldn't have asked for a better Enabler. She was highly regarded by the board members and effectively challenged things and got the board members to think of different points of view.” [LV Project Partner]

“I learnt a lot from [our Enabler] during her time with us. She highlighted to me that it appeared that I wasn't fazed when dealing with senior members of staff such as directors/councillors.” [LV Project Partner]

The mix of facilitation, support and role modelling demonstrated by Enablers can clearly act as a significant catalyst for systems change in localities. What is less clear at this stage, however, is the extent to which change is sustained once the Enabler leaves the project, what additional support/input is required alongside the contribution of the Enabler, and how to ensure the best fit between Enabler and project. These are issues that will be explored in Phase 2 of the evaluation.

5.2.2. *Problem framing and analysis*

Enablers are identified for their skill as facilitators and change agents rather than as subject experts. Whilst they are appointed by localities to help address a particular issue/challenge a key part of their role is to facilitate reflection and dialogue about the nature of the problem and the potential response from partner organisations.

Thus projects begin with a ‘problem-diagnosis’ stage in which Enablers engage with a wide range of partners to develop a systemic understanding of the issue and to identify ways in which they can support the partnership in progressing. Whilst this stage is deemed essential to the subsequent process and outcomes of the intervention stage there can be pressure to move quickly to action, as indicated in the following quote.

“From the outset, the Enabler avoided the production of an action plan. The project aims were purely to learn more about the system and to gather intelligence from communities and other stakeholders. For some stakeholders this felt like an absence of a plan and at times it was uncomfortable. Through focusing on learning rather than doing, there was noticeable breaking down of ‘the silo mentality’ among stakeholders.” [LV Project Partner]

The distinction between problem-diagnosis and action resonates with Heifetz’s³¹ work on adaptive leadership where he highlights the need to take time to analyse and agree on the nature of the problem before attempting to resolve it. Similarly, Grint³² suggests that for wicked problems, a key role of leaders is to facilitate a process through which a shared understanding of the problem can be identified and articulated. To this extent, Enablers can also be seen as modelling systems leadership through the problem diagnosis phase.

³¹ Heifetz, R. A., Grashow, A. and Linsky, M. (2009) *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*

³² Grint, K. (2005) ‘Problems, problems, problems: The social construction of ‘leadership’.

There are, of course, tensions here - particularly as the Enabler only has a finite period of time to work with the partnership to facilitate change. Problem diagnosis can be a time-consuming activity, requiring extensive engagement with partners and, often requiring the identification and invitation of new partners to the table. In almost all cases Enablers reported that progress at the start was slow, given the need for:

- Building shared understanding of the project and a commitment to learning,
- Building trust between key partners,
- Developing relationships between Enablers and other partners, gaining buy-in for the Enabler role and generating an understanding of its value.

In the analysis of *Local Vision* projects to date, it would appear that there are some significant differences between the scale and type(s) of project being supported. Whilst the most obvious differences may be in terms of the topic (ranging from healthy eating, to dementia awareness, integration of health and social care, and reducing risk of Female Genital Mutilation), it may be that other differences are more significant in terms of project process and outcomes. In particular, we noted differences between the level of the intervention, with some operating almost exclusively at a senior, strategic level across partnerships (this was particularly the case for integration projects such as Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole, Kent and Wakefield) and others at a much more community/grassroots level (e.g. Cornwall, Wirral). In Phase 2 of the evaluation we will explore these issues in greater detail in order to identify where and when a *Local Vision* approach is likely to be most effective, and the significance of how Enablers are recruited and matched to localities.

5.2.3. *Timing*

Given the time needed for projects to produce measurable outcomes, along with difficulty in assessing outcomes and distinguishing the contribution of *Local Vision* from the myriad of other initiatives and developments within localities most Enablers and projects focussed on changes in 'mindset' and 'culture', warning against unrealistic expectations in terms of measurable outcomes.

“One of the challenges for the work is that it’s too small. It’s a real tension. The speed of expectations is unrealistic. We are forced into playing that game and could fail with unrealistic expectations.” [LV Enabler]

“Lots of other things happening at same time so a bit hard to differentiate just this project but making some progress across both resident and across leadership outcomes. My emphasis with them has been on leadership issues rather than the frontline and there are some shifts apparent which feed through to frontline.” [LV Enabler]

In many respects it is still too early to draw conclusions with regards to the impact of *Local Vision* on the development of better services and service outcomes and attempts within localities to identify and capture robust measures of success have been limited.

