

# ***Introduction to Lankelly Chase and place based work***

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# About Lankelly Chase

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Lankelly Chase works to tackle a vicious cycle between inequity and harms damaging many lives in the UK today. This is the way inequity (or unfairness, injustice) puts people at much greater risk of harms such as homelessness, drug misuse, mental illness and violence, which significantly worsens the inequity they experience, which causes those harms to multiply, and so the cycle continues.

These issues are complex. They involve everything from the psychology of the individual facing it through the relationships in a family and the actions of statutory services right up to the global economic system and the inequality it generates (with these things all being interconnected).

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No one has the answer to the question of how to change systems and no one has full control over it. We think change only emerges through the action of whole systems. No person, project or organisation can make it happen. We take an action inquiry approach, learning and adapting as we go around the central question of ***‘how can we change the systems that perpetuate severe and multiple disadvantage in (place)’?***

We do not have a predetermined sense of how to do this. We are guided by the **system behaviours** as our best understanding about the characteristics of healthy systems.

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# What do we mean by systems?

‘a set of things—people, cells, molecules or whatever—interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behaviour over time’ (Meadows, 2010).



# Why take a systems approach?

- No agreement on the solution to the issues (eg where to start or what makes the biggest difference)...
- ...or even what the problem is in the first place (eg 'individual choice' vs 'lack of education')
- Intended and unintended consequences
- Constantly evolving and adapting
- Unboundaried time/resources/people
- Uncertainty
- Our systems approach is grounded in some theory, but we were led to this by our practical experience – we found that no matter how many great individual projects we funded, the same fundamental problems remained

## Why work in 'places'?

- The systems approach can't be taken within the boundary of an organisation like a 'grantee' - it has to be wider
- Convening people/groups/networks/organisations and focusing on the relationships and interconnections between them – disadvantage and inequality aren't the business of any one organisation or sector
- It doesn't mean just funding lots of different things in one town/city!

# What are the system behaviours?

Through observing and working in different fields including homelessness, violence, health, the arts, community development, substance misuse and youth work, we have identified some core *behaviours* (rather than a set of actions, for example) which help systems function better for people facing severe and multiple disadvantage. Our experiences have led us to conclude that:

- (i) it is the presence of these behaviours, more than any specific methodology, that seems to account for positive change; and
- (ii) these behaviours need to be present and continually promoted in every part of the system.

For a full version, see: [Our Approach to Change](#)

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# System behaviours

## Perspective

- People see themselves as part of an interconnected whole
- All people are viewed as resourceful and bringing strengths
- There is shared purpose and vision

## Power

- Power is shared and equality of voice is actively promoted
- Decision making is devolved
- Accountability is mutual

## Participation

- Open, trusting relationships enable effective dialogue
- Leadership is collaborative and promoted at every level
- Feedback and collective learning drive adaptation

# The system behaviours

Two perspectives we hold at the same time -

System behaviours — as an outcome

What are the new patterns and structures that might emerge?

System behaviours — as a process

How we get there. The process you use to get to the future is the future you get.

# Core assumptions...

....systems produce outcomes NOT individuals or organisations

....no one has monopoly on the truth

....emotions are present in all of this

# How we work

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We don't have a model or one way of doing things. We do have some key ingredients for our place based work. We are still learning and so far, these are:

### **We value work that builds relationships**

We believe that the one of the biggest challenges we face is how we shift human relationships. We value work that invests in building relationships because we recognise that it's through relationships that things find definition as opposed to the common sense view that 'things' interact with 'things' to form relationships. We value spending less time on getting policies and strategies right and more time learning about how we might need to work together in order to reach our objectives. Back to, ***it ain't what you do, it's the way you do it.***

### **We take an action inquiry approach**

We develop action inquiries into the changes that are needed. We don't think any one person or organisation has all the answers, and so we aim to make these inquiries as collective and collaborative as possible. We focus our action inquiry on an overall question: ***how can we change the systems that perpetuate severe and multiple disadvantage in (place)?*** We also recognise that our partners in places will have their own sub questions. Northumbria University have created a [Place inquiry map](#), so you can see how things fit together.

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## **Learning and the learning partner**

We recognise that changing complex systems requires the ability to adapt and change because the context which enables interventions to 'work' is constantly changing. "What works" is the continuous process of listening, learning and adapting. Learning and adapting is one of the [system behaviours](#). Our learning partner for the work in places is Northumbria University - the main people are Hannah Hasslegreaves and Max French. Our learning partner's role is to: 1) help Lankelly learn 2) support places to learn and 3) spot patterns across the different places we work, so we can all adapt.

## **System behaviours**

We think outcomes emerge from the actions of whole systems. The system behaviours are our best understanding about the characteristics of healthy systems. The systems behaviours are both the how and what we focus on. We believe the process you use to get to the future is the future you get.

## **Focus on extreme marginalisation**

We focus on the way inequity (or unfairness, injustice) puts people at much greater risk of harms such as homelessness, drug misuse, mental illness and violence, which significantly worsens the inequity they experience, which causes those harms to multiply, and so the cycle continues.

