

EAST AYRSHIRE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP

INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD: 03 FEBRUARY 2021

AYRSHIRE & ARRAN CAMHS REFORM AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE SCOTLAND WIDE COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH

Report by Thelma Bowers, Head of Mental Health Services

Direction Required to Council, Health Board or Both	Direction to:	
	No Direction Required	✓
	East Ayrshire Council	
	NHS Ayrshire & Arran	

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to provide awareness and assurance to the Integration Joint Board (IJB) on the progress against a programme of significant Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) reform work being undertaken in Ayrshire & Arran in alignment with key national policy and local priorities.

Recommendation

2. The IJB are asked to
 - note and comment on the report.

Summary

3. The purpose of this report is to provide awareness and assurance to the Board on the progress against a programme of significant reform work in CAMHS to improve children and young people's mental health and wellbeing with timely access to services and support to children, young people and their families at a locality level.
4. This report defines the national and local context to the CAMHS improvement work in Ayrshire and Arran, key challenges and opportunities with an outline of the process to this compelling reform work which commenced in September 2020.
5. This report has been presented to the North Ayrshire Integration Joint Board on 17 December 2020 and will be presented to South Ayrshire Integration Joint Board.

BACKGROUND

6. The National Children & Young People's Mental Health Taskforce provided recommendations to the Scottish Government and COSLA in 2019 on how to improve the way children's mental health services are organised, commissioned and provided and how to make it easier for young people to access help and support when needed.
7. The recommendations noted that transformational change is required both in the immediate short and long term to improve children and young people's mental health and the services that support them.

8. Preventative approaches are central to this transformational change and equally important is a whole system approach, underpinned by 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC). A whole system approach will help children, young people and their families receive the support they need when they need it.
9. In alignment with this work national service specifications have been developed nationally which impact on the delivery and design of CAMHS provision and require consideration of the service model in Ayrshire and Arran in the context of current and future investment opportunities.

REFORM OPPORTUNITIES

10. There are key drivers which present a compelling opportunity for reviewing the delivery of the CAMHS Service across Ayrshire & Arran. The following are some of the key national and local drivers with an urgent imperative to develop, clearly define and improve the experience and timely access to the breadth of mental health and wellbeing support available to children and young people.

KEY POLICY DRIVERS

11. The National Children & Young People's Mental Health Taskforce recommendations reinforced the importance of responding to local needs with local solutions, and that across Scotland there are different structures and arrangements currently in place to support children, young people and their families. It is accepted therefore the starting point for implementing these recommendations will vary throughout Scotland. However, the most important principle central to transformation work is that children and young people receive the right help, at the right time wherever they are.
12. Whilst early intervention and prevention are vital to improving outcomes for children and young people, decreasing waiting times and reducing rejected referrals, increasing this activity however may not directly benefit the children and young people who are already waiting for help. It is also possible that enhanced identification of children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties will result in increased demand on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the short term. It is vital therefore that a whole system approach is adopted so that children, young people and their families receive the support they require.
13. The national task force recognised that a small number of children and young people experience mental illness or other mental health needs that require focused, evidence based assessment and interventions from specialist Child & Adolescent Mental Health teams. This includes children, young people and families who would benefit from a range of interventions, including specialist community treatment and/or in-patient services.
14. This support should be provided as part of an integrated approach, with a team around a child, and with the interventions set out within a child's plan, clarity on what outcomes are being sought, and what additional services will be required once the child no longer requires a specialist service.
15. The five core components of a whole system approach to meeting the mental health needs of children and young people are noted below and provide the context to reform of CAMHS and children's mental health and wellbeing approaches in Ayrshire and Arran:

- i. Clear points of contact for children, young people, families and practitioners who have concerns regarding a child's mental health through the Health Visitor, School of GP to where advice or access to support is available.
- ii. An early response to the first concerns or signs of distress without prompt, proportionate and informed assessment that determines the response, without unnecessary delay or bureaucracy.
- iii. A clear pathway through services, with a focus on prevention and early intervention within the community, and an accelerated path to additional, higher level or specialist support or treatment whenever that is required.
- iv. Children, young people and their families at the centre, empowered to express their views regarding their needs and services, and to have these views acknowledged and recorded.
- v. Mental health needs integrated into any support for other needs that a child may have, as part of a single plan with a team around the child that is coordinated by a lead professional.

THE NHS SCOTLAND NATIONAL SERVICE SPECIFICATION FOR CAMHS

16. The national CAMHS specification was published by the Scottish Government in February 2020. This is a product of the work of the '*Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme Board*' and successful implementation will meet the recommendations of the '*audit of rejected referrals*' and the children's and young people's Mental Health Taskforce and outlines the key priorities and principle drivers for CAMHS across Scotland. The specification has been developed in partnership with young people and their families and includes a number of aims such as reducing waiting times for a first assessment appointment and the waiting time for any subsequent treatment.
17. The specification acknowledges the need for children, young people and their families being able to access additional support which targets emotional distress through Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services. It indicates these Community Supports and Services should work closely with CAMHS and relevant health and social care partners, children's services and educational establishments to ensure there are clear and streamlined pathways to support where that is more appropriately delivered by these services.
18. In the context and requirement of this publication and associated mandatory deliverables, significant revision of the CAMHS service model within Mental Health services in Ayrshire and Arran is required to align the focus both with the National vision for services and at a locality level. This includes the level of provision children, young people and their families can expect to receive when they are referred for help within the NHS.
19. All health board areas will be expected to set out plans on how this will be implemented, with a formal review of how it is working across Scotland to take place in the very near future. In Ayrshire & Arran CAMHS senior clinical leads in collaboration with Children's Services have commenced a mapping exercise against the new national service specification and have introduced new roles to support the delivery of this work – this includes an enhancement to professional nurse leadership within the service.

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH FRAMEWORK

- 20.** In the same period – February 2020 – a *Community Mental Health Framework* has also been published by the Scottish Government to enable the development of community supports. The Scottish Government in partnership with COSLA is working with the new national Children and Young people’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme Board to put in place community wellbeing supports for children and young people aged 5-24 and their families.
- 21.** In Ayrshire and Arran there is an investment of £0.925m which has been allocated to respective Education and Local Authority areas to implement these supports. Furthermore, some additional investment announced in November 2020 will support the response to additional demand and needs identified as a result of the impact of Covid 19 on the mental wellbeing of children and young people.
- 22.** Other Scottish Government investment which has been directed to Education departments includes provision for additional school nurses and school counsellors. CAMHS is currently working with Children’s Services and wider agencies in each HSCP area leading on this work to ensure that CAMHS can respond to the local developments in each locality area, building upon the positive pilot work undertaken in previous years.
- 23.** In Ayrshire and Arran there has already been significant nationally recognised work undertaken in the development of a ‘Wellness Model’ and approach to children and young people’s wellbeing upon which to progress further at a local level with the Scottish Government investment in community mental health and wellbeing.
- 24.** In developing a whole system model of wellness, the model has managed and changed the demand pressures placed on specialist CAMHS services. It has helped develop capacity, confidence and resilience in schools and the local community and has ensured that the child, young person and family are at the centre of care. This approach also links well with the National and Strategic priorities around C&YP mental health and wellbeing and the CAMHS NHS Scotland National Service Specification which highlights the importance of:

 - i. High quality support this is right for me;
 - ii. Fully involving children & young people in the decisions about their care;
 - iii. Young people, when appropriate for CAMHS, receive the appropriate treatment that is right for them;
 - iv. Fully involving children & young people, families and carers.

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL SERVICE SPECIFICATION

- 25.** The Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme Board are also developing a Neurodevelopmental service specification alongside an improvement plan across Scotland which will be published by the end of 2020. CAMHS has continued to develop this pathway and re-design the service ahead of the national specification with investment in additional dedicated workforce.
- 26.** A short life working group on neurodevelopmental services within CAMHS has concluded. Recommendations for pathway revision have been made and an increase in assessment capacity has been evident from August to October 2020.

27. Co-ordination of pre- and post-diagnostic support is being driven by a newly established working group to bring together providers across Partnership and 3rd Sector, alongside involving other services such as KA Leisure. Service-user involvement will be key to the development of support services. CAMHS is a key stakeholder in an upcoming bid, via the Pan-Ayrshire Autism Strategy Group, for additional funding for neurodiversity services across Ayrshire and Arran.

THE NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY 2017 – 2027

28. The National Mental Health Strategy lays out a vision and mandate for mental health where people can get the right help at the right time, expect recovery and fully enjoy their rights, free from discrimination and stigma.
29. This is a 10-year vision and the local response to this: *The Ayrshire Mental Health Conversation 2019 to 2027* incorporates key actions and priorities for children and young people including prevention and early intervention, access to treatment, joined up accessible services, physical wellbeing and access to rights and information. In Ayrshire and Arran local mental health strategy implementation groups continue to meet to develop and implement key plans at a local level in response to the priorities laid out in the high-level action plan as a response to the Ayrshire Mental Health Conversation.

ACTION 20 OF THE MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY 2017-2027: NATIONAL HOSTED SECURE INPATIENT ADOLESCENT SERVICE (NSAIS)

30. Ayrshire and Arran successfully submitted a bid for the Nationally hosted Secure Inpatient Adolescent unit (NSAIS) in 2016. This is a first in Scotland secure provision for young people to promote timely access to specialist provision and prevent over the border referrals to secure provision in England. The full business case is reaching finalisation, with expected construction in 2021, and service launch anticipated in early 2022. A significant recruitment programme for this national development is being planned for, in excess of 70wte staff. The Clinical lead for this development is now in post and a wider workforce is planned to be in place in 2021.
31. The CAMHS service is required to develop both community pathways and a community Forensic CAMHS provision ahead of the new service launch in 2022 in addition to working nationally to respond to the needs of young people who require IPCU provision.

THE REASON FOR REFORM

32. This complex landscape and imperative of key national and local drivers, represent a significant amount of development work across every level of the current system. This includes the work of the Children's Strategic Forums to deliver Children's plans, a national and local Mental Health strategy, a Pan Ayrshire Children and Young People's Transformation Board and Mental Health Strategic Programme Board amongst many other groups which all consider, develop and implement plans to address these fundamental challenges of access, improvement, development and alignment of the right support at the right time for children and young people.
33. This demonstrates a great commitment to improving the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in Ayrshire and Arran with a great deal of very positive work being undertaken by all agencies across the system.

34. Critically, whilst there is a significant amount of development and improvement work underway a fundamental change of pace is required in order to improve and sustain access to the right support at a local level, particularly in the context of national drivers, alignment of critical investment decisions and levels of increasing demand in how CAMHS operates within this complex health and social care delivery system is required.

