



LOTTERY FUNDED



# FULLING LIVES



## Changing systems for people with multiple and complex needs

### How systems have changed through the Newcastle and Gateshead Fulfilling Lives project

#### Summary interim report (June 2016)

#### 1. Introduction

##### The Fulfilling Lives programme

Fulfilling Lives<sup>1</sup> is an eight-year programme funded by the Big Lottery aimed at people with multiple needs - individuals who are likely to experience at least three of the following: homelessness, reoffending, problematic substance misuse and mental ill health. The programme aims to bring different organisations and services together to offer people one co-ordinated support service that meets all their needs. One of the intentions of the programme is to change systems for people with multiple needs.

The Newcastle and Gateshead Fulfilling lives project (hereafter referred to as 'the project') is being delivered by Changing Lives in partnership with Mental Health Concern and Oasis Aquila Housing.

### *tyneside women's health*



## About systems change

Systems thinking is a way of understanding problems and how they can be solved. A system is made up of, for example, people, things and relationships, as well as perspectives, values and purposes.

The system someone with multiple and complex needs interacts with is a complex web of services including housing, criminal justice, substance misuse and mental health services. Within this broader system are sub-systems that might include (for example) hostels, support workers, families and individuals. These operate within wider systems including local commissioning and national policy. Systems are made up of elements including working cultures, values and power relationships as well as physical elements, policies and procedures.

Systems thinking says that:

- The systems that people interact with can cause problems, even when they are designed to help people.
- We can solve problems by seeking to change these systems.

Systems change requires radical change in our thinking, assumptions and ways of working. Systems change is not simply about implementing new projects; it is about doing things differently, and is a process rather than a project. It requires new facilitative forms of leadership and extensive collaboration. Systems change involves an ongoing process of innovation, reflection and learning.

The research presented in this report builds on a previous selective review of the literature conducted by the New Economics Foundation for Changing Lives and reported in *Changing Systems for people with multiple needs: Learning from the literature*.

## Systems change in the Newcastle and Gateshead Fulfilling Lives project

The Newcastle and Gateshead systems change project has identified a number of principles underpinning its programme development and approach to systems change. These include:

- Meeting and understanding the needs of beneficiaries, based on service user involvement and the Experts by Experience group (which is made up of people with personal experience of multiple and complex needs).
- Using a combination of first order change (focused on improving current provision using existing models) and second order change (involving changes in practice and culture within or across organisations).
- The continuous practice of reflection by programme members.
- An ongoing dialogue with partners around influencing and evidencing potential change as opposed to directing change, resulting in a process of evolution and gradual change.
- Working with others to build movements and act as a platform for change.
- Using learning to adapt what we do and share with the wider community, including through conducting and evaluating pilots.
- Organisations are made up of people, and in order to change behaviour we must influence organisation culture to enable the people to effect systems change.

The project employs Service Navigators to support individual clients to navigate systems, and System Brokers who identify where the current system may prevent individuals from transforming their lives, work with the Service Navigators to evidence the real issues facing the client group, and lead on individual areas of systems change.

The project has established Experts by Experience, Operational and Strategic reference groups. The purpose of these groups is to understand and change the way services respond, are commissioned and are delivered, based on evidence of the real issues.

## Aims and methodology of this research

This research aims to answer the question: *How have systems changed through the Newcastle and Gateshead Fulfilling Lives project, and how can this learning inform the future of the programme?*

This report explores in detail three selected areas of the system that the Newcastle and Gateshead Fulfilling Lives project (hereafter referred to as 'the project') is attempting to influence. It identifies barriers to and facilitators of systems change experienced by the project overall, and presents an emerging theory of systems change for the project.

Research was conducted in April and May 2016 and consisted of workshops and in-depth telephone interviews with selected external stakeholders (including local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and statutory services), Fulfilling Lives project staff, the Chair of the project's Strategic Group and members of the Experts by Experience group (a reference group for the project), and a review of selected project documentation. The research will be repeated in spring 2017.

