



Accelerate

Empowering social care leaders:
learning from the third cohort

Foreword



Glen Garrod

Executive director of adult care and community wellbeing at Lincolnshire County Council, and honorary secretary of ADASS

 *The high volume of quality applicants amply demonstrates the extent to which the Accelerate programme is valued”*

Change has been at the front of everyone's minds over the past year as the coronavirus pandemic has swept aside established ways of working – in some cases permanently – and radically reshaped the landscape of social care.

This year's Accelerate programme was hardly immune to those shifts. Two of the four course modules were, like so much else over the past 15 months, hosted virtually. Meanwhile some of the change-management projects participants brought to the programme were subject to disruption and delay as attention rightly focused on Covid-19.

But social care is a sector that rarely stands still. The ongoing integration agenda, the nature of managing resources and the need to cope with rising levels of complexity and need are among the factors that can influence how a programme of change is ultimately implemented.

Instilling social care leaders with the confidence to chart a successful course in an uncertain world has been at the heart of the partnership ADASS and Newton have forged with Accelerate, now in its fourth year and going from strength to strength.

While this year's participants have had less face-to-face time than their predecessors, they have spoken warmly

about the tools gained from the reimagined programme – which have been put to use during the pandemic – and the relationships built with their peers. I was privileged to sit in on some of their closing presentations, which showcased the inspirational work ongoing in the sector – something this report provides a real flavour of.

Meanwhile the high volume of quality applicants for the new cohort, which is just getting underway, amply demonstrates the extent to which the programme is valued as a crucial component of what ADASS is able to offer its membership. The success of Accelerate has acted as a catalyst for other areas of our work and has informed a new programme now available to Principal Social Workers.

I'd like to pay special tribute to Marie Rogers, who has recently retired from ADASS and who is responsible for having built the partnership with Newton and enabling Accelerate to develop. Thanks also to Marie's colleagues Cathy Kerr and Letizia Mattanza for their instrumental roles in the programme and ongoing support. Finally I'd like to thank our colleagues at Newton for the expertise, flexibility and imagination they have brought to the programme – a shining example of partnership work in action.

Introduction



Steve Phillips

Senior partner, Newton

Following a year which has been filled with such uncertainty, the stories in this report feel – by contrast – full of incredible clarity. Clarity of vision, of decision-making, of impact and of improved outcomes, among others. Despite the challenges, and impact, of the pandemic, I am proud the Accelerate programme has continued to be able to support participants deliver their change programmes.

We continue to receive positive feedback on how Accelerate supports participants to form supportive and lasting relationships with their cohort. That's why I am delighted that over the last year we have started to bring together our two previous cohorts through an alumni network – and the continued support and sharing of best practice this is enabling.

I'd like to echo Glen's thanks to Marie – who has been instrumental in shaping the Accelerate programme from the outset into what it is today. We look forward to working with the rest of the ADASS team to continue to adapt and improve the delivery of the programme, as we react to the changing world around us.

Lastly, I would like to welcome our fourth Accelerate cohort – I hope that you find the next year as enjoyable and rewarding as we find delivering the course.

 *The stories in this report feel full of incredible clarity – of vision, of decision-making, of impact and of improved outcomes”*



Back row (on stairs L-R)

Gary Heathcote
Director of commissioning,
Norfolk CC

Laura Gaudion
Strategic commissioning
manager, Isle of Wight Council

Nick Davies
Assistant director, Royal
Borough of Greenwich

Matt Lees
Programme lead, Newton

Clare Deards (on laptop)
Head of social work &
principal social worker,
Swindon Borough Council

Katie Quarmby
Business manager,
Newton Europe

Catherine Gormally
Director of social care,
Salford Royal NHS
Foundation Trust

Sue Batty
Service director,
Nottinghamshire CC

Front row (L-R)

Richard Parry
Strategic director for adults
and health, Kirklees Council

Hilary Hall
Director of adults, health and
commissioning, Royal
Borough of Windsor and
Maidenhead

Peter Davis
Assistant director,
Leicestershire CC

What is the Accelerate programme?

The Accelerate programme develops the ability of directors and senior leaders in adult social care to deliver strategic and organisational change.