CAMHS IN AYRSHIRE & ARRAN

35. CAMHS operates within a complex health and social care system in Ayrshire and Arran, interfacing with wider Children's and Justice Services, Education, Adult Services, Paediatric services, Primary Care, Inpatient Acute Services, Unscheduled Care Services and the Third and Independent Sector.
36. A new leadership team has been established within CAMHS during 2019/20 including Professional leadership for Children's Psychological services, a Clinical lead for the National Secure Adolescent Inpatient Service and Consultant Forensic Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist/Clinical Lead for West of Scotland CAMHS Network and Senior Management lead for the CAMHS service. The new leadership team have been working assertively throughout 2020 to ensure delivery of service improvements and work collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders across Ayrshire.
37. The CAMHS service is delivered within the strategic and operational remit and Governance of North Ayrshire HSCP as the lead Partnership for Mental Health and is provided by three locality multidisciplinary teams located in East, South and North Health and Social Care Partnerships. Children, Families and Justice Services are integrated health and social care Children's Services delivered within HSCP arrangements.
38. CAMHS at present comprises three Locality CAMHS Teams made up of an Interdisciplinary workforce of healthcare professionals. Aspects of service provision can be considered in two broad groups:
- i. Locality Critical – These are aspects of service provision across the whole interagency system which require a bespoke response to the locality. This may include things such as School Counselling services, commissioned services unique to the locality and Looked After and Accommodated Children Services.
 - ii. Pan-Ayrshire consistence – These are aspects of CAMHS service provision that are clinician dependent and based upon diagnostic and treatment pathways. A very clear and evidence based example is the diagnosis, treatment and management of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). These conditions must be approached and managed consistently regardless of the locality.

CHALLENGES

Waiting Times and Annual Operating Plan/ the Referral to Treatment Targets (RTT)

39. Delivering the right interventions to young people in a timely way have been challenging for a number of years and likely to become even more so with the introduction of the National Service Specification with the requirement for the first appointment, unless for unscheduled care, to be offered to children and young people within 4 weeks. In addition, it is important to note that whilst in Ayrshire and Arran the CAMHS treatment target is compliant, there are internal waits for some treatments that are in excess of the national target - although these do not meet the criteria for reporting against the national target.
40. The CAMHS senior service and professional leads have been meeting with the Scottish Government Mental Health directorate leads in 2019/20 and throughout the national pandemic crisis in 2020 to develop and implement waiting time improvement plans and trajectories as designated within the health Board Annual Operating Plan (AOP) and in alignment with mobilisation plans. The target for CAMHS is that 90 per cent of young people will commence treatment for specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health services within 18 weeks of referral.
41. Since April, the accepted rate of referral has increased month on month. During September 2020, the three CAMHS teams received 145 referrals compared to 108 in September 2019. The chart below (Figure 1) illustrates the RTT compliance pre COVID and during COVID. Despite the increasing referral rates and consequently clinical activity, the CAMHS service is maintaining the 90% RTT standard.
42. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, CAMHS has continued to provide accessible service to Children and Young People (CYP) across the three localities. Since the return of children to school in August CAMHS have moved to a position of offering more face to face contact with CYP. One area of challenge has been in the provision of assessment for Autistic Spectrum Disorder and other Neuro-diverse presentations where the wearing of face coverings and PPE can interfere with the process.

RTT % for September 92.1% is a slight decrease on the previous month of 94.2% however more children commenced treatment in September (76 compared to 69 previous month)

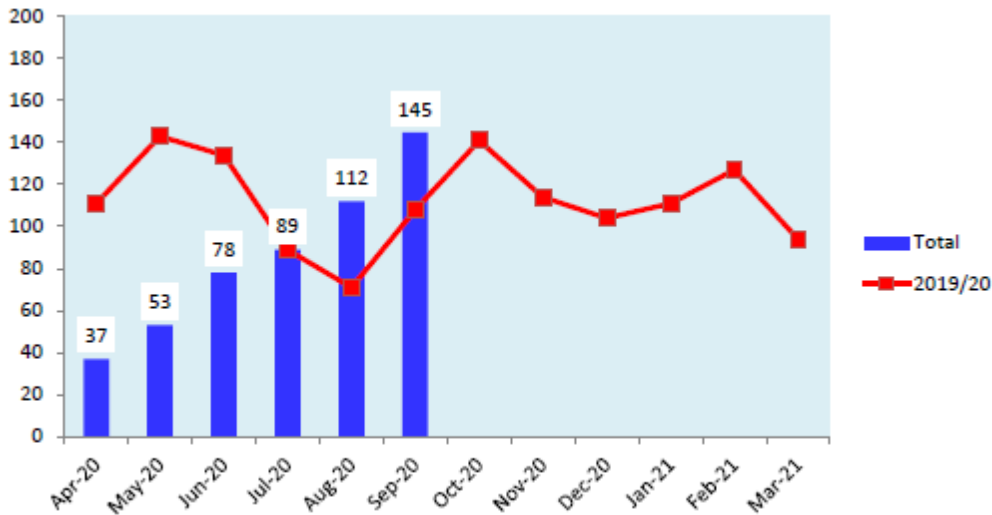


Figure1

Increasing Demand

43. Increased levels of demand have been rising for a number of years but experienced now across the whole system in the context of the pandemic and not least for presentations of young people to emergency departments. The AOP plan is currently being revised in alignment with the new national specification, Covid mobilisation work and new projections of demand post-Covid. In addition, the work of the Distressed Young Person's Pathway working group continues with implementation of a new pathway and action plans in place at both a local and Pan Ayrshire level and as part of the Pan Ayrshire Suicide Prevention Group in response to 'Every Life Matters'.

Workforce Challenges

44. There is a recognized challenge nationally in the recruitment to CAMHS of professional roles such as Psychology and Psychiatry due to the challenges in the scope and demand of work in the context of intensive media enquiry and rising public expectation. In Ayrshire and Arran there is a 40% gap in availability of CAMHS Psychology and Psychiatry due to vacancies which have been challenging to recruit to on a substantive basis. Assertive workforce planning and development is underway in collaboration nationally, including a review and implementation of revised skill mix, job planning and revised models of delivery and practice to increase access to these essential areas of provision. The introduction of new roles such as Advanced Nurse Prescribers and a Prescribing Pharmacist will reduce demand upon Psychiatry for ADHD prescribing and review.

Data and Information

45. There are challenges with access to data due to lack of functionality of systems to allow more joint and detailed analysis of activity and service demand to improve planning and shared understanding. An intensive work programme has been underway to ensure current systems are maximised and improvement to quality of data to inform local planning.

CAMHS EXTREME TEAM AND OUR BIG OPPORTUNITY

- 46.** In response to the national and local commitment to children's mental health as outlined in this report, the challenges currently evident and to consolidate and build upon the positive, multi-agency work undertaken in the last five years, Ayrshire and Arran have commissioned an Extreme Teams' approach to respond to the mission critical key question:

How will we improve children and young people's mental health and wellbeing with timely access to services and support to children, young people and their families at a locality level?

- 47.** Extreme teaming is the way in which Ayrshire and Arran has committed to enabling innovation at pace across our system, to balance the four pillars and deliver *Caring for Ayrshire*, our Big Opportunity. (See handbook at Appendix 1).
- 48.** An initial team of Children's and Mental Health service senior leads have been mobilised at pace and have been meeting on a weekly basis since September 2020 in order to better understand, share experiences, define the challenge and overarching objective within the context of complexity outlined in this report which lays out the reason for reform.
- 49.** The focus for this reform question is centered on the interface, relationship and delivery outcomes of the multidisciplinary CAMHS service (tier 3 specialist outpatient CAMHS) with community-based Children's Services (Tier 2) and Universal Services at a locality level to improve children and young people's experience in alignment with the CAMHS national specification. This also includes unscheduled presentations of young people to Emergency Departments and how better to respond with early intervention approaches at a locality level.
- 50.** The review team are considering the following areas of enquiry and planning assumptions to formulate the scope of the work plan:
- i. The Community Mental Health and Wellbeing framework/specification in the context of the reform question.
 - ii. The implications for the reform question in the context of the pending national neurodevelopment specification as an integral part of current CAMHS caseload activity and high waiting times.
 - iii. The consideration and formulation of innovative options and solutions to ensure more seamless, joined up and timely access to supports at a locality level.
 - iv. Tier 4 highly specialist inpatient CAMHS and intensive community treatment services are not within scope although the review team must consider the implications of these developments on community pathways at a local level to enable timely discharge and outreach which must be critically in place ahead of this future development.

51. The review team is commissioned by the Strategic Planning and Operational Group (SPOG) and consists of the following key members:

- Tim Eltringham – Director South Ayrshire HSCP - Extreme Team Commissioner
- Mark Inglis – Head of Children, Families and Justice services SAHSCP, Co-Chair
- Thelma Bowers – Head of Mental Health, Lead Partnership, NHSCP, Co-Chair
- Dr Helen Smith - Consultant Forensic Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist/Clinical Lead for West of Scotland CAMHS Network
- Marion McAuley - Head of Children, Families and Justice Services EAHSCP
- Stuart McKenzie – Senior Manager CAMHS NHSCP
- Ken MacMahon – Head of Psychological Specialty: Child and Adult Learning Disabilities, Psychological services – NHSCP
- Alison Sutherland – Interim Chief Officer & Head of Children, Families and Justice services NAHSCP

52. This whole system review team will continue to meet, aligned to this shared goal, and work together at pace in response to the reform question between October 2020 and December 2020 (or as many meetings as required) to ensure reform momentum, creativity, pace and innovative outcomes with critical recommendations formulated and shared by the end of December 2020.

PROPOSALS

53. The report details the focus of service improvement work in CAMHS, the wider system in relation to children's mental health and wellbeing and an outline of the CAMHS Extreme Team formed to ensure recommendations are developed to improve timely access to services and the quality of mental health service provision for children and young people.

PEOPLE WHO USE SERVICES AND CARERS IMPLICATIONS

54. The outcome of this work will be a positive impact and outcome of improving access to integrated, joined up CAMHS provision for Children, Young People and their families.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

55. The programme of work outlined in this report will influence future investment opportunities in Community Health and Wellbeing developments and CAMHS.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

56. Workforce planning and development implications linked to service improvement work and redesign of CAMHS based on the national specification and CAMHS Extreme Teams recommendations. A recruitment strategy is in place to address workforce challenges and particularly in relation to recruitment of some professional groups.

POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

57. The work is set within the context of the legal framework for delivery of NHS CAMHS provision and Children's Services.

COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

58. This will support the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Plan.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

59. This report and the scope of work outlines supports all aspects of the Public Sector Equality Duty, Fairer Scotland Duty, and the Board's Equalities Outcomes.
60. An impact assessment will be completed for areas of change and recommendation formulated by the Extreme Teams group and thereafter implemented.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

61. Risk mitigation and improvement plans are in place for areas of current challenge outlined in the report with associated actions assertively implemented.

