

Taking a Human Learning Systems approach for the work of the Board

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<p>Summary:</p>	<p>During the Somerset Board Members workshop in September 2024 Gary Wallace, Plymouth Health Determinants Research Collaboration, gave a presentation on the complexities of system working and the application of a Human Learning Systems approach to work within a complex system.</p> <p>The approach was met with enthusiasm at the workshop and this report details the ask of the Board to develop and adopt this approach for the Somerset health and wellbeing system through its application to the work of the Somerset Board, and subsequently that of its Board members.</p> <p>Human Learning Systems focus on learning as a continuous process. “What works” is a continuous process of learning and adaptation, where a positive error culture is created with informal and formal spaces for learning.</p> <p>The other fundamental principle is “healthy systems produce better outcomes” with system stewards (as opposed to system leaders) looking after the health of a system.</p> <p>Adopting this approach offers the Board the opportunity to apply an evidence-based approach to working within complex systems whilst meeting the aims within its constitution.</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p>	<p>That the Somerset Board approves:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A multi-agency working group begins work to define and develop what this means for the Somerset system.

	<p>2. Once defined and approved by the Somerset Board the group identifies opportunities to implement the approach.</p> <p>3. That Board members will consider themselves to be 'system stewards' and facilitate the implementation of the approach through their leadership: shaping the strategic direction; creating space for learning from staff and setting the pace for change.</p>																	
<p>Reasons for recommendations:</p>	<p>These recommendations are made in line with discussions at Board workshop.</p> <p>There is a lot of work happening across Somerset which could be pulled together through the working group and a plan developed to optimise work to date and develop the approach at a system level going forwards.</p>																	
<p>Links to The Improving Lives in Somerset Strategy</p>	<p>Please tick the Improving Lives and Integrated Health and Care Strategy priorities influenced by the delivery of this work</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td> <p>A County infrastructure that drives productivity, supports economic prosperity and sustainable public services</p> </td> <td> <p>x</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>Safe, vibrant and well-balanced communities able to enjoy and benefit from the natural environment</p> </td> <td> <p>x</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>Fairer life chances and opportunity for all</p> </td> <td> <p>x</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>Improved health and wellbeing and more people living healthy and independent lives for longer</p> </td> <td> <p>x</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <td colspan="2" style="background-color: #cccccc;"></td> </td></tr> <tr> <td> <p>Improve the health and wellbeing of the population – Enable people to live socially connected, healthy, independent lives, promote early intervention and prevent avoidable illness.</p> </td> <td> <p>x</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>Provide the best care and support to children and adults – Ensure safe, sustainable, effective, high quality person-centred support in the most appropriate setting.</p> </td> <td> <p>x</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>Strengthen care and support in local communities – Develop and enhance support in local neighbourhood areas and bring care and support closer to home.</p> </td> <td> <p>x</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>A County infrastructure that drives productivity, supports economic prosperity and sustainable public services</p>	<p>x</p>	<p>Safe, vibrant and well-balanced communities able to enjoy and benefit from the natural environment</p>	<p>x</p>	<p>Fairer life chances and opportunity for all</p>	<p>x</p>	<p>Improved health and wellbeing and more people living healthy and independent lives for longer</p>	<p>x</p>	<td colspan="2" style="background-color: #cccccc;"></td>			<p>Improve the health and wellbeing of the population – Enable people to live socially connected, healthy, independent lives, promote early intervention and prevent avoidable illness.</p>	<p>x</p>	<p>Provide the best care and support to children and adults – Ensure safe, sustainable, effective, high quality person-centred support in the most appropriate setting.</p>	<p>x</p>	<p>Strengthen care and support in local communities – Develop and enhance support in local neighbourhood areas and bring care and support closer to home.</p>	<p>x</p>
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<p>Links to Integrated Health and Care Strategy</p>																		

	Reduce Inequalities – Value all people alike, target our resources and attention to where it is most needed, giving equal priority to physical and mental health.	x
	Respond well to complex needs – Improve outcomes for children and adults with complex needs through personalised, co-ordinated support.	x
	The approach can be adopted across the system which will positively impact on a wide range of health and wellbeing and health and care outcomes.	
Financial, Legal, HR, Social value and partnership Implications:	The approach described at the workshop is that work delivered through this approach must be “safe and legal”. Empowering our workforce to adopt a positive error culture through continual learning, and the sharing of the learning will mean working in a different way.	
Equalities Implications:	An equalities impact assessment is not considered necessary for this decision as there are no immediate impacts, and equalities will be a due consideration of any decisions that are made as a result of adopting a human learning systems approach.	
Risk Assessment:	This is a decision to take a new approach to how services are commissioned, managed and provided. There are no current risks identified from the recommendations made at this stage of developing the new approach. There may be risks associated with future decisions on implementation, which will be risk assessed on a case-by-case basis.	