## 2. Three selected areas of systems change

This research focuses on three selected areas of systems change:

1. **Local connection:** Councils commonly require someone to have a local connection to the area (for example, having lived in the area for a certain period of time) in order to help them with accommodation. However, returning to a home area with which they have a connection is not always in the best interests of people experiencing multiple and complex needs, who may wish to start again away from, for example, exploitative relationships or peer groups with whom they used drugs or alcohol.
2. **Access to benefits:** People wishing to make new claims for benefits must telephone the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Benefit Delivery Centre to do so. Those with multiple and complex needs can struggle with what they can experience as an inflexible call-centre style approach. This can make it difficult for them to claim the benefits they are entitled to.
3. **Supporting people with no recourse to public funds:** The Fulfilling Lives project is supporting five people experiencing multiple and complex needs who do not have recourse to public funds but wish to remain in the UK. These people fall into two groups:
  - Destitute asylum seekers, who have been refused refugee status but do not wish/are not safe to return to their home country.
  - People from EU countries who do not have access to benefits.

The project's Service Navigators have encountered several difficulties in supporting these individuals, and local stakeholders report that the system for those without recourse to public funds does not work as well as it should for people experiencing multiple and complex needs. Discussions suggest that many systemic issues for this group are at a national policy level.

## 3. Selected outcomes

Important outcomes in the three selected areas of systems change are:

### Overall outcome: stronger relationships

- Trusting relationships have been established/strengthened with a range of decision makers and providers, including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), local councils, and local services, as a result of dialogue and collaboration.

### Local connection

- Gateshead Council is piloting new procedures around local connection which mean that people experiencing multiple and complex needs can be housed without a local connection.
- A local connection working group has been formed with representation from many councils in the North East of England, with the aspiration of developing a regional local connection agreement.
- One woman who was formerly street homeless has been housed in Gateshead despite not having a local connection with the area. She has remained in her tenancy for nine months at the time of writing this report.

### Access to benefits

- A single point of contact model of support for residents of one hostel wishing to make new claims for benefits has been piloted in partnership with DWP.
- One man completed the pilot, and he had his claim for benefits 'resolved quickly and efficiently'.<sup>2</sup>

During the pilot period, the introduction of full service (ie fully implemented across all groups of benefit recipients) Universal Credit in Newcastle in May 2016 was announced by the DWP nationally. This was sooner than expected and was also found to be fully-online (without a Benefit Delivery Centre), meaning that partners are now reassessing this work. Enduring outcomes are that:

- A strong relationship has been built with the DWP locally.
- The evaluation of the pilot has provided some indication of the need for different approaches for people experiencing multiple and complex needs.
- The issue is on the agenda, and local DWP partners are open to continuing to work with the project.

### Supporting people with no recourse to public funds

- This work is in its early stages. So far, relationships have been built with local charities working with this group of people, and early ideas for systems changes have been produced through discussion of the situations of individual Fulfilling Lives clients.

## 4. An emerging theory of systems change for the project

Figure (i) presents an emerging model of the process of systems change for the project.

The main processes by which the project aims to influence change include:

- Collaborating, understanding the system, and aspiring for a better system.
- Testing and evidencing the need for and effectiveness of change.
- Scaling and embedding change.