COMMUNICATION IMPLICATIONS

62. There are no direct communications implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

63. The IJB is asked to;
- i. note and comment on the report and
 - ii. to otherwise note the content of the report .

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28th January 2021

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Daring to Succeed



Delivering Excellence Through Reform

'Extreme Teaming' – A Handbook

2nd Edition, August 2020



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Overview of this Handbook

Welcome to the 2nd Edition (June 2020) of Ayrshire and Arran's 'Extreme Teaming Handbook'.

Now that we have over 12 months' experience of using *extreme teaming* across our health and care system, including to deliver innovation during the Covid-19 global pandemic, we are able to draw on our learning to further expand and develop the guidance offered to you in this Handbook.

'Extreme Teaming' is a concept developed by Amy Edmondson in her 2019 book 'The Fearless Organisation', which we are using as part of our approach to whole-system reform at Ayrshire and Arran.

If you are reading this Handbook, you are either interested in learning more about how we use *extreme teaming*, or you are involved in *extreme teaming* and want to find out about what is required of you in your particular role.

The first part of the Handbook starts with giving you some general information about *extreme teaming*: what it is, how it fits, and what it requires.

It then goes on to set out the core roles involved in delivering *extreme teaming* at Ayrshire and Arran: Commissioner, Sponsor, Chair/Co-Chair, and the 'extreme team' itself (these may also be called Leadership Groups, depending on the commission). Each role is unpacked in detail so that you get a sense of its purpose and responsibilities, and how you can make the most difference in the role.

We then go on to explore the point at which *extreme teaming* – the reform space in our system – meets the hierarchy, which is responsible for operational grip. This is a space in which we are all learning! We all need to become skilful as leaders in knowing which 'hat' we are wearing, and how to communicate from that 'hat' so that our work can be progressed as straightforwardly as possible.

The final part of this Handbook looks at core conditions of effective *extreme teaming*, namely psychological safety and communication.

If you wish to learn more about Ayrshire and Arran's overall approach to reform, and how *extreme teaming* sits within it, then please refer to our *Daring To Succeed: Delivering Excellence Through Reform - Guide for Leaders*. This is available from the contact details on the final page.



Delivering Reform and Innovation at Pace: The Power of Extreme Teaming

(Edmondson, AC & Harvey, J-F 2017)

Extreme teaming is the way in which Ayrshire & Arran has committed to enabling innovation at pace across our system, to balance the four pillars and deliver *Caring for Ayrshire*, our Big Opportunity. Here we will give you more information about what *extreme teaming* is, how it fits, and how it works.

Health and social care integration relies on 'whole system working', and we use this term frequently. Whole system working means that people come together across professional, disciplinary, organisational and sector boundaries to innovate and deliver, in a context that is complex, ambiguous and unpredictable. By definition these groups are diverse and bring many different frames of reference into the mix. This can make interaction 'edgy', challenging and sometimes conflicted. However it is this very challenge and 'edginess' that is the source of their capacity to innovate. Whole systems present us with a paradox, therefore. In order to create the potential for creativity and innovation you need to optimise diverse expertise and perspectives, and yet it is can be the very presence of these that gets in the way.

This kind of teamwork, referred to as *extreme teaming*¹, represents a radical shift in the meaning and nature of teamworking in the 21st century.

As leaders of reform in a large, complex system spanning multiple sectors, professions and disciplines it is important to understand this shift and recalibrate our assumptions about teamworking, so that we can put the conditions in place for our teams to work effectively. This will enable us to recognise and to work with dynamics and events that are very different from previous traditional settings.

So, how has teamworking changed?

Traditional teams are groupings that are built round a department, specialty or ward for example. This means that there is a foundation of context- and project-specific knowledge that is shared from the start. Traditional teams have clear boundaries that distinguish members from non-members, often have a static core, and tend to be relatively stable. This gives members the opportunity to learn over time how to work well together, and to build relationships and deepen their contextual knowledge. These teams can be highly effective in taking forward local improvements, but may be less successful when asked to work across team boundaries.

Contemporary teams Fewer teams these days are stable or clearly bounded in this way. Members often work across multiple teams at once. Membership of teams may be transient.

¹ Edmondson AC & Harvey J-F (2017), *Extreme Teaming: Lessons in Complex Cross-Sector Leadership*
Emerald Publishing



Teams change fast, need to work at pace, often work virtually, are geographically distributed, and members therefore have little time to establish a shared understanding of tasks, contexts or each other.

This shift in emphasis introduces the concept of team as a *process* rather than a static *entity* – ergo, moving from teams to *teaming*².

Extreme Teaming refers to teams like those described above that also work across multiple sectors and boundaries. People come together from diverse backgrounds and organisations to address wicked problems for which there is no single solution, and which require creative, innovative and flexible thinking. Unlike traditional teams they often do not share project specific knowledge or contextual knowledge³, and the work does not follow predictable or linear patterns in how it progresses. This unpredictability, and the pace at which these teams need to work, means that their success depends on their capacity to *learn*. They need to adapt and respond continuously to their environment, integrate new knowledge and shift their frames of reference in order to serve their shared goal.

Extreme teaming necessarily provokes the ‘rub’ of different frames of reference and the potential for conversations that are challenging, messy and conflicted. When this happens in service of the work, this kind of dialogue is the bedrock of the team’s capacity to innovate. A core condition for this is psychological safety⁴, and the skills to build psychological safety are therefore a leadership priority in this context.

What does this mean for us as leaders of reform?

Although we will still find effective traditional teams in our system, extreme teaming is the way we increasingly need to work in 21st century health and care.

Leadership is at the heart of successful extreme teaming. It is different from the leadership required to lead and develop traditional teams.

As leaders of reform, you will need to co-create the following conditions:

- Build an engaging vision⁵ that becomes shared by individuals and the teams they work in. This has many benefits, not least of all overcoming confusion and frustration and aligning to a common goal.
- Make values explicit and be clear about the challenge and the goals set.
- Build psychological safety (see Section 4 of this Guide)
- Support and welcome engagement and participation
- Welcome learning, experiment and risk
- Encourage agile thinking that supports flexibility and timeliness in decision making.

² Edmondson, AC & Harvey, J-F (2017): *Extreme Teaming: Lessons in Complex, Cross-Sector Leadership* p xviii, Emerald Publishing Ltd

³ Ibid, pxix

⁴ Edmondson, AC (2019): *The Fearless Organisation: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation and Growth* John Wiley & Sons, Inc

⁵ Edmondson, AC & Harvey, J-F: *Extreme Teaming*, p 110



Now that you know more about what extreme teaming is and how it fits in our context as a 21st century health and care system, we will now go on to set out how we structure and use it at Ayrshire and Arran to deliver reform as part of a dual operating system. (If you are not sure what dual operating is about, please refer to our *Guide for Leaders* which you can request via the Contact Details on the last page of this Handbook).



Roles and Responsibilities in Reform at Ayrshire & Arran

Role	Purpose
Commissioner	<p>High-level accountability for the commission</p> <p>Ensuring integration / alignment of the work with other organisational priorities</p> <p>Scoping of the commission</p> <p>Identification of chair / co-chairs and working with them to establish membership of the team</p> <p>Initial contracting and ongoing dialogue with chair / co-chairs and team to establish, clarify and set up the work, to provide steer if and as required, and to seek assurance if/as necessary</p> <p>Primary relationship is with Sponsors and Co-Chairs. May meet with the team from time to time, if/as the work requires.</p> <p>Actively engage with the hierarchy in order to progress the work if/as required</p> <p>Direct intervention if there is a risk of non-delivery of the commission, or if the team is struggling to tackle organisational barriers</p>
Sponsor	<p>Advocacy for the work of the extreme team</p> <p>Provision of structure if / as needed</p> <p>Steer / guidance / counsel / advice if / as needed</p> <p>First point of escalation for team when encountering barriers or challenges</p> <p>Primary relationship is with Commissioner and Co-Chairs - and sometimes with team</p> <p>Actively engages with the hierarchy in order to progress the work as required</p>
Chair / Co-Chairs	<p>Leadership of extreme team / leadership group</p> <p>Ensure clarity of the commission with Sponsors and Commissioner</p> <p>Structure and lead extreme team meetings</p> <p>Ensure that work of extreme team is consistent with principles of reform and extreme teaming</p> <p>Accountability for delivery of commission</p> <p>Ensure that the team works and delivers within scope</p> <p>Provision of assurance to Commissioner if/as needed</p> <p>Active linking with Sponsor(s) as required, so that the work stays on course to delivery</p> <p>Active engagement with the hierarchy as required by the work</p> <p>Keep team focus and activity within the reform space</p> <p>Build motivation and ownership of the work within the team by maintaining strong and regular communication</p> <p>Maintain communication with wider organisation</p> <p>Develop own leadership</p>
Hierarchy	<p>Those with formal roles with accountability in the line for delivering operational grip, assurance, governance, and administration of organisational processes</p> <p>Engagement with Commissioner / Co-Chairs of reform</p> <p>Addressing, where appropriate, issues emerging through reform work that cannot be resolved in that context</p>
Extreme Team (aka Leadership Group)	<p>Leadership of reform and delivery of the commission</p> <p>Ownership of reform and the commission in the wider organisation</p> <p>Whole system working and thinking</p> <p>Building of capacity and capability in the system via the Team Sponsor / Strategic Lead relationships, in order to deliver sustainable change</p> <p>Participate in own development</p> <p>Co-operate and work with the hierarchy as needed</p> <p>Support the co-chairs to provide assurance as and when required</p> <p>Model the culture and behaviours that are sought through reform</p> <p>Active and sustained communication of reform work in the wider system</p> <p>Active participation in regular face-to-face / virtual meetings to progress reform activity, according to the schedule agreed by the Group</p>



Commissioning Reform Activity: Some Notes for Guidance for Commissioners

When is it reform rather than everyday business?

It is important to be clear that not all change is reform, and therefore not all change requires an 'extreme teaming' approach. As a leader how do you know which is which, and at what point do you decide?

The purpose of reform is to make fundamental change in how a system is working in order to improve and sustain it.

Fundamental change is required when the same challenges recur repeatedly, create predictable problems which tend to get worse over time, and do not improve in any sustainable way even though solution after solution is implemented. Some people call these repeated efforts to improve the situation 'moving the deckchairs'. This is because things are being moved about so that they look different, but will ultimately end up functioning in the same way as before. This kind of work can result in temporary optimism and often relief because action is being taken, and because the time and commitment required to think differently does not seem to be necessary. Underneath, however, there can be a feeling of cynicism or even futility because deep down, people know there will be no change. We enact this by talking about things but not doing them.

