

## What Does It Take to Shift to A More Relational Approach to Public Services?

### The Clackmannanshire Strategic Transformation Story

#### FOREWORD

**By Harriet Hunter & Toby Lowe, Centre for Public Impact**

People working in public service today face complex, interconnected challenges: climate change, inequality, poverty, health crises, and more. They increasingly crave a new approach to navigating the complex issues of the 21st century, one that fosters collaboration and recognises that no single service or department can meet all people's needs.

However, the reality of public services often feels fragmented. Frequently, we are trapped in crisis response, with little or no scope to work upstream. Moreover, how funding is provided, and reporting works means that we address needs in isolation through the lens of each department or each single need: housing, education, social work, and health care. But people's lives aren't lived and experienced in this compartmentalised way. To help people flourish and live well, public services must adapt and respond holistically to people's strengths and needs because what we truly need is rarely met by a single public service.

What does public service look like, when it is organised to respond to the strengths and needs of the people it serves? How can we rebuild trust in public service, when resources are tight?

How can we create the radical change in public service that we need, rooted in the practical realities of the day-to-day work?

Over the last eight years, a growing body of action research is emerging that articulates a different approach to public management - how public service is organised, funded and governed - which seeks to answer these questions. It has been created by thousands of public servants around the world experimenting and learning together. The principles underpinning this way of thinking and working are brought together under the name of a [Human Learning Systems](#) (HLS) approach.

This approach is being taken by people who want to address the failings of the current way of organising public service, which is called New Public Management ([Ferlie et al, 1996](#)). People who do the work of public service - public facing workers, managers, leaders, together with their Learning Partners - who are frustrated that working in often siloed professional services and towards performance targets often draw their attention away from what matters to the people they serve.

What many different groups of people who run and work in Public Services have discovered is that by changing the way that public service is framed and managed, they are able to create conditions in which public service supports people to create better outcomes in their lives.

Human Learning Systems has continuous experimentation and learning at its heart to both understand and improve individuals, families and young people's lives:

Public facing workers (i.e. public sector and third sector) and individuals, families and young people continuously explore together what helps and supports their needs. Through these relationships, public facing workers and individuals, families and young people try out ideas aimed at improving people's lives and learn from what happens.

Leaders (of all forms and roles) continuously explore how to create effective learning systems, intentionally creating conditions for this to work in practice for everyone in the system.

Together, they all learn about doing public service and public management differently and use the learning to change things for the better.

There are now a wealth of examples of places across Europe and beyond where public services are taking this approach and supporting people to flourish, and a growing community of people coming together to share their experiences and learn from each other. Many of these examples have been written up and can be found on the [Human Learning Systems website](#). The Family Wellbeing Partnership work has strong resonance with a range of these examples, including the [South Tyneside Alliance](#) and the [Wallsend Children's Community](#).

Sometimes the work to radically change how public service is organised is being undertaken explicitly as a Human Learning Systems approach, and sometimes what people are doing is recognisable through the lens of this approach. What unites all these different examples are the values and principles that people hold in what they are doing and how they are going about it. What is different is how these principles are alive in each local context.

In this report, the team leading the Clackmannanshire Family Wellbeing Partnership have reflected together on what they have been doing to take a Human Learning Systems approach to supporting families, children and young people to flourish. What stands out from the Clackmannanshire story is their whole system approach, and in particular, the willingness to explore how governance processes can change to support continuous learning and improvement. For example, the leadership team share how they encourage staff to use the Family Wellbeing Partnership Oversight Board as a place to talk openly about the challenges they are facing, rather than seeing it as a scrutiny board. The most compelling examples of where a Human Learning Systems' approach is making a difference tell a story of active support and leadership at a senior level, leadership that creates the conditions for people working in public services to genuinely be able to work across a system in relationship with individuals, families and young people and respond to their needs in holistic ways. This appears to be the case in Clackmannanshire, where active support for the Family Wellbeing Partnership comes from the elected leader of the Council alongside senior Council employees. This type of active leadership goes beyond saying that people have permission to do things differently. What we see when this approach works are leaders who:

Create space, time and resource for people to learn together and to build relationships with each other, to develop a shared set of values together.

Work collectively together in their leadership, intentionally stepping outside their professional and traditional silos to focus on achieving system wide change.

Trust people working in public services to do things that make a difference for individuals, families and young people, without needing to know every detail of what this action might be.

Are open to hearing about what people are learning, what is and isn't working, and what help they need to keep improving things. Essentially leaders who welcome those who speak truth to power.

Recognise that this work takes time, bringing persistence and tenacity to the work, who don't look to traditionally measured indicators to change within months. At the same time, these leaders believe that the stories told by staff and individuals, families and young people about positive change *are* the results and that these changes in outcomes are achieved in the long term.

This report sets out the context of Clackmannanshire and how the Family Wellbeing Partnership came about and what it takes to make this kind of change. We then go on to share the collective reflective story of the team who are leading this work. This team wanted to pause and capture their story together so that they could continue to learn and develop their approach. Although there has been a clear strategy in Clackmannanshire, this work is not linear, there isn't a simple plan or recipe to follow that results in system-wide change. It feels important to try and reflect this complexity in the story telling, otherwise a somewhat false impression is given of the messy reality involved in undertaking this kind of change. We hope sharing more of this reality helps people think about the equivalent challenges and opportunities that they face in their context. Details about how this report was produced and who was involved can be found in appendix A.

The report closes with some reflections on the universal learning that emerges from this particular story, which we invite people to use to reflect on their own approach to reforming services.

## SETTING THE SCENE - CLACKMANNANSHIRE AND THE FAMILY WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP

When reading stories like this, there is always a question of how they might be relevant to our own situation or context. There is much to be learned from what's happening in Clackmannanshire that is applicable to other geographical areas, but there are also some distinct factors that are important to note too.

Clackmannanshire is the smallest local authority in mainland Scotland with a population of around 51,500 people<sup>1</sup>. It has high levels of poverty, particularly those in intergenerational poverty, and when the team began their journey, they were worsening. The small size of the area means that the impact of this is seen every day by people working in the community, but these people are also close enough to families, communities, partners and colleagues to see what's really going on, listen to each other to identify barriers, then test something and use the learning from it to inform their wider approach.

