

Local innovation for the 21st century

Designing Next Practice solutions

innovation

Contact

If you are interested in finding out how The Innovation Unit could work with you to deliver transformed provision for children, young people and families in your locality, please contact us for an exploratory discussion of your issues, challenges and aspirations.

Or, if you are an organisation that would like to partner with The Innovation Unit in support of local innovation projects, please get in touch.

Contact:

Claire McEaney

020 7259 1232

claire.mceneaney@innovation-unit.co.uk

The Innovation Unit
28-30 Grosvenor Gardens
London
SW1W 0TT

www.innovation-unit.co.uk

The Innovation Unit approach

The Innovation Unit is a not-for-profit agency committed to working in partnership in localities to build innovative capacity.

We develop long term partnerships with local authorities, groups of schools and other agencies that want to develop new solutions to knotty, complex problems.

Our approach is to help leaders to reconceptualise their practice, imagine how things can be different, and to design and deliver a programme of change management to achieve this transformation. With our expert knowledge of the Power to Innovate, we can support localities in suspending legislation that may be holding back innovative approaches.

In many of the locations where we are working, policy drivers like Every Child Matters and Building Schools for the Future are being used as stimuli for programmes of significant cultural and organisational change. Our people, tools and frameworks are making real changes and building local capacity.

The Innovation Unit provides:

The right people to work alongside you

- Who can empathise with your local challenges and will be stakeholders in your success
- Who have relevant experience and have facilitated Next Practice solutions elsewhere
- Who understand and deliver great consultancy as partnership

Tools and frameworks to support change

- Used to create collective energy and momentum, and develop innovative capacity
- Taken from the private sector and tailored to need
- Proven in children's services contexts

Networks and connections

- Connecting you to key influencers, policymakers and other innovators
- Endorsing and legitimising your work
- Sharing your learning with the system

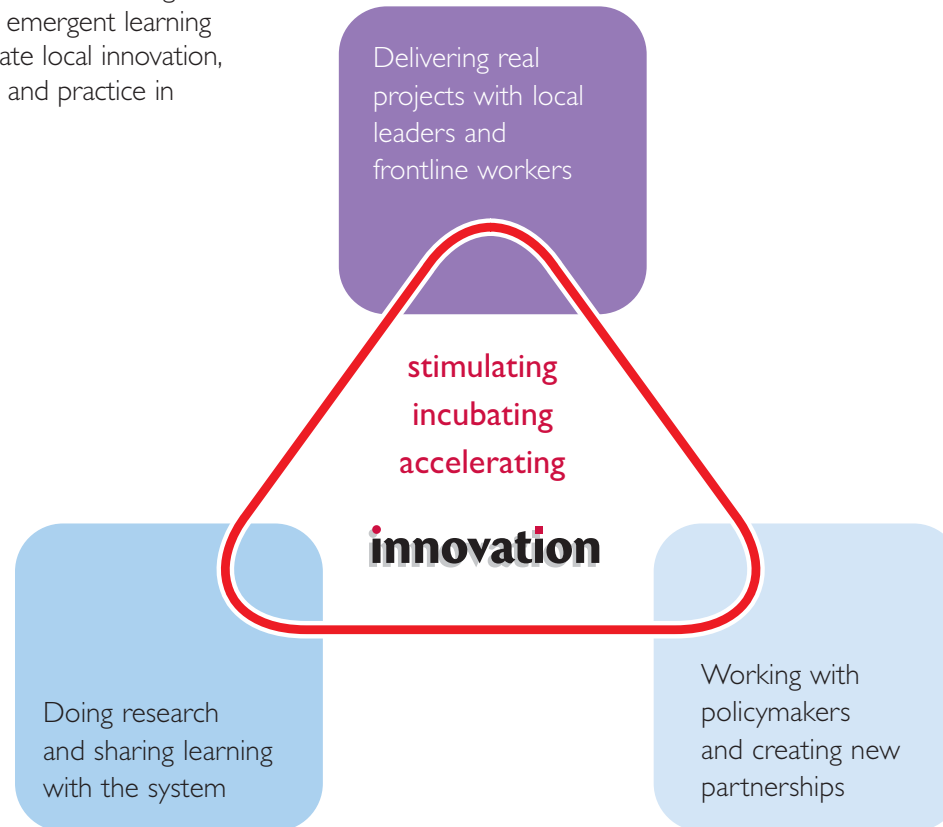
Transformation through partnerships

The Innovation Unit works in partnership with local leaders to design and apply Next Practice approaches to local challenges. We also enable and facilitate partnerships with individuals and organisations that add value at both the local and national level.

