

Training and support for leadership and organisational development

Navigating complex and perilous territory requires fresh thinking and creative action.

The Strategy Unit can help you with this.

There is little satisfaction with the status quo. NHS IMPACT, the Messenger Review, the Hewitt Review, the Goldacre Review, the Leadership Academy's Healthcare Leadership Model; they – and others - cry out for leaders and teams who can think and act differently.

Health and care services are not alone. The World Economic Forum's *Future of jobs 2023* report found high and growing need for people with 'thinking skills'. Analytical, creative and systems thinking skills are in particularly high demand.

How can these skills be cultivated and sustained? This offer is part of the [Strategy Unit's](#) answer.

We have long been known for the quality of our analytical work, and the clear, critical thinking that underpins it. More recently, we have been asked to provide leadership training and support for organisational development.

Individuals, teams, organisations and Integrated Care Systems have found this valuable. We have also enjoyed it, and now we are opening our offer so others can benefit. This document is a starting point.

We combine high-quality training with hands-on support.

Our offer is flexible, tailored to your needs.

Below, we summarise our training offer session-by-session. In one way, this is right: each session can be commissioned to stand alone and there is value in this. Yet selected sessions can also be structured into a development programme, taking a specific cohort through bespoke training.

Most powerfully, we can combine training sessions with organisational development support. This blend – training *and* support – can be rich and transformational, helping you to embed and sustain the practices we introduce in the sessions.

Our training stimulates and supports people to think differently. It is designed for current / aspiring leaders and senior managers - as well as those, such as analysts, who inform decision making. Some of the sessions are particularly suited to Board development.

Our support is always tailored, so format and cost varies. But - for the purposes of providing a guide - we find that short day, face-to-face sessions are most effective, and the sessions summarised below range between £3-8k. For more details, and to discuss your needs, please [get in touch](#).

Our offer is organised into three - deeply interrelated - themes

1: Improving decision making

- Better quality decision making *
- Problem solving and creativity
- Economic thinking for non-economists *
- Ethics for decision making

2: Working together effectively

- Leading in collaboration
- System thinking, system doing
- Seeing (and feeling) your organisation in new ways
- Working with challenge and conflict

3: Value from analysis*

- Leadership for analysts
- Improvement science
- Analytical concepts for leaders

* These sessions may be available under the:



Midlands
Decision Support
Network

Contact us to discuss your requirements

1: Improving decision making

Better quality decision making

Gain skills, insights and methods to improve strategic decision making for your team, your organisation and yourself

What does the session cover?

- Why decision making matters - and why high quality decision making is so difficult
- Insights from the literature on improving decision making in teams and organisations
- Specific tools and practices to improve decision making

What do people gain?

- Knowledge on why decision making so often goes wrong, and why it needs specific attention
- Pointers, tips, tools and methods to cultivate better decision making as individuals, teams and organisations
- Facilitated time to reflect upon current practice and plan for improvement

Who leads the session?

- [Fraser Battye](#) / [Professor Mohammed A Mohammed](#)

Problem solving and creativity

See old problems in a new light - and learn tools and techniques for addressing them more creatively

What does the session cover?

- Why creativity is fundamentally important, yet often neglected
- Insights from neuroscience and design thinking
- A framework – the Design Council's 'Double Diamond' structuring problem solving and supporting creativity

What do people gain?

- A process for problem solving – alongside multiple practical tools and methods
- Pointers and practices to enhance creativity in themselves, their teams and workplaces
- Increased confidence to approach problems in a more creative and collaborative way

Who leads the session?

- [Fraser Battye](#)

Economic thinking for non-economists

Learn powerful ways of thinking in this jargon-free, engaging session for people with no background in economics

What does the session cover?

- Why economics rules the roost, and the power in economic ways of thinking
- Core concepts from economics – and how they apply to health and care services
- Different approaches to economic analysis and the tricky question of 'value for money'

What do people gain?

- Insights into the way that economists think
- Increased confidence to engage in discussions about 'the economics of' their services / projects (etc)
- Understanding of the strengths and limitations of different approaches to economic analysis

Who leads the session?

- [Fraser Battye](#)

Ethics for decision making

How do you know if you're making ethical decisions? Gain understanding and confidence in approaching thorny questions

What does the session cover?

- What ethical decision making is and why it matters
- The main approaches for thinking about ethics, their strengths and limitations
- Approaches and practices to improve ethical decision making

What do people gain?

- Understanding of why ethical decision making is difficult, and why improvement matters
- Insights into thinking about ethics: how they and others can approach ethical decision making
- Facilitated time to reflect upon current practice and plan for practical improvement

Who leads the session?

- [Fraser Battye](#) and [Angie Hobbs](#), Professor of the Public Understanding of Philosophy

2: Working together effectively

Leading in collaboration

Partnerships and collaboratives are everywhere in health and care – explore how to work in and with them effectively

What does the session cover?

- The underlying dynamics of partnership decision making
- The concept of 'stretch collaboration'
- Noticing and navigating the multiple roles and boundaries in collaborative working

What do people gain?