The team involved in the strategic leadership of this work has remained remarkably stable over the years. They are wholly committed to improving the lives of those in the community and for everyone involved, and when they see the difference this work is making, it drives their commitment even deeper. The team felt they had fertile ground to be bold and try a different approach. They took the conditions they had and created the conditions **they needed** to go even further, including the important work of securing and maintaining political support and encouragement from local and national politicians over a significant period of time.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.clacks.gov.uk/council/factsandfigures/>

At Clackmannanshire Council, the leadership team believes that the solutions to many social problems lie closest to those who have direct experience of them. They recognise that a key challenge in realising those solutions is that the power resides with those who control the funds or who are held “accountable” for delivering the service.

In 2020, the Family Wellbeing Partnership was established, a transformation strategy aimed at improving the wellbeing and capabilities of individuals in Clackmannanshire by placing people at the heart of decision making. The Family Wellbeing Partnership works to empower young people, their families, communities and staff, encouraging their voice and agency. This includes a focus on what needs to change within the existing system, shifting the values and behaviours of those designing and delivering services, as well as those receiving support within Clackmannanshire.

The current vision of the Family Wellbeing Partnership is to realign the values, cultures and behaviours of the people who design and deliver services so that poverty and inequality are tackled head on, making an immediate and lifelong impact.

Its aims are to:

- Develop the conditions to enhance wellbeing and capabilities.
- Create a community where everyone has the opportunity to flourish.
- Deliver a radical shift towards a preventative and relational model of public services.
- Ensure the voice and agency of Clackmannanshire people and communities is at the heart of decision making.

The Family Wellbeing Partnership uses the lens of the wellbeing and capabilities approach to assess how people are faring. Crucial to the Family Wellbeing Partnership approach is asking what people want and need to thrive. To evidence impact, qualitative and quantitative data is gathered. Data is used to track change at a population level, and individual stories really matter in Clackmannanshire. The evaluation of the approach being taken happens alongside the people involved, creating impact stories to evidence how people’s lives have changed for the better. Some quotes from these stories include:

*“I can now stay at a job I love and I’ve worked hard for. The income from the job helps support the whole family” (Parent)*

*“You should be proud of yourselves as you go above and beyond to help for people to genuinely care instead of judging what they don’t know or understand as or know facts are never gonna be able to help me much as you will” (Parent)*

*“I thought you’d like to know what a joy it was phoning families tonight to offer them support through the Family Wellbeing Partnership. Some were even in tears saying this will transform their lives. Thank you for everything you’ve done to make this even possible.” (Headteacher)*

The Clackmannanshire team tells their strategic transformation story in the next section. See Appendix A for more details of who was involved.

## THE STORY IN MORE DEPTH

### **By the Clackmannanshire leadership team**

#### HOW DID THE FAMILY WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP COME INTO BEING AND WHAT IS IT ENABLING?

##### **Understanding the issue from a system-wide perspective**

There is not really a “beginning” to this story. Everything comes from somewhere. For many of us, we trace the impetus for the formation of the Clackmannanshire Family Wellbeing Partnership back to 2017 and the Council’s involvement in the Scottish Attainment Challenge. This was set up by the Scottish Government to tackle the poverty related attainment gap in schools. Significant numbers of young people in Clackmannanshire are affected by adverse childhood experiences and live in poverty. It was clear after quite a short time however that we were not going to tackle the educational attainment gap unless we addressed the well-being and improved the capabilities of the individual children and their families.

*“As a school head teacher, I had valued education as a means out of poverty. I had lived as a child in an area of deprivation as well. So I was really aware that for some children, young people and families, they needed more than education to support and scaffold them to better outcomes...we had to recognise the complex multiple barriers, often generational, that some people face. I could teach as much as I want but there were some children that needed more than getting an education to lift them out of poverty.”*

*(Veronica, Clackmannanshire Council)*

We had many discussions with Education Scotland and the Scottish Government to convince them that we wanted to broaden our focus beyond what happens in the classroom. In the end, we took a twin approach and focused on both attainment in the classroom, and improving the wellbeing of our families and communities.

As part of the Attainment Challenge, some head teachers, Lorraine (Clackmannanshire Council, as Senior Manager), and then young people and families were funded to attend Columba 1400 Values Based Leadership Experiences. The premise was that by focusing on your values as leaders, you can reconnect to why a different approach to working together is needed and create opportunities for people to engage their voice and agency to take direct collaborative action to improve their lives. Lorraine, who at this point had now been appointed as the Strategic Director of the People Directorate, saw the power and potential in this to shift the culture of how people work together and create whole system transformation.

Lorraine’s values, vision and tenacity were the driving force for what would later become the Family Wellbeing Partnership. First however, she needed more people involved. Veronica (Clackmannanshire Council) had experienced the Value Based Leadership programme as a Headteacher and was invited to join the Family Wellbeing Partnership team. Veronica’s role has evolved from coordination and mobilisation of staff, to Strategic Lead for the Child Wellbeing Partnership strand of work. Veronica is now the Strategic Lead for the Family Wellbeing Partnership; picking up the mantle from Murray’s hard work. Likewise, Janet (Clackmannanshire Council) had experienced the Value Based Leadership programme and has become an integral part of the Family Wellbeing Partnership. Janet is now the Lead Officer, supporting strategic direction and connecting the operational and delivery side. Their direct connection to young people and families was important to keep the work well grounded. Now, more work was needed to articulate the vision into a workable strategy and approach that could be shared further.

## Partnership building through articulating and living the vision and strategy

While the Attainment Challenge had been going on, Lynn (the Hunter Foundation) had been having conversations with the Chief Exec of Columba 1400 about who was doing some interesting work at a local level to catalyse change in public service, moving from aspiration to action at scale. Clackmannanshire was highlighted to her. The Hunter Foundation had been working with the Scottish Government for a number of years to pilot and prove different approaches to change and was becoming more interested in what was happening at a local level.

*“National policy, in itself, was not going to lead the change. The change occurred at the delivery end. So it was really important for us to look at what we could do in the local government space because that’s where the direct interaction with families and individuals takes place... [Lorraine] was really driven by a desire to do something very, very different. Although at that stage I’m not sure she could articulate it in the way she can now, but it was very evident that she was in her role in Clacks to be an agent of change and not just to do a job.”*

*(Lynn, The Hunter Foundation)*

Through their connections with Lynn and the Council’s involvement in the Scottish Attainment Challenge, colleagues in the Scottish Government’s Tackling Poverty & Social Justice Directorate became more interested in what was happening in Clackmannanshire around poverty and well-being. In 2022, they officially asked the Council to join their Social Innovation Partnership, a unique collaboration between the Scottish Government, the Hunter Foundation, and a selection of social entrepreneurs. The idea of the Social Innovation Partnership was to work with partners to test wellbeing and capability enhancing approaches to service delivery to improve multiple outcomes simultaneously and inform public policy. What was important to all of us involved was that we were willing to go on a journey together without over-specifying the outcomes too soon.