“I don't feel that we have yet completely internalised this piece of work and I am not sure of its lasting impact so am nervous of any collective insight to date.” [LV Project Partner]

“More about a curve of change rather than a ‘Big Bang.’” [LV Project Partner]

Whilst one Enabler spoke of community leaders taking steps to address the issues raised through the programme and whilst many others pointed to how problems were now better understood, there was some recognition that there may be delays in this translating into action:

“Issues and challenges in relation to shared leadership of alcohol have been articulated although not yet significantly acted upon.” [LV Enabler]

There was recognition by both Enablers and project partners that shortage of time allocated to the *Local Vision* project is a potential barrier to success. It was acknowledged that more time was spent on relationships than initially anticipated.

“We are still focusing on improving outcomes for frail older people but I suspect that there has been more work on the building blocks of establishing trust and relationships than was originally anticipated.” [LV Project Partner]

“Think it merits more time allocation. It is important to build trust and relationships locally could be structured into emerging areas of work.” [LV Project Partner]

Local Vision projects often build on from pre-existing initiatives and with more or less established partnerships. Participants often described a slow start to projects given the time it takes to build relationships and trust. The timing of projects can also be important in terms of aligning with organisational priorities and the engagement of important stakeholders, as outlined below.

5.3. Context

According to the *Local Vision* documentation and discussion with programme leads there are a number of key criteria for engaging localities and Enablers for the *Local Vision* initiative, as summarised in Section 4.1. In many respects these constitute the start-up conditions for the projects and, as reflected in the emerging evaluation findings, can have an important impact on project process and outcomes. In this section we explore, in particular, organisational structures and priorities, networks and relationships, and political and organisational support.

5.3.1. Organisational structures and priorities

Enablers commented on the tensions visible in localities including perceptions and experiences of a range of funding streams, and in particular the Better Care Fund for integrated working. Some localities were able to turn this to strategic advantage whilst others were considered to be too embedded in a mindset of short-term institutional survival to focus on long-term collective gain.

“I think we have underestimated the gap between shared long-term goals, and conflicting short-term business aims and priorities – and for particularly acute provider organisations this is creating real tensions which play out in the localities.” [LV Enabler]

The Better Care Fund is providing particular challenges to the *Local Vision* initiative since it is a national ‘top down’ approach in contrast to the emergent approach of *Local Vision*, and so militates against the developmental work of relationship building. Some localities (e.g. Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole) have been able to

knit together a range of funding streams under the impetus of the Better Care Fund building on the work of *Local Vision* in the broad mix of support for systems leadership and integration of services. In other localities, taking strategic advantage of initiatives was down to the Enabler and/or other systems leader(s) in raising awareness of the opportunity.

“I think our work would have benefited from being aligned more to the other work that was taking place regarding integration. As the Better Care Fund deadlines and requirements were published at short notice, capacity was moved somewhat away from this programme.” [LV Enabler]

“The initiative was closely linked with other system initiatives - HWB development, Pioneer, BCF - and was endorsed by political leaders at all levels.” [LV Enabler]

Where the *Local Vision* project was not closely aligned to existing organisational structures and priorities, there was often difficulty maintaining momentum and managing a wide range of competing commitments. This was exacerbated by project partners' work in highly pressured environments, often with constant flux of staff restructures, responsibility transfers between departments and other larger initiatives. The short timescale of *Local Vision* projects can be a challenge if they hope to sustain or embed changes for the long term. Presently we hold qualitative data from the different projects collated from online surveys and interviews spanning from start-up to the present. The second phase of this evaluation will undertake deeper analysis and investigate variation within the different time points of the projects.

Systems Leadership: Local Vision is taking place in a complex and changing political, organisational, social and economic landscape and any understanding of outcomes needs to take account of this. Individual and institutional metrics and targets may militate against collaboration and need to be considered if outcomes are to be achieved and sustained over time.

5.3.2. Networks and relationships

There was widespread agreement amongst key stakeholders of the importance of developing strong relationships between partners, founded on trust and a shared sense of purpose.

“It is about collaborating with equal partners for the benefits of our population. It is also about trying to trigger that intrinsic drive in people to motivate themselves rather than being ‘done to’ by services. It is rewarding to work with like-minded people.” [LV Project Partner]

“We have a strong history of partnership working in [this area] as demonstrated through our involvement in the whole place community budget programme. I believe that this programme has extended these principles by allowing us to work with important third sector providers such as Age UK to address these issues in partnership with important providers.” [LV Project Partner]

In several projects, Enablers reflected on a need to build fluency across the partners at the early stages, participants reflected on tentative beginnings where trust was beginning to emerge between people and organisations. Several participants

reflected on the importance of grounding the systems leadership approach in real work.

