



HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

Health and Wellbeing Strategy: Mission-led Approach

Discussion Paper

2024 - 2030

January 2025



1. Mission-led Approach

The significant challenges we face today in South Tees are comprehensive, systemic and long-standing. The challenges are often dynamic and unpredictable, with a lack of consensus on meaningful, long-term approaches across or within agencies. Poorly defined problems, lack of consensus and commitment across partners mean that long term, systemic solutions remain elusive.

The way we work is compounded by short-termism of projects (and often their focus on linear, compartmentalised solutions that don't fit the complex nature of challenges), budgets and limited partnership working making it incredibly difficult to act strategically to address systemic challenges across agencies.

All agencies have been focussed on financial survival for more than a decade – a survival that has got increasingly precarious. This has exacerbated the pre-existing short-termism and limited understanding of the impact of decisions beyond the immediate budget area under consideration. This approach squeezes out innovative solutions across the whole system and reduces the appetite for risk whilst simultaneously not recognising the significant financial risks and poor outcomes contained within the status quo.

The Mission approach allows us to progress as a system and set of partners from pursuing incremental innovation and change, working within existing paradigms (and often within individual agencies), to working together across agency boundaries and with communities to challenge and transform the logic and existing paradigms that has led to the current situation of compounded crises and poor outcomes.

Shifting to a mission-led approach will create the space for us to be more intentional in finding connections, creating a shared agenda to build coherence between different assets, capabilities, and relationships across agencies in the delivery of the mission. This then should support agencies and communities to design portfolios of interventions that are coherent with the challenges we need to address by fully leveraging assets, capabilities, and relationships in the direction of the mission.

Missions are measurable, ambitious, and time-bound objectives that have the potential to help enable transformative change. They are declarations of intent to tackle complex societal challenges, by taking a purpose-oriented, solution-driven, and market-shaping approach.

The LiveWell South Tees Health & Wellbeing Board agreed to a “Mission-led” approach for the development of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), structured across the life course.

Each mission is a response to a significant local challenge, one where innovation, working together and aligning resources has a big part to play in driving large-scale change – missions cannot be resolved by any single agency acting in isolation. Each mission has a set of ambitious goals that further articulate and explain that mission.



2. Key Areas of Difference in the Mission-Led Approach

“This work is not symbolic like ‘systems thinking’ – it’s more field work than head work”¹.

2.1 System Leadership

2.1.1 Defining System Leadership

The original paper to the HWB proposing the Mission-led approach used the Kings Fund model (“Leadership of Whole Systems”) to describe System Leadership, and outlined six “guiding messages” for would-be system leaders:

- Go out of your way to make connections
- Adopt an open, enquiring mind set, refusing to be constrained by current horizons
- Embrace uncertainty and be positive about change – adopt an entrepreneurial attitude
- Ensure leadership and decision making are distributed throughout all levels and functions
- Establish a compelling vision which is shared by all partners in the whole system
- Promote the importance of values – invest as much energy into relationships and behaviours as into delivering tasks

Systems leadership must exist within and across organisational, cultural and geographical boundaries; often without direct managerial control of resources. This moves beyond individual disciplines – we will not achieve the population shift required by operating within the boundaries of the individual organisations or departments.

Considering this further we need to move beyond the usual suspects in senior roles within public sector agencies and develop leadership roles more broadly across the system. VCS organisations tend to be issue (mission) based and consequently more naturally and intuitively navigate their way around the system and across organisational boundaries.

2.1.2 Recommendations (expanded from the HWB Strategy)

1. **We will identify System Leaders for each Mission** considering the importance of developing new system leaders and engaging with latent system leaders. We will establish our long-term approach to give confidence that our System Leaders could be part of leading something that has the chance to produce real change across partners.

The table over the page identifies where system leaders will be required for the missions.