A core team of people had come together in partnership: this included Lorraine, in the Council who brought an initial vision and approach as a result of the work from the Values Based Leadership programme in the Attainment Challenge; Lynn, in the Hunter Foundation and colleagues in the Scottish Government who brought their organisations’ knowledge, networks and funding; and Veronica and Murray, then Janet who were instrumental in planning and keeping the work grounded through their operational connections in the Council. All were committed, personally and in terms of time and resources, to going beyond seeing this as a ‘project’. They were establishing an overarching approach to change and new ways of working, shifting cultures and behaviours, to address some really complex and intractable social issues.

The next step was to clarify and articulate the vision and the approach for what would become the Family Wellbeing Partnership in a compelling way that could be shared and more fully understood by a wider group of people. The partnership began a series of conversations, meetings and workshops over a period of a year to articulate the broad principles and vision into an action plan that worked within both the national and local policy contexts. This was later refined and revised into a strategy and evolving action plan.

Getting to know each other in this space was a crucial part of the process and we were still in the early stages of this when the pandemic hit. The Social Innovation Partnership provided the space and cover, outside of the normal policy portfolio approach and scrutiny process to test and learn together, which was invaluable but not always something that’s available or prioritised in other partnerships.

It's important to note that while we didn't know each other well, we were all connected either directly or indirectly (through others) and we grew that connection based on our desire to change the system in a relational way. Often with a piece of work, people in a position of hierarchical power decide who is in that team, usually based on service area and grade. When this happens, there is little to hold them together other than the brief they have been given by someone else. We're not saying that approach can't work, but it can take longer to form relationships that are the basis of good work.

By working through our network of relationships, we found core partners that, crucially, operated in different parts of the system and so brought different perspectives. Connecting to the local and operational aspects kept us grounded and agile, while the national and even international perspectives kept us looking outwards for opportunities to contextualise and bring learning in from elsewhere.

We each had enough experience and autonomy in our own roles to engage in this work together, in a way that was tolerable to the systems we worked within. By exploring and testing out the details of how to work together in the beginning, we were practising listening to each other, collaborating and working at the edges of each other's boundaries. We worked hard to stay out of our own silos, with decisions on who did what being made for the benefit of our overall intention, based on who was best placed to do so due to our position, power, capacity and experience. Not only did this all help to move the work on but it deepened our relationships at the same time, allowing us to be aware and use our individual and organisational power to create cover and grow support for each other and the work.

As a result, after working together for a year articulating the vision, framing, and policy story, we had a much more integrated and joined up approach as well as a strong partnership for going forward. The Family Wellbeing Partnership was finally given a name and grew from there.

### **Planning and co-designing intentionally for whole systems transformation**

We put a lot of effort into identifying the key conditions needed to bring the Family Wellbeing Partnership into being. These included intentionally planning and co-designing ways of:

- creating "cover" from those in power to enable people to work differently including having a different relationship with risk
- working with the people and staff of Clackmannanshire to create a shared purpose
- encouraging their voice at the centre of all that we do and growing their own sense of agency to take action, and
- enabling the creation of a shared vision and approach to integrate services to start really transforming the system.

### **Creating "cover" to work differently and changing perceptions of risk**

To improve the outcomes of people in the community, we had to streamline and collaborate more effectively across services, by building support and capacity within the Council and partner organisations to work more effectively in a multi-agency, partnership way.

To do this, it was important to address attitudes to risk. Outcomes for people in Clackmannanshire were poor and stubbornly persistent. Holding the belief that continuing to work in the way we had always done was riskier than trying something different. However, people tended to continue working in silos and privileging performative behaviours because the fear of repercussions of doing otherwise felt too risky.

*“The part that stands out for me, is how the system pulls people to behave in a certain way. I don't think I completely understood that until the Family Wellbeing Partnership. I manage community justice services, children services, education, sport, leisure, communities – all those people services. Part of my task was to integrate those services, but you can integrate services and they all still operate separately ... it isn't because those people delivering those services don't want to integrate or they don't know how important it is. It's just that the system pulls people to behave in a siloed way. If we didn't address that, to systemise that, the outcomes for people were not going to be as good.”*

*(Lorraine, Clackmannanshire Council)*

We needed everybody on the same page for what was to come and what we were asking from them. A crucial part of changing people's relationship to risk was securing authentic buy-in or “cover” from those who hold power in the system to create opportunities or shut things down. The Family Wellbeing Partnership approach would mean pushing at some boundaries imposed by some procurement guidance and legislation which often unnecessarily constrained us from doing what needed to be done. We needed senior leaders, including elected members, to understand why we might do that and support us.

We intentionally cultivated this cover by drawing in interest from the Council's corporate leadership team through sharing information about the partnership with the Council, Scottish Government and Hunter Foundation and its potential to support the Council's new “Be the Future” Transformation Programme. Led by the Chief Exec., this programme recognised that we needed to transform our services to improve our communities' outcomes while resources were getting tighter. The Family Wellbeing Partnership offered a way in which we could, and were, already doing this.

The elected members didn't need a lot of convincing that a different approach was necessary. We have a collaborative political culture in Clackmannanshire and elected members understand that working together will be what makes the difference to the many challenges we face. Convinced by the need to work very differently together, Ellen, the council leader, showed real leadership, believing in what we were doing and championing it through Council with elected members to get everybody on board. This was important because it signalled that the Family Wellbeing Partnership wasn't just another initiative staff had to do on top of their day jobs. It created the cover staff needed to have the confidence to try something different without fear of being held accountable to short term performance targets.

*“I always think if you can demonstrate that you've made a decision for the right reason, even though it might not necessarily follow the guidance or policy, as long as you can defend it and it's not been for personal gain, but to help somebody, then stand by it and go for it... I suppose I don't have any cover, the buck stops with me and elected members. But, for me, it's been a risk worth taking because things couldn't get any worse.”*

*(Ellen, Council Leader)*

Staff and people of Clackmannanshire have played a crucial role in maintaining political engagement by sharing their stories of the impact of the Family Wellbeing Partnership approach during visits from Ministers and senior Scottish Government officials.

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## CREATING SHARED PURPOSE ACROSS THE COUNCIL, PARTNERS AND PEOPLE OF CLACKMANNANSHIRE

To begin to shift the culture we were operating in, we needed to create a shared purpose for the Family Wellbeing Partnership across staff, partners and communities by connecting staff and members of the community back to their own values and explore how they can shape and enable more positive actions for change.