Reform is therefore required when the way something is organised and delivered is neither effective nor sustainable in its current form. In order for it to become effective and sustainable, there is a need to change not only how the activity is organised and delivered, *but how it is thought about in the first place.*

This is when the work moves out of the traditional hierarchy into the reform space, and becomes something that needs to be scoped, commissioned and owned by an appropriate whole-system 'extreme team'.

What is the purpose of a commission?

The purpose of a commission is to charge and empower a diverse group to own and lead the delivery of a piece of reform in service of our Big Opportunity. This *extreme teaming* approach enables us to innovate and deliver at pace, which experience has shown is not possible through traditional hierarchical approaches.

A well-articulated commission defines the direction and scope of the work, so that the extreme team is clear as to its purpose and what it is needs to deliver. This frees the group to define the 'how' – ie the activity they believe will deliver on the commission. They can then charge people across the system to lead on those pieces of work.



What is the structure of a commission?

A commission needs to strike a delicate balance between providing sufficient structure and information, whilst not veering into hierarchical territory of control. As a basic guide, it is recommended that you cover three areas:

- 1 Set out the 'why?' of the commission
- 2 Identify the reform question(s)
- 3 Set out the area(s) of scope.

Why? – the Commission

Why is this piece of work important? What's been happening that makes it important, and means reform is required? How is the work mission critical for our Big Opportunity, *Caring for Ayrshire*, and for balancing the Four Pillars?

Identify the central reform question(s)

As commissioner, it isn't your job to come up with the answers, or advise the team how to go about their work. The most important thing is to come up with the central reform question or statement that the group needs to work with in order to come up with new ways of thinking about the activity in question. The question needs to be high level enough to avoid telling the team what to do, yet specific to be clear what needs to be delivered.

The examples below are a guide, and are reform questions that 'extreme teams' in our organisation are currently working with:

- How will we deliver a planned approach to excellent unscheduled care in the right place at the right time?
- What specific pieces of cultural development work do we need to do to build a psychologically safe health and care system?
- How will we educate, support and equip our leaders to use the four pillars in how they think, lead and work across our health and care system?
- How will we deliver a TEC Exemplar Respiratory Pathway for the citizens of Ayrshire and Arran, using an approach that can be a model for other Boards?
- Undertake a focused assessment of PPE including end to end processes that ensures our staff and patients are kept safe.

Identify the areas of scope

Our experience has shown that the first thing an extreme team tends to do is try to sort out 'the world, the universe and everything' – it is a cultural favourite of ours! It is the job of the commission, therefore, to provide enough structure to contain the work and help the group to keep its focus. The purpose of this section is to break the overarching commission into chunks so that the group understands the spread of its responsibility.



A good thing to do when you have drafted your commission is to ask a couple of colleagues to read it. Their understanding and response to what you have written will give you good information as to what is clear or otherwise in how you have set things out.

A note on timescales

We have learned a lot about timescales over the last year. On the whole, long sprawling timescales do not work for extreme teaming unless the work is clearly phased and chunked up. Our experience has been that where groups have had a clear commission and agreed to a fast (and realistic!) timescale to deliver, we have seen a rapid and highly effective build up of energy, commitment and ownership in the group, deep thinking and wrestling with the ask through face-to-face and virtual meetings, and very high quality and innovative results delivered in a short space of time. The pace and rapid changeability of our context since the arrival of Covid-19 makes this approach even more relevant, and we have learned that our leaders and teams are energised by work that is meaningful, relevant and ‘cuts to the chase’ in this way. When the group has delivered on its commission it can then dissolve – or if appropriate be re-commissioned to deliver something new.

Identify your Sponsor(s)

A Sponsor for reform activity is someone who will advocate for the team and their work, and be a line of support / counsel / advice / guidance as and when the team expresses a need or runs into difficulties. It may also be someone in the hierarchy who has direct responsibility for the area of reform, and for whom a relationship with the team will be important. **It is important to remember, though, that this relationship is not hierarchical, and that the Sponsor’s role is not to performance manage the team.**

Identify your chair / co-chairs

As commissioner it is important to identify a chair, or co-chairs, for the group. Whether it is better led by one or the other arrangement will be determined by the nature of the reform activity.

Identify your team

Again depending on the nature of reform activity, the commissioner may choose to identify the group membership, or work with the chair / co-chairs to do this. It is very important to remember that **extreme teaming is not traditional** – that is to say, members are not chosen because of their position in the hierarchy, nor are they representative of the area in which they work. Members are chosen on the basis that they have assets, knowledge, interest, experience, skills, networks etc that they can bring to the table as part of a diverse reform team.



Our experience over the last 12 months has shown that small (ie no bigger than 6 if possible), very diverse groups are the most effective in delivering innovation at pace. This is because they are nimble and fleet-of-foot, and can communicate and respond to what happens in the work much more quickly and easily than large groups. We have also learned that psychological safety is quicker to build and maintain, which means the group can work with a greater level of challenge and therefore make the most of its diversity.

How to set up the commission

Once you have written the commission, there are three parts to setting it up. **It is mission critical not to take short cuts on this.** When you are setting up a commission, you are asking people to step out of the hierarchical space in order to lead and deliver on a piece of innovation. By definition, the piece of work will not be something that is already happening – and oftentimes, will most likely challenge or change what is already happening. In order to feel confident and clear about what you are asking them to do the co-chairs and the group will need time and space to ask questions, clarify what they need to know, and check out things they don't understand. If you don't take the time to do this and ensure that all of you are on the same page, the lack of clarity and resolution will play out in the group dynamic. The group may lack focus and feel unable to translate discussion into action, or they may start to experience problems in the dynamics. Our experience has shown us that there is sometimes a need for several conversations between the co-chairs, sponsors and commissioner to get things clear, and that it is *always* worth the investment of time!

Once the co-chairs and the group is clear about the commission, we have seen repeatedly that they embrace the opportunity to think, wrestle with the challenge and do things differently, and put in an investment of time to do this work that they often surprise themselves with!

Step 1: Meet face to face with the chair/co-chairs, and work the commission through with them. Agree the membership of the team.

It is helpful to do this at the same time as providing them with the written information, rather than sending it to them beforehand.

Reform activity, by definition, is asking people to think and work differently. The risk with sending written information about reform activity without a discussion is that people read and interpret it within existing ways of thinking, and unnecessary confusion / misunderstanding can sometimes follow. The response of your chair / co-chair will show you how you need to develop and clarify the written information further if needed.

Step 2: Once the co-chairs have been commissioned, as commissioner you then formally invite the team. Send an invitation to each member individually, and your written commission, advising them that an initial meeting will be set up which you will attend for the first hour or so, in order to go over the commission and work through any questions and clarification.



3 Attend the first meeting and take the time to set out the commission, being clear what the purpose of the reform activity is and how it links to our ambition and vision at Ayrshire and Arran.

The most important thing here is that the team has the chance to ask questions, clarify their understanding and make sense of what they are being asked to lead. Because it is reform activity, it is likely to be different to anything they may be currently involved in. People often express anxiety about capacity and the time needed to do 'extra work', and this is where your messages as commissioner are mission critical.

Our experience in all our extreme teaming activity has shown that once committed, people not only create the time to attend team meetings, they usually add in additional meetings and get together weekly, twice-weekly or even daily in order to achieve the pace and momentum the work needs. The introduction of Microsoft Teams during the Covid-19 pandemic made this rapid, fleet-of-foot communication much easier than it has been for us before, and the pace this generates enables teams to produce radical results in a short space of time, surprising even themselves! Some extreme teams have become so motivated and purposeful in their work that they describe these meetings as the highlight of their week! It is important to communicate these experiences to new teams who might be anxious, and invite their curiosity and excitement in what they might create together, rather than fuel any worry about how they might fail.

It is also important to message that reform is not 'extra' work – it *is* the work. In other words, it's not more work on top of our current work, it is work to *change* how we currently work. We need to do this to deliver on our Big Opportunity, *Caring for Ayrshire*, to balance the four pillars, and to provide the excellent services we have committed to for our citizens. We need to do this because it is the right thing to do.

Another important thing to do is to clarify roles and responsibilities and how everyone will communicate – you as commissioner, the Sponsors, and the co-chairs – and how this is different from traditional hierarchical communication.

And lastly...

Commissioning is not a formulaic activity that you necessarily 'get right in one take!' It is a vehicle that brings structure and scope to reform activity, and supports the development of a set of relationships. It is important to keep going with the commissioning conversation(s) until everyone is clear and on the same page.

Don't forget that these discussions in and of themselves generate learning and shifts in thinking, and you might find that greater clarity about the work emerges for all involved once you start talking. Our experience of extreme teaming has shown that regular, constructive feedback loops like this fuel energy, motivation and the willingness to do things differently because people feel safe.



Sponsoring an 'Extreme Team': Some Notes for Guidance

If you are the Sponsor of an 'extreme team', you have a unique opportunity to make a mission-critical contribution to leading reform at Ayrshire and Arran.

The Sponsor role is relatively new in our system, and we continue to learn even after 12 months of implementing extreme teaming. Learning is fundamental to building a psychologically safe organisation, and to making sure our thinking and habits are working for us. Although this note will provide you with guidance and pointers as to how to deliver the Sponsor role, it is also yours to shape and bring to life however you think will best deliver on our vision and goal. It is important that you see it as an opportunity to learn and develop, and to make the most of your experience, skills and assets so that you can support your 'extreme team' to be the best they can be.

The main responsibilities of a Sponsor are as follows:

To advocate for the work of the extreme team The extreme team has been formally commissioned to deliver on a particular area of activity in service of our reform agenda. As such they will be thinking differently, taking risks and bringing approaches and recommendations to bear that are different to how they have been before, and are most likely not traditional. Your role as Sponsor is to support, understand and advocate for their work in the system, and when appropriate, to provide whatever the group might need in terms of steer / structure / guidance / counsel / advice so that they can deliver. **This will not be on a hierarchical or 'performance management' basis, but on a needs-led basis in service of what they are developing.**

Communication is key in this relationship. Given that extreme teaming is new in the system, and the Sponsor is a non-hierarchical role, it is important to pay attention to how you choose to communicate. Email and texting out of context can play out in confusion and miscommunication, whereas informal face to face, phone or contact on Microsoft Teams can be experienced much more positively. Once trust and psychological safety is built in the relationship it has the potential to be a mutually beneficial two-way dialogue that serves as a strong supportive platform from which reform work can progress at pace.

