

Changing Futures – Learning Report – Leadership on Multiple Disadvantage

November 2022

Visible leadership creates system change, does Sheffield have this?

Evaluations of Fulfilling Lives programmes, including those by [CFE](#) and [Blackpool](#) highlight that senior leaders championing agendas and approaches are effective ways to model desirable behaviours and were a key enabler to system change.

The [Bristol](#) Fulfilling Lives evaluation and [Liverpool Legacy Report](#) both recommended creating focused opportunities for frontline staff to share, with strategic leads, their passion and ideas for interventions to improve the lives of people who are experiencing multiple disadvantage.

In Sheffield our system mapping of local barriers identified a gap between commissioners and service delivery which contributed towards a lack of joined up support for service users. Participants felt there was a disconnect between those commissioning services and those delivering them.

Frontline staff feel disempowered and frustrated

This work, alongside discussions in the programmes cross sector Learning and Development working group, resulted in the creation of three Local Leaders workshops. These workshops explored what a local leader for multiple disadvantage would look like and how a culture of collaboration and learning around multiple disadvantage could be cultivated within the Sheffield system.

The consensus from participants was that a local leadership programme was not required and instead there was a need for visible leadership on multiple disadvantage from those who were already in senior leadership positions. It was felt that frontline practitioners and unappointed local leaders who are experts in their respective fields are low in morale and feel disempowered to affect system change. It was also discussed that opportunities to share learning around multiple disadvantage were not structured and limited in reach and impact.

Sheffield has the infrastructure; it just needs closer alignment

Shelter established the Community of Practice in May 2021 to build on the good practice, creative approaches, and collaboration that we had seen through the period of covid in addressing the needs of people experiencing multiple disadvantage. Shelter recognised the need to create a place where practitioners across the city could focus on and discuss the challenges of supporting those experiencing multiple disadvantage with lived experience at the heart of the approach. The aims were to share learning, breakdown barriers between services, develop solutions to bring long lasting change and build on best practice.

The main challenge was resourcing the delivery of the Community of Practice and making it truly collaborative and multi-agency, as well as giving it a clear outlet to engage with senior leaders, especially from statutory agencies. Frontline managers and practitioners were involved in planning the activity of the CoP and capacity to engage in planning sessions is limited.

Practitioners need constructive outlets for system change discussions to be effective

Following discussions with the Community of Practice planning group, it was agreed that Changing Futures would play a larger facilitatory role in the delivery to create a clear connection between the programmes co-production service, frontline staff and senior leaders – this [video](#) explains how this works in practice.

Designing a constructive and useful space was essential in building confidence within frontline practitioners that they could share their experiences and contribute towards affecting system change. Feedback from participants from the recent Community of Practice focussing on women was positive and going forward, each CoP will focus on a system change workstream identified by Changing Futures. This ensures that there is a clear and consistent pathway for continuous learning and that frontline practitioners will directly impact system change.