As an innovation agency, our role is to endorse and promote the changes in systems and practice that take place in your locality through our work together. By brokering strategic connections with central government and other key public and private sector partners we can mobilise resources and place the spotlight on this work. Our current partners include; The Department for Children, Schools and Families, The Office of the Third Sector, Nesta, Acevo, Headshift, Sky and OECD.

We avoid simply creating interesting but isolated pockets of experimentation by facilitating a community of public service innovators: likeminded individuals who come together virtually and face-to-face in a spirit of enquiry and are willing to share learning around the system.

The Innovation Unit takes a D&R approach, bringing in knowledge about practices elsewhere and working at the local level to draw out and transfer emergent learning for use by others. We aim to generate local innovation, but also to influence national policy and practice in other localities.



www.innovation-unit.co.uk

Applied Next Practice Projects

Example – Thamedale*

“Our consultant is very supportive to me as the project leader – he’s my first port of call as a sounding board for my ideas and is always accessible by phone or email. He’s objective, outside of our immediate situation, and brings fresh ideas which spark off new ideas in us. It’s because of him that we’re focusing on creating an independent Social Enterprise as the vehicle for implementing our plans.”

Mark Wilson, Director of Colne College, Haven

Your aspirations

Redesigning locality provision, using external support, to create 14-19 student entitlement pathways

Your challenges

Moving from best to Next Practice

Creating new governance arrangements to deliver radical change

Our partnership work

Levering increased levels of local ambition

Helping to define strategy

Actively supporting implementation

Local change

Establishment of 14-19 Trust

Executive Head for 14-19 supported by teams of aspiring leaders

Setting up a not-for-profit company to support the work

System change

More effective public services and improved outcomes for children, young people and families

* This is a fictional example drawn from four locality 14-19 programmes The Innovation Unit is supporting.

**From timetables and transport to student entitlement
Redesign locality provision, using external support,
to create 14-19 student entitlement pathways in
Thamedale.**

Thamedale has seven 11-18 secondary schools and an FE College and post-16 participation-rates are at a plateau of around 50%. There are high numbers of NEETS in the town and the rural areas surrounding it. Three years ago a 14-19 coordinator was appointed across the town funded collectively by the schools. The town was a 14-19 Pathfinder and made considerable progress by having a locality prospectus and a common timetable across the town on Wednesdays so that students could elect to do FE-supported diplomas or work-based training.

The Innovation Unit in partnership with Thamedale...

Despite having national recognition for its 14-19 developments, progress in Thamedale was not focused on any really powerful aspirations. Decision-making was slow and heads were restrained by concern for their own school and their governors' perceptions. Talk was more about timetables and transport than about entitlements.

As a first step, The Innovation Unit facilitated a visioning seminar to define more ambitious locality aims, which

included establishing town-wide entitlement pathways for all students, accreditation through to 18 for 100% of students, and zero NEETS within three years.

The Bridge Change Leadership Framework was used to confront some of the real issues holding back transformation, to define an agreed strategy and to build leadership. It was clear a new governance arrangement was necessary to legitimise strategic action across the locality and to commission new forms of provision.

With the The Innovation Unit's help, a Thamedale 14-19 Trust was established. It contained key governors from each institution, significant local business partners and the mayor. An Innovation Unit consultant helped them to address governance subsidiarity issues and all partner institutions upwardly delegated the funds for 14-19, subsequently to be re-delegated to drive the strategic agenda. The Coordinator became an Executive Head for 14-19, and set up leadership teams, drawn from aspiring leaders, around collectively agreed work streams.

One of these work streams, supported by the consultant, involved the establishment of a not-for-profit company commissioned by the Trust to work with key partners to establish data-systems and personalised routes for NEET students.

