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CITIZEN-CENTRED PUBLIC SERVICES

DESIGNING FOR COMPLEX OUTCOMES

A CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

The election in May 2010 gave Britain its first hung parliament since 1974. It was a watershed year for government. Subsequently, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties formed the first coalition government since the Second World War. Very soon thereafter, they began implementing a radical reform program intended to remove the fiscal deficit, shrink and decentralize the state machine and transform its relationship with citizens.[1]

In the years just before the election, the Labour government had already begun to change its approach to public service reform. The top-down, target-driven approach it had employed earlier was modified, and a new approach was developed that specified the role for central government as "strategic leadership rather than micro-management."[2]

The relationship between central and local government in the United Kingdom is not constitutionally codified and had become much more centralized since the 1980s. While many other jurisdictions experienced New Public Management as decentralization, the reverse occurred in the United Kingdom. From the early 1980s onwards, the central government imposed control over local governments' capacity to raise their own revenue, and it imposed other regulatory restrictions as well.

Moreover, the underlying design principles of the two levels of government tend to differ, creating frictions that reduce the effectiveness of the system as a whole. Central departments are designed primarily on "functional knowledge" criteria, (such as a department of health and a ministry of justice), powers are vested in the specific secretary of state, officials' careers are located primarily within the department, and organizational cultures that reflect that reality develop over time. Local authorities are typically more corporate and multi-functional, and seek to lead not only their own services but the "place" as a whole. Such differences mattered less when the system was more loosely connected, but a tighter link reduced the capacity of local government to respond to complex problems in a holistic way.

A centrally driven approach may be best when the goal is to deliver narrowly defined services. For example, a single and very efficient vehicle registration system that operates in a self-contained way offers the best value. But this approach is not the way to solve complex social problems. A more holistic and less mechanistic approach that integrates multiple contributions is needed. Grappling with the conundrum of inconsistent design principles has led to various initiatives over the years to get the best of both worlds so that specialization and integration mix in an optimal way, with central government providing strategic leadership rather than micro management.

This case study explores three such initiatives, one at the national or macro level and two at the local or micro level. Each illustrates the issues involved as government tackles complex issues through more holistic, integrated and participatory responses.[3]

The national-level *Total Place* program was initiated in 2008 and launched in 2009. It was designed to assess the gains to be made in efficiency and effectiveness by taking a less centralized, more holistic and place-based approach to public service. It was re-branded as Community Budgets by the incoming government in an announcement made in October 2010.

At the micro level, two collaborative endeavours to re-orient public services are described. The first example draws upon the work of the London borough of Croydon, through its Total Place pilot, to design holistic early years support for families. The second example considers the Family LIFE Program in Swindon where new approaches to family intervention and support are co-created with families.

Both local examples suggest that a new relationship is emerging between public services and citizens; one where services are designed with citizens and from their perspective. Citizens are not just seen as passive clients or users of public services, but as activists with knowledge and resources of their own. These examples also suggest a change of focus for public services, from coping with the symptoms of social problems to dealing with their underlying causes. That focus necessarily involves working with citizens, families and communities to build their social resilience by developing their capabilities and networks.

HISTORICAL AND PUBLIC POLICY CONTEXT

The early development of the modern state in the United Kingdom established the capacity of the central government to exercise power and ensure citizen compliance to laws passed by the legislature. This capacity in turn created norms and values that provide the foundation for legitimate government. It also created a powerful centrifugal force, especially in a unitary state where there is relatively little constitutional devolution.

In common with many other governments across the world since the 1980s, the emphasis in the United Kingdom has been on improving public service performance and increasing the cost-effectiveness of state action. However, in much of the rest of the developed world where constitutional and cultural settlements emphasized subsidiarity, performance was defined so that local service delivery specialists were free from central constraint and better able to use their local judgment to achieve outcomes for citizens. But in the United Kingdom, performance was defined in a way that reinforced centralizing tendencies.