“Systems leadership is people coming together across the different parts of the system; it’s people that enable us to do the stuff we need to do and it’s about these relationships that enable us to be joined up - it’s not us and them.” [SL Steering Group member]

Part of the need to spend a substantial amount of time in project framing and analysis is to allow partners an opportunity to get to know one another and to work through anxieties and uncertainties about the implications of collaborative working.

“[What was important was] spending time on relationships and talking about the felt experience around addressing anxieties and supporting risk-taking. For example many members felt vulnerable and concerned about speaking with the community directly. The original idea had been to commission a social marketing agency to research the views of the communities.” [LV Enabler]

“Investing in relationships across organisations is often not done sufficiently in a very task-orientated system, and as a result actual system wide change can be difficult to deliver despite best intentions.” [LV Project Partner]

Whilst systems change requires active engagement from a wide range of stakeholders, significant value can be gained from having people with dedicated time allocated to supporting and leading the project, as the following project partners suggested.

“Having a clear local project lead / contact resulted in the project moving quicker than it had in other areas. Good existing local partnerships and a genuine desire to do the best for our local population also supported our project. These are factors that our Enabler said supported our project.” [LV Project Partner]

Within the *Local Vision* programme as a whole there are some clear differences between localities in terms of existing networks, partnership and relationships that will have a significant impact on both the speed at which projects can be established and likely outcomes. Mapping and understanding these relationships will form part of the Phase 2 evaluation.

5.3.3. Political and organisational support

Perhaps the most widely cited barrier to *Local Vision* projects was insufficient senior level strategic support for the project. There was a sense that whilst some senior leaders played lip service to a systems leadership approach, improvements are difficult to sustain without consistent, long-term support.

“They wanted to show that they had worked to build local community capacity. Cynically I would say, they wanted to get a ‘tick in the box’. Once the press release went out, saying that they had been selected as a local vision site, the sense was that the energy in their approach to the project dissipated. There was no-one left other than a junior policy guy.” [LV Enabler]

Enablers frequently observed that whilst junior staff were quick to understand systems leadership and were enthusiastic to get involved, without positional authority they struggled to be heard.

Enablers identified a number of issues pertaining to the culture of organisations and senior leaders that were counter-productive to systems leadership and cross-systems collaboration. Significantly, they suggested that senior leaders may have a tendency towards discouraging contributions from less senior colleagues that were received as being critical and challenging. Strikingly however, there appeared to be some very real progress on these issues and emergent evidence of a cultural shift away from controlling behaviours (see Section 5.4). Participants in one project recognised that the pilot needed people who could work across boundaries and gave political cover to more junior participants (who were perceived as having a natural tendency towards systems leadership) to act in the project and take it forward without 'comeback'. A number of participating organisations reported that they had taken steps to embed systems leadership into all role profiles across senior leaders, and training had also been developed to support these changes.

"I stepped out of my place in the hierarchy and asked my Chief Executive to address it in the best way she could. This is how I view systems leadership, compassionate and taking actions which morally you are compelled to do. The only way I can fulfil the values of my organisation is to model system leadership behaviours." [LV Project Partner]

One Enabler identified the following key ingredients to success:

- Commitment of key senior leaders,
- A desire by senior leaders across the system to "do" system leadership even if the tension that creates in terms of time and change means they often don't actually commit to doing it,
- Membership of the pilot, national profile and a desire to do it well,
- A competitive spirit of not wanting to be seen to get it wrong in the eyes of the pilot,
- Recognition that the complex issue can't be fixed and therefore permission to experiment without worrying about finding the 'right' solution.

Changes to personnel and the emergence of more pressing or critical problems were also cited as inhibitors to the success of the programme, in particular where there was a need to bring on board senior colleagues who were resistant to systems leadership styles and reluctant to let go of hierarchical leadership behaviours.

Across many *Local Vision* projects, the most commonly reported outcomes centred on the benefits and challenges of bringing people together across organisations. Emergent findings point to challenges that are relevant to the wider implementation of systems leadership: for example, one Enabler noted the reluctance of key leaders to attend large cross-system events because they thought they might get shoehorned into making decisions in that type of setting. It was notable that certain 'types' of people were seen to attend the meeting, specifically those who were more bought into the process and that way of working. As with many change initiatives, there is evidence from this *Local Vision* project that working with and connecting the enthusiasts is an important first step.

In another locality, the project Enabler reflected on the need to generate trust with senior level participants, in order to be seen as someone who can help them help themselves. This Enabler worked hard to be seen as having a legitimate voice on the issues and as someone who could bring in new and valuable ideas. The Enabler on this project felt that stakeholders had a limited understanding of the nature and shape of the project, and that key leaders were focused on crafting the organisational arrangements for integration with little discussion or understanding of the leadership challenges of system change, or of leading the new integrated care system. The Enabler suggested that the project lacked a clear commissioner or champion and as a result they had to work hard to connect stakeholders and create ownership. The Enabler also suggested that it would have been helpful to meet the people who were putting the bid together earlier to influence the process.

