

Making sense of systems change: practical steps for learning and evaluation

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Session summary



Many programmes aim to deliver “systems change”, but understanding what this looks like in practice, and how to learn from it, can feel abstract or overly complex.

This interactive session creates space for shared reflection on how we understand and learn about systems change. Drawing on experience from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough’s Changing Futures programme, we will introduce a simple way of thinking about change at different levels of a system (from activity through to beliefs), and explore how different approaches can support learning alongside routine monitoring.

Participants will be encouraged to reflect on their own systems change work and whether approaches like those developed in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough could help to show its impact or boost learning to improve future systems change work.

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Aims for the session



Introduce a simple framework for understanding and gathering evidence about systems change.



Learn from colleagues in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough about their experience of developing and using this framework in their Changing Futures programme.



Reflect on the potential application of similar frameworks in your own systems change work.

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Why this matters

Systems are complex. Evaluating systems change can feel challenging.

Good evaluation can promote systems change through supporting learning and adaptation, not simply measuring change and success.

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Are we making a difference?

2

How do we make the case for our work?

3

How do we learn and adapt?

4

Setting the scene: in conversation with Kyle and Tom



What top two challenges were you hoping to solve through developing the framework for understanding systems impact?

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Reflection moment: think to yourself

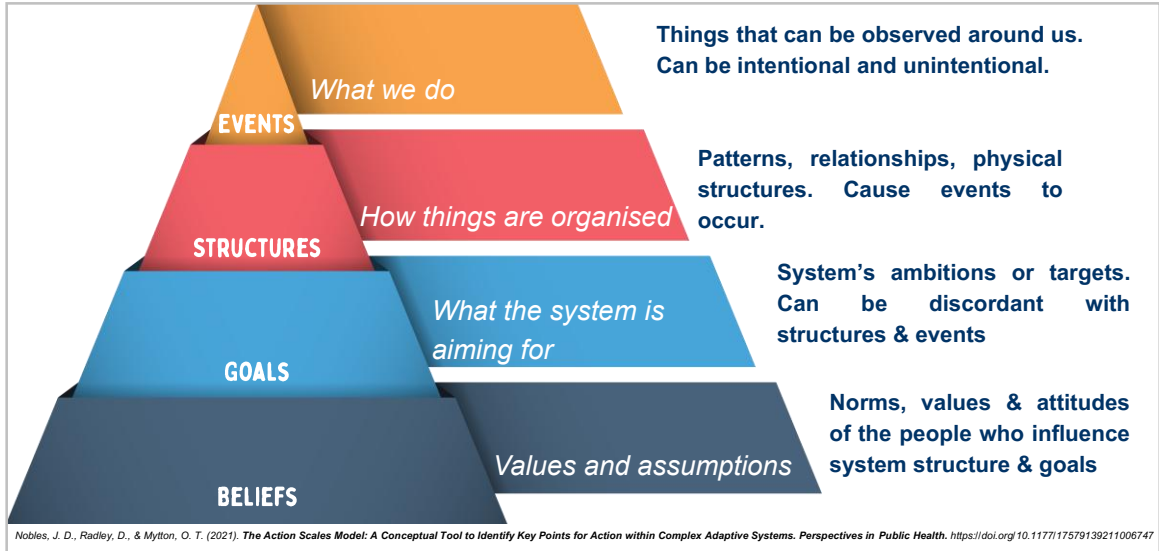


What priority changes that you are trying to bring about in your local system?

How confident do you feel about (1) understanding whether this change is happening and (2) capturing evidence about it?

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A simple way to think about systems: the Action Scales Model

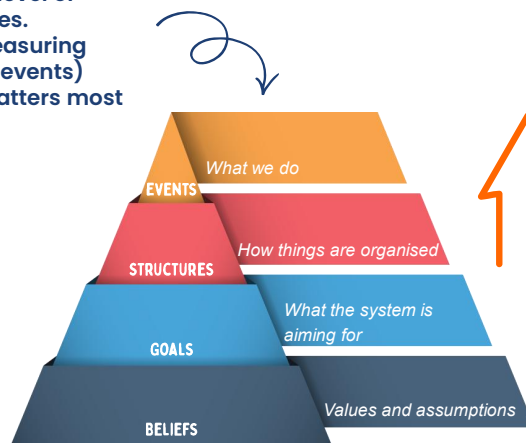


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A key challenge in achieving and measuring systems change



We often act at the level of events and structures. We often end up measuring what's easiest (e.g. events) rather than what matters most



But for a system to improve, change needs to happen at all levels. And change at deeper levels is often more transformative

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Horses for courses: different approaches help us to learn about different aspects of the system and different types of change

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| <p>1 Understanding activity and engagement through output monitoring</p> | <p>4 Understanding the nature, quality and impact of support through journey mapping</p> |
| <p>2 Understanding the quality and impact of events and structures via qualitative consultation with system stakeholders</p> | <p>5 Understanding goals and beliefs through a survey of system stakeholders</p> |
| <p>3 Understanding relationships and connectedness through social network analysis</p> | <p>6 Exploring direct and unintended outcomes through Ripple Effects Mapping</p> |

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Learning from practice: in conversation with Kyle and Tom





What do you like about having a framework that uses the Action Scales Model as a way of thinking about systems and systems change?

How have you used it so far within the Changing Futures team?

How do you hope it will help other people in your local system to think differently about doing or measuring systems change?

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Reflection moment: talk with your neighbours



Think back to the priority changes you are trying to make in your local system.

How could the Action Scales Model be useful for thinking about these changes?

Do any of the suggested evaluation methods feel like they would work well to reflect on and measure these changes?

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Takeaways



For a system to improve, change needs to happen at all levels. And change at deeper levels is often more transformative



Using frameworks for understanding the system and systems change can help to make evaluation work more effective and credible



Good evaluation can promote systems change through supporting learning and adaptation, not simply measuring change and success



Doing this doesn't have to be complicated. You can find ways to make this work within your local resources and context.

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