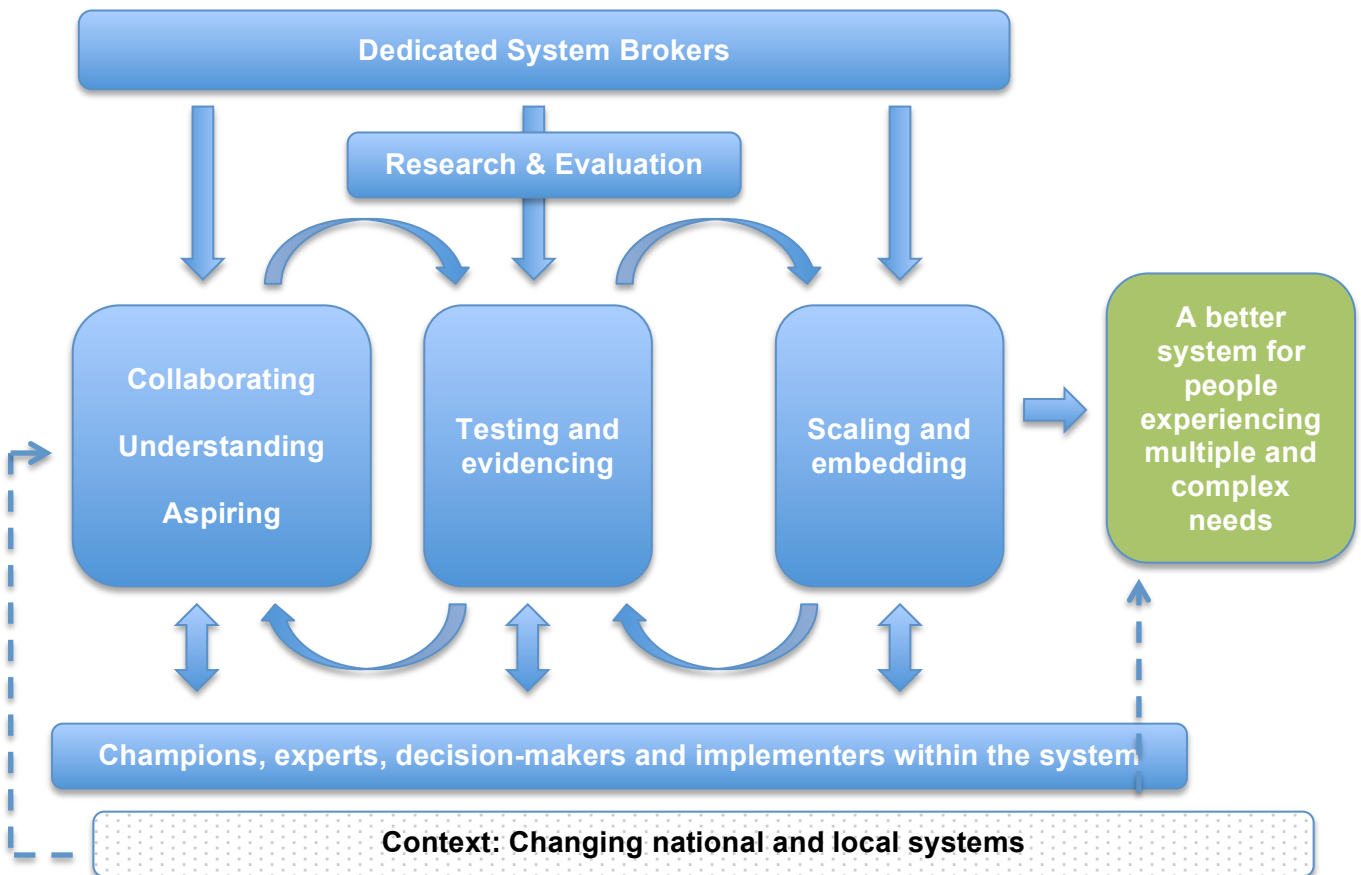
The work is supported by:

- The dedicated System Broker and Research and Evaluation roles.
- Others within the system, including:
  - Experts (by experience and professionally, including Fulfilling Lives clients, Service Navigators, and the project's three reference groups, as well as external experts).
  - Decision-makers (such as senior managers, who are in a position to sign-off change).
  - Implementers of the change (such as frontline staff and managers, who may need to change ways of working).
  - Champions (to help scale and embed the work and potentially take ownership of it).

These individuals shape the project's work, but are also shaped by it; for example, as collaboration develops and evidence is built, people may be more likely to support and champion the work.

The work is taking place within a context of complex and ever-changing national and local systems. Ultimately, the aim is to create a better system for people experiencing multiple and complex needs.

Figure (i): The process of systems change in the Newcastle and Gateshead Fulfilling Lives project: an emerging theory



## 5. Facilitators of and barriers to change

The project has encountered the following facilitators of and barriers to systems change across its systems change work.

### Facilitators of systems change

- **The project's open, non-directive approach** to change facilitates genuine collaboration, enables a flexible approach to change, and enables the project to seize opportunity as it arises.
- **Building and connecting with networks** enhances the expertise the project can draw on, and gives access to decision-makers and potential champions.
- **Dialogue and collaboration** with a wide range of people within the system enhances understanding of the issues and buy-in from those who may need to change.
- **Trusting relationships** between Fulfilling Lives staff and others have encouraged other organisations to get involved in the systems change work.
- **The dedicated resource of System Brokers and the Research and Evaluation Lead** have enabled busy partners to take part in initial testing of new ways of working with reduced resource implications.
- **The tenacity and resilience** of System Brokers has helped them move work forwards and keep issues on the agenda, despite some delays and obstacles.