In some cases there may be a tension between organisational and political leaders – with the potential for elected members to override shared system approaches/objectives in favour of singular objectives. Whilst these issues were not explored in detail in the Phase 1 evaluation, they are likely to have a significant impact on outcomes and will be considered further in Phase 2.

5.4. Change

The third set of themes relates to project outcomes, in particular the kinds of change that are both sought and observed in *Local Vision* projects. The *Local Vision* programme is aimed largely at influencing mindsets in order to bring about cultural and behavioural change. An analogy to an iceberg may help here: mindset is below the surface, and shapes what we ‘choose’ to do and how we behave. Behaviours are visible (above the surface) and reflect our mindset. Indeed behaviours can sometimes also shape our mindset (reinforcing, or challenging and provoking or encouraging enquiry). Culture can be likened to the broad make-up of the iceberg and its environment: whether it is conducive to stasis, stability or indeed significant change (such as a slow melt or disruptive break up). The key supposition of *Local Vision’s* model is that mindset is the basis or ‘software’ of systems leadership that will lead to behavioural change and ultimately outcomes for service users.

5.4.1. Mindset

Local Vision is mainly targeted at facilitating a change in mindset – to encourage leadership in localities to arrive at a shared conception and understanding of a difficult problem, to see with true vision their part in a wider system and to foster an outlook of agency that shapes behaviours of self and others in this bigger ‘sea’. This aspect of systems leadership is often termed ‘soft’ but is anything but soft since it requires deep re-learning. It takes skilled facilitation and courage from participants to see afresh and to take new action accordingly.

“I think most of the group would say that their attitudes have changed. Collectively I think we see that we are part of a wider system. There is starting to be a collective view that we do not have to wait for the system to change, we can change the system.” [LV Project Partner]

Local Vision has also enabled people to refocus on shared purpose as the basis of motivation, reenergising, and realising the part they can play in leading towards outcomes. Enablers demonstrate through this their capabilities as sophisticated

leaders and teachers in their own right, modelling the work highlighted by Ganz³³ and others in the art of mobilising change through transforming motivation.

“The role of the Enabler is reconnecting people with their source of motivation, collectively to have shared purpose.” [LV Enabler]

Several *Local Vision* participants commented on the revelation experienced in discovering the talents of those around them, seeing beyond ‘title’ or ‘role’ with a realisation that solutions can be generated through harnessing collective capability. This represents a significant shift as the very essence of systems leadership and indeed the polar opposite of the mindset of ‘heroic’ leaders. Of course this shift in thinking cannot be attributed directly to *Local Vision*, though for some the language used is striking. Some participants may of course already have been predisposed to working in this way.

“I do not need to come up with all the solutions - nor should I as my perspective is only a very small part of the overall; I’ve been inspired by the energy, resourcefulness and innovation within the communities. Reduced my arrogance and opened my mind; it involved a more facilitative and respectful leadership approach.” [LV Enabler]

“You do not have control of all of the solutions as much of it lies outside your team or organisation. We operate in a world where we influence, shape, nudge, persuade but do not control.” [LV Project Partner]

Several Enablers described their role in terms of ‘holding up a mirror’ to help stakeholders see afresh, fostering a sense of joint responsibility for action. The example below in particular reflects the three stages of Egan’s ‘skilled helper’ model³⁴ which uses the art of question to offer challenge, deeper reflection and ownership for action. It is a sophisticated skill set that requires a detailed understanding of the human psyche.

“Systems leadership could perhaps be described as leadership beyond ego: It has been this holding up of the mirror and asking them why they care; what they are doing; what they think others are doing; what they think they could do. And once they realise the number of girls at risk and that they thought everyone was doing something, they have the ‘guilty knowledge’ and know they have to do something.” [LV Enabler]

“There is a better understanding of the issues and risks and a commitment to take action.” [LV Enabler]

Risk-taking is the basis of learning but in the workplace, leaders can be inhibited by fear and the assumption that their job is to know the answers. It takes confidence, courage and a very different leadership style to ask questions rather than provide false certainty through ‘answers’.

“Professionals acknowledging that they just don’t know how to do this, how to ask the questions but starting the learning curve of finding out.” [LV Enabler]

³³ Gantz, M. (2010) ‘Leading change: leadership, organization and social movements’.

³⁴ Egan, G. (2007). *The Skilled Helper*.