During 2022 and 2023, a number of Values Based Leadership programmes were delivered by Columba 1400, which would bring Drew more closely into the partnership, funded by the Hunter Foundation and the Scottish Government's Social Innovation Partnership. Attendees included Ellen the Council leader, elected members, the Council Chief Exec., senior staff and frontline staff. Partner organisations and members of the community also took part. Including senior leaders and elected members in these programmes simultaneously generated deeper buy-in for the approach. Together, people from all levels in the system were really encouraged to explore their values, their leadership potential and their own personal motivation.

*"The work centred around six core values: self-awareness, focus, creativity (doing things differently), integrity, perseverance and service. From there we can move to focusing on behaviours, purpose and outcomes that are self-owned rather than imposed. We're not offering the answers. We helped people feel listened to, feel valued and created a sense of belonging. It gave protected time for people to really stop and think, what am I doing here?"*

*(Drew, Columba 1400)*

The facilitators were outwith the Clackmannanshire context and helped us to have non-judgmental conversations which instilled trust and confidence that it was a safe space to explore issues together. The leader of the Council and Chief Exec. spoke openly with each other in front of everyone. This helped others, who possibly would not have the confidence to speak in front of senior leaders before, share their views. People were together, understanding each other as human beings and hearing what was really going on for them in real time, not in a report or during a prepared visit.

The initial programmes were residential, and latterly, moving to a non-residential but off-site model. For many, it was a big ask to take a few days away from their busy lives but being completely away from the pressures of the work environment in nice surroundings made a big difference to the quality of experience. As we in the Family Wellbeing Partnership team had participated ourselves, we could vouch for it personally. In turn, others who attended encouraged their staff to participate because of their own powerful experience.

*“Lorraine quite strategically identified the first cohort for the Family Wellbeing Partnership Values Based Leadership programme. They were people I had never met, folk from all different departments, and I had to introduce myself and convince them to go away from the workplace for a few days and commit to something that was kind of vague. At that point, we hadn't quite articulated the Family Wellbeing Partnership as such and what we expected to get in terms of systems change. It was kind of a leap of faith, so I had to use my skills of persuasion. It's funny because some of them forget how much persuasion it took. One person is always talking about his amazing Columba experience, and I'm always sitting there thinking, he never mentions that he really didn't want to go! He absolutely loved it and now he wants to be a facilitator.”*

*(Veronica, Clackmannanshire Council)*

As a result of participating, we started hearing people say things like, “My job has changed. I'm the facilitator. I'm not the service provider. I'm helping people be the best parent or community activist they can be.” It seemed staff at first had been feeling they had to have all the answers, but Values Based Leadership gave them the confidence that the answers are out there in our communities. Our job is to encourage people to trust us to help them.

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## ENCOURAGING VOICE AND AGENCY

As well as shifting the values and behaviours of those who design and deliver services, a key element of the Family Wellbeing Partnership is empowering young people, their families and communities by placing their voice at the centre and encouraging their sense of agency to work together with staff to transform the system. Two examples of how we supported this was through establishing and growing Community Around the School and hosting entrepreneurial events with The Lens to actively support people to try out their ideas and learn from them.

### Community Around the School (2021 – to date)

The Community Around the School approach has been a key development of the Family Wellbeing Partnership, incorporating the learning from the STRIVE early intervention pilot (see subsequent section on STRIVE) in terms of the positive impact of close collaboration across services. It brings together a whole range of non-curricular initiatives and programmes to support families and young people. Alloa Academy (the pilot school), for example, has more than thirty different partners wrapped around the school including Columba 1400, Duke of Edinburgh, NHS and university collaborations. We are literally and metaphorically opening the school doors more widely after hours to welcome in the community; all with the purpose of encouraging people to view the school as a community asset where people can develop their wellbeing and capabilities through fun and purposeful programmes and initiatives that matter to them.

This initiative has grown and grown because the families themselves, young people or school staff are coming forward to say “I have an idea I'd like to try”, such as two mums being supported to run cookery classes for children over the school holidays. Another example is of a local woman who, after co-leading one of the cookery sessions as part of the Adult Learning programme at a local secondary school, gained work preparing and cooking food for weekly literacy sessions at a local community centre. The Family Wellbeing Partnership Lead then helps by connecting them with other people and initiatives and some funding if needed.

Through funding from the entrepreneurial process delivered by The Lens in 2023 (see below), we were able to expand and fully resource the after-school learning programmes and initiatives for families and the wider community.

This has led to examples such as a group of parents, whose children have profound and multiple learning disabilities, working with the Family Wellbeing Partnership to deliver fun activities for them during holidays and outside of school. This early work evolved into a strong inclusion theme within the Child Wellbeing Partnership (Scottish Government Early Adopter Community) alongside PAMIS (Promoting a More Inclusive Society) and an opportunity to develop their ideas even further.

*A recent evaluation of the Family Wellbeing Partnership found that through Community Around the School, “Parents and carers are reporting improved family relationships and feeling more a part of the school and the wider community - that it feels like ‘everyone is in it together’. There are examples of people moving from passive recipients of services to active participants in shaping and delivering them as volunteers. They are also gaining confidence and moving from volunteering into further education or employment.”<sup>2</sup>*

### **Entrepreneurial events to actively support people to try out their ideas (2022-23)**

During and after the Values Based Leadership programmes, people had lots of good ideas, but we could see they needed some help in growing the skills to move them into action. So in 2022 and 2023, we ran a series of Lens<sup>3</sup> entrepreneurship events, with some small amounts of funding available to participants.

The events were open to anyone, but it was mainly people from the Values Based Leadership cohorts that came forward in the first year. We believe this was because they'd had the space and encouragement to work with the community to find out what people needed and wanted. Individuals or teams, often including partnerships of parents, carers and staff from the Council and third sector partners, applied for funding to run things like parent/carers groups, community learning and health and wellbeing events. Participants were supported through a series of development workshops, followed by a final pitching event in Alloa Town Hall. Successful bids then received additional advice and support to bring their ideas into reality. Examples include:

- The Baby Bonds group who re-introduced face-to-face baby massage as part of a multi-agency COVID recovery plan. Since securing funding in 2022, 70% of new parents are now engaging with baby massage and there is a 90% completion rate.
- A community group who now meet weekly to share gardening skills and equipment, which they had identified as a local need.
- Starting and developing the Clax P&C parent group for families with children with additional support needs, supported by the Education Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Outreach Team.