¹ John Thackara on “[islands of coherence](#)” and their importance in systems change

Lifecourse	Mission	System Lead (tbc)
Start Well: Children & Young People have the Best Start in Life	We will narrow the outcome gap between children growing up in disadvantage and the national average by 2030	
	We want to improve education, training and work prospects for young people	
	We will prioritise and improve mental health and outcomes for young people	
Live Well: People live healthier and longer lives	We will reduce the proportion of our families who are living in poverty	
	We will create places and systems that promote wellbeing	
	We will support people and communities to build better health	
	We will build an inclusive model of care for people suffering from multiple disadvantage across all partners	
Age Well: More people lead safe,	We will promote independence for older people	
	We will ensure everyone has the right to a dignified death	

Discussion

- There is the potential for a system leader to be from one Council. Are we happy that they can lead across South Tees or does this rule out Council staff as System Leaders?
- Do people have nominees for the other Missions (and potentially those with nominated leaders)?
- Who should be part of the “system leader support” from each agency/function?

2. We will develop a model of support for System Leaders that considers:

- Supportive methodologies for problem-solving and decision-making (for example connecting into the HDRC “sandpit” approach; development of theory of change) – to build true understanding, moving away from the more nuts and bolts, traditional, linear thinking model;
- Clarity on the role of System Leader, focussing on leadership, insight and learning. Transformational change will be achieved through influence across the system rather than formal power, with partners aligned and committed to the Mission;
- Training and support on building a learning culture; capturing, sharing learning and contributing to the development of the Learning Framework, engagement with other Missions, accountability and reporting cycles. Training is in development through the Agility in Complexity programme built from the learning of the YGT system change programme.
- Recognition of the opportunity to engage with others with valuable skills and experience and attributes to create effective systems leadership.
- Support team drawn from all relevant agencies



Discussion

- Does this make sense? Omissions? Amendments? Issues?
3. **We will create a regular facilitated space for System Leaders to identify and share learning, achievements, barriers, issues and decision-making governance.**

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy establishes that the nine missions are strategic priorities across the partnership. This establishes the legitimacy of System Leaders (and their support and associated Partnerships) to expect that learning is built into system change more broadly, and to articulate barriers on the expectation that barriers and issues are addressed through the **South Tees Place Partnership** and up to the **Health and Wellbeing Board**.

Discussion

This could be really powerful and challenge structural issues that have prevented progress previously. Barriers are likely to include approaches to commissioning and procurement, employment, strategy development and decision making, pooled budgets – plus other stuff.

- Whatever the learning and barriers, this will be challenging to how we work now – are people ready for this? Do you think this is the right approach?

2.2 Mission-level Governance

Mission-oriented approaches require the ambition to transform landscapes rather than just fixing problems in existing ones. Public sector organisations face barriers to achieving this transformation. Without addressing these in a systematic matter, the potential for mission success is limited.

To deliver our missions we need to consider how we **break silos within and between agencies** and **coordinate action across portfolios and agencies**. Complex organisational structures, with rigid formal processes, limit the flow of information, reduce openness and constrain creativity.

Whilst the Health and Wellbeing Board and the South Tees Place Committee will provide overarching governance of delivery of this Strategy – **assuring progress, collating learning and removing barriers**, we will develop a new bold and ambitious governance structure at a mission-level, that develops leadership across the system; facilitates cross-agency coordination built on insight and information sharing to build shared understanding; engages communities; encourages calculated risk-taking, experimentation and development of innovative solutions; embraces the learning approach; generates new perspectives and new thinking and connects into existing Partnerships.

There are local examples emerging that demonstrate a different, outcome-focused approach to working, including Thrive at Five and the Increasing Attendance programmes in Redcar & Cleveland the STRiVE Boards and You've Got This, the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot.



2.2.1 Principles

In the first instance the Mission-level governance will seek to progress within existing organisational parameters and financial models. However, the regular facilitated space for System Leaders to identify and share learning, achievements, barriers, issues and decision-making governance may create the need to revisit this where existing organisational cultures and parameters are limiting the ability to deliver the Missions.