“I thought that I was the system, but now I realise that I am only part of a much wider system. We need to learn to work much better together and then listen to what communities want from us so that we can deliver together.” [LV Project Participant]

There is evidence from the interim evaluation that significant changes in mindset have been accomplished, with realisation among many of the potential for collective leadership as part of a wider system and accompanying intent for new ways of working. What is rather less clear at this point of the evaluation is the extent to which this translates into wider change in culture and behaviours.

Specific interventions, which build the voice and stories of local people into service design, review and management, were viewed as useful to the change process. It was also believed that the voluntary sector is often more experienced at working in this way than their public sector counterparts.

5.4.2. *Culture*

Whilst mindset might be regarded as an individual or team based attribute, culture relates to the broader environment, or ‘the way we do things around here’. Culture shapes the temperature or climate in which leadership and day-to-day business is enacted and is shaped by broad collective mindset, behaviours and indeed local and broader systems (such as pay, rewards, performance measures and so on). Culture can be conducive to systems leadership, hostile or indeed mixed and/or contradictory. As the examples below suggest, a neo-liberal interpretation of public service reform with emphasis on speed, efficiency, product, task or outputs over and above human relationships, drives the wheels of conventional capitalism and shapes the way we ‘do business’ through reward and recognition.

“The suspension of focus on solution and task in order to develop relationships across the system and to achieve a better shared understanding of the ‘problem’. The reasons are cultural: reward in society and organisations is around task and how it is monitored/measured.” [LV Enabler]

“There is a real desire to improve outcomes. Much of the thinking is from service delivery rather than prevention and individual control, which they find hard. It is also still easier to look to change others rather than change oneself.” [LV Enabler]

It is no mean feat to gain awareness of the need for collective ownership rather than being territorial. Indeed, in psychological terms, this is the moment of awareness or ‘light bulb moment’ when reframing becomes possible through a different understanding, and there starts to be a perception of new approaches and ways to make progress. These ‘light bulb moments’ stem from the provocation of skilled conversation and as Stacey³⁵ suggests, it is the ongoing and ensuing mix of discourse that shapes and reshapes mindset and culture, making it safe and possible to derive and identify new behaviours.

“For aspiring leaders we will need to see and own the whole system rather than be territorial.” [LV Project Participant]

³⁵ See Stacey, R. (2001) and Stacey, R. (2007).

“There are big differences still in language and approach but some conversations really help to bring about a greater appreciation of different perspectives and an ability to work through to a genuinely more shared approach have helped to set up quite a few penny-dropping moments...” [LV Enabler]

An inclusive culture is one that values the time taken to listen, engage and seek the wisdom from across a diverse range of stakeholders, including those whose voices may often go unheard. Systems leadership recognises that the most creative solutions to complex problems often come from unanticipated places, from harnessing the best of a diverse collective experience and imagination. It is deeply grounded and practical, rejects the idea of mono-cultures as having the best or only answer and uses an ability to build trust across stakeholders with different perspectives and mindsets, in order to facilitate new and open conversations. It is fundamentally built on fostering human connection beyond role and task.

“What has been achieved is a commitment to conversation in an open environment, sharing views, developing trust, and deepening relationships. Many of the participants had worked with each other for years, but there was a perception that these conversations were something new, that people were really getting to know each other and that people were beginning to form more effective working relationships.” [LV Enabler]

Such changes were by no means universal across projects, and a number of Enablers commented on how the culture of key organisations remained oppositional to the very nature of systems leadership and *Local Vision*. This points to the potential for considering the significance of culture in start-up conditions for *Local Vision* and will be explored in the second phase of the evaluation:

“The culture of the Local Authority was one of successful project management – being very clear about aims and objectives, governance, delegation and reporting back to a board. The kind of ‘messy and complex’ work involved in system leadership was counter-cultural to them.” [LV Enabler]

“A lot of the responses above relate not to the actual Systems Leadership approach but to the fact that it runs counterintuitive to the culture of the organisation, which is why I wanted to delegate leadership to the voluntary sector.” [LV Project Participant]

One important finding is the way in which *Local Vision* appears to have opened up space for new leaders to emerge, working in non-hierarchical ways, building links and partnerships across organisations.