First point of escalation for team when encountering barriers The extreme team is leading activity that will challenge the status quo, and may well happen that they run into organisational blocks or barriers that extend beyond their reach in terms of working through them. As Sponsor you would be their first port of call in talking this through and working out what to do. You might decide together that a) there are things they can do as a team to move through the barrier, b) there are things they can do and other things others need to do, or c) the situation needs to be dealt with somewhere else entirely. The most important thing is that a way forward is surfaced, so that organisational learning beyond the extreme team can continue.



Again, this is not a *hierarchical* situation – ie the issues are not being ‘sent up the line’. It is more a matter of ‘right place, right time’ – working together to shed light on a situation until it reaches a point at which next steps become obvious.

Primary relationship is with Commissioner, Chair/Co-Chairs and sometimes with team As Sponsor your primary relationship is with the commissioner of the extreme team and with the chair/co-chairs. It is helpful to communicate proactively with them on any matters that are important for the progress of the commission, and to be available to them for any need of you.

Actively engage with the hierarchy in order to progress the work as required All extreme teams are likely to generate some pieces of work or propositions for reform beyond the scope of the team that require the involvement of the hierarchy. Your role in ‘the space between’ will be important here. You might need to provide steer to help the team in their own engagement with the hierarchy, or use your own hierarchy hat to move things forward as required.

As you will have read in previous sections, the skill to move in an agile way between organisational grip and reform is a learning curve for us all! Our purpose here is ‘right place, right person, right time’ as it is with our services – and as we get more practice under our belts we will find out what works and what doesn’t!



Chairing / Co-chairing an 'Extreme Team': Some Notes for Guidance

If you are the chair / co-chair of an 'extreme team' (which may also be called a Leadership Group, depending on the commission), you have a unique opportunity to make a mission-critical contribution to our work to reform our health and care system.

This role is relatively new in our system, and we continue to learn from our experience. Although this note will provide you with guidance and pointers as to how to deliver the role, it is also yours to shape and bring into colour however you think will best deliver on our vision and goal. It is important that you see it as an opportunity to learn and develop, and to make the most of your experience, skills and assets, so that you can maximise the diversity of your team and deliver the innovation we need at pace.

As Chair or Co-Chair of an 'extreme team' you will inevitably be wearing other 'hats' in the system. It is very important not to confuse roles these with your role as Chair or Co-Chair of this team. All participants, including you, are there in your capacity as members of the team, *not* as 'representatives' of other parts of the system, professions or disciplines.

The earlier parts of this section have set out some important factors in leading reform, all of which apply in your role as chair / co-chair. The pointers in this note are therefore more specific, as follows:

Provide leadership of extreme team As discussed in the piece on *extreme teaming*, your team is diverse, and this is the very source of its capacity to innovate and think differently. This can also be what gets in its way if the work is insufficiently led and contained. It is important in your role to keep bringing everyone back to the purpose and goal of the work and how it links with our ambition at Ayrshire and Arran. This keeps a common 'rudder' that everyone feels connected to, and can keep joining things up. You will need to do this with ownership and energy, and to build that same ownership in the team. This makes it easier for the team to think differently and take risks as the work progresses. Some teams have the our ambition, vision and goals in visual form up on the walls at each meeting, so that it is easy at all times to link back in to the 'why' and hold course.

Build psychological safety This is covered in detail towards the end of this Guide. We also have a dedicated Ayrshire and Arran Resource Pack on this subject, *Building Psychological Safety: A Handbook*, which you can access via the Contact Details at the end of this Handbook.

Structure and lead 'extreme teaming' meetings As an 'extreme team' you can meet for as long and as often as you like. However as a rule of thumb most tend to meet for frequently – weekly, twice weekly and even daily – so that they can drive pace on a particular piece of work. The meeting time passes quickly and it is easy to waste it if you are not focused.



Nothing de-motivates people more quickly than pointless meetings! As chair/co-chair it's important to make sure there is a balance between keeping an overview of the work, inviting/supporting meaty discussion on reform issues, making decisions, problem-solving any challenges, and following things through to conclusion. It is also important to ensure that everyone participates, all voices are heard and diversity of view is welcomed. If in doubt, come back to your purpose and goals, and see where you are.

The introduction of Microsoft Teams during the Covid-19 pandemic has expanded the pace, flexibility and accessibility of options for whole-group communication, and it will help your work and the building of your team to keep a balance of face-to-face and virtual communication where you can.

Ensure that work of the team is consistent with principles of reform and extreme teaming Reform is about innovation, and extreme teaming is about optimising diversity to deliver innovation at pace outwith normal hierarchical controls. As chair/co-chair this will be different to meetings or groups you might have chaired before, particularly those in which you have a hierarchical role or authority. Your authority in this setting comes from the commission rather than your hierarchical role. Your work is to enable your team to stay focused on and connected with that commission, such that they can make the best use of their assets and diversity to problem-solve and deliver on the challenges of the work.

Any work you can do to encourage thinking, open questions, listening, checking and exploring understanding, widening perspectives and expanding flexibility in how people see things will help the team to improve. It is important also to provide direction and steer to keep the group on course and connected to the commission, so that you don't drift or circle in ways that do not progress the work.

Accountability for delivery of commission The team as a whole is accountable for leading on the delivery of the commission. However in your role as chair/co-chair you have a particular role in maintaining oversight of delivery and ensuring that the team works and delivers within scope, and stays focused on reform rather than operational delivery. It is common for teams to try to 'boil the ocean' when tackling a commission, and if left unchecked this would play out in overwhelm and/or investment of energy in activity that may not be in service of the goal. ***Extreme teaming*** creates a unique context for focus because it is outwith the normal hierarchical/organisational 'push and pull' – and so in your role you have a clear mandate to help the group hold course on this and avoid distraction.

Provision of assurance to Commissioner if/as needed As chair/co-chair you have a 'direct line' to the commissioner of the work, and can expect to provide periodic assurance to him or her as to how the work is going. The more proactive you can be about this the better, as regular communication builds trust and confidence in the work. Provision of assurance will not fit normal hierarchical structures, and so it is worth discussing with your commissioner if and how such information would be provided if it is to be in written form. On the whole, assurance from an extreme team is expressed through information regarding impact of *delivery* – and this is what will your commissioner will be looking for.



Active linking with Sponsor(s) as required by the work As you will see from the 'Roles and Responsibilities' chart earlier in this section, your Sponsor is there to advocate for your work and to act as the first point of call for any guidance, counsel, steer or advice that you might need. Again, it is not a hierarchical relationship. As with your commissioner, proactive linking with your Sponsor will help to build trust and confidence in your work and build the relationship.

Active engagement with the hierarchy as required by the work There will be times in your work where there is a need to engage with the hierarchy in order to move things forward, and this might be initiated by you or by the hierarchy. This needs to be a co-operative and mutually enabling relationship, even if there is a natural tension between these spaces at times due to the qualitatively different nature of what is delivered in each. These tensions are not *personal* – they are simply to be noticed and worked through together.

It is important to remember that those with hierarchical hats on have worn them for years, and that extreme teaming is still new for us – and so it will be easy for people to fall into hierarchical ways of working and communicating with you even if it not the right setting for it. It helps to respectfully call this out and re-set the communication when it happens, so that everyone can learn – and then to work with the hierarchy to distil what the outcome of the dialogue needs to be. Avoid email and texting when communicating about these sorts of issues, as miscommunication and misunderstanding can spiral and get in the way.

Build motivation and ownership of the work within the team by maintaining strong and regular communication The importance of this cannot be over-stated, and has been a tough learning curve for some of our extreme teams. Communication is one of the core elements of building psychological safety, upon which the success of extreme teaming rests (more about this in Section 4). There needs to be frequent whole-group communication to keep everyone connected, invite contribution and participation, maintain a sense of energy and direction, and build a sense of team. Some groups do this via team texting such as WhatsApp as well as by email between meetings, and this works very well. We now have Microsoft Teams available to us, which enables very fast and flexible communication. One of our extreme teams developed an entire set of planning principles over a weekend by WhatsApp, because they were so motivated! It is important that group communication is exactly that – group communication, unless one-to-one communication is important for a particular piece of work. This keeps trust and open-ness, and a sense of 'all for one, one for all'.

An essential element of communication is follow-through: doing what you say you are going to do, following things through to conclusion, and communicating clearly if you decide to change course.

Confusion, loss of confidence and cynicism can set in quickly if leaders – often unintentionally – become inconsistent in delivering on their commitments, or say yes when they actually mean no. Be attentive to how much you take on and ensure that you as leader, and the team as a whole, do not fall into the trap of 'doing the doing' instead of leading. This quickly leads to overwhelm and risks fragmentation and disconnection in the team.



If you notice that this has happened, observe it and invite a discussion about it. Work out with your team what your options are and the changes you are going to make together to loosen up the work once again.

Maintain communication with wider organisation You are leading change, and therefore bringing challenge and change into the wider organisation that will require people to do things differently. For some, this might bump into things they have done a certain way for a long time, and which they are comfortable or familiar with. Regular communication between your team and the wider organisation will build visibility, trust and confidence in your work, *especially* when it links the changes you are making with the benefits for your staff, services and citizens. As chair/co-chair it is important to develop, with your team, a way of communicating simply, easily and regularly, so that it becomes a 'heartbeat' of how you work. This will build energy and momentum for change in the system, and encourage people to trust that something new is possible and is happening. News doesn't have to be big news, remember – it simply needs to connect people with our vision and ambition, and keep that sense of urgency and energy alive.

Develop your own leadership Chairing / co-chairing an extreme team is a new role at Ayrshire and Arran, and will ask different things of you to any leadership roles you may have had before. Learning is fundamental to success, and core to our reform culture across our health and care system. It is important therefore to take care of your own development as a leader and do whatever you need to do to resource yourself in the role.

And – not a 'credit card between you' if you are co-chairs! If you are co-chairing an extreme team, it is mission critical that you work closely together and bring joint leadership to bear on the work at all times. This builds psychological safety in the Group, and also a lived experience of strong collaborative working. Take care to maintain equality in the relationship by sharing the chairing of the meetings, communicating equally in between and co-owning your messages and steer for the team. If you are drawn from different parts of the system it can put pressure on co-ordination of communication and decisions between you, so it is important to be extra disciplined about how you want to manage this.

Your work is about leading reform – creating a sustainable future for our health and care system for our citizens – and so all of these behaviours are essential in terms of building a solid foundation. No effort to do things differently is wasted, and every small difference can make a big difference. Make the most of your joint leadership to create something together and to bring your shared energy and diversity to the team so that you can all dare to succeed.



Commissioning Reform Activity in the Wider System as an Extreme Team: The Group Sponsor / Strategic Lead Relationship. How Does It Work?

What is the purpose of the Group Sponsor / Strategic Lead relationship?