These characteristics are long-standing and deeply embedded. While this model offers many advantages, such as clear accountabilities and economies of scale, it does not support coping with complex problems. There has therefore been a long history of special schemes meant to introduce the locality or citizen as an alternative design criterion around which services could be planned and delivered. Examples include the urban program in the 1960s, the City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget in the 1980s, and the idea in the late 1990s of "zones" (health action zones, education action zones) where funding from the central government was provided where organizers could prove that they were working in partnership with others from different specialities. Later, these onerous requirements for partnership were simplified through the creation of Local Strategic Partnerships, through which multiple streams of funding could be handled in a more coherent manner.[4]

But a re-emphasis on centralized control in the early 2000s sidelined these local partnerships, reinforcing the requirements of local bodies in priority fields—health service, education and crime—to respond to central directions.[5] This approach had some success at improving the delivery of service outputs (such as National Health System (NHS) waiting lists and clinic wait times), but it took attention away from partnerships in addressing more complex issues. There was a proliferation of centrally set targets. The whole system of mandating and funding local action suffered a loss of credibility.

Opinion leaders in local government criticized this approach, notably in the report produced by an inquiry into the purpose of local government, which defined it as "place-shaping" with the strategic leadership of "place" seen as the crucial factor in locality success.[6]

To address the situation, the central government began increasing its capability to respond to local needs through a significant number of senior appointments that drew people from local government. The top 200 cadres of public servants now contained a significant minority who had gained their experience in localities. Many of them gravitated towards the development of Total Place.

TOTAL PLACE

The Total Place initiative emerged in April 2009 in the context of a looming fiscal deficit, anticipated cuts in public expenditure and widespread disappointment with the results of an earlier surge of spending on public services. Its origins lie with the Calling and Counting Cumbria initiatives in 2008 that brought public agencies together to understand the needs of citizens, map public expenditure and explore how this information could better align in the county of Cumbria.

Treasury ministers asked the Executive Director of the Institute for Government, Michael Bichard, to lead a piece of work under the Operational Efficiency Program. A section of the program's final report on local incentives and empowerment recommended that government implement the Total Place program in at least 12 pilot sites. The goals were to identify efficiencies, incentives and barriers to collaboration and, with the support of ministerial sponsorship, ensure swift resolution of issues across government.[7]

The recommendation was adopted by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in part-

nership with the Treasury. Local Government Leadership, a non-profit organization, performed a co-ordination and intermediary role between central and local government. By May 2009, 13 localities across England had agreed to become pilot areas.

The Total Place approach was deliberately designed not to be a prescriptive central government program. A high-level group of officials was established in the central government that included director generals from across Whitehall (the British public service) and some chief executives from public agencies and local authorities. The group's role, however, was not to manage the pilots but rather to keep in touch with the emerging learning, share ideas and think about the barriers to local collaboration and innovation that the central government could remove. To aid this reflective process, each group member was assigned to one of the pilots to act as an advocate and intermediary, and to become involved in the work.

Each pilot involved a high-level count of how much public money was being spent and by whom. It involved a bottom-up tallying drawn primarily from discussion with local bodies. This stage was followed by a local decision to focus on particular themes, including early years, drugs and alcohol, mental health, high-deprivation neighbourhoods, unemployment, offender management, customer access and asset management. Pilot teams conducted a "deep-dive" for each theme, exploring how and where money was being spent, what effects were being felt and what opportunities and challenges existed for collaborative working arrangements.

The number and choice of themes were determined by the pilot teams according to local circumstances, as was the process of conducting the high-level counts and deep dives. There was some pressure from the central government to use the priority themes in the existing policy planning system but "it became clear it was important that the pilots went where the energy was in each locality and focused on issues most important to them."[8]

Each pilot submitted an interim report in September 2009 and a final report in February 2010 to CLG and the Treasury. In the interim period, the teams explored their themes and developed proposals, a process that varied across the locations but usually involved working across agencies and engaging with citizens as well as experimenting with some innovative methods of generating new conversations, insights and ideas. The final report summarized the journeys of the pilot teams, setting out their approach, the themes they had chosen, the evidence they had collected and the lessons they had learnt, as well as their visions and plans for the future, business cases for projects and recommendations to central government.