“Operating as organisational leaders depended on hierarchical power etc., with traditional lines of command and control. When acting as system leaders, this hierarchical power could not be relied on, and people emerged who were able to act across organisational and hierarchical boundaries”. [LV Enabler]

There was some evidence to suggest that a number of these ‘new leaders’ were more junior, which raises significant questions on the influence and impact of the *Local Vision* project within the upper echelons of organisations and prompts

reflection on whether investment in fostering systems leadership may sometimes be better targeted at aspiring rather than established leaders? Of course, younger less experienced leaders are more likely to take risks. But taking a risk is also a fundamental building block in supporting change and learning. Without appropriate risk-taking there is stasis:

“The Director of Adult Services recognised this, and gave the more junior people freedom – ‘without fear of comeback’ to act in the project to take it forward.” [LV Enabler]

There are many inhibitors to spreading and embedding systems leadership. The most obvious is the very real psychological experience of fear. It takes a courageous and resilient outlook or mindset to recognise the potential for ‘abundance’ in order to foster a culture of risk taking, innovation and learning when operating under constant duress and a discourse of scarcity and budget cuts:

“The riskiness in the current environment is very high. People are really worried about their jobs. What are the conditions for success? Perhaps younger colleagues can get away with it. But [X] who is older and established, she was terrified. So some feel less exposed than others. We’re looking for people with latitude to work in more dangerous ways!” [LV Enabler]

“Fears about money and how cuts will impact on the whole ability of the system to deliver and potentially swing costs in unexpected ways between organisations.” [LV Enabler]

A culture of blame and fear erodes trust, limits imagination and capacity to learn and is more likely to lead to narrowing down of options for action rather than opening up fresh avenues of thought, at a time in the history of public service when the capacity to reimagine new possibilities is at a premium. Failure to foster new ways of seeing and re-imagining services will lay the road open to demise in a competitive quasi-marketplace in which the very notion of public service is being re-engineered.

“[There is] lack of trust in the system about what will happen to sensitive information if it is transferred.” [LV Enabler]

Many of those involved with *Local Vision* at this stage of the evaluation recognise the fundamental building blocks required in moving to different outcomes with a focus on citizens and the need for different behaviours.

“Delivering real benefits to our residents will require significant re-design: we need to change behaviours from describing problems/issues to delivering solutions whilst investing in building relationships, not just trying to move quickly to task.” [LV Project Participant]

5.4.3. *Behaviours*

Behaviours visibly demonstrate intention, values and are the basis of action. There is no doubt that *Local Vision* has enabled some significant shift in mindset and resulting behaviours for some, which has led to new more inclusive ways of working within the community. These signs of impact will be explored in depth in the second phase of the evaluation.

“I've learnt that I use project management tools and processes as a method of control, when I should put more trust and flexibility in others. I've learnt

that there are wealth of professionals working on the ground in areas who need empowering to promote their creative solutions to improve outcomes, rather than being micro-managed through project management methods. I've learnt that the understanding across partners on a common issue is in constant flux." [LV Project Participant]

"It has definitely enabled staff working in localities (e.g. Registered Social Landlords) to play a more active role in addressing social isolation, without the need of 'permission' and oversight from strategy." [LV Project Participant]

There was some evidence to suggest leadership behaviours have shifted from controlling (which prioritise the needs of the organisation) towards collaborative approaches (that seek to generate benefits for the collective system through more innovative ways of working).

"Leadership moved from more directive and controlling to a more collaborative approach as demonstrated by dual leadership by DPH and DASS." [LV Enabler]

"There has been a shift in emphasis in commissioning from 'telling' to 'asking'." [LV Enabler]

"People have been given confidence to act outside of their normal roles, and identified others they could be working with on different things they didn't know before. [The *Local Vision* programme has] shown people possibilities." [LV Enabler]

There was a strong theme emerging from interviews and surveys of transformational changes arising as a result of working differently and more closely with citizens in the community. This has catalysed changes in the way services are provided and led to an increase in co-production in some localities. The second phase of the evaluation will seek to determine the extent of this impact and the factors shaping or inhibiting behavioural shifts.

"The main difference will be that we starting to listen and learn what the community wants from us, and that we are able to deliver a more bespoke service which meets the needs of the population." [LV Project Participant]

"Service users are now engaged in co design of mental health services and there is a better understanding between partners." [LV Enabler]

One *Local Vision* locality undertook a series of co-designed events with service users, and reported that the findings directly fed into strategy. In another case, it was evident that the project was considering ways to involve users and carers in the governance of *Local Vision*. In the second phase of the evaluation, it may be useful to map the processes and techniques used by Enablers and project partners to facilitate user involvement, alongside the degree to which they are engaged in projects and their levels of influence.

Benefits of behaviour change are also being realised at strategic levels, with progress towards integrated services as a result. There is recognition amongst *Local Vision* participants that much of the benefit or change in outcomes and spread of learning is anticipated through much better working relationships across systems and is dependent upon time. This supports the supposition of *Local Vision's* commissioning:

that fostering mindset for systems leadership will lead to new behaviours with positive outcomes, and indeed spread of learning, in time.