As part of your 'extreme teaming' activity, you will – as a team – decide the areas of activity that you think are essential to deliver on your commission. Whilst you as the 'extreme team' hold the whole picture of reform activity, each specific piece of work will be owned by a member of the team, who will act as Group Sponsor for it and commission a Strategic Lead in the organisation to deliver it however they see fit. The Group Sponsor is responsible for maintaining oversight of an area of work 'from the helicopter' – ie knowing how that work is progressing, what's being delivered, what is needed in terms of support, and what the challenges are.

The purpose of each Sponsor / Strategic Lead relationship is threefold:

- a) To deliver an area of the reform activity specified in the plan of an 'extreme team';
- b) To spread the message of reform and build confidence in and engagement with change;
- c) To build capacity and capability in the system in service of our vision and ambition.

The Strategic Lead for each area of work is commissioned by the extreme team to lead on a particular piece of reform activity *according to the specific brief that the extreme team has developed*. The Strategic Lead will then take charge of *how* they will deliver the brief, and will work with whomever they see fit to take things forward. **Strategic Leads can sit in any position in the organisation – they are not hierarchical roles.** They are identified on the basis that they are a good match for the activity and are well placed to take the work forward, and their authority to lead comes from the commission.

Once all this is in place the 'extreme team' holds the overview of all reform activity that you have agreed will deliver on your goal. Through your regular meetings and discussions, you maintain a live picture of what's happening and how it all joins up, and make decisions as a group as to what needs to be done where across the system. These conversations help to manage the unpredictability of this kind of work, and to come up with solutions to things that might be new to you. The 'extreme team' is also responsible, through the Chair(s), for providing assurance to the Commissioner of the work regarding progress and delivery.



What is important about the Group Sponsor / Strategic Lead relationship?

You are commissioning your Strategic Leads to lead a piece of work to deliver reform. This means that they will be stepping outside of normal ways of working and normal role relationships to do something different.

They need to feel safe, supported and *connected* with you, and with the purpose, vision and goal, so that they can take risks, experiment, learn, and draw on their assets and experience to do whatever the work requires.

This does not mean that you have to have all the answers, or 'do the doing', or get involved in the detail. What it does mean, however, is that you need to keep regular contact with your Strategic Lead, build the relationship, and keep a strong two-way communication between you.

As mentioned earlier reform work is uncertain, unpredictable and challenges the status quo. This might be unnerving for your Strategic Leads to start with. You cannot build safety through email and texting, although these have their place. Trust and safety are built through investing time in the relationship, and in ongoing conversations about the work. It is truly amazing how many complex and tough issues can be managed simply by people taking the time to talk with each other, and having Microsoft Teams available to us allows us to 'see' each other more frequently in addition to face-to-face relating.

Safety is also created through clear direction, parameters within which to work, timelines within which to deliver and structure *in terms of planned review slots and regular conversations*. This supports pace and energy to deliver. This is NOT the same thing as telling people what to do! It is up to your Strategic Leads how they take the work forward. The safer people feel with the structure they have and their relationship with you, the more enabled they will feel to simply get on with things.

A common response is to feel that there is not the time to invest in face to face and Teams contact with people in this way. This is mistaken. At the moment, an unprecedented amount of time is taken up with reactive working and crisis. As a leader the more you invest time in building safe, trust-based relationships geared to delivering reform, the less time you will need to deal with crisis, because better ways of doing things will take over.

Things to pay attention to

Invest time in the commissioning conversation

Again, you are commissioning reform activity, which hasn't been done before. The initial conversation to commission the work will need time and space, so that you and your Strategic Lead(s) can sit down together and properly talk things through. There will probably be a lot of questions, challenge and enquiry, and you don't have to know all the answers – indeed you *cannot* know all the answers! This is because reform activity takes you into the unknown – you are working to create new solutions to our challenges.



These early conversations are rich and fruitful in shaping the work even further and creating a platform from which next steps can be identified, whatever they are.

As Sponsor you need to stay clear about purpose, vision and goal of the commission, and bring the conversation back on course if your Strategic Lead gets tangled up in the status quo. It's also really important to be patient if the initial responses are that the work 'cannot be done'. Take the time to learn more about that person's thinking, *what they think the specific barriers are* and what the options would include for dealing with them, and what that would need. Once people get more specific, it tends to get easier to sort out what's in the way.

At the end of the conversation make sure you've agreed who is going to do what and when, and the date you will have your next conversation.

Structure in your regular conversations

Plan the time to talk and connect with your Strategic Lead in your diary. If you don't, it won't happen. If it doesn't happen, the work will not progress. Structuring time in this way removes stress, because everyone's commitment and availability is planned, and so you will be able to pick up and respond to what happens. This maintains the flow of information in and through the 'extreme team' too.

Keep a focus on delivery

A favourite cultural pattern is to talk a lot about things and then not do them, or to commit to doing things and then not do them. There are many reasons for this. Perhaps things are too big, too vague, too abstract, or not thought through enough. Perhaps people are not actually clear even though they say they are. Perhaps people don't have what they need. Perhaps they don't know how to prioritise or feel overwhelmed. Perhaps they are not gathering the right data or information and don't actually know what needs to be done. It could be anything!

As Group Sponsor, keeping track on progress of delivery is essential for your extreme team to deliver on your commission. The extreme team is collectively accountable for it, and for knowing what is in place to ensure delivery. This is where having a strong relationship of safety and trust with your Strategic Leads is so important. It will enable you *both* to ask straight questions, sit down to discuss tough issues and things that don't have an immediate answer, and find solutions to challenges.

It will also enable you to escalate anything that you have 'tried it all' with yet cannot solve – for example an organisational challenge that is much wider than the piece of work you are sponsoring and therefore needs a wider approach.

Above all, remember that leading reform is ultimately about people and relationships, and coming together to do what the work needs at the time it needs it.

“When I started out as a Sponsor, I thought it would be extra work. I was nervous of the commitment. Then I realised it IS the work. It all fell into place when I ‘got’ that I don't have to have all the answers. Actually, it isn't possible to have all the answers.



We work together to do what is needed. I loved our meetings and finding our way together. And I loved seeing the Strategic Lead grow in confidence and enjoy themselves in a role they hadn't experienced before".

"Trust is everything. If you don't build trust, and you don't communicate, you both just do what you've always done and pretend it's something else".

"There is very little you can't sort out by talking about it and making the time to connect. It's so simple, and yet we have got so out of the habit. Poor communication wastes time and energy, and slows things down".

"It can be scary to watch Strategic Leads doing things in ways that you wouldn't do them yourself. You worry about failure and being responsible. I found that when we talked regularly and kept in touch, it was easier to let go. It was also easier for me to say if I felt worried, because we knew where the other was coming from".

Building on what works

Our Respiratory 'extreme team' discovered that their Strategic Leads could function as a community of practice on behalf of the whole pathway, as well as leads of their own streams of improvement.

They embedded a structure of bi-monthly large-scale meetings, at which Strategic Leads and associated colleagues would participate, in order to discuss a theme or range of topics that had become relevant at that time. Sometimes these were exploratory, sometimes they were informative, sometimes they were consultative, and sometimes they were heavily pragmatic. Because reform work is emergent it was not always possible to predict the focus of the sessions in advance, and so dates were scheduled and prioritised by Strategic Leads anyway knowing that the subject would become clear in time. The Respiratory extreme team would clarify the focus and approach to the session a week to 10 working days in advance.

These sessions were well attended and highly energised, balancing time for cross-system discussion and focused development work, and making the most of having 'the system in the room' to generate new conversations. There were some surprising unintended outcomes too – our COPD app was an idea that emerged towards the end of one of the sessions, the development and implementation of which was progressed at pace by the extreme team in the days following.

This is just one example of the kind of creativity that you can implement in the 'reform space' – and the freedom to try things out and do things differently can be energising and liberating.

The more your Strategic Leads own, are enthused by and empowered to take forward reform work, the more energy there is available within the system to do things differently. We are used to hierarchical control as a way of 'getting things done', whereas the sponsor/strategic lead relationship is more like a partnership in which you are both dedicated in your particular roles to ensuring delivery. Communication and trust are the glue that bind this together.



In the following section we provide you with a 'tried and tested' structure of prompts for commissioning activity in the system as a Group Sponsor of an Extreme Team. We have found that when the Team takes the time to think these questions through, you are well set up to sit down with your chosen Strategic Lead and do the same with them. To have these written documents available in this way serves the dual purpose of a shared reference against which you can check in and update regularly, and share with your sponsors and commissioner as information as to how your work as a team is progressing.



Scoping and Commissioning Reform Activity Prompts for Use By 'Extreme Teams'

Activity identified

Part 1: Deciding the shape and direction of your commission

What is the purpose of the piece of work you want to commission, and what do you want it to deliver?

What are the planning assumptions or principles that you consider are important for this piece of work?

If it was successful, what is the evidence of impact you would expect to see? How does this deliver on your commission, and excellence as per the planning assumptions / principles you may have identified as a team?

What topics do you think you need to cover in the initial commissioning conversation you have? And if you were in your Strategic Lead's shoes, what might you want to talk about?



What kind of timeline do you think this work needs? If it needs to be phased, what would a first phase look like? (nb experience has shown that long, sprawling timescales do not work! Go for pace and momentum!)

How often will you and your Strategic Lead(s) meet so that you can build your relationship and maintain communication?

What regular review points will you set so that everyone's in touch with what's happening?

What kind of information / data do you think might be needed, to support the commissioning conversation? Where and how will you source it?

Who will be the Team Sponsor for this work?

And who will be the Strategic Lead(s)?



Part 2: What conditions are needed to ensure successful delivery of your commission?

What do you think would inspire and give your Strategic Lead(s) confidence to embrace this work, and how do you see your job as Sponsor in doing this?

What will they need to know about our vision, purpose and goal so that they understand that this is reform and will require change – maybe change they are not initially comfortable with? How might you help them to see its importance?

What challenges do you think they might face, and what support do you think will be needed to enable them to work with these? How will you go about helping them to name their challenges?

What challenges might you face as Sponsor, and how will you prepare / resource yourself to deal with these?

How will you make it safe for your Strategic Leads to enquire, challenge and test their thinking with you?

What will you do as Sponsor to help your Strategic Lead stay motivated and on purpose if they run into difficulties?



Extreme Team (aka Leadership Group): Notes for Guidance

As a member of an 'extreme team', you are a pioneer in Ayrshire and Arran's reform agenda and part of leading change to balance the four pillars, radically improve the experience of our staff and deliver on our Big Opportunity, *Caring for Ayrshire*.

As you will have read in other sections we are all on a learning curve here, and there is no 'one right way' for extreme teaming. Every team is unique with a unique commission, its own diversity of members, and its own ways of working. These notes are intended to serve as a guide and some pointers, so that you can step into this new space as an extreme team member and take up your role with greater confidence.