The Lens process has been an effective way to support people to do things differently to provide hyper-local solutions to local problems. A lot of the projects are still on the go or they've evolved into something bigger and better. It also provided a platform to gather and show some examples of the Family Wellbeing Partnership approach. Staff talk about how proud they felt when they heard people telling their stories of what they've achieved in their community for their community and how they had played a part in that.

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<sup>2</sup> Clackmannanshire Family Wellbeing Partnership - Story of Change Report, Animate 2024

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lensperspectives.org.uk/>

Another example of putting funds directly into community hands is our work with 'What Matters to You', a community-based programme working with families, aiming to shift public resources to provide earlier support. We currently have five projects ranging from a gardening group to a crochet club and all are a direct response to what the community tells us is important to them. This is expanding our community of changemakers and having a really positive impact on wellbeing and capabilities.

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## INTEGRATING SERVICES THROUGH COLLABORATION AND A SHARED VISION

### STRIVE (2020 to date)

STRIVE (Safeguarding Through Rapid Intervention) was set up in the very early stages of the Family Wellbeing Partnership. It's a multi-agency group from police, housing, health, education, children's services, and the third sector who work together to overcome service barriers and meet the needs of individual people who need rapid support. It meets daily to work together on early intervention and prevention, dealing with referrals that come in through various different agencies. Previously, subsequent referrals would need to be sent to every single service required but when you start to unpick a person's situation, often the issue relates to their wellbeing and mental health and so needs a whole system approach. The STRIVE team works together to see what can be done rapidly to stop that person ending up in the same situation again.

Then the Council and partners, centring that person's own voice throughout the process, can work in a multi-agency way to help stabilise the person's situation and improve their wellbeing and capabilities. For example, could they go to a group to learn some skills? There, they might meet people to reduce social isolation. Later, when they have gained more skills and confidence, they might get paid to teach a few others which can help with their longer term employability. There are a lot of barriers to working in this multi-agency way, for example, Data Sharing Arrangements but we've managed to overcome them with a lot of tenacity and appropriate legal input.

While initially, STRIVE served those on the cusp of statutory measure, with the leadership of Gillian (Clackmannanshire Council) it is now moving to engage in earlier preventative actions. This way of working is very organic and so can't always be planned. You have to follow what's needed, when that person is ready. Therefore, we are being careful not to inadvertently over-systemise the approach again.

### Permission to work differently through supportive governance structures

Achieving buy-in and cover for the work, as well as staff participating in the Values Based Leadership programmes, were all pivotal in creating and maintaining a sense of real permission and support for people in the Council to work differently and move their intentions into concrete action.

To maintain a focus on the person's needs rather than the service, staff have to go out and talk to people in the communities to see what's needed, what resources the person or community already have and how they can help. As stated earlier, this means encouraging staff to find their voice and agency too.

*"There's something about freeing people up to operate in this way and saying go off and do it. I'm not going to tell you how... Do what you think is the right thing for that group. Proceed until apprehended almost; come back if you think you're breaking the law. But otherwise I don't need to know the detail."*

*(Lorraine, Clackmannanshire Council)*

Governance and accountability structures play a key role in, not only stating this permission, but in consistently demonstrating active support for this new way of working. We've paid close attention to how these structures help, adjusting when needed so they can be as supportive as possible.

The **Family Wellbeing Partnership Oversight Board** aligns the strategic aims and process of the Family Wellbeing Partnership with wider change in Clackmannanshire and Scotland. It listens to the evidence, the voice of parents, children and staff, data and wider research, sharing stories of change and impact, and learns by being curious, understanding what's changing and what's not, what impact the Family Wellbeing Partnership is having. It identifies areas where the Family Wellbeing Partnership can create the greatest change and improvements and enables them by unlocking, accelerating and challenging current service delivery. Overall, it leads by modelling and supporting change at all levels, making decisions and doing things differently.

The **Family Wellbeing Partnership Strategic Planning Team** works to support the design and development of provision that best meets the needs and entitlements of children and families. They collaborate across services and provide strategic direction for operational activity: ensuring the necessary time, resources (including human resources) and other supports needed to complete the work are available. It enables the re-balancing of public resources dedicated to children, young people and families towards early support which results in them thriving.

The purpose of the **Family Wellbeing Partnership Operational Team** is to support both system and cultural change by sharing and accelerating the implementation of policies and practice which consistently put the voices of children, young people and families at the centre. It makes decisions on the development and scaling of changes that reflect the expressed needs of children, young people and families, including the deployment of key resources. The team focuses on the future sustainability, flexibility and responsiveness of provision – while recognising that supports must be able to adapt to the changing needs of children and families.

These 'teams' involve staff from across disciplines and directorates. More staff are starting to embrace the Family Wellbeing Partnership approach, proactively making it their own. A real success has been the formation of the **Family Wellbeing Partnership Collaborative**. It is a space created to enable a wide range of front-line practitioners to share their work and exchange ideas and has resulted in new initiatives to support children, young people and families.

However, even with careful planning and intentionally creating supportive governance structures, it took some time for people to really believe they had permission and support. It can be hard to trust this at first, especially if you come from a very structured, hierarchical background. We had to keep encouraging people out of their comfort zone, including ourselves, to see that taking risks is expected and will be tolerated. For example, even though we wanted our Family Wellbeing Partnership Oversight Board to be an enabling space where staff could talk openly about the challenges they were facing, they initially treated us as a scrutiny Board. After a lot of gentle pushing back, confirming we didn't want traditional performance related papers, things have started to change. This encouragement was required at all levels in the system.

*"That's part of the whole approach: that there is no wrong really. If you run a Community Around the School group, for example, and it isn't well attended or isn't exactly what people thought, OK well, you gave it a try. We'll learn from it and then we either won't do it again or we'll do it differently. From a very high strategic level, you have permission to do things differently. You've got permission to try things as long as you're attempting to support someone to enhance well-being and capabilities and you learn from it."*

*(Janet, Clackmannanshire Council)*

This realignment of staff roles and changed ways of working has happened in parallel to the intentional restructuring of the People Directorate, with a People Senior Management Team across Education, Social Services, Community Justice and realignment of teams towards locality models, focusing on early intervention and prevention. This is now leading to changes to wider restructuring across the Council. You can also read about what we are working on next to evolve our governance of funding and reporting in Clackmannanshire towards the end of this document.