Designed by ADASS and Newton, the programme is aimed at directors and assistant directors of adult social care services. There have been three cohorts, in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Each participant brought a real-life high-priority major change project to the Accelerate programme that was their focus for the course.

The programme is divided into four modules that mirror the stages of a major change project. Each module consists of a two- or three-day residential where participants deepen their

understanding of Newton's change methodology, hear from guest speakers, and share and debate ideas (some of these sessions have inevitably been conducted virtually during the coronavirus pandemic).

The four stages are:

- **Assess** – Identifying and quantifying the opportunities for change, including how to work with stakeholders, measuring success and planning next steps.
- **Design** – Refining the opportunities, designing and piloting new ways of working, including designing effective pilots.

- **Implement** – Delivering the solution with local teams and measuring benefits, including communicating and embedding change in behaviour.
- **Sustain** – Supporting teams to sustain the changes permanently, including sustainability planning and how to keep change going in challenging times.
- Participants are also paired with a programme partner who, together with the peer support from others on the programme, offers an additional source of advice on effective change.

The Accelerate programme is now in its fourth year.



The headspace to think strategically

Nick Davies, senior assistant director for operations and partnerships, Royal Borough of Greenwich

● “Successfully adopting a strength-based approach to how we work with residents who need adult social care is a critical part of the Royal Borough of Greenwich’s health and adult services

vision,” says Nick Davies, the council’s senior assistant director for operations and partnerships.

Nick’s change programme, which was also being assisted directly by Newton representatives, entailed tackling those challenges through instilling more consistent practice, building resilience

and ensuring that there was appropriate capacity within reablement.

Key elements included implementing more consistent decision-making assisted by professional reflection and data, which helped address issues around culture change and empowerment within teams. “Accelerate gave me the headspace, away from the operational day-to-day, to reflect on how to make some really critical decisions,” Nick says. He cites as an example the ‘sustain’ module helping to convince him of the need to put in a bid to corporate finance colleagues to continue funding recently created delivery lead posts, who had been pivotal to driving things forward.

“If we didn’t invest, I realised we’d risk losing gains we’d made – the programme gave me the time, space and energy, and the ideas from other people on the course, to think more deeply and in more of a planned, strategic way about what I needed to do,” Nick says.

 *Accelerate gave me the headspace, away from the day-to-day, to reflect on how to make some really critical decisions”*

Unsticking a sticky problem

Sue Batty, service director for ageing well community services, Nottinghamshire County Council

● Before applying for Accelerate, Sue Batty had no shortage of change-management experience. But having worked with Newton in the past, she says she was drawn to the programme because of the company’s record in tackling the seemingly intractable system issues local authorities can face.

Sue was wrestling with just such a “sticky problem”, around reducing the use of residential care for older adults, which she could see other authorities were doing much better at. Nottinghamshire had been working on this for several years making only small improvements and was now in the throes of a broader strength-based service redesign.

Newton’s case-review methodology helped deliver the first of several “lightbulb moments” on the programme, Sue says, by enabling her to home in on factors that were increasing the inappropriate

use of residential placements. These included gaps in housing options for older people to plan earlier for later life, health ‘prescribing’ social care, pressure from families and staff, and the residential option simply representing the path of least resistance.

“Once we said: it’s about reducing inappropriate care, it’s not right to put people in residential if that’s not actually the service they need, that made sense,” she says. “It enabled staff buy-in because they get that, whereas if you just say, reduce the numbers, save money, that’s not a good thing to win hearts and minds.”

With the barriers diagnosed, Sue set out several ways by which Nottinghamshire will aim to reduce the use of inappropriate residential care by at least 32 people per year over three years. Key strands include internal embedding of strength-based approaches and improvement around decision-making, influencing partners’ culture and practice, and joint commissioning to ensure the



right services are there for people at the right time.

The project has been held up by the pandemic, meaning implementation has just started, from April 2021 – but Sue has been sharing learning from the Accelerate programme with managers, who have likewise been in discussion with their teams. Even allowing for the impact of Covid, stats are already demonstrating a reduction in the use of short-term residential care for over-65s in Nottinghamshire.

