



Voluntary Sector Assembly

Another Year: Facing the Challenge

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The question

Is it our responsibility to think beyond the walls of our own organisations, our specialisms, our sector and even our geography to influence policy and practice, achieve integration, survive as organisations and ensure the best quality services for our communities?

Single Service, Single Issue Interventions vs Systems Thinking



42nd Streets Theory of Change



Benefits of Systems Thinking and Leadership

1. We are able to offer more responsive, more person centred services that have a lasting impact.
2. Children , young people and families are more empowered as experts in control of their own lives
3. We can better define our services and interventions so they have clarity of purpose and add value to the system and the people experiencing them (and attract funding.)
4. We are better able to understand integration models, avoid duplication, reduce competition and create efficiencies.
5. We are better able to influence change with and for our service users but also for our teams, our specialisms, our sector and our community.
6. We can position our organisations and create a deeper understanding of what we do
7. We can bring in, position and join up other expertise and colleagues
8. The models and approaches to policy and practice are better as a result of our expertise and insight.
9. We can better adapt to change and approach organisational development strategically- we feel less “done to” and our teams feel more valued and safe.
10. We can when others can’t, our freedoms allow us to innovate- we are not simply service providers we are independent, drivers of change.

Challenges for System Leadership

- Capacity
- A history of not being listened to – frustration
- Cultural shift?
- Requirement for a robust and compelling evidence base
- Power dynamics within and across all sectors
- The inevitable relationship between systems and money creates suspicion and competition.
- Who are we representing and who are we accountable to - ourselves, our specialism, the sector?
- Do we operate systematically as a sector?

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