

PE1423/C

Improvement Service Letter of 19 May 2012

PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF PE1423 QUESTIONS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS (See 'Written submissions' for responses)

Improvement Service

- What is your response to what the petition seeks?

The Improvement Service is happy to respond to the petition and the issues it raises, specifically to the concerns about individual as opposed to organisational learning; the need to take a whole system approach to the intractable, “wicked” issues facing Scotland; and the most beneficial models of leadership in the post Christie context.

The Christie Commission states that there is a need for a “whole system focus on outcomes” and we are clear that this requires our organisations to respond and relate differently in order to deliver on this agenda. We cannot “do” outcomes to people, we require to find new ways of working that include collaboration, empowerment of both staff across public services and communities, engaging much more directly with their aspirations and implementing new leadership thinking and paradigms.

In order to deliver on this agenda, we have been working with public service partners to create more organisational development and whole systems approaches aimed at promoting more appropriate and effective leadership. A multi-agency team including Scottish Government, NHS, and the Improvement Service, designed a leadership programme for 64 senior leaders across public services which sought to tackle the presuppositions we have about the nature of the challenges we face and the type of leadership which is needed to bring about improvement. The concept of wicked issues was introduced to the group and a process of collaborative inquiry was strongly featured, supported by the introduction to, and the use of, soft systems methodology. The purpose of this was to invite leaders to reflect on their own practice and to challenge their assumptions regarding the most suitable leadership models in the present environment. This included the need for collaborative responses, the use of listening and inquiry skills, and the need to hear all of the voices who have issues and concerns and a stake in improving the lives of communities. We were clear that we cannot apply “managerial” responses to such problems and we challenged participants about the way they thought about and applied their own leadership. We encouraged leaders to take risks, experiment, talk to different people, to use rich pictures, cause and effect diagrams and to formulate and ask powerful questions.

Within this programme we looked specifically at command and control as a response to a critical situation or immediate crisis (for example a fire);

management as a response to a tame problem (applying a known process); and leadership as a response to wicked issues.

We continue to work collaboratively encouraging leaders to cross organisational boundaries, facilitating alternative interventions, such as action learning and seeking to build the leadership and organisational development capacity to support the outcomes, prevention, early intervention and co-production agenda in Scotland.

We would be happy to discuss this further and provide any other help required.