The Mission-Level Governance model can be described by the following principles:

1. Develops leadership across the system
This is described in the System Leadership section above.
2. Embraces the learning approach
This is described in the Developing our Learning Approach section below.
3. Engages communities
This is described in the Engaging Communities and People with Lived Experience section below.
4. Facilitates cross-agency coordination built on insight, and information sharing to build shared understanding
There is a common theme across multiple missions emerging from the JSNA on the importance of improving **information sharing** to build shared understanding – that also highlights the limited sharing of information that happens in our current ways of working.

We will develop a greater understanding of data collected across the system and explore data sharing agreements to enable the development of shared intelligence to build a more comprehensive understanding of issues and solutions at a Mission level. **This will be a cross-mission workstream.**

Insight developed from the perspective of communities, service users and others impacted by the specific Mission will naturally cross service and organisational boundaries (as the work to develop the JSNA and the HWB Strategy did). This should provide the platform and rationale for cross-agency co-ordination in pursuit of the Missions.

5. Encourages calculated risk-taking, experimentation and development of innovative solutions
The Mission-led model has to be prepared to test new approaches that challenge existing assumptions and ways of working. The model also has to accept that some of these approaches may fail, and learn from that failure in designing the next iterations. Calculated risk-taking accepts failure, within simple parameters where nobody is harmed and financial impacts are limited. This approach can be built on insight that demonstrates that existing approaches in some areas for some people can cause harm, so the risk of the “do nothing” option isn’t neutral but can cause harm in some circumstances. Note – this is the approach that South Tees FT are developing in their health inequalities work, considering harms created by long waits.
6. Generates new perspectives and new thinking
Developing the team to support the System Leader is critical and should extend beyond the usual suspects to include academic partners, VCS, communities and others with different and seldom

heard perspectives. In addition the approach to much deeper community engagement and the learning approach should develop insight that in turn generates new perspectives and new thinking.

Building a social value perspective into all of the work of the Missions will create a different lens to consider decision-making for Missions.

7. Connects into existing Partnerships

The Missions will need to connect into and draw support from existing Partnerships operating in the same or similar fields. It is important this relationship is based on support, removing barriers, sharing learning and insight rather than the traditional focus on assurance models and RAG-rating.

2.2.2 Recommendations

4. We will develop mission-level governance structures to support the delivery of the missions that consider devolved autonomy to facilitate information sharing, support mission leadership and enable more agile decision-making across agencies.
5. We will connect our mission-led approach to the Tees Valley Anchor Network to explore the additional value we can generate by coordinating missions across approaches to procurement, employment, education and the environment.

Discussion

- Do the principles for Mission-level governance make sense? Is anything missing?

2.3 Engaging Communities and People with Lived Experience

Four cross-cutting principles to guide and under-pin the work of LiveWell South Tees were agreed in December 2017: addressing inequalities, integration and collaboration, use of Information and intelligence, and involvement of residents, patients and service users.

We have embedded the first three principles to varying degrees but haven't systematically embedded in our work as a Partnership the "**involvement of residents**".

There are pockets of engagement within the Partnership, including Health Champions, the HDRC Community Researchers and others, but nothing that systematically informs policy development and decision-making. Engaging communities is a critical element of the mission-level governance and a key vehicle to generate new perspectives and new thinking and development of innovative solutions. Deeper connections into communities will also connect missions to assets that exist in our communities.

The Poverty Sprint work in Middlesbrough has recommended the development of a **Poverty Action Network**, which aims to:

- Build relationships and trust between local people and civic leaders that increase understanding of poverty;
- Prompt changes in policy and practice within organisations;
- Provide a positive example of co-production;
- Develop new skills for all participants which can be applied to other programmes;
- Maximise on the Local Motion investment by putting forward actions using the devolved budget.

