Managing Change: Working towards a Shared Purpose

This factsheet has been designed for use by healthcare professionals only.

The last year has been a time of extreme change both in the NHS and more widely and even those teams and individuals most experienced in the process of change management have found themselves challenged on an almost daily basis. Much of the Covid-19 response has required leaders to manage what we would deem 'unplanned' change; that is, taking immediate action for which the organisation and its staff have had little or no time to prepare. While responding to unforeseen change is rarely easy, it can be useful to try and apply the principles and strategies of planned change management in such situations.

Change Management in the NHS

Many aspects of change management are simply extensions of good leadership and management practices. The key difference is that these skills must be used in extraordinary and demanding circumstances, and it can be helpful to have a framework to ensure a consistent approach is taken in practice.

The NHS *Change Management Overview* (2011)[1] suggests that effective change management incorporates:

- the processes, tools and techniques for managing the people side of change.
- a method for reducing and managing resistance to change
- recognition of change as a necessary component for organisational performance improvement
- working to realise results

More recently, NHS England introduced the Change Model, which is described as 'a framework for any project or programme that is seeking to achieve transformational, sustainable change.[2]

This multifaceted model demonstrates that change can be implemented most effectively by considering the factors that contribute towards achieving a **Shared Purpose:**

- Improvement Tools
- Project and Performance Management
- Measurement
- System Drivers
- Motivation and Mobilising
- Leadership by All
- Spread and Adoption

This Change Model is not exclusive to the NHS and can be used for any change initiative, big or small, in any organisation. In this week's podcast, our Head of Academy Laura Hyland talks to Patrick Hyland, Contracts and Compliance Manager at Cadent Gas about how change can be managed at strategic level to achieve a shared purpose.

What is Our Shared Purpose?

Within the NHS, our overarching goal is almost always related to improving patient care and supporting individuals to achieve a better quality of life. In a change management context, this aim will inform the identification of a shared purpose but it is helpful to be more specific; the first and most important step in the process is to identify **why** a change is required, and why people should make a commitment to achieving it.

The Change Model suggests three steps for building Shared Purpose:

1. Create a safe space in which open and honest conversations around the change can take place
2. Look for commonalities. Even when teams appear to have conflicting agendas, there are likely to be common benefits when considering 'the bigger picture'
3. Design together, to translate shared ambitions into attributable actions.

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As we begin to move out of Covid-19 restrictions, the shared purpose in primary care settings may be to welcome patients back into the practice in a way that is safe for all parties. This will require consideration of a range of perspectives and offers an opportunity to work through the Change Model:

1. Facilitate opportunities for group and individual discussions about the return to face-to-face appointments. Make a note of any concerns and / or suggestions.
2. Identify overlaps in concerns and queries and draw out common themes. Are there benefits that will outweigh the risks?
3. Bring together a project group with representations from all teams to plan the transition and implementation process. Support the group to focus on solutions rather than obstacles.

Further reading: Change Management in Practice

The Change Model is not intended to be prescriptive and can be used alongside other frameworks and tools to facilitate change in practice. For example, in **Podcast 3**, Ann Saxon, Education for Health's Director of Learning Design and Quality, discusses her experience of using the Kurt Lewin model[3] in healthcare settings, and the activities of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing perceptions and processes will naturally occur within the steps of the Change Model.

The Change Model is intended to support the journey towards **sustainable, transformational** change; the operational tools and resources used to facilitate that change are very much determined by organisational practice and leadership preferences. Details of a number of recognised change management models can be found in **Factsheet 13: Managing Change as a Healthcare Professional**.

For more information on use of the Change Model, please see **The Change Model Guide** produced by NHS England's Sustainable Improvement Team.

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References:

1. NHS England, (2017), Improvement Hub, Available from:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/improvement-hub/wp-content/uploads/sites/44/2017/11/Overview-Change-management.pdf

2. NHS England, (2017), Change management, Available from:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/sustainableimprovement/change-model/

3. Kirk Lewin, (2020), Change Management Model, Available from: https://www.change-management-coach.com/kurt_lewin.html

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