Applied Next Practice Projects

Example – Barnsley

“The most successful activities have been co-facilitated events. Our consultant brought in tools and I harnessed local contacts and knowledge. We have used this combination to run an effective Bridge diagnostic day with the Children’s Services SLT. The DCS is keen to use the model across the local authority.”

Diane Heritage, Head of Innovation for Learning, Barnsley Council

Your aspirations

Putting local communities and their needs at the heart of service provision through new governance and leadership models

Your challenges

Developing a model of community leadership which builds on existing good relationships
Gaining active support from a wide group of stakeholders
Bringing together local models and LA-wide strategy

Our partnership work

Using tools to help define local vision
Brokering effective locality working
Creating local facilitation capacity

Local change

More confidence and capacity to deliver change
Increased levels of local agreement and commitment to change
Local Wellbeing Partnerships and Director of Community Wellbeing now operationalised

System change

More effective public services and improved outcomes for children, young people and families

'Remaking Learning' in Barnsley

Putting local communities and their needs at the heart of service provision through new governance and leadership models.

'Remaking Learning' is a programme aimed at transforming lifelong learning across the whole of Barnsley through Building Schools for the Future (BSF). Two localities are working with the local authority on behalf of the whole of Barnsley to develop new forms of leadership across local areas. These include Local Area Wellbeing Partnerships with strong community and multi-agency engagement, and a Director of Community Wellbeing with a focus on developing community literacy.

The Innovation Unit in partnership with Barnsley...

Some early 'process mapping' sessions with small groups from each locality helped clarify a vision for what Barnsley wanted to achieve through their Next Practice project. There was a keen desire to develop new leadership models which enabled community links to be strengthened and so this initial work focused on developing the concept of community leadership and how it could look in these areas of Barnsley.

Following this, an Innovation Unit consultant facilitated sessions to introduce new and different governance

models and approaches. At this point it became clear that a range of models could work, but that the key to success was securing the active support of a broader group of stakeholders. To achieve this, the same consultant used Delta 6 and the Leadership and Governance Landing Pad tools in an event designed to build consensus about the future amongst a larger group, including senior local authority staff, heads and governors.

The key ideas of Local Wellbeing Partnerships and Director of Community Wellbeing emerged and are now being operationalised in some of the nine planned localities. Use of the Bridge Change Leadership Framework has enabled key local leaders to better understand the complex change taking place across the authority and how the Next Practice work fits within this. The team now has confidence in their vision and a clear strategy for moving forward. They have become skilled at engaging others and have facilitated sessions locally with heads and governors.

The Local Wellbeing Partnership model has generated real commitment and enthusiasm and the local authority is looking to implement it widely. The Innovation Unit is now working with Barnsley to identify multi-agency leadership development activity to support the developments taking place.

www.innovation-unit.co.uk

Applied Next Practice Projects

Example – Knowsley

“Of all the consultancy support we have received, the most significant has been from The Innovation Unit, for two reasons; because the two consultants took time to get inside and understand what we are trying to do, and partnered us through the process over a sustained period.”

Elaine Ayre, Assistant Director, Knowsley MBC

Your aspirations

Mobilising system leadership to transform lives by radically redesigning 21st Century education and service provision for young people across Knowsley

Your challenges

Putting in place local leadership capacity to deliver ongoing change
Working to difficult timescales
How to actively engage and develop new system leaders

Our partnership work

Critical friendship
Expert advice
Brokering partnerships with national agencies

Local change

Redesigned models of governance and leadership which are adaptive and fit for purpose
Co-design of a year-long Pioneering System Leaders programme

System change

More effective public services and improved outcomes for children, young people and families

System Leadership in Knowsley

Mobilising system leadership to transform lives by radically redesigning 21st Century education and service provision for young people across Knowsley.

Knowsley has a recent history of radical educational innovation and is now using Building Schools for the Future as a key driver of transformation in education and wider service provision for young people. Its vision is to replace ten secondary schools with three area based federations comprised from seven new Learning Centres. The newly appointed Learning Centre Leaders will form a system leadership cadre, working together and with the authority and other partners to effect system transformation.

Two key issues for Knowsley are the capacity to achieve the work and the challenge from outside to ensure that their thinking remains at the radical edge of Next Practice.

The Innovation Unit in partnership with Knowsley..

