



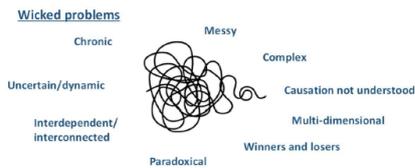
Live Online

Effective Leadership Plenary Session (14 July 2020) Further Reading

SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP

This thinking on systems leadership was undertaken by volunteers from DfE, DfID and HMRC who reviewed literature and interviewed experts/practitioners. They have been supported by the Strategic Framework team and OD&D Expert Service.

Because many issues we face are “wicked” problems:



Because solutions lie in systems working differently:

What is a system in this context?

Set of individuals or organisations working together or interacting as part of interconnecting network; a complex whole

Because systems leadership is different to other forms of leadership:

“The collaborative leadership of a network of people in different places and at different levels in the system creating a shared endeavour and cooperating to make a significant change”

Source: Virtual Staff College.

Systems leaders see themselves as a leader in a system rather than the leader of a system

Mindset for systems leadership

- Strategic
- Collaborative
- Passionate
- Listening
- Humble
- Self-reflective
- Courageous
- Inspiring

We need systems leaders who:

- Identify and galvanise other leaders;
- Reflect deeply on what’s stuck;
- Iterate through learning cycles as a way of co-creating solutions that will last;
- Dare to experiment and learn from failure.

They have the mindset, resources and relationships to see the bigger system, foster reflective conversations and shift the collective focus.

They create emotional commitment to a shared endeavor, by ceding power to co-create and build self-care/support network to sustain them working in a counter-cultural way

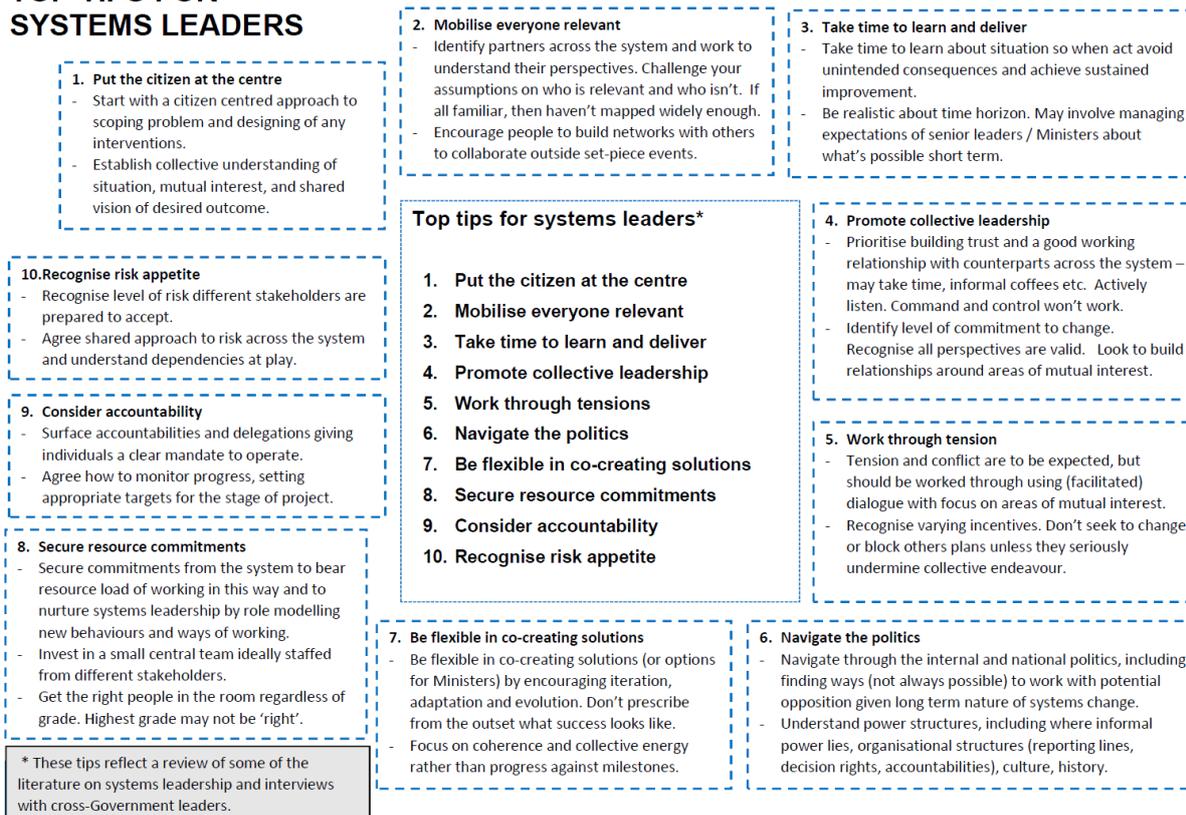
Systems leadership is strongly linked to the stewardship role for Civil Servants and public sector leaders.

Barriers to systems leadership

- Silo mentality
- “The day job”
- Departmental objectives
- Funding arrangements
- Lacking levers of action/accountability
- Short termism
- Tensions and misunderstandings
- Frequent job moves
- It is hard work

Our work on systems leadership is early stage and we’d very much welcome your views. Please do let us have any comments on what resonates with you and what’s missing; and what support you think systems leaders need. If you want to follow up please e-mail ben.coates@education.gov.uk. We would be very keen to arrange a conversation.

TOP TIPS FOR SYSTEMS LEADERS



The Strategic Framework

What is the Strategic Framework?

Traditionally government struggles with working across boundaries. In order to tackle some of the most complex challenges of our time, this has to change.

To generate more deliverable policy, better value for money and improved outcomes for the public, systems thinking should be at the heart of policy design and delivery.

The Strategic Framework (SF) approach is based on private sector best practice, academic research and international initiatives, as well learning from and building on previous best practice within the UK Government. It represents a different way of delivering the major, complex Ministerial priorities which do not fit easily within our departmental or organisational barriers (e.g. how to reduce crime, or 'level up' regions).

We have set up a series of demonstrator projects, led by Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) and sponsored by Permanent Secretaries, to develop, learn and refine the way the SF works.

What does this mean?

The SF uses systems thinking to address complex policy challenges that are "systemic" - which means that they cut across different organisations. The SF approach involves:

- starting with the citizen, and their experience of the world, rather than our views from departmental silos in Whitehall;

- addressing tensions between different organisational objectives, and focusing complex systems on the delivery of the government's cross-cutting priority outcomes;
- collaborating with the public, private and third sector at the earliest possible stage, co-designing policy;
- enabling a place-based approach through harnessing the power of local systems.

In practice, the SF has senior officials (SROs) who take responsibility for the system and delivering each cross-cutting priority. They are supported by an interdisciplinary team from across the system with expertise in systems thinking, user centred design, data science and project management. Crucially, the team also has direct access to resources. The SF also includes options for a sponsor Minister to provide political leadership, and dock into the relevant collective agreement mechanism.

The SF is being explored as a way of delivering HMG's top cross-cutting priorities such as reducing crime and reoffending, ending homelessness and tackling addiction.

Contact us

systems@cabinetoffice.gov.uk