

OUR APPROACH TO CHANGE

Lankelly Chase builds partnerships across the UK to change the systems that perpetuate severe and multiple disadvantage.

We develop and support **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.

Through years of working with people tackling issues such as homelessness, drug misuse, violence, mental ill health and poverty, we've observed that the systems which are effective in responding to severe and multiple disadvantage have some common qualities. We call these qualities **systems behaviours**.

Our action inquiries therefore aim to create the **conditions** within which these system behaviours can be tested, understood and promoted.

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OUR GOAL

We want to see systems across the UK that are effective in contending with the complex interlocking nature of severe and multiple disadvantage.

OUR ASSUMPTIONS

We hold five **assumptions** about the nature of systems which come from our experience of supporting change across the UK:

1. Systems are **complex and often messy** webs that are constantly shifting. They consist of tangible things like people and organisations, connected by intangible things like history, worldviews, context and culture.
2. Everyone who is part of a system holds a different **perspective** on its nature, purpose and boundaries. **No one person holds the whole truth** (including us).
3. **Everything and everyone exists in relationships, and these involve emotions.**
4. Change emerges from the way the **whole system** behaves not from the actions of any one project or organisation. We therefore need to help build the fitness of the system to generate positive change.
5. The complexity of systems means we can't fully plan how to achieve the changes we seek, but we can identify several **conditions that enable positive change** and the actions that **are likely to move us toward our goal.**

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Our assumptions inform how we work. For example, we:

- involve **the diversity of people** found across the system
- attend to **the whole** as well as the parts
- acknowledge the importance of **relationships** and emotions to this work
- **explore questions collectively** using action inquiry

SYSTEM BEHAVIOURS

We have identified core behaviours that help systems function better for people facing severe and multiple disadvantage. Through observing different fields including homelessness, violence, health, the arts, community development, substance misuse and youth work, we've seen 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.

These behaviours are about **perspective, power and participation**.

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Created by Alina Oleynik
from Noun Project

PERSPECTIVE

1. People view themselves as part of an interconnected whole

Everyone working towards positive change understands that their actions form part of a web of activity made up of the contribution of many others. Everyone wants the system as a whole to work and knows they cannot control it.

2. People are viewed as resourceful and bringing strengths

Everyone is viewed as bringing both strengths and weaknesses as part of a resourceful network of people who are continually growing and learning from each other.

3. People share a vision

People appreciate each other's perspectives and seek common purpose and understanding.

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POWER

4. Power is shared, and equality of voice actively promoted

All people are able to play their fullest role in building an effective system. Unequal distribution of power, including structural inequality, is continually addressed.

5. Decision-making is devolved

Those people closest to a complex situation are free to engage with its uniqueness and context and to use their initiative to respond to it.

6. Accountability is mutual

System improvements are driven by accountability to the people being served. The people being served are supported to take responsibility for their own change.

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PARTICIPATION

7. Open, trusting relationships enable effective dialogue

People feel safe to ask the difficult questions, voice disagreement and deal with the conflict and uncomfortable emotions that surface.

8. Leadership is collaborative and promoted at every level

Leadership is identified and valued as much in the person experiencing interlocking disadvantages and the frontline worker, as in the CEO or commissioner.

9. Feedback and collective learning drive adaptation

People can see a learning loop between the actions they take and their understanding of the problem they are trying to solve, so that each is being continually adapted and refined.

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HOW WE WORK

All our actions are designed to test, understand and promote the system behaviours. Rather than seeking to impose them, we've learnt that the most effective way to work with complex systems is to develop open and powerful questions as the basis for collective inquiry. This involves collaborating with people across systems to act, reflect and iterate. We are currently focusing on **five action inquiries**.

- 1. How can we promote a more critical approach to understanding the interlocking nature of severe disadvantages?**
- 2. How can power shift to people who are marginalised, so they have the motivation, capability and freedom to become change agents?**
- 3. How do we build a field of people capable of analysing and disrupting systems?**
- 4. How do we support places to build the system behaviours?**
- 5. What does effective governance look like of organisations trying to think and act systemically, starting with Lankelly Chase itself?**

This way of working requires us to address our own processes and capabilities, both at an Executive and Non-Executive level, recognising that we are part of the system that needs to change. A key aspect of the fifth action inquiry is therefore to explore what it means for an independent foundation to act as a system practitioner and to model the system behaviours itself.

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HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK?

Our ultimate indicator will be a critical mass of people who want to, feel able to and are free to embody the system behaviours:

People want to embody the systems behaviours

Indicators include: we are identifying and galvanising the people, ideas, resources and events that promise to lead the system towards our goal; we are creating powerful partnerships with people who can contribute.

People feel able to embody the system behaviours

Indicators include: work is being picked up and used outside of our funded activity; there is a growing network of change agents with a collective vision.

People are free to embody the system behaviours

Indicators include: work has increasing relevance to policy development; the system behaviours are translated into institutional processes that have credibility with decision makers.

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WHAT NOW?

Our main purpose in publishing this update on our approach is to be as open as possible about the ideas, learning and assumptions that underpin our work, and to demonstrate how they continue to evolve.

We hope that you will contribute to and challenge our learning and ideas, so that this document comes to represent the collective wisdom of our network of partners.

We would love to hear your feedback, questions and challenges so please contact communications@lankellychase.org.uk to start the conversation.