- A strengthened capability to manage the challenge of working in multiple roles at the same time
- The ability to work more effectively with the hidden as well as the explicit dynamics of partnership working
- A variety of frameworks that participants can draw on as they return to their shared task

Who leads the session?

- [David Frith](#) and [Mark Thompson](#).

System thinking, system doing

Amplify your impact with a session designed to enhance your ability to think, act and lead in systems

What does the session cover?

- The characteristics of 'systems' and especially of complex systems
- The implications of systems thinking when it comes to designing actions
- Leadership behaviours needed to lead and guide system working

What do people gain?

- Theoretical insights from systems thinking (combine theoretical insight with practical reality)
- Practical Increased ability to design services / projects / programmes (etc)
- Time and space to consider their own leadership and management practice – and to plan for improvements

Who leads the session?

- [Fraser Battye](#) / [Belinda Weir](#) / [Professor Mohammed A Mohammed](#)

Seeing (and feeling) your organisation in new ways

We develop set ways of seeing our organisations – and miss so much else in the process.

What does the session cover?

- Exploring the 'organisation-in-the-mind', and where it does and doesn't match with reality.
- Using insights from open systems theory to enrich our understanding of how organisations work
- Frameworks for exploring organisational culture, dynamics and challenges

What do people gain?

- Enhanced skills in observing what is going on around them (and within them) in their organisation
- A richer understanding of organisational dynamics – open and hidden – and how to work with them
- Capability to use 'feelings as data'

Who leads the session?

- [David Frith](#) and [Mark Thompson](#)

Working with challenge and conflict

How to build a depth of understanding rather than “manage” or “dismiss”

What does the session cover?

- Why problems repeat or feel intractable and how to work with this
- Critical Incident Analysis – using the group to shed new light on real challenges or conflicts
- Semantic Polarities and Negotiation– taking and understanding ‘positions’ and uncovering underlying ‘interests’

What do people gain?

- Greater understanding of the dynamics that lie beneath challenge and conflict
- A safe space to review confusing or difficult experiences as senior managers
- Skills and techniques for engaging with challenge and finding opportunity and understanding in conflict

Who leads the session?

- [David Frith](#) and [Mark Thompson](#)

3: Value from analysis

Leadership for analysts

Analysts are often neglected when it comes to developing leadership talent, but they bring specific perspectives and skills

What does the session cover?

- Flexible format (please contact us to discuss), usually run over 4-6 sessions
- Runs from considering individual factors, into team, organisational and system, ending broader influencing skills
- Examines the core theme of what analysts – as technically skilled people – bring to the task of leadership

What do people gain?

- Confidence in themselves as leaders (current or prospective)
- Practices, skills and methods for leading
- An understanding of their development trajectory as a leader

Who leads the session?

- [Lucy Hawkins](#) / [Fraser Battye](#) / [Professor Mohammed A Mohammed](#)

Improvement science

Learn methods, tools and techniques for applying the scientific method to service improvements

What does the session cover?

- The science of improvement
- Understanding of systems, variation, people and knowledge
- Measurement for improvement

What do people gain?

- Appreciation of the science of improvement
- Increased confidence to approach problems using the science of improvement
- Pointers, tips and tools for application in the real world

Who leads the session?

- [Professor Mohammed A Mohammed](#)

Analytical concepts for leaders

Gain insight into core concepts from analytics to help you become a better decision maker

What does the session cover?

- Why data and analytical reasoning are essential to high quality decision making
- Intuitive demonstrations of key analytical concepts that are useful for real world problems
- Simple graphical tools to understand variation in data and embrace uncertainty

What do people gain?

- Insights on how systems science can help us work better as a system
- Understanding why plans are theories to aid learning which can be evaluated before going live
- Understand how to enhance decision making by embracing, not ignoring, uncertainty

Who leads the session?

- [Professor Mohammed A Mohammed](#)

The training offer set out here is just a starting point; it will evolve.

Contact us to discuss your requirements

Our training and organisational development offer is flexible. It can be adapted to meet your needs, and we can develop specific sessions if what you want is not described here. We will also continue to develop new, related courses.

If you are interested, please contact us to discuss your requirements:

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A brief introduction to the Strategy Unit

The [Strategy Unit](#) is a specialist NHS team. We exist to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities, by:

- *Improving decision making* - applying critical thinking, analysis, and impartial advice in structured processes.
- *Increasing capabilities* – helping individuals, teams, organisations, and partnerships develop local competencies.

A simple belief animates everything we do: ***better evidence + better decision making = better outcomes***.

We take a 'systems' view and we add most value in complex situations. If mechanistic solutions are appropriate, then we're not. We combine theoretical insight with practical reality; we bring stimulation and useful provocation; we promote diversity and inclusion - creating energetic and safe learning environments.

Our training and development offer draws upon the diverse skills and insights of our over 60 staff. We understand - from the inside - the realities of working and leading in NHS provider and commissioner organisations, the Voluntary and Community Sector, and Social Care services.

Our [team](#) includes experienced educators, skilled in creating learning sessions; high quality facilitators who draw on diverse evidence-based methods; organisational consultants schooled in the Tavistock tradition of systems psychodynamics; experts in policy development, the use of evidence, and improvement science.