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## EMBEDDING & GROWING

### **Learning as the basis for action and planning**

Cultivating a learning culture has been intentional to the transformation we're seeking because people's lives are ever changing. When you walk alongside a person to see where and how you can help, you realise how interconnected and emergent our lives are and why then we have to work in an interconnected and emergent way. If you don't have an iterative learning process that can work with the whole person, you'll never understand what's really happening. Having a learning partner from the very outset has been invaluable and we're constantly challenging ourselves about the impact the approach is having.

From early on, we started systematically collecting stories of change to understand what was happening. We are also creating and protecting spaces, like our Board meetings and the Family Wellbeing Partnership Collaborative, as reflective spaces to explore and analyse, to probe and ask questions. Listening to your intuition or trusting your gut is key to a learning approach too as often not everything is visible or measurable. This takes practice and trust in yourself, your colleagues and your communities but the results are usually much more powerful than looking at things from a purely analytical perspective.

At times it was a bit frustrating when we faced barriers or something didn't work in the way we had thought it would but each time we learned a lot. Our strategy to this has been to deal with each problem as it occurs. An interesting outcome of this kind of approach is that we can be more strategic with the resources needed as we're working in real time, not with projected budgets. A consequence is that we used a smaller budget than what we originally thought although we did require re-alignment of people and resources. For example, Instead of one role working in a vacuum or silo, delivering for one service, we had that equivalent resource undertaking a range of supports and tasks, sharing their learning, insights and coordinating support. This approach also creates space to draw in wider assets including the full range of the community's abilities and ambition for change; something that isn't always acknowledged or valued in more transactional service models. Continuing with this learning approach should help us be more targeted, not only in where we can make genuine savings, but in any other structural changes that are needed within the Council that will improve people's lives.

However, there is a tension between transformation and articulation of impact. Rightly, people want to know what difference we are making and this has been a challenge. It was quite difficult earlier on in the process to tell the story of what we were doing in Clackmannanshire because it's not always linear, just as life isn't. But people with the most power in the system want to understand what's happening and we need to find ways of helping them recognise the change they are asking for - even if this doesn't always look like what they expect. Otherwise, particularly as time goes on, the pressure builds and those with the power to stop things can revert to old paradigms of change, even if they were previously supportive. We've now got robust impact stories and processes for gathering them. At first, these were about the person or family in the communities. Now, they also include the impact on the professional and what they learned, because it's not just the families who are developing their capabilities, it's us and how the system works.

To continue the focus on Values Based Leadership as an important factor in embedding a shift in culture within the Council, we are working to ensure the sustainability of Values Based Leadership approaches. We continue to work closely with Columba 1400 and last year introduced a Legacy Facilitation Trainers' programme for staff as well as a Train the Trainer programme for young people. Both will continue for the next two years to ensure sustainability of Values Based Leadership approaches across the Council. We also held some targeted opportunities, for example an Employability Values Based Leadership cohort and a STRIVE cohort, providing an opportunity for a range of participants to have a deep dive experience around a theme. This collective dialogue allowed all partners and stakeholders to understand barriers and opportunities to systemic change. The relationships forged at that time are still driving forward change, for example through the Child Wellbeing Partnership, DWP and Employability work on Universal Credit Childcare Payment Pathway.

We also hold regular reconnect days for people to check in on what they have been doing, access help and share the impact of their tests of change and their learning with each other. Successes are shared and failures are embraced and explored so that we can learn from them together. The council leader is keen to continue the momentum by opening out the space to any staff member who wants to come along and share what they're doing. The culture is not solely defined or owned by those who have had a Values Based Leadership experience but it is creating wider and deeper change across all departments.

*“When Columba participants shared their stories of what they’ve all done, speaking from the heart, there wasn’t a dry eye in the house. It was deeply moving... Columba 1400 has been made to feel a real partner in this, rather than being a small charity in Scotland, when you’re in Clackmannanshire, you’re part of the Council. That has been a wonderful opportunity to grow and be part of. The learning for me through the Family Wellbeing approach is how much bigger impact you can have when you’ve got a good group of people working in partnership.”*

*(Drew, Columba 1400)*

In addition to all this, within the Council we have made changes to HR policy and procedures to reflect Values Based Leadership in our everyday working relationships, including more family friendly policies, and a more conversational approach to performance management.

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## MOVING TO HOW WE DO THINGS IN CLACKS

### Changes in behaviour and relationships

We are seeing change percolating through the system with people collaborating more, based on stronger relationships and trust. People are realising that we don’t have to keep doing things the way we’ve always done them if it’s not serving the needs of the children, young people and their families. We’re seeing differences in many people’s behaviour and bravery; to say what they want to happen, ask for help when needed and then go for it and trust they will be supported.

While we’re not at the tipping point yet, we are now seeing a shift from people thinking of this as a programme or “project” to it being the way we work in Clackmannanshire. In the beginning, it was a very small group of people working in this way. Now, whole areas like Housing, Community Justice, Whole Family Wellbeing, Sport and Leisure, Education, Finance, Legal, HR, the Promise etc. are coming together to think about how they best work together to support better outcomes for families and communities.

An example is our Council Justice team who, through encouragement to work more closely with Health and Third Sector colleagues to integrate services, are using their own agency to create a new justice hub together to improve outcomes and reduce reoffending rates. They're creating a really exciting, vibrant piece of work and while they're working in the Family Wellbeing Partnership way, they don't actually know that's what they're doing.

Previously, Clackmannanshire could be seen as a local authority you don't want to work for. But now there are people who are joining or coming back to Clackmannanshire because they're aware that something is happening and they want to be part of it. Overall, the approach is helping to build and strengthen relationships within the Council.

*"I [as Council Leader] probably have a much more personal relationship with members of staff than I would because of this experience, because usually, you don't cross the boundaries when sitting in the Council chamber. But this gave me and Council officers the ability to be honest and be open. And we've been able to keep that up. If I say something and an officer doesn't agree, they'll probably feel quite empowered now to say well, no, I don't agree with that. Whereas before it would be: the Council leader said it so I better just mutter under my breath and go along with it. The culture is now different in my personal experience"*

*(Ellen, Council Leader)*

Better relationships within the Council are also helping relationships with our communities and third sector partners, which have not always been positive. The Family Wellbeing Partnership approach is helping us improve our interactions so, for example, partners and community members don't get a faceless Council person answering the phone or nobody gets back to them. Our relationships are increasingly based on a more human level. Much of this is due to going through the shared Values Based Leadership and entrepreneurial experiences together; partners and community members trust that we want the same things as them. This is so important because the Council can't do things alone. We can have disagreements but there's a bigger outcome that we are working towards, rather than it becoming personal or about who wins or loses.