In March 2010, the Treasury, with input from CLG and Local Government Leadership, produced a summary report that recognized, "Total Place is demonstrating the greater value to be gained for citizens and taxpayers from public authorities putting the citizen at the heart of service design and working together to improve outcomes and eliminate waste and duplication."[9]

POSTSCRIPT: FROM TOTAL PLACE TO COMMUNITY BUDGETS

Total Place was the product primarily of the professional and political networks that connected local and central government, although it also had the stamp of approval of the then-government and it chimed well with the incoming coalition government's view that there should be greater decentralization of the United Kingdom state. It came as no surprise therefore that a re-branding process took place around a set of broadly similar design principles and the high-level group of officials was again put in place to guide its development.

The re-branded initiative focuses on families with complex needs and is being taken forward in 16 localities, including those that had already embarked on work in this area under Total Place.

As of February 2011, the coalition government's fiscal consolidation policies were being put into place. As a result, relationships between central and local government are suffering and there is a danger that Community Budgets will lose momentum, despite the fit with the government's overall strategy of decentralization. There is a mismatch between the strategic issues of decentralization and short-term media messaging regarding who gets the blame for cuts.

CROYDON TOTAL PLACE PILOT

Working from the recognition that "the public sector needs new models to improve public services,"[10] Croydon was one of the 13 localities to pilot the national Total Place initiative, beginning in May 2009 and ending in March 2010. While the borough had good previous experience with cross-agency integration of services, the pilot provided a catalyst for local agencies to come together and co-create with families a new vision and model for supporting families and children in the early years.

Co-led by the chief executives of Croydon Council and NHS Croydon, the local strategic health body, the partners decided on this focus because "the evidence is unarguable that a good start in life, in terms of physical, emotional and cognitive development, will result in better individual and social outcomes later in life."[11] Despite this evidence, overall expenditures were skewed towards addressing the consequences of poor early development later in young adulthood, rather than towards supporting families in the early years to prevent these problems arising.

The partners set the following success criteria for themselves:

- A new relationship between ourselves and our citizens, moving from "consultation" methods to collaborative co-design and co-production;

- A further deepening in trust between organizations across Croydon;

- A new way of working taking root among professionals; A validation of our commitment to give specific time to shared problem framing, and doing this in new ways with new people;

- Significant financial savings in the short, medium and long terms.[12]

They did not immediately jump to developing solutions to an assumed problem, but rather adopted a system-design approach based on a four-stage process: discover (creating new information and insights), define (developing and testing a new formulation of the problem), develop (prototyping and refining new intervention methods) and deliver (supporting children and families during the early years across Croydon).

DISCOVER

The partners worked across teams, organizations and sectors (using deep qualitative systems-thinking and traditional information gathering) to develop an understanding of their challenges and opportunities. This stage consisted of five work streams:

- Collecting and analyzing secondary data, including evidence from around the world on why early intervention is important and what works;

- Listening to families in new and creative ways to find out what life is really like for them;

- Engaging the 120+ frontline staff and managers from more than 20 organizations through a series of workshops and other collaborative techniques to develop a shared experience of what it means to design services around the needs of service users;

- Mapping activities and expeditures in the "early years system" to reveal the flow of resources to families from central government; and

- Mapping customer journeys through existing services by developing case studies (based on real families) of how services are actually experienced.[13]

This work uncovered a range of insights about the potential of early intervention, the experiences, needs and wishes of families, and the failures of the existing system.