1. Background	
1.1.	The Somerset Board have agreed that Housing is the number one priority to take forward in the coming year. Priorities under this theme include supporting independent living in the context of a rapidly ageing population, reducing homelessness and rough sleeping, and implementing a county-wide health impact assessment policy for new housing developments.

	<p>For the Board workshop, officers from across the Council and external providers shared case studies and local analysis that illustrate how the Somerset 'system' as a whole, including Council, NHS, VCFSE, and other statutory services, sometimes do not meet the needs of our residents in ways that are optimal, which can contribute to worse outcomes and unnecessary costs.</p> <p>In many cases, partners are already seeking to work in ways that are person-centred, joining up support for individuals who do not always fit service pathways and thresholds that have not been designed around their needs. However, operational staff can face barriers to working differently that are created by the system and service in which they work. We need to reduce these barriers to empower and enable the Somerset workforce to work flexibly across organisational boundaries, providing the right services at the right time.</p>
<p>1.2.</p>	<p>The Human Learning Systems approach offers an alternative to the “Markets, Managers and Metrics” approach of New Public Management. The human is at the centre, the approach seeks to enable services to address the complex realities of the lives of people being served. This may mean allowing flexible thresholds for support, joint commissioning between services, greater flexibility in spending, and reducing siloes between services, all with a focus on outcomes rather than inputs. This has a further effect of increasing job satisfaction that motivates people to go into public service.</p> <p>The Learning in Human Learning Systems involves creating an environment in which performance improvement is driven by continuous learning and adaptation. This learning is both horizontal, within and between services, and vertical, escalating learning to the level that would enable the barriers to delivery to be address.</p> <p>Finally, taken together this fosters in leaders a sense of responsibility for looking after the health of the systems that shape how we work, and it is these systems which create positive outcomes in people’s lives. www.humanlearning.systems</p> <p>The Homes for Horizon programme led by Children’s Services used human learning system methods to inform commissioning and delivery. It will be used as a working example during the Board meeting.</p>

2. Improving Lives and Integrated Health and Care Priorities and Outcomes

- 2.1.** The Human Learning Systems approach was positively received following discussions about cross-cutting issues that affect the relationship between housing and health in Somerset. Housing has been agreed as the number 1 priority theme for the Somerset Board this year and connects with two of the Improving Lives Strategy priorities: Fairer life chances and opportunity for all;

and improved health and wellbeing and more people living healthy and independent lives for longer.

3. Consultations undertaken

3.1. Somerset Board members participated in a workshop to learn about and discuss the relevance of an HLS approach. They heard from workforce representatives in person or via case studies about some of the progress being made towards service integration, but also examples of where we have not met a person's needs, sometimes at significant cost to the Somerset system.

4. Request of the Board and its members

4.1. That the Somerset Board approves:

- (1) A multi-agency working group begins work to define and develop what this means for the Somerset system.
- (2) Once defined and approved by the Somerset Board the group identifies opportunities to implement the approach.
- (3) That Board members will consider themselves to be 'system stewards' and facilitate the implementation of the approach through their leadership: shaping the strategic direction; creating space for learning from staff and setting the pace for change.

4.2.

5. Background papers

5.1. Centre for Public Impact, Human Learning Systems: Public Service for the Real World, available at: [Human Learning Systems - Public Service for the Real World](#)

Somerset Annual Director of Public Health Report 2023: Housing and Health: [Enc-F-Somerset-Annual-Report-of-the-Director-of-Public-Health-2023-Homes-and-Health.pdf](#)



Homes and
Horizons - Human L

6. Report Sign-Off

6.1

Report	Seen by:	Name	Date
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Sign off	Relevant Senior Manager / Lead Officer (Director Level)	Trudi Grant	Click or tap to enter a date.
	HWBB chair & Leader of the Council	Bill Revans	Click or tap to enter a date.
	Executive Member (if applicable)	Graham Oakes	Click or tap to enter a date.
	Monitoring Officer (Somerset Council)	David Clark	Click or tap to enter a date.
	Somerset Integrated Care Partnership Chair	Paul Von Der Heyde	Click or tap to enter a date.