By the end of 2007 seven new Learning Centre Leaders were appointed who, although still not yet in post, needed to be inducted into the prior history, to share and shape the aspirations and become an active partnership in the evolving work programme.

The Innovation Unit was asked to form a design and planning team to co-design a year-long Pioneering System Leaders programme for these new leaders and for key authority personnel. The programme is being implemented in partnership. It will also inform real work – the applied curriculum is no less than authority-wide reform. It will utilise powerful frameworks as core tools and mental models to unify the work. The 'system transformation' module will incorporate the Bridge Change Leadership Framework and the unit on 'federated leadership within a system context' will include NCSL and the Innovation Unit's work on new models of leadership and community leadership. The unit on 'leading a Learning Centre within a federation' will engage with the personalisation, workforce reform and parental involvement practices from the Innovation Unit's Next Practice programmes and the SSAT's Innovation Networks.

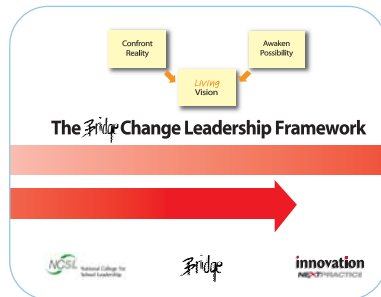
It is not a conventional programme. It is the engine for learning and leadership in a system transformation process, grounded in the aspirations of context. The Innovation Unit is both a partner and a stakeholder in success – by working at the leading edge of practice it has the additional role of making widely available learning outcomes from the work on behalf of the wider system.

www.innovation-unit.co.uk

Next Practice toolkit

Since its inception in 2001, The Innovation Unit has invested heavily in the development of high quality, practical tools and other resources to support the development of innovation projects. Part of the support offered to localities wishing to achieve Next Practice is a 'toolkit' which has been expressly designed to be interactive, flexible and developmental.

Examples include:



The Bridge Change Leadership Framework

Supporting strategic change programmes



Delta 6

A tool for enabling groups to identify their core priorities



Looking to Learn

Encouraging group learning from observation and peer reflection



Gathering Baseline Data
Supporting the collection and application of baseline data



Next Practice Self Evaluation Activity
A tool to support the self-evaluation of innovation



Models of Leadership
Interactive resource to help federations / networks determine the model for them



ToBe: Next Practice Process (Forthcoming)
Supporting effective planning



The Leadership and Governance Landing Pad (Forthcoming)
Diagnostic tool on governance

Supporting the leadership of complex change

The Bridge Change Leadership Framework

We know that radical innovation and complex change go hand in hand. We also know that the majority of change projects stand or fall on their ability to engage the hearts and minds of their participants – and to sustain that engagement.

An important component of The Innovation Unit's work with local projects is a tailored approach to supporting the strategic leadership of change. This approach is customised to the aspirations and challenges of local circumstances and is co-designed with leaders on the ground to create leadership capacity.

The Innovation Unit have partnered with Bridge, a small and highly successful consultancy specialising in change leadership, cultural dynamics and organisational transformation, to adapt the Bridge Change Leadership Framework. It has proven to be a very successful tool for local leaders of innovation projects and our ongoing partnership with Bridge provides our clients with direct access to their expertise.

Coach in a Box

Coach in a Box was founded in 2005, with the aim of making executive coaching affordable for all. Coach in a Box has been adapted to support leaders taking part in Next Practice innovation projects, and complements the Bridge Change Leadership Framework. The coaching programme runs for six months and helps leaders to make the most of their own leadership capabilities, work through difficult issues and engage stakeholders.