Research reviewed from other localities and countries suggested there might also be significant financial savings from early intervention. These studies estimated "a 'not coping family' can cost an authority ten times the cost of a 'coping family,' and 'a chaotic family' 75 times as much...early intervention makes good economic sense to strengthen their capability and resilience."[14]

Ethnographic research brought to life how families experience the existing system. The mapping of the journeys of 10 children through numerous interventions illuminated significant recurring themes, such as large time-gaps between problem identification and intervention, narrow service responses, a focus on service delivery rather than problem-solving, ad-hoc engagement, lack of continuity and decision making in silos.[15]

Mapping the money in the system showed that public agencies in Croydon spend £206 million each year on children from conception to age seven.[16] The mapping demonstrated there was very little opportunity for local discretion over how money was spent. It also showed that money was directed at services rather than solutions and that it was difficult to link investments to outputs and outcomes. The ethnographic work produced more worrying results. While a significant amount of money was spent on a limited number of children and families, each contact between those children and families with a public service only served a narrow purpose.

Together, the ethnographic research and money-mapping were powerful tools for breaking down organizational and cultural boundaries. Exposing frontline workers and managers throughout the system to the reality of people's lives helped develop a shared sense of purpose and energy that was vital to ensuring genuine collaboration. As one interviewee said, "Once people had confronted the current reality... you just built a momentum... It just got people thinking."

The need for joining up the cultural, geographical and technical aspects of the organizations involved was thus recognized. The shared learning experience at this early stage laid the groundwork for new relationships among partners, which in turn enabled more productive conversations about potential solutions.[17]

Critical to this process were "honest conversations" among people at all levels, but particularly among senior leaders. These shared, reflective conversations are an example of double-loop learning in action, highlighted by those leaders as having a major impact.

DEFINE

The partners used the insight from new conversations to develop and refine a set of high-level propositions. These propositions shaped their new vision that "Children and their parents in Croydon...will experience a system from conception onwards which supports and invests in their parenting capabilities, resilience and ability to live independently...it will be a system that demonstrably supports the emergence of solutions for families, rather than merely delivering 'services'."[18]

More than 80 staff members from across the agencies took part in ethnographic insight and co-design training, and were challenged to go into the field to develop and test the propositions.

The importance of co-designing public services with their users was an important insight from the project. As a senior manager commented, "The really important issue is about the involvement of the citizens, the children, and the families in design and actually in delivery of the services...that's been the profound learning point from all this."[19]

The propositions were intended to fill the gaps in support to families. They included:

- geographically-based Family Partnership Teams, made up of professionals from across agencies, with shared budgets and outcomes;

- preparation for parenthood;

- early identification;

- family advocates;

- Peer2peer support networks;

- Family Space Croydon (web-based);

- the Life Passport for Disabled Children; and

- motivational support for return to work.

DEVELOP AND DELIVER

At the time of writing, the partners, in collaboration with families and staff members from across public, voluntary and community organizations, were beginning to prototype and refine a number of propositions by "iterating and collaboratively designing a response in real time on the ground, making changes when they are identified, reflecting and refining to develop the best possible plan for implementation."[20]

In two of the most deprived areas in Croydon, the partners are implementing a selection of the prototyped propositions: the Family Partnership Team, the Peer-2peer Support Network and Family Space Croydon.

Family Partnership Teams are comprised of workers from various agencies seconded to a team with a devolved budget to address the needs of a particular locality. The final definition of each team is determined by local needs and "shaped through prototyping and co-design."[21] The team ensures a particular locality has sufficient capacity for focused preventative and early intervention services and that all contacts with families help develop parenting capacity, independence and resilience.

Peer2peer Support Networks build social supports for families in the greatest need so that parents are better able to access informal support and cope with problems before these escalate. Findings from the "discover" stage show that friends and family are the first port of call for parents for advice and information. The project works with communities to support the growth of parent networks, train parents in the community as peer mentors and develop networks of "virtual grandparents" who act as trusted friends and mentors.

Family Space Croydon is an online tool for parents and professionals that enables access to up-to-date information about local services and provides an opportunity for parent feedback.