Ownership and communication of reform in the wider organisation As an extreme team you are charged with a commission to lead reform in service of a particular question and arena of activity that is mission critical for our vision and goals at Ayrshire and Arran. Part of your role as a member is to visibly and actively own this agenda in the wider organisation, and to communicate and engage others in respect of the team's work and its intended impact and benefits. This gets easier to do as the team's activity is clarified and agreed. The visibility of reform invites interest and curiosity, and starts to build trust and confidence in the possibility that things can and will be different. Do not underestimate your role and influence here, and the difference you can make in your own energy and activity on behalf of your team.

Whole system working and thinking Extreme teaming works across divisions, boundaries and silos – it is by definition diverse. You are not there as a representative of your profession / area / department, but as a leader of reform with a profile that lends the right diversity to the richness needed in that particular team. As such you own the entire activity of the team, whether it sits within what you know or not. This means that your voice counts on all issues, and your perspective on something you are not directly familiar with might be the one that notices something everyone else has missed.

Building of capacity and capability in the system via the Group Sponsor / Strategic Lead relationships, in order to deliver sustainable change The note 'Extreme Teaming: Leadership Group Sponsor / Strategic Lead Relationship: How Does It Work?' sets out what is required here.

Co-operate and work with the hierarchy as needed At times your work as an extreme team may need you to co-operate with the hierarchy in order to move things forward. This relationship is important, and not always easy to navigate because you serve different purposes in these arenas even though it is for the same goal. Communication is vital – and more than that, the right communication in the right way at the right time.



This strips out a lot of the confusion or misunderstandings that can arise through emails and texts, particularly as everyone is learning how to work with these new relationships and ways of thinking and working.

Support the chair/co-chairs to provide assurance as and when required Your chair / co-chairs will meet with the commissioner periodically to 'check in' as regards the progress of the commission, and to provide any assurance that might be required. As members of the team it is important to support the chair/co-chairs with this work, and make sure that information regarding any activity you are sponsoring is readily available when needed.

Model the culture and behaviours that are sought through reform Reform is the process through which the future emerges – rather than a process that *leads to* the future. This means that everything you do, everything you say, *is* the future – right now. Another way of saying this is that an extreme team is a microcosm of the future, 'living in the present'. The way you go about your business, the way you communicate, the way you lead, and the way you engage with each other and others in the system, therefore needs to be true to the changes the system is seeking to make. Your integrity and congruence in this will build ownership, engagement, trust and psychological safety in the system leave behind ways of doing things that no longer work but may currently still feel comfortable and familiar to people.

Participation in regular face-to-face and virtual meetings to progress reform activity. These can be weekly, bi-weekly and even daily, depending on what you build as a team. This is 'mission critical' to the success of reform. Regular communication and discussion builds relationships, psychological safety, trust and pace more quickly than anything else. Most people at the start worry about capacity, imagining that they will struggle to find this time 'on top of' other things they already have to do. Our experience has been that not only do people immediately re-prioritise when reform work starts, they actively find the time for extra meetings so that they can create additional pace and drive in the work. Some have reported that the meetings are the highlight of their week! Meetings are variously reported to be dynamic, active, focused, fun, challenging, messy, tense, and relaxed, usually with lots of food and lots of learning! We now have Microsoft Teams available to us which brings in an extra dimension of fast, fleet-of-foot connection. Your participation and contribution is fundamental to success, your voice counts, and your energy makes a difference. No matter how often and for how long you meet, you will find that hours and hours of wasted time is saved, and that you will gain from this commitment in ways that are hard to foresee at the start.

Follow-through to delivery The purpose of liberating reform activity from normal hierarchical controls is to enable work to be initiated, progressed and followed through to delivery **at pace** without unnecessary impediment. Extreme teams / leadership groups are therefore responsible for ensuring that work *is* followed through to conclusion, and doing whatever is required to enable this to happen through your Strategic Leads. Sometimes the way forward won't be obvious, and this is where you need to take issues back into your Group to problem-solve together, or make the time to sit down with your Strategic Leads or other stakeholders to think something through.



There's no blueprint or rulebook here – you are free to use your experience, wisdom and knowledge to find the best ways through, and to encourage and enable others to do the same.

On the next page, you will see Ayrshire and Arran's Decision Framework.

We created this to help our extreme teams think through your recommendations and propositions for reform that you want to take into discussions with the hierarchy. Our experience has shown that this framework supports extreme teams to develop their thinking with depth and rigour, and has helped them hold a strong line of sight to what they want to do and to demonstrate how and why they think it will deliver the reform and innovation we need. The document then serves as a very well developed reference for discussion, learning and progress of the work.



NHS Ayrshire & Arran Decision Framework

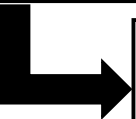
Decisions must be tested against the “Common Purpose” and the Model of Care



Before You Start
 Does your idea align with and enable our Common Purpose and Model of Care?
 Is it mission critical – i.e. high impact? How do you know?
 If you’re confident that your answers to the above are ‘yes’, then move on to the following:



Your scenario so far
 What is it you want to do / progress / implement?
 What would be the evidence of high impact, and on what basis do you think these improvements would be sustainable?
 On what evidence or information are you basing your hypotheses?
 Is your idea still mission critical?



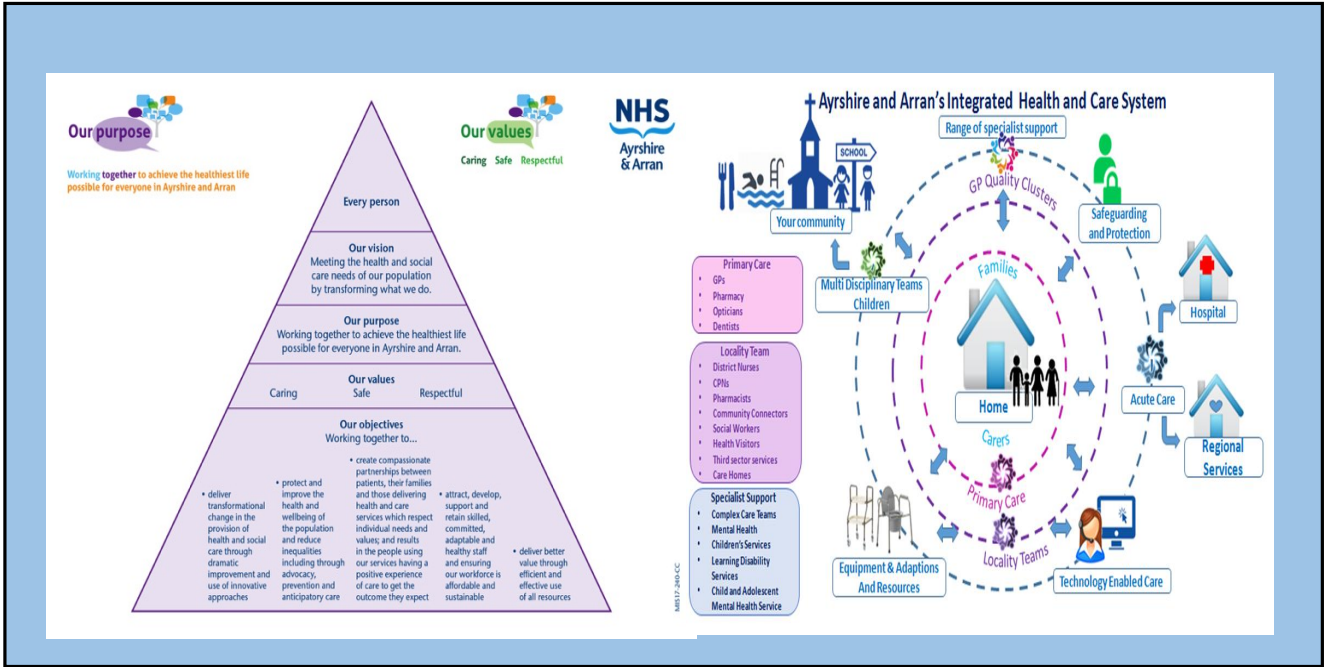
Testing and developing your thinking: step 1
 Can you show where and how what you are proposing impacts on the system as a whole, and where major changes might lie?
 How is your thinking innovative, and/or different from previous approaches/solutions?
 Is your idea still mission critical?



Testing and developing your thinking: step 2
 How does your idea make the most of our existing assets, resources and expertise in service of high quality impacts for citizens and staff?
 How does your idea meet the best value test?
 If you are recommending an ‘invest to save’, how and where in the system will assets/resources be released, and how is this of benefit in the longer term?
 Who will the key participants be in making your idea happen, and what conditions will be needed to enable the work?
 What risks have you identified, and how will these be managed?



DECISION





Hierarchy and extreme teaming – working in the space between

Extreme teaming takes place outwith the hierarchy, which is why it is an effective way to empower and enable delivery of innovation at pace.

It doesn't *replace* the hierarchy, however. The hierarchy performs a vital ongoing role in maintaining operational grip.

In a large, complex system like ours neither function can exist without the other. Both perform an essential and valuable role.

Hierarchy and extreme teaming are not mutually exclusive, therefore. Whilst each is distinct in its role, what it delivers, and how it delivers it, they are interdependent and need to work together as and when appropriate to ensure delivery of reform. At times, this relationship will be in tension. This is not wrong, the fault of either, or a sign that 'things are not working'. It is simply a natural consequence of qualitatively different functions coming together. Any tensions that emerge are a signal and opportunity for dialogue, seeking understanding, negotiation and shared agreement as to how issues need to be taken forward.

It is important to realise that those in the hierarchy that are new to extreme teaming may feel unnerved, uncertain and anxious when they are party to activity and decision-making that is not within their control. Similarly those in extreme teams may feel anger, frustration and resistance if they perceive the hierarchy to be attempting to control or 'performance manage' their activity. Both reactions are entirely understandable and to be expected in a situation where everyone is learning, and everyone has something at stake in what they are trying to do.

When these tensions emerge, the most important thing is to step *in*, meet each other and communicate, rather than step *away* and allow beliefs and stories about each to kick in and spiral. A good question to ask might be, "what does the work need here?" or "what is the work asking of us here?" or "what's the next right thing for me to do to make a difference here?" This usually surfaces a number of issues, which will be relevant for both hierarchy and extreme team. It also cuts across any temptation to escalate our emotions and try to guess what the other is thinking by shifting our focus onto our shared endeavour and what is needed next in both functions to move through any current challenges.