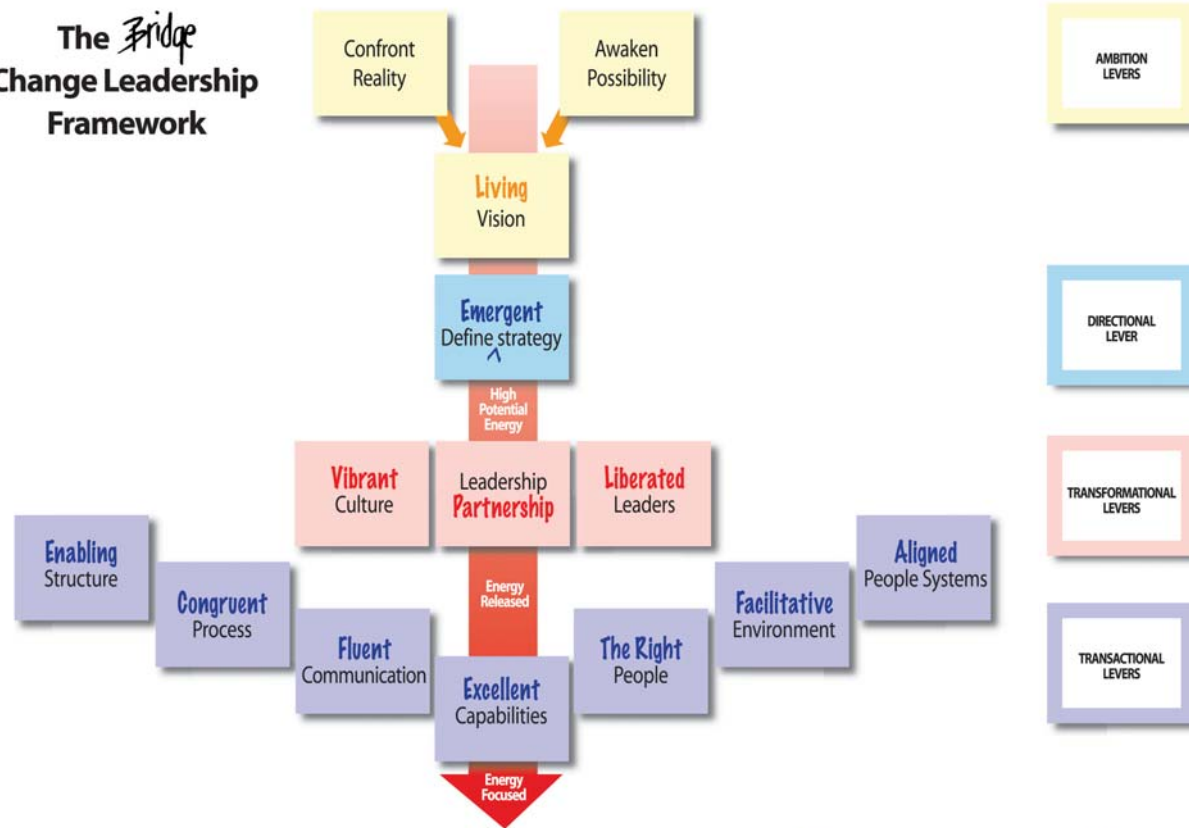
“Coach in a Box gives confidence to practitioners. It helps provide the support and challenge required to make Next Practice a reality.”

Professor Dame Pat Collarbone

“The Bridge Framework has been very good, with excellent facilitators. Without Bridge we would not have recruited such deep support across the schools in our group.”

Angela Armytage, Headteacher,
Yewlands Technology College

The *Fridge* Change Leadership Framework



Support and expertise: working with our consultants

Innovation Unit consultants have a range of backgrounds. They have led children's services, held strategic roles in national agencies and all are committed to public service innovation and to supporting adaptive modes of learning. They work to understand the particularities of your context and purpose and they also know how important relationship-building is in consultancy working.

Our consultants are experienced in:

- Incubating and supporting the local development of transformative practices across a range of locations
- Providing access to external expertise, critical friendship and knowledge about practices elsewhere
- Utilising innovative approaches to coaching for key leaders
- Stimulating and creating innovative capacity
- Providing sustained situated development support for leaders at all levels
- Developing partnership working with system and community partners

- Offering skilled facilitation in complex situations with multiple stakeholders
- Assisting with designing and planning events – particularly using people and materials arising from the Next Practice projects
- Strategically using tools and resources developed within the Next Practice programme in partnership with participants
- Brokering additional capacities, where relevant
- Connecting with policy and the DCSF knowledge-base
- Producing written outcomes for the work
- Sourcing other sites from which learning can be gained

“Our consultant is very perceptive, very good at managing change and anticipating problems, and he is adding great value. I’m remarkably impressed, and I am a hard person to impress.”

Dan Moynihan,
Chief Executive and Principal, Harris Federation