By implementing these propositions across Croydon, the partners calculate that they can achieve significant savings: more than £8.3 million during spending period 2011/12–2013/14, £25 million by the end of the following spending period (ending 2016/17) and more than £62 million by the time the locality's current four year-olds turn 18 in 2023/24. These calculations are net of up-front costs and new revenue costs, and are based only on implementing the main propositions in four Croydon wards. The partners therefore believe their estimations are conservative.[22]

SWINDON FAMILY LIFE

The Family LIFE program is about "building new lives for individuals and families to enjoy."[23] It is an example of multiple public agencies in Swindon and the families themselves taking a new approach to interventions with families in crisis. At the core of the program is a new type of relationship between public services and families, including a focus on developing the capabilities, networks and resilience of families.

The LIFE program originated in 2008 when public agencies in Swindon recognized the need for a new approach regarding families with complex needs.[24] Local analysis shows Swindon has between 60 and 100 families living in the worst state of chronic crisis, suffering from numerous issues, such as susceptibility to illnesses, domestic violence, poor lifestyle habits, alcohol or drug abuse, poverty, child abuse or neglect, marginal living conditions and behavioural issues.[25]

Swindon Partners, the local cross-agency strategic partnership, was aware of rising numbers of children being taken into care and had evidence that interventions were not meeting the needs of families or enabling sustainable change. Swindon entered into a partnership with Participle, a private consultancy with expertise in public service design and a mission to create community-based change and develop a new approach for supporting families. "The intention has been to find what could bring about long-term sustainable positive change, not just for 'problem families' but also for other members of the community and government services."[26]

The approach to developing the Family LIFE program was based on a design methodology that included a participatory process in three phases: discovery, prototyping and delivery.

DISCOVERY

The discovery stage brought together "cutting edge thinking in design with cutting edge thinking in social change."[27] An important aspect was reconsidering (rather than assuming) the nature of the problem before adopting solutions. Participants worked with 12 families during this discovery phase (which included six months when the Participle team lived in the community with families) shadowing frontline workers.

The picture that emerged was of disjunction between the approach of public services and the realities of the families: "We were just not speaking the same language."[28] It showed that government interventions were having little effect on the lives of families living in chronic crisis, and that the activity of the system was even creating a barrier to change. This system featured:

- impersonal delivery by professionals with a separate "professional" language;

- enforcement without relationships;

- lack of trust, honesty and transparency on both sides;

- negative systemic behaviours and cultural beliefs;

- service designs irrelevant to people's lives;

- high costs with few or no outcomes;

- a focus on reporting, risk management and monitoring; and

- an attempt to rescue rather than support people.

Families felt powerless: there was no safe place to ask for help, and they were exhausted from fighting the system. Families were building resilience against public agencies rather than social resilience. "For many, their career and expertise has become manipulating the system."[29]

However, richer conversations between families and public servants revealed that families in chronic crisis are "hungry for change and do have aspirations. There just wasn't the right kind of support there."[30]

PROTOTYPING

Core to the prototyping stage was the recognition that change could not be achieved unless families themselves wanted it and were empowered to make it happen. The four families involved in prototyping were given control from the start: they worked with the multi-agency team (comprised of members interviewed and selected by the families) on a variety of projects and practical tasks (including cooking, shopping and managing home budgets). The intention was to enable families to develop the skills and knowledge they needed to begin to improve their lives, develop a new enriched relationship between the workers and the families, and build a sense of trust and a safe space for them to open up and talk about their aspirations and the issues they faced.

DELIVERY

During the delivery phase, the number of families involved in the LIFE program rose to nine, with participation ranging from six months to two years. Families were expected to move through the four stages of the program, albeit not necessarily in a linear fashion, acknowledging the likelihood of intensive periods, lulls, setbacks and breakthroughs. The amount and nature of contact between a team and family was to depend upon the needs and wishes of the family and the stage at which they found themselves.