### Barriers to systems change

- **Difficulties securing the desired level of involvement by some decision-makers**, which may stem from lack of time, lack of sufficient evidence to secure their involvement, anxiety about the consequences of change for their own organisation, or a disinclination to tackle complex or controversial issues.
- **Resistance to change by some frontline workers**, which may stem from anxiety or a context of other pressures.
- **Challenges in securing evidence**, both from partners and from a transient client group.
- **Unpredicted changes within the national and local system** can disrupt systems change work that is being conducted.
- **National policy**, in some cases, has restricted the project's ability to make changes at a local level.
- **A context of budget cuts and financial pressures** can make services more open to change, but may also mean that changes can only be achieved where there is evidence that they will save money.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

- Fulfilling Lives Newcastle and Gateshead has begun to influence change in local systems. It has brokered the piloting of a new local connection policy in Gateshead, and its work has initiated conversations among many Local Authorities in the North East region around developing a regional local connection agreement. It has built strong working relationships with the Department for Work and Pensions locally, and conducted a pilot project that has provided some indication of the need for a supported approach to accessing benefits for people experiencing multiple and complex needs.
- Early indications are that the project has adopted an effective model for systems change. Important elements of this are:
  - The provision of dedicated staff to support systems change has facilitated the work and proved an incentive for other organisations to become involved. This includes System Brokers who can facilitate dialogue and collaboration and provide a resource to take new ideas forward, and a dedicated Research and Evaluation Lead who can provide robust evidence about the effectiveness of systems change pilots.
  - Indications are that the project's approach of gradual, non-directed, collaborative change is working well. Stakeholders were on the whole enthusiastic about the project's role and the possibility of making change.
  - Stakeholders confirm that evidence is important to them, and, for many, is necessary to obtaining sign-off for change from senior decision-makers.
- The project has built strong, trusting relationships with many local stakeholders, built on dialogue and collaboration. Some local stakeholders have not been closely involved in the project's systems change work, and the project is seeking ways to increase their involvement, for example through the provision of stronger evidence of need and effectiveness.
- The project's systems change work has been grounded in the aspirations and experiences of Fulfilling Lives clients. All of the areas in which the project is seeking to influence change are believed to be important areas of change by local stakeholders. The selection of areas of system change on which the project has focused has been influenced to some extent by chance and opportunity, and by the passion and expertise of its System Brokers. Both of these have proved valuable and effective routes to influencing important change. As the project's systems change work develops, it might be useful to consider in more depth how areas for the systems change work are identified and prioritised, and to seek ways for the Experts by Experience group to be more closely involved in this process.

## 7 Changing systems for people with multiple and complex needs: interim report

- The resilience and tenacity of System Brokers have been important in ensuring that work progresses in the face of obstacles. It is important that System Brokers are well-supported to deal with the challenges of their role.
- Systems change takes time; most of the systems change work conducted so far has involved building trusting relationships, engaging in dialogue and collaboration, and gathering evidence, all of which take time. The next phase of work for the local connection pilot will be scaling up and embedding the change, and it is expected that other future pilots will go through a similar process.
- Systemic changes and blockages at a national level have set back systems change work in a number of areas locally. The introduction of full service (ie fully implemented across all groups of benefit recipients), fully online Universal Credit in Newcastle has rendered work improving access to benefits through the current telephone system redundant. The changes to Right to Rent in the Immigration Act 2016, alongside other national policies affecting people with no recourse to public funds, has made it more difficult to support such people. The project is likely to benefit from working closely with the Big Lottery to identify ways in which the national Fulfilling Lives programme could influence national policy.
- Conversations with experts and other Fulfilling Lives projects helped the project to identify innovative practice elsewhere (for example local connection agreements between councils) which significantly informed its work. Sharing ideas, learning and (importantly) evidence across the Fulfilling Lives projects may become particularly valuable as each project progresses and increasingly influences change locally.

### Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank all of those who took part in the research for sharing their knowledge and ideas. This includes: Action Foundation, Changing Lives, the Comfrey Project, Crisis Skylight Newcastle, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Experts by Experience group, Fulfilling Lives, Gateshead Council, Homeless Link, Mental Health Concern, Newcastle City Council, Newcastle Law Centre, North Tyneside Council, Oasis Aquila Housing, Shelter, and Sunderland Council.

**Written by:** Juliette Hough

#### **New Economics Foundation**

[www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)

[info@neweconomics.org](mailto:info@neweconomics.org)

+44 (0)20 7820 6300

@nef

Registered charity number 1055254

© 2016 The New Economics Foundation

<sup>1</sup> Big Lottery Fund (n.d.) *Fulfilling Lives: Supporting people with multiple needs*.

[http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog\\_complex\\_needs](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_complex_needs) Accessed on 01.09.2014

<sup>2</sup> As reported in the evaluation of the pilot. His experience contrasts with the man in the control group who accumulated arrears as a result of difficulties making his claim and was ultimately evicted.