The Poverty Action Network is being developed by LocalMotion in Middlesbrough and the support of the Council could create greater impact.

2.3.1 Recommendations

6. We will develop a model of mission-level community engagement that is embedded into policy development, decision-making and learning processes to inform the development of our plans and approaches to deliver the Missions.

Discussion

- The Poverty Action Network is a Middlesbrough-only recommendation at present, although there have been discussions in both Council areas on the development of a Poverty Truth Commission. Is this an approach that could be developed across South Tees to support meaningful engagement for all Missions? Could it be developed further to influence local policy development and decision-making more broadly than both Councils?
- Poverty is a critical issue driving issues across all Missions, however does the focus on poverty create any issues?
- There will be different communities of interest (inclusion health groups, older people for example) that will need to be engaged too – are there any existing mechanisms that we could tap into?

2.4 Developing our Learning Approach

A mission-based approach requires a methodology that seeks to develop, test, learn and scale a set of interventions that are complementary and can shift complex systems by focusing on multiple intervention points at a given time. The missions, goals and portfolio then become a platform for strategic learning and action: to understand the dynamics of the problems we are trying to impact, and over time more accurately understand the aligned interventions.

This will require a shift from a culture focussed on compliance and policing the boundaries to one of learning and continuously adapting; collectively embracing the complexity arising from a portfolio of diverse projects, activities and initiatives designed for long-term transformation together with communities, people with lived experience and strategic actors in the system. It will require a willingness to let go of power and the false sense of security provided by our current ways of working with a narrow focus on operational performance and thin single-agency measures.

We have developed expertise in this area in the work of You've Got This and their whole system approach to supporting the least active to be more active. YGT is developing a capacity-building

package for leaders at all levels of the system that will help to define and outline approaches for how we can apply a “learning approach”, developing distributed leadership across the system and approaches to system change. YGT is committed to resourcing this training and support as part of their legacy.

South Tees is also a **Health Determinants Research Collaboration** (HDRC), which puts us in a very strong position to build longer term learning and research into how we work, in particular to draw down research funding to help us to understand better knotty issues in our own context. The HDRC provides a platform for greater collaboration between Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland Councils and Teesside University (and other Universities). There are nominated academic leads for each life course element of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

2.4.1 Recommendations

7. We will develop our learning approach and shared understanding of system change building on the learning from YGT to coordinate action across agencies to deliver our Missions.

Discussion

The learning approach is a fundamentally different approach to how we work now. If it’s true that we require a shift from a culture focussed on compliance and policing the boundaries to one of learning and continuously adapting and collectively embracing the complexity are we ready to support this approach in the delivery of the Missions? What do we need to do to create the space for this approach? What could the barriers be to developing this approach?

2.5 Delivery through the Policy Frameworks and Powers

To achieve sustainable change across the system we need to develop clear connections into the Policy Frameworks in both Councils and partners to develop real health in all policies and amplify the delivery of the Missions.

In addition we need to **broaden our scope** from commissioning and services to how we can exploit roles and powers of both Councils and partners to support the delivery of our Missions, including:

- General Power of Competence that gives councils the power to do anything an individual can do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation;
- Regulatory - including licencing, cumulative impact policies and potentially including alcohol minimum unit pricing;
- Planning - including affordable homes requirements, local energy planning;
- Convening - including to improve the performance of partners or collective action to reduce energy costs through community energy schemes;
- Asset and landowner– potential to develop community-based solutions using Council or NHS land or buildings;
- Bidding powers to bring in external resources to support delivery of the Missions;
- Finance powers including exploring innovative funding mechanisms.



2.5.1 Recommendations

8. We will work with both Councils and partners to embed the ambitions of the HWB Strategy Missions into organisational policy frameworks.
9. We will consider how we can better use roles and powers of both Councils (and partners) to deliver our Missions.

3. Live Well South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board

The Board are asked to consider and endorse the recommendations outlined above.

Mark Adams
Director of Public Health for Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland
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