“There was a sluggish start but it’s moving well now. There is better understanding between partners.” [LV Enabler]

“I am seeing different behaviours and the start of integrated services across health and social care.” [LV Project Participant]

“This has been an excellent programme and I am convinced that the benefits will be long term and applied to many situations.” [LV Project Participant]

Whilst there is evidence of significant shift in mindset leading to new behaviours in some localities, for others progress was limited or mixed. Factors shaping this point to lack of real understanding of what systems leadership means in practice, and the wider culture and role of senior level stakeholders in championing systems leadership or not. In the absence of these ingredients, the responsibility for embedding falls unduly on the shoulders of Enablers.

“There was an intellectual acceptance of the need for systems thinking and action, but limited understanding about what this really meant in day-to-day leadership behaviour. They note that new systems leadership behaviours may have emerged through the project, but it needed constant attention and facilitation to embed.” [LV Enabler]

“I have undertaken systems leadership work before in my MA. It intrigues me that my colleagues go on lots of systems leadership training but do not change their behaviour” [LV Project Participant]

This suggests the need for the evaluation to explore in further depth the role of the start-up conditions and context in which *Local Vision* operates, as well as the exit conditions for Enablers to withdraw from their involvement in localities. It also highlights the value of framing projects in a way that will enable comparison of these potentially crucial factors from the outset.

6. Summary and Conclusions

This report has outlined interim findings from the evaluation of the *Systems Leadership – Local Vision* programme. We have reviewed the background of the programme, including national context and conceptual framing, as well as programme processes and outcomes. Figure 4 provides a visual summary of key points from the evaluation to date.

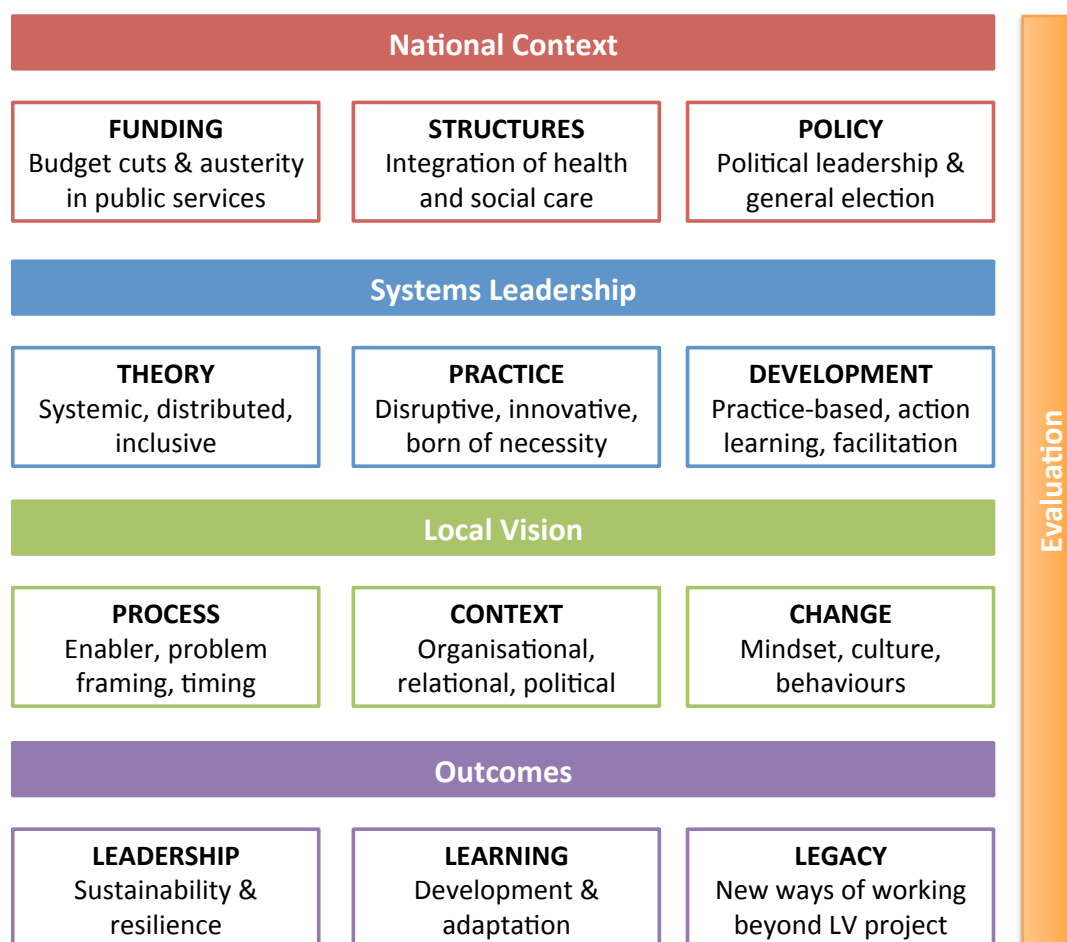


Figure 4 – Visual summary of interim evaluation

The **national context** in which *Local Vision* takes place is one of concern about the financial sustainability of current models of health and social care, and the extent to which they meet the changing needs of communities. The trend towards integration of services is linked to both of these priorities, and a key feature of government policy in the run up to, and following the General Election in May 2015. Together, these factors present a need to re-evaluate established approaches to the provision of health and social care and shape the environment in which *Systems Leadership: Local Vision* is implemented.