In stage zero of LIFE, families are invited to participate in the program. During this period (which lasts for several weeks), the team builds a relationship with the family and helps them discuss the potential for change. Families that decline the initial invitation can participate at a later date.

In stage one, the team and family spend time together drawing out the aspirations and the potential of the family, as well as the values and capacities they wish to develop. Through a process of reflection, they begin to articulate a plan for the future and select a project that eventually they can work on independently from the team.

In stage two, the families explore opportunities for change in their activities, friendships, work and other relationships. They begin to experience the benefits of the

changes and become engaged in outward-focused activities (for example, helping neighbours and volunteering).

In stage three, the families explore new social networks and relationships beyond their current friendship circles. They move towards independence (the team is needed less), build an exit strategy and eventually exit the program.

Multi-agency teams, comprised of up to ten workers, are used in the program. Members are seconded from the council, police or health and housing organizations. The model creates opportunities for different family members to bond with different people, lower the risk of burnout, increase the scope for questioning and challenge, and create more of a sense of "a team building something together."[31] Members recognize the danger of creating new dependency relationships or falling into the rescuing mode and so make an effort to avoid those traps. "We're all the time thinking, is this empowering the family?"[32]

The impetus of the program is not just on the families to change, but also for the team members to change. "The program is just as much a program for workers as it is for families. We found that building the capabilities of the team and working in a very different way was just as key as the work that needed to happen with the families."[33] Participle therefore trained the LIFE team workers to replace unhelpful working practices encouraged by the system with an ability to develop richer relationships with families.

The program saved £760,000 in the first year of the pilot. This includes £275,000 in reduced actual spending and £485,000 preventative value. Participle estimates that a further £720,000 will be saved in the second year, comprising £235,000 of actual and £485,000 value of preventative work.

As yet, none of the families has completed the program; however, a number of early positive outcomes have been achieved. There has been a reduction in domestic violence, the number of police call-outs, eviction orders and children taken into care. There has been an increase in children's school attendance, the number of adults seeking employment or training and the number of individuals seeking help for substance abuse. Mental health outcomes, emotional support skills among parents and

relationships between family members and neighbours have improved.[34]

Encouragingly, participating families have not only invited other families to participate, but have also wanted to work with and support them. This development led the team to explore the creation of a position on the team for the mother from the first family engaged in the project. The LIFE Program is therefore showing signs of becoming a platform for peer-to-peer development. The LIFE team is working to increase the number of families and to institutionalize the approach across local public agencies.

LESSONS FROM THE CASES

The national Total Place initiative and the local Croydon Total Place and Swindon Family LIFE examples took place in the context of a unitary state with a strong record of achievement. That achievement was in areas where a centralized push can bring significant success, but not in areas where issues are complex. Five lessons, drawn from the examples above, may help inform how government can alter its thinking and behaviour to better handle complex issues, such as those revolving around families in chronic states of crisis.

HANDLING COMPLEXITY THROUGH NETWORKS

Theories of complexity demonstrate that complex situations are full of emergent properties and unexpected consequences.[35] Complex problems will not be recognized unless an approach is developed that draws on many different perspectives and sources of intelligence and that adapts to new conditions. Recognizing the distributed nature of the knowledge required leads away from centralized prescription towards a networked mode of co-ordination.

Total Place is the flowering of the latter.[36] In particular, a set of people who already had the habit of connecting to professional peers through networks were recruited from local government to work at senior levels in central government. A critical mass of these appointments meant officials retained their previous orientation and contacts, rather than being socialized into a culture in

Whitehall that normally puts hierarchy first. As important as the multi-level governance networks were, the existing horizontal networks in localities were also instrumental to the success of the initiatives.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TACIT KNOWLEDGE

In both local examples, great efforts were made to engage local actors, including citizens, families and front-line professionals, in defining the problems and solutions. The design methodologies incorporated evidence gathered from elsewhere, but used to stimulate the thinking of those involved in the situation rather than to recommend a blueprint to be implemented. Addressing complex issues involves tapping the tacit knowledge of those involved, respecting knowledge that develops through experience and leaving space for collective sense-making and individual judgment.