However, there is still work to be done in winning all hearts and minds.

*"With all organisations, some people are really open to change, and other people will take a bit longer. I understand if you've been working with a system which, in your mind, works and is simple and straightforward, you'd want to maintain that. But actually, when you start to ask those questions about how this is serving our community, how is this making sense and, if it isn't, why can't we change it, then that makes a huge difference. Getting people out of silos and asking, "Is there a better way to do things that cuts down on expenditure, makes more sense and avoids duplication?" this enables people (including staff members) to see different opportunities, different ways of working."*

*(Janet, Clackmannanshire Council)*

There are increasing numbers of people in the Council who are embracing this way of working. It might not feel right for everyone, but we are slowly shifting the culture. Increasingly, we are employing people into the Council based on the Family Wellbeing Partnership values and qualities as well as other considerations. Managers are looking for values first, and then skills and expertise.

## The ripple effect of embodying a relational way of working

By strengthening our relationships with each other and taking a strong learning approach, we as strategic leaders seek to role model and embody a relational way of working as much as possible, as we include wider and wider circles of people. This helps build trust, but as in all relationships, it often takes someone to trust first. That is what we did, trusting staff, partners and members of the community to work relationally and over time, as they realised they had permission and power/agency to try things and that learning was privileged over performing, this helped them trust us and each other too.

The fluidity and flexibility in approach has also helped people feel agency to give it a go. In every human interaction within the Council, we try to make people feel valued or listened to. At an organisational structural level we might have the policies and the processes in place, but we know when we're in a difficult situation people don't always look there – they look to each other. What we've tried to enable through a partnership approach is the space to have the conversation. What do you think? And how might we do this better? If we disagree, we have a better understanding of how we disagree and work through it. If we come across problems, we work through them at the time – and if this is something we can use our strategic leadership positions for, then it's our role to do that, looking outward for help and support when needed. We're finding that all of this grows people's sense of trust, agency, ownership and commitment to their work.

We feel immensely privileged to be part of this work. While it can be challenging at times, there is also a sense of joy that comes from your work aligning with your values, working creatively together on something meaningful, and then seeing people flourish as a result – both staff and community members.

There is still a lot of work to do. We are at a tipping point of system transformation and we are staying focused on what is helping people's sense of wellbeing, developing their capabilities and capacity for working relationally. We are at the sharp edges of the work now. Looking at how money flows in and how the voice of individuals, families and young people can genuinely help shape the services they need and want, and crucially, identify where the public sector should be stepping back.

## Perseverance and tenacity

When the system still expects change initiatives to bear fruit after a couple of years, we require all our belief and tenacity to stick with this longer-term approach.

*“What helps is having tenacity. You’ve just got to stick with it, deal with every problem as it occurs. Because if you look at the problems, you’re never going to do it... And what helps build that tenacity is when you reconnect with people in communities, and you see the lives they lead. When you hear people talk about their lives and their children’s lives and they talk about what they want to do for themselves and their community. And then you see them do it. That’s the thing that makes you realise this is possible. The thing that stops it is us. We need to change.”*

*(Lynn, Hunter Foundation)*

Our ability as leaders to stick with the approach over a long period of time has tested us at times but our personal tenacity and seeing the impact it is having keeps us going. Having a better understanding of how systems change and the time it takes has also helped maintain that perseverance.

For example, there have been times when those in power have questioned the approach because they can't see the impact it is having from where they are in the system. However, because we maintain close links with our families, partners and frontline staff and have ensured we consistently gather the stories of the impact the approach is having, we have been able to say that we can see the 'flywheel turning'<sup>4</sup>. We have managed to keep their trust that things are going in the right direction, and we are now seeing evidence of improvements. This hasn't happened overnight though but because of the years of sustained, consistent work, perseverance and belief that this approach will deliver those results.

## WHAT'S NEXT? TACKLING SYSTEMIC ISSUES – MONEY AND REPORTING

Two consistent barriers to working more relationally relate to how money is distributed and the impact reporting requirements have on behaviour. To break out of siloed funding and understand the combined assets that can be applied to solve complex social problems like poverty, we have to know all the funding streams available including those that have not come from the public sector. At the moment, we're working with the Wellbeing Economy Alliance to create a map of all the assets available within Clackmannanshire to gain an overall understanding of this. This will feed into an exciting development which is a new transformation space or entity to explore opportunities to manage spend through an equal partnership of the Council, third sector, private sector and the community to nurture and build community wealth.

This entity will look at how money flows through the system and into transformation projects in a way that is instigated and supported by those they directly affect in the community. As learning is integral to our overall approach, we will seek to bring this intentionally into the governance of funding within this new entity. It will have only one measure of success: do the families, individuals and young people of Clackmannanshire believe their lives are better?

We know it's not just how money flows that can pull people back into old ways of working. It's also how the associated reporting drives behaviours. So the Family Wellbeing Partnership has been working on a single plan that pulls together reporting processes into a single report that speaks to the whole of the National Performance Framework.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.jimcollins.com/concepts/the-flywheel.html>

## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO UNDERTAKE THIS KIND OF REFORM?

**By Harriet Hunter, Keira Oliver and Lynn Hendry**

The team realise that this is a journey - there is still a lot of work to do. It hasn't all been plain sailing and yet there haven't been as many big challenges to the approach as they might have thought given it is a very different way of being and behaving. While what's happening in Clackmannanshire is specific to their context, there are things that can be learned about what it takes to develop public services that really support individuals, families and young people to live well and flourish. These themes are found time and again in places like Clackmannanshire and in many other examples of taking a [human learning systems](#) approach. We have drawn out some of the key insights about what this kind of reform involves.

### **1. Shifting power dynamics – individuals, families and young people, services and third sector**

When meaningful relationships can form between those working in public services (local government, public services, third sector and community groups) and individuals, families and young people, there is an opportunity to create a situation in which what people need to flourish is responded to in a human, holistic way, that results in sustainable positive change for people.

This happens when those who are working directly with individuals, families and young people have the power to respond to what people need, knowing that they are supported and trusted by those around them and those above them in the traditional hierarchy. This involves leaders letting go of providing solutions, and instead focusing on creating conditions for people to listen, learn and find solutions together. Instead of holding people to account for performance, leaders need to hold people to account for how they learn about what matters to people and how they act on that learning.