Timely, considered communication in the right place at the right time is therefore key in this relationship. You will find that our cultural habits of "speed=best" and over-reliance on emails and texts tends to create miscommunication, waste time and energy, and play out in unnecessary interpersonal tensions, creating problems that then need time and space to be resolved. It is far more effective to invest that time and space up front by communicating in the most helpful way to ensure messages and questions are clear.



Building Psychological Safety

(Please see Amy C Edmondson (2019), *The Fearless Organisation: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation and Growth*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc)

As mentioned many times throughout this Handbook, psychological safety is fundamental to the success of extreme teaming. To build psychological safety in our teams is therefore a core leadership responsibility.

The most important dimension of our work is *to be able to talk about, and respond to, what is happening in reality, in the right place at the right time*. This enables us to stay on course, keep pace and focus, and work together to create solutions to the challenges we encounter. This might sound obvious, but as humans we will often do anything to avoid it! – and often completely out of awareness.

Perhaps you have heard, or experienced yourself, examples of the following:

“We knew that at the time. Why didn’t anyone say anything?”

“The signs were there all along. Somehow we didn’t see them”.

“I didn’t dare say it. It felt too obvious, like I had missed something everyone else knew”.

“I didn’t want to look stupid”.

“Everyone else seemed to know things I didn’t”.

“Something didn’t feel right to me. I wish I had said something, because I found out later I was right”.

“I didn’t bother saying anything. No-one would have listened anyway”.

“I knew something wasn’t right, but it wasn’t my subject area and I didn’t want to risk offending people”.

“If I had opened my mouth I would have risked retribution or someone getting back at me later”.

“But they are a senior person! I can’t challenge a senior person in my role – it wouldn’t be right”.

These are all examples of situations in which there is insufficient psychological safety for people to trust their own experience, and each other, enough to do what the work requires. A lack of psychological safety is not necessarily because people don’t care, or intend that these things should happen. It suggests that people do not spend enough time building and sustaining the *conditions* for it – usually because ‘there is too much to do’, ‘it takes too much time’, and so on.



Psychological safety is the foundation on which everything else rests. It is the 'beating heart' of our ability to do the right thing in the right place at the right time, for our staff and our citizens.

To build and sustain psychological safety is the most important work you will do as a leader, and in the end, what will save you time and energy as you tackle complex challenges.

The following elements are essential:

- **Maintaining an unequivocal line of sight to our purpose, direction and intended outcomes.** What binds us all together, in the end, is our vision, purpose and common goal. The more complex, unpredictable, ambiguous and fast-paced our environment, the easier it is to lose sight of these, particularly in the face of tough challenges. This is when work can become fragmented, disconnected and conflicted, which plays out in our interpersonal relationships.

As you will have read earlier, the greatest source of an 'extreme team's' strength is its diversity. Yet if there is not enough psychological safety, this same diversity can be what gets in the way, because people cannot find enough common ground to stay connected.

Vision, purpose, direction and intended outcomes are your common ground, together with strong communication. As a leader it is mission critical to build engagement, ownership and participation in these. It is the backbone of your work, and the rudder with which you will navigate and hold course through uncertainty, and build trust and ownership of a shared agenda.

- **Encouraging and supporting open-ness of debate, contribution and perspective.** At times your discussions will be extremely crunchy due to the diversity referred to earlier – yet this crunchiness is the meat of our ability to be innovative. Conflict and tension is to be welcomed, *when it is respectful and in service of our work*. People can understandably feel very emotional and impassioned about their perspectives, and as a leader it can be a delicate balance to support expression of this whilst containing the potential for it to get personal.

Conflict and disagreement is not about our worth as individuals, or perceived rights and wrongs of our personal views about things. It is the point at which different worldviews bump into each other. Our focus as leaders needs to be, "how can this conversation serve our work and what we want to deliver together"? Our culture at the moment can be conflict-avoidant due to our tendency to take things personally, and so our ability to keep returning to the work, and what the work needs, will help us to build resilience and skill in these discussions.

Open-ness includes anyone of us being able, no matter our role or position in the hierarchy, to observe and call out our experience openly - even if we are the only person in a team / room / situation to be thinking or feeling this way.



You might be the one person who has caught something everyone else has missed, or the one person who has information that is vital to progress yet has been overlooked or discounted for some reason. Psychological safety is what makes it possible for someone to speak out and be heard, even if the information is disruptive or challenging. Our values of safe, caring and respectful are fundamental here, and our question – how might / how does this serve our work?

- **Maintaining transparent, consistent and responsive communication.** In order to feel safe it is important that communication is open, and that it is done in a considered way. Many of us work in a reactive or crisis-oriented environment and so our culture is to fire off emails and information habitually ‘as it happens’, often unwittingly, rather than take the time to speak to people when this would actually deliver a far better outcome. This can be confusing and even feel undermining for people when we are seeking to embed a proactive culture of planning and joint working, and in the early days, can unwittingly undermine confidence in the work.

Everything we do as leaders makes a difference. Part of our role with communication is – again – to keep returning to what it is we want to achieve, and to choose the most appropriate way of doing it. The volume of communication we all experience in the 21st century is so intense that many of us feel we do not have the time to invest in face-to-face communication, or to lift the phone. If we believe this we are not seeing our reality, which is *the amount of time we all spend in dealing with the consequences of not communicating directly*, and the loss of trust and responsiveness that follows.

Communication is the fabric of our connection, and the foundation of trust. It is the first improvement people usually want to make in any kind of development work, and the aspect of organisational life that comes in for the most criticism. It is something we can improve immediately, with profoundly positive consequences, simply by each of us choosing to do so.

- **Staying focused on reality.** By definition, a reactive/crisis culture is full of stories and behaviours around drama, catastrophe, shroud-waving, blame, helplessness and defensiveness. If this is familiar to you then your leadership role is very much around holding an overview of what is happening such that everyone’s perceptions and lived experience are taken into account, yet do not supersede the facts and wider context of the situation. Furthermore it is important to bring people back to a place where options and possibilities for intervention can be identified and assessed. This re-ignites ownership of the situation, agency and power / responsibility to act.

As this culture is built over time in our teams, they will recognise their own pattern of crisis and be in a position – there and then – to choose different responses. If fear / panic / dogmatism / adversarial thinking sets in, a good place to start is usually with helping people to identify the facts of the situation and the evidence they are basing these on. This calms the situation and invites clearer thinking.



Our vision of delivering the right health and care in the right place at the right time is all about being able to notice and respond to reality. 'Calm heads', clear thinking, good communication and strong relationships make this possible.

- **Experimentation and learning, including from failure** Reform is about innovation and doing things differently. We cannot know in advance what the impact of our activity will be, even with the best hypotheses and data available. A critical element of psychological safety is, therefore, a commitment to learning from what happens no matter what happens, and avoiding blame / shame if something doesn't work. Everything is learning, and sometimes the most disastrous seeming events can play out in unexpectedly fruitful consequences – nothing is black and white. The main thing is to keep noticing and talking about how something is playing out, and acting in a timely way if it becomes clear that a change of course is needed.
- **Building our resilience.** Reform does not go in straight lines. There can be sudden, swift and surprising shifts in the work, there can be incremental shifts, and there can be long periods where nothing seems to be happening – and all of this at once. None of this is right or wrong, it is simply what is happening – and our job as leaders is to work with this and stay focused on our vision, purpose and goal.

Part of our responsibility and accountability is to resource ourselves to do this, and to build our resilience. If we take an assets-based approach to this, it means putting the conditions in place that we need as leaders to respond healthily and effectively to what our work requires of us in our roles, and to do whatever we need to do to look after our personal energy and wellbeing. In doing this we empower ourselves to keep perspective as things shift and change, and are therefore more able to stay connected to our vision, be flexible in our thinking, and make the right decisions at the right time.

It is important to remember that our own resilience as leaders is part of our organisational resilience, which is our capacity to adapt to what happens and find creative solutions to any challenges we face.



Communication, Communication, Communication

Whenever a piece of development work is done in an organisation, or we take the time to reflect on how we are working, the subject of communication is nearly always called out as something that needs improvement. And when the going gets tough it can so easily be what lets us down, because we haven't invested enough in the practices, mechanisms and ways of working that we know build trust, psychological safety and resilience.

As leaders of reform, attention to communication is probably the most mission critical investment you will make. Communication is what enables us to notice, pay attention to and respond to reality – and therefore to make the right decisions in the right place at the right time. It is the foundation on which trust and psychological safety are built. It is what connects us as people, maintains and strengthens our relationships, and enables us to flex and adapt when things come left field and need us to think on our feet. And it is what fuels our motivation, energy and commitment to staying on course when we hit inevitably tough patches in our work together.

A hazard of organisational communication is that it becomes habitual, and driven by our culture – not only in our organisation, but in our wider society also. We confuse speed with effectiveness, and volume with efficiency. As we experience greater pressure we automatically favour email and texting because it is convenient, without asking ourselves whether it is the best and most helpful way to do something, and how the recipient might experience what we are sending. We forget what communication is *for*, and simply focus on getting it *done*. This has the contradictory effect of creating more pressure for us over time even though it seems at the time to be more efficient. This is due to loss of relationship, loss of trust, miscommunication, over- and mis-information, and eventually a pervasive sense of disconnection and loss of shared value and respect.

If we go back to thinking four pillars, good and considered communication is an investment in and valuing of all four. As you will have read in 'No Master Builder' earlier, Atul Gawande identified that communication in a complex system – and therefore in our reform work – needs to operate at two levels at the same time. One is about the work, and maintaining at all times a shared, *live* sense of what is happening, when, where and how, so that all concerned can make real-time decisions and act as required. This can be dynamic, informal and straightforward as well as though more explicit formal processes. The other is equally important, and is about relationship building, trust and *psychological safety*. It is this latter emphasis of communication that is the point of success or failure for modern systems.

Our commitment to communicating effectively, and to building trust and psychological safety, is mission critical for our success – and therefore to our ability to balance the four pillars and deliver *Caring for Ayrshire*.

If this feels like more work, or as if it will slow everything down and you will become overwhelmed, think of it this way. Our experience of extreme teaming has shown that teams that put communication first tend to be motivated, purposeful, supportive,



resilient and have deeper levels of trust. They have more fun and are less disturbed by setbacks and failure.

They waste less time. They find it simpler and more straightforward to solve problems even if those problems are tough or messy, because people want to invest the time to do it.

Our culture of speed and volume has become a habit. Just because it's expected, doesn't mean it's right.

What's right is what the work needs, and our reform work gives us a unique opportunity to ask this question afresh.



Enquiries and Questions?

Who to Contact

Please contact the Daring to Succeed Mailbox as detailed below, with any enquiries or questions.

aa-uhb.daringtosucceed@nhs.net

Our Daring to Succeed Athena page is accessible through the Chief Executive's Athena site at:

<http://athena/corporate/Pages/Default.aspx>



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