The **Systems Leadership** approach advocated as a response to this wider context is a perspective, informed by an emerging body of theory, practice and development, that views leadership as distributed, complex and adaptive. This approach focuses on leadership across boundaries and in response to wicked and intractable

problems/challenges where traditional hierarchical approaches are likely to be of limited effect.

The **Local Vision** programme itself takes a problem-based approach, in which a skilled 'Enabler' is appointed to work alongside project partners to address a specific challenge in a particular locality. Interim evaluation findings highlight the importance of project process and context and the nature of the change process. Significant facilitators/barriers include senior level organisational and political support, timing, relationship development, and changes in culture and mindset. It would seem that start-up conditions have an important impact on project progress and outcomes.

Key **outcomes** of the *Local Vision* programme are framed in terms of leadership, learning and legacy (the potential for ongoing and sustainable change). Each of these factors will be strongly influenced by the wider context and framing of the programme (as indicated earlier) and hence require a systemic approach, informed by a complexity perspective on organisations and change.

Phase 1 of the *Local Vision* evaluation provides promising insights into the potential for this programme act as a significant catalyst for systems-wide change. There are, however, a number of important assumptions and caveats underlying the initiative that merit careful analysis if we are to gain a richer understanding of how, when, where and why an Enabler-based approach to systems change is effective and additional factors that may influence the potential and effects of a systems leadership approach. Table 1 summarises the key insights of this interim evaluation on enablers, outcomes and challenges.

Interim findings suggest that the mix of facilitation, support and role modelling demonstrated by Enablers can clearly act as a significant catalyst for systems change in localities. However it is less clear at this stage the extent to which change is sustained once the Enabler leaves the project, what additional support/input is required alongside the contribution of the Enabler, and how to ensure the best fit between Enabler and project. Whilst many have pointed to how problems were now better understood, it is still too early to draw conclusions with regards to the impact of *Local Vision* on the development of better services and service outcomes. There also appears to be limited attempts within localities to identify and capture robust measures of success. However there was emergent evidence of transformational changes to mindset, culture and behaviour arising from a realisation of the potential for collective leadership as part of a wider system and accompanying intent for new ways of working. This has catalysed changes in the way services are understood and led to an increase in co-production of services in some localities.

Whilst the initial evaluation report for this programme suggested that '*The Revolution will be Improvised*'³⁶ the current analysis suggests a need for the active engagement of key organisational and political stakeholders and an attempt to align project aims and objectives with wider organisational and political priorities and agendas. To this extent, the *Local Vision* initiative could be regarded as less about

³⁶ Vize (2014). 'The Revolution will be Improvised'.

revolution (which suggests conflict and opposition) and more about reframing, realignment and relationship building.

The concept of 'systems leadership', whilst potentially counter-cultural in Western society, begins with a shift in 'mindset' or perspective rather than requiring fundamental change in structures or resources. This is both its main power and limitation. Thinking differently can release a great amount of agency (the ability to act independently) for both individuals and organisations, but the potential to sustain and replicate success over time is also dependent on embedding new practices, processes and structures.

The second phase of the evaluation will require a look in greater detail at the similarities and differences between *Local Vision* projects in different localities in order to gain a better understanding of how local context both enables and/or constrains the potential for sustainable change. We will consider the potential role of data in capturing significant contextual factors across the locality and consider its role as a tool in benchmarking progress towards outcomes as well as facilitating integrated working for systems leadership. Further investigation is also needed in phase 2 to better understand the part *Local Vision* plays within the wider regional and national context of health and social care reform. *Local Vision* does not take place within a vacuum and it would be misleading to attribute success or failure without a clearer understanding of the relationship between this initiative and its wider context.

As Albert Einstein famously said: "no problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." Systems leadership calls for a fundamental rethinking of the nature and purpose of leadership and there is much evidence to suggest that it is precisely the kind of response required to create new, more sustainable, equitable and effective approaches to the provision of public services such as health and social care. Whether or not this is achievable in practice, however, will depend to a large extent on the ability of key stakeholders to mobilise and facilitate a widespread and enduring shift in consciousness about leadership – working with stakeholders to reframe, realign and harness the collective synergy of relationship.

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