CULTIVATING RESILIENCE

Both local examples start from the proposition that human beings have built-in resilience and a desire to live a satisfying life and good relationships with others in their community. Where these outcomes are lacking, public service seems to treat the symptoms rather than the root causes. Both examples demonstrate the benefits of a citizen-centred approach, with an emphasis on building capability that should in due course reduce the need for public service. This capability needs to be grown. It is not possible to impose it from the top.

LEADERSHIP

If we think of an operating paradigm as "how we do things around here" along with the stories that have been developed over time to socialize people into doing things in that way, the development of a compelling, alternative narrative is an essential component of changing how things get done in the future. It can help people reframe their view of reality and to work together in new ways.

An academic literature had been developing since the 1990s about the need for "joined-up government" in the United Kingdom. The 1997 Labour government's first term of office involved much activity to overcome the silo nature of the British public policy system. These prepared the ground for new thinking. The breakthrough came when a number of former local government officials who became senior public servants at the national level played a significant part in re-framing the narrative. Michael Bichard was one of these people. Working with his network, he produced a critique that came to redefine the issues, successfully creating the climate for change.

In another lesson on leadership, Torbert suggests that we draw a distinction between conventional and post-conventional leadership.[37] The former plays a familiar part at various levels within organizations, but post-conventional forms are needed to work effectively within larger inter-organizational systems.

Both local and national examples in this case study demonstrate the presence of post-conventional leadership. The high-level officials group specifically rejected the conventional approach to program management and thus was able to create a framework that released innovative potential at the local level. The local-level senior managers and political leaders were then able to engage, rather than direct, local professional staff in a joint endeavour to find a better way, thus creating the opportunity to re-orientate professional practice in ways that accessed the knowledge of professionals and put citizen at the centre of the action.

INTERMEDIARIES AS RESOURCES FOR CHANGE

Our two local cases would not have been as successful had it not been for the presence of intermediaries, such as Participle, that brought skills to facilitate change.[38] Intermediaries brought the capacity to listen to all perspectives, earn the trust of all participants, understand the highs and lows of change, synthesize workshop findings and pull together change narratives that made sense to all involved. Others like them were employed in Total Place and other local projects.

CONCLUSION

Public administration in the 20th century was dominated by large institutions and powerful professional groups. Grouping knowledge and expertise in this way has limitations, including the high cost of delivering unconnected silo services that make little headway in resolving underlying issues. In this approach, citizens have little involvement in decision making (beyond the ballot box) and are passive (rather than active) recipients of services.

In this case study, we explored these limitations and saw how this approach is insufficient to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Public service must harness new and diverse sources of knowledge and resources by unlocking and enhancing the insights, motivation, capabilities and networks of citizens and communities to boost social resilience, achieve greater public value and catalyze innovation. These new approaches present both challenges and opportunities for public services, and will require government leaders to re-frame consciously their views of governing in the 21st century.

ENDNOTES

1. HM Government (United Kingdom), *The Coalition: our programme for government.*

2. Cabinet Office (United Kingdom), *Excellence and Fairness: Achieving world class public services.*

3. The case study was informed by interviews with more than 30 national and local government officials and experts in public service reform and design.

4. Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (United Kingdom), *Strong Local Leadership.*

5. Barber, *Instruction to Deliver.*

6. Lyons, *Lyons Inquiry into Local Government.*

7. HM Treasury (United Kingdom), *Operational Efficiency Programme: Final Report.*

8. Leadership Centre for Local Government, *Places, People and Politics*, 26.

9. HM Treasury (United Kingdom), *Total Place*, 5.

10. Croydon Council and National Health Service Croydon, *Child: Family: Place: Radical Efficiency to Improve Outcomes for Young Children*, 14.

