

Design community of Practice–August 2025

Question and answer summary

Executive summary:

Morag Dendy (Head of Planning, Performance and Quality Assurance) of University North Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) shared an inspiring story of transformation, moving from siloed working to a truly integrated, whole-system approach. Her presentation captured the ambition, challenges and lessons learned, offering practical tips for anyone looking to initiate change.

1. What is the role of the 'sticky person' within a team? What has the actual experience been like for those working within a sticky team approach?

Morag shared an example of one person who had 19 separate touchpoints over two years with different services working in isolation, each with its own waiting list. While the person was kept safe, “the quality of that experience wasn’t great.” Morag explained, “If you did something really well at the beginning and guided that through the ups and downs and changes in her health, that would hugely benefit the woman and her family and be a much more economical way of services working.”

The shift to a sticky team approach wasn’t easy. Morag highlighted some of the staff worries: “If I set up my team as a sticky person, what happens if others don’t?” Early meetings involved “quite a lot of norming and storming” as people felt their autonomy was being challenged. Over time, collaboration got better, and “some of the people that were probably the most challenged through that are now some of the biggest supporters,” she added. This resulted in better experiences, more efficient use of resources, and a culture of shared responsibility.

2. How to get all professional disciplines fully onboard for a change?

Morag stressed the value of starting from where each team is, building on existing strengths rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach. While some colleagues welcomed this flexible approach, others preferred clear guidance and standard operating procedures (SOP). To get everyone onboard, North Lanarkshire senior leadership team did half-day sessions to explore these tensions and build trust, through honest conversations which took time to develop. Tools like journey mapping helped teams focus on real experiences for both staff and public and this shifted the conversations, that this is not about SOPs but about improving people's experiences. She added, "getting into the journey mapping and the reality for people was particularly helpful... this is about people and people's experience."

3. What are the benefits of doing journey mapping?

Morag highlighted that the journey mapping exercise provided a structured and effective tool that helped teams slow down, reflect and consider different perspectives. It encouraged them to think about real experiences both of staff and people and their families, especially in high-pressure environments where quick decisions often overshadow thoughtful ones. By mapping the journey, teams identified repeated interventions with minor impact, such as the example of the person who was touched 19 times without making a meaningful difference. The process also encouraged teams to discuss and share their views on their frustrations, often described as "the grit in your shoe" and helped them explore what isn't working and what needs to improve. Overall, journey mapping supported honest conversations, validated existing good practices, and helped avoid repeated, low-value interventions while "building in capacity into the system." The usefulness of the tool extended beyond designing a particular service, with teams recognising its value in performance reviews and other areas. It encouraged honest and open reflection through questions like, "Did we improve somebody's life?" a question that's coming through strongly and described as "just brilliant."

4. How did leadership support the change, and what was the role of using simple, clear language that everyone could understand and relate to?

Language, communication, and emotional wellbeing were recurring and important themes given the ongoing pressures services are experiencing. People are "a bit tired and worn out," and it's "much easier to pass on frustration than pass on joy" noted Morag. The shared purpose of "we are here to make a difference to people" remained a focus across roles, and teams were encouraged to try new approaches guided by those core principles and approaches. When teams saw that ideas once considered unrealistic, like "no waiting lists," could be achieved with examples such as next-day podiatry access and reduced waiting time in adult psychological therapy, those stories helped build belief and momentum. The adult psychology team's work on attachment, both with people and among colleagues, showed how new ways of working can foster psychological safety, connection, and a sense of impact. About the language, Morag highlighted: "it is that kind of simplicity of tell the story and tell it wide and share it and show what we value and show what's important."

5. How important is it to engage with staff groups?

Change is hard, and “if it was easy, we’d be doing it already.” Change can feel disruptive, even if it’s a good change “it needed getting over.” This reflects the discomfort people feel when asked to work differently, especially when it challenges familiar routines or feels like a critique of past practices, described Morag.

One example was from Home First and one assessment initiative, where social work teams were doing assessments at home rather than starting them on the ward. When doing that, the leadership highlighted the focus wasn’t on changing structures or teams, but on working differently within them. Often, change is met with “qualified” responses such as “we could do that if we had a different team setup” or “if we had training.” The challenge became: “How do we take some of those ifs out and just say, what is stopping us?” and “how can we carve space to do it?” explained Morag.

6. What are the implications for equality and diversity when initiating change?

Morag highlighted that they are still at the initial stages of the journey in getting these principles in place. There are discussions taking place around roles and processes, with the aim to “create a structure so that we can learn and share across,” ensuring that equality and diversity of those experiences of community, carers and lived experiences are addressed meaningfully.

Early conversation on using human learning systems stemmed from supporting “high resource users” - people who frequently access services in unplanned ways. A dedicated team focused on responding to individuals rather than making them fit the system. “They did really great work, really changed lives,” but the learning wasn’t embedded system wide. Instead, it reinforced the idea that “working with people who don’t fit our system well is not my business.” This prompted a shift in thinking that “this is everybody’s business, and we have to get it right for everybody.” That’s why the focus moved to localities, where teams worked together taking a place-based approach where staff are directly connected to the people in that locality. The goal is to respond better, especially for those with protected characteristics, so that “it should work better than it ever has in the past.”

7. How do we evaluate the public experiences and these new ways of working when change takes place?

Evaluating public experiences and new ways of working needs to be meaningful and “not just tick a box.” North Lanarkshire is currently developing an outcomes framework to improve how the system captures impact on lived and living experiences. As Morag noted, “we’re really not good at capturing outcomes, we can capture outputs.”

Staff perspectives also play a role. While it may seem controversial, she added, “you’re going to ask staff what people’s own experience is?” and staff can offer insight into whether services have genuinely improved. She highlighted that there is a “growing feel” amongst staff members now that things are better and fewer people waiting and more joined up responses are in place. However, she

added, “challenge is to build on that and find ways to evidence and communicate the improvements.”