### **2. Active involvement from political leaders**

This approach can only result in long lasting and fundamental change to how systems work if those with the most power in a system actively support this way of working, trusting people to respond to individuals, families and young people's needs. Those at the top of the hierarchy have a responsibility to influence system leaders to be supportive of the change and to actively support those who are leading in this way. It involves creating a governance structure that rewards and supports learning and improving, where people are encouraged to share ideas, try things out and learn from them. Persistence and tenacity are needed. It takes time for people to change how they are working and to trust that moving beyond professional silos will be welcomed, that it's ok to speak truth to power, that this will result in support and change rather than being ignored or penalised.

### **3. Creating a sense of shared values amongst everyone involved – bringing people and services together more closely**

Intentionally bringing people together to get to know one another, to connect with their own and each other's intrinsic motivations, the reasons they are working in public services, generates a shared sense of purpose. Developing relationships between people across the system means people begin to understand each other's worlds and to see how acting systemically together is more likely to result in meaningful change in people's lives.

The leadership team in Clackmannanshire have realised how important it is to give people time to do this together, away from the day job. This learning together leads to a shared sense of values and purpose and a supportive network and community that is critical to the change.

#### **4. Intentional focus and structured approach to learning**

To be able to continually explore and understand what's needed, to try out different things to respond to those needs, and to reflect on what's working and what's not, is an essential part of taking this approach. What this looks like will really depend on context; what's important is that a systematic approach to learning is developed which enables people to learn together, to share that learning more widely in their system, and to act on what is being learned. The team in Clackmannanshire have paid attention to making sure this in itself doesn't become a bureaucratic process, but provides just enough structure to enable learning to happen. What's particularly exciting in Clackmannanshire is that this new way of working has also led to people taking the initiative to come together as the Family Wellbeing Partnership Collaborative and learn from each other without being asked to do it. People can see the value of this way of working and recognise that learning is an integral part of changing.

#### **5. Balance between intentional planning and responding to opportunities that arise**

Taking a relational approach that recognises and responds to complexity doesn't mean abandoning structure and planning. The Clackmannanshire leadership team have spent a lot of time getting clear on their collective intention, what they want to do and how they plan to do it, and then putting their plans into action. Within this structure, the team also pays attention to what emerges, what happens as a result of their actions, and are able to respond and adapt their approach as they learn and things change. This kind of work means paying attention to both planning and working with emergence, continually reflecting on what's needed at any particular time, knowing that this will keep changing as things evolve.

#### **6. Developing distributed leadership – sharing power and trusting each other (as a behaviour as well as a belief)**

Trust is often talked about as a vital part of this approach. Put simply, people talked about trusting each other to do what they say they will do, and if they can't, talking honestly together about what's happening. Developing trust involves explicitly working on trust and it also comes about from working together in this new way. Staff working directly with the public find that they are supported to try out new ideas. They find that leaders have provided cover to do that, and want to hear about what's being learnt, not just what's going well. Leaders find that people across the system are able to listen and respond to the needs of individuals, families and young people in ways that really support them to flourish. Individuals, families and young people trust that they can talk honestly and openly with staff, that they are listened to and then genuinely involved in working out what will make a difference in their lives. Those with the power to bring people together and support them to get to know each other, develop a shared sense of values and purpose, have stayed committed to finding the time, space and resources to support this learning and relationship building to happen. So, trust grows and develops each time someone finds that what's being talked about is congruent with what is actually happening.

## 7. The contribution of a non-traditional funder

Funders took a venture philanthropy approach to the work and were purposefully more involved and more dynamic, willing to take the time to build trust and find the right ways to intervene with a specific focus on achieving visible support for the work from a high level. This involved contributing to the local authority's wider transformation ambitions and leveraging in their networks as well as using their wider convening role to build connections between the Family Wellbeing Partnership and wider national strategic and policy ambitions, and across a range of stakeholders.

They resourced additional specialist capacity if necessary and on an ad hoc and temporary basis. This has brought a valuable flexibility to engage other expertise as and when required, rather than being fixed on an agreed long-term budget. Their commitment to long-term investment has generated trust amongst senior leaders and practitioners, helping them to be open and willing to invest time and take risks.

They set out to be enablers and partners on the journey towards transformation, rather than just abstract funders. Listening to people on the ground, working locally to support communities, was a key ethos underpinning that approach.

## APPENDIX A

### Telling our strategic leadership story

Over the late summer of 2024, the Hunter Foundation commissioned Keira Oliver, in partnership with the Centre for Public Impact Europe, to help a small group of people tell their strategic leadership story; of how they worked together to create the conditions for a more relational approach to public services in Clackmannanshire through initiating and growing the Family Wellbeing Partnership. This is a story told from the perspective of what they found it takes, in their context, and what they learned along the way.

Those who took part in this story were:

- Councillor Ellen Forson, Leader of Clackmannanshire Council
- Drew Drummond, Values Based Leadership programme lead, Columba 1400
- Lorraine Sanda, Strategic Director of People Services, Clackmannanshire Council
- Lynn Hendry, the Hunter Foundation
- Janet Adam, Family Wellbeing Partnership Senior Lead Officer, Clackmannanshire Council
- Veronica Cully, Family Wellbeing Partnership Strategic Lead, Clackmannanshire Council

We, in the leadership team, are also grateful to colleagues in the Tackling Poverty and Social Justice Directorate, Scottish Government who are an important part of this story. Thank you also to Murray Sharp and Gillian Scott (Clackmannanshire Council), to everyone involved from Columba 1400 and, of course, all the children, young people, families, staff, partners and community members who have walked and worked alongside the Family Wellbeing Partnership.

In this document, we do our best to tell a collective story about what we've found it takes to strategically lead a shift towards more relational public services. We will have often experienced the same events differently and we haven't space to include everything we all would have wanted. However, we have found distinct common ground to be content that this does a good job of articulating our shared journey. That's part of partnership working after all.

A bit about who the "we" is in this story. Keira, our story gatherer noticed that we use the term "we" a lot and to mean multiple groups of different people. This has been difficult to disentangle for the purposes of making our story as clear as we can but we've done our best.

Firstly, the "we" usually refers to the group of people who have taken part in this creative exercise and where the story resonates and/or there were enough of us involved with the part of the story to be included in the "we". Where an event or part of the story sits more with one of our organisations, we have named that organisation instead. We have also included some quotes to bring in our individual voices.

"Partners" can refer to our partner organisations such as in the third or private sectors, NHS, police etc. It can also refer to each other and our organisations. And importantly, we use "communities", "members of the community", "community members", and individuals, families and young people sometimes interchangeably.

Throughout, we've tried to be consistent but please forgive us if the story feels messy at times. Complexity is messy but that's often where the beauty and learning is.