11. Ibid., 9.

12. Ibid., 22.

13. Ibid., 50-53.

14. Ibid., 34.

15. Ibid., 54-55.

16. Of that amount, £103m (or 50 percent) goes directly to families as transfer payments, £71m is spent by Croydon Council and £32m by NHS Croydon.

17. Croydon Council and National Health Service Croydon, *Child: Family: Place: Radical Efficiency to Improve Outcomes for Young Children*, 87.

18. Ibid., 62.

19. Interviewee.

20. Croydon Council and National Health Service Croydon, *Child: Family: Place: Radical Efficiency to Improve Outcomes for Young Children*, 29.

21. Ibid., 71.

22. Ibid., 84-85.

23. National Health Service, Swindon (United Kingdom), "Family Life Programme."

24. Participants included the Borough Council, Strategic Health Authority, Primary Care Trust, and Wiltshire Police.

25. National Health Service, Swindon (United Kingdom), "Family Life Programme."

26. Ibid.

27. Interviewee.

28. Interviewee.

29. Interviewee.

30. Interviewee.

31. Interviewee.

32. Interviewee.

33. Interviewee.

34. National Health Service, Swindon (United Kingdom), "Family Life Programme."

35. Bourgon, with Milley. *The New Frontiers of Public Administration.*

36. Markets, hierarchies and networks are the usual categories of co-ordination explored in the academic literature. See Powell and diMaggio, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*; Thompson, Frances, Levacic and Mitchell, Markets, Hierarchies and Networks.

37. Torbert, *Action Inquiry.*

38. On the role of intermediaries in improving public services, see Horne, *Honest Brokers.*

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FROM NS6 TO NS WORLD

THE NEW SYNTHESIS PROJECT

The New Synthesis Project is an international partnership of institutions and individuals who are dedicated to advancing the study and practice of public administration. While they hail from different countries, different political systems and different historical, economic and cultural contexts, all share the view that public administration as a practice and discipline is not yet aligned with the challenges of serving in the 21st century.

THE NEW SYNTHESIS 6 NETWORK

In 2009, Madame Jocelyne Bourgon invited six countries to join the New Synthesis Network (NS6), composed of officials, scholars and experts from Australia, Brazil, Canada, the Netherlands, Singapore and the United Kingdom. Committed to supporting practitioners whose work is becoming increasingly difficult, this network has engaged close to 200 people from more than 24 organizations. Their efforts have resulted in five international roundtables, five post-roundtable reports, and 17 case studies. Collectively, this work has generated significant insights into preparing governments to serve in the 21st century.

The Network's findings have been captured in the publication of a new book entitled *A New Synthesis of Public Administration: Serving in the 21st Century*, and is available in print and electronic formats from McGill-Queen's University Press. Its signature contribution is the presentation of an enabling governance framework that brings together the role of government, society and people to address some of the most complex and intractable problems of our time.

TOWARDS NS WORLD

So where to from here? Reconfiguring and building the capacities of government for the future cannot be accomplished through the publication of a single book. It is a continuous journey which requires the ongoing sharing and synthesis of ideas, as well as the feedback, learning and course adjustments that can only be derived by testing ideas in action.

And so the journey continues and the conversation expands. Our goal is to build upon the rich partnership of the original six participating countries by opening up this exchange with others—wherever they may be located. We seek to create an international community that connects all leaders—from government, the private sector and civil society—committed to helping prepare governments for the challenges ahead.

Next stages of this work will include virtual exchanges supported by web 2.0 technologies, as well as possible thematic and regionally-based networks and events. But no matter the vehicles, success can only be achieved through the active participation and collaboration of those passionate about making a difference.
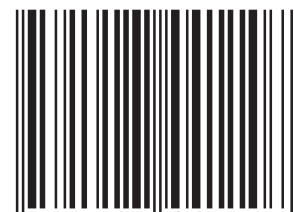
We encourage you to stay tuned to nsworld.org for more information about how to get engaged.

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