## Coordination teams (or core teams)

We invest in local teams who can coordinate the different strands of the work and who create learning spaces to bring people together. We may support more than one coordination team in a local area and they may vary in size, composition and purpose. Some coordination teams will also have a mandate from Lankelly Chase's Trustees to make funding decisions as we move towards devolving funding decisions locally.

## Place Associates

We work with associates who are often local people with the skills, connections, relationships, mind-sets and capabilities to connect/weave work across sectors, people and fields. We also work with people who have specialist skills.

## What we prioritise for funding

We don't fund services or projects (unless these are experiments co-designed by cross sector groups of people who are deeply invested in them). We focus on supporting **spaces** where diverse groups of people can come together to create healthier systems or further the **system behaviours**, **practices/skills** that strength systems health, work that builds **cross-sector relationships/networks** and visions & ideas that shift work to the [2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> horizon](#).

# Where we work

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**We focus our action inquiry question: *how can we change the systems that perpetuate severe and multiple disadvantage in (place)*’? in the following places.**

- Barrow in Furness
- Barking & Dagenham
- Gateshead
- Oxford
- Greater Manchester
- York
- Finalising one place in Scotland at the moment

Each locality has a group of people 'coordinating' the work. Please feel free to reach out to each other.

- **Barrow in Furness:** Rebecca Rawlings and Katrina Robson
- **Barking & Dagenham:** Avril McIntyre,
- **Gateshead:** Andy Crosbie
- **Oxford:** Sara Fernandez,
- **Greater Manchester:** Paul Connery,
- **York:** Catherine Scott and Kelly Cunningham
- Finalising one place in Scotland at the moment

# Tools & methods we use

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We experiment with different tools and methods that are about building relationships, dealing with conflict, welcoming diverse and conflicting perspectives, bringing people together, taking systemic perspectives and avoiding boring meetings dominated by a few individuals.

Tool/methods	Why we use it
<a href="#">Team agreements or alliances</a>	Groups to agree how they work together, including when things get difficult
<a href="#">Checking in and checking out</a>	To recognise each other as humans rather than mere cogs in the wheels. It gives each person the opportunity to be recognised. It gives a sense of where people are 'outside the meeting'.
<a href="#">Co-resolve</a> and deep democracy	A way of making group decisions that incorporates the “No/invites alternative views” and deals with polarising views. We mostly use this to make decisions in Lankelly Chase and in groups we are part of.
<a href="#">Liberating structures</a>	Free, easy-to-learn ways of having discussions. They foster lively participation in groups of any size, making it possible to include and unleash everyone.

Tool/methods	Why we use it
<a href="#">Art of hosting</a> – along with participatory methods such as <a href="#">Open Space</a> , <a href="#">World Café</a>	It is an approach to leadership that scales up from the personal to the systemic using personal practice, dialogue, facilitation and the co-creation of innovation to address complex challenges.
<a href="#">First, second and third person action research</a>	To help us integrate research and practice in ourselves, our teams, our organisations and our communities.
<a href="#">Reflective Practice and journaling</a>	It enables recognition of the paradigms – assumptions, frameworks and patterns of thought and behaviour – that shape our thinking and action.
<a href="#">ORSC</a> - Organization and Relationship Systems Coaching	It's based in the belief that good relationships are the foundation to healthy families, businesses and communities.
<a href="#">Theory U</a>	A free online course that introduces you to a process of leading profound social, environmental and personal transformation.
<a href="#">School for Systems Change</a>	Helps you navigate <a href="#">five core capabilities for system change</a> , introducing you to a variety of tools and methods to lead ambitious initiatives and engage others.

Tool/methods	Why we use it
<a href="#"><u>Systems changers Programme</u></a>	“On the job” programme to enable frontline workers (and others) to gain a sense of agency to influence the multiple systems they work within
Coaching approaches	Focus on people’s ability to find solutions within themselves rather than be told what to do.
<a href="#"><u>Systemic Action Research</u></a>	An approach to action research which is built on the foundations of systems thinking and complexity theory. Its focus is not so much on the systems themselves as on a systemic understanding of how change happens and how norms become established
<a href="#"><u>3 Horizons Framework</u></a>	It is a simple way to encourage a conversation about the challenges in the present, our aspirations for the future and the kinds of innovation we might need in order to address both at the same time.
This list is not exhaustive! There are many other tools and methods you may know about, including those from artists, the Global South, participatory research, de-colonial practitioners etc! We are not attached to any one method.	

# **Additional Materials and reading**

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# Additional reading

Things which have inspired our thinking or reflect how we see the world/our work:

- ✦ [Peter Senge: The Dawn of system leadership](#) and [The Water of Systems Change](#)
- ✦ Explanation of structural, systemic and enabling approaches in [‘Transformations to sustainability’](#)
- ✦ Donella Meadows: [‘Places to intervene in a system’](#) (and other work)
- ✦ [‘Embracing Complexity’](#) and other work by Jean Boulton

Reviews and insights from our own work:

- ✦ [Historical Review of place based work](#)
- ✦ [Medium blogs](#), especially [our learning so far](#)

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