Bridging transition gaps



Hilary Hall, director of adults, health and housing, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

● “Transitions are an issue for every authority,” says Hilary, Windsor and Maidenhead’s DASS. “But our scenario is slightly more complicated.”

Children’s and adults’ services in the borough are operated by separate, jointly owned arms-length companies – Achieving for Children and Optalis – fuelling the potential both for siloed working practices and for blaming the other organisation when things going wrong. Work to improve

the “flaming clunky” transitions between the two also seemed an ideal project to bring to Accelerate because it was “wide-ranging yet quite contained”, Hilary explains.

“It was an opportunity to pull heavily on the support from Newton and others to help me think through things, and to use some of the programme’s tools,” she says. “When I talked to parents of young people who have been through transitions, what they were describing was the impact of really poor processes – if we get them right, one of my key metrics is parents’ and young people’s lived experience, and also

practitioners’,” says Hilary. “The frustration coming from practitioners was, everything happens too late, and the processes were about as far away as you could describe from being person-centred.”

The change programme was divided into three workstreams: planning for independence much earlier, reworking transition processes and increasing accommodation and learning options locally to reduce out-of-borough placements. Each was subjected to Newton’s assess, design, implement and sustain methodology – which Hilary says staff were receptive to as a proven external system rather than “the way we’ve always done things”.

The transitions programme is – despite Covid disruption – now into its implementation phase and there are tentative positive signs around numbers of young people remaining in-borough, improved lived experience and reduced placement costs.

Hilary adds that the space away from her day job that Accelerate has granted has – along with its rigorous self-assessment exercises – enabled her to reflect much more on her own development, and management style.

“I have a tendency, if staff say, ‘I’m really struggling,’ to go, ‘I’ll take that on for you,’” she says. “I have really worked hard on having much more of a coaching style – rather than rushing to help, actually getting people to come up with their own solutions.”

Cutting vision statements down to size

Cath Gormally, director of social care, Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust

● “We had just started a transformation programme to deliver community-led support, a strengths-based approach,” says Cath Gormally. “The ‘exam question’ for me was: how do you stick to principles of co-production and design with staff, citizens and people with lived experience, while actually delivering change, at scale and pace, and some savings as well?”

Cath, the only one of the 2020 cohort to work for an integrated care organisation (ICO), says that as well as seeking to answer those questions, she was drawn to Accelerate to “stretch myself” in response to an aversion to project management.

“We had visioning workshops – the Accelerate programme helped with cutting down the vision statements, which had

been too big – then got staff to bid for the chance to be an innovation site,” she says. “It fit our approach – one principle of community-led support is: keep your bureaucracy to a minimum, co-produce and co-design with people, and avoid jargon where you can.”

Cath says that without her learning from the programme she would also have been less able to challenge her project team. “It’s helped me really interrogate the KPIs and the plan, keeping that stuff in the background so it doesn’t turn staff off, but being really clear about what metrics we actually need and what they lend us in terms of financial opportunity,” she says.

During a long coronavirus-related pause in the change programme, Accelerate’s framework also provided an extra resource to draw on at a time when



Cath was executive lead for implementing discharge-to-assess processes during the height of the pandemic. “It was my role to kind of hold the ring on an ethical framework to make sure we discharged people swiftly yet safely – so the design and implement framework in my mind was really helpful,” she says.



‘Testing the way you do everything’

Gary Heathcote, director of commissioning for adult social care, Norfolk County Council

● Gary was encouraged onto the Accelerate programme by his DASS James Bullion, the former ADASS president, as an ideal self-development opportunity that could help him broaden his role at Norfolk.

The change project he selected – redesigning the county’s fragmented and unstable home care market around a smaller number of strategic partners – has been affected by Covid-19 and while its implementation is running on track, a lot of elements have been delayed. Gary says his learning from Accelerate proved invaluable in mapping the path forward – and is already being transferred onto other initiatives.

“It’s because of the rigour and the process about how you set out what you need to achieve, as well as learning to look at things from different stakeholders’ points of view, what they need to hear from you,” he says.

Gary adds that his participation has fundamentally shifted his approach to new projects.

“I’ve reflected a lot on the programme – it’s very clever in that it embeds learning in a project so you’ve got an example, but what it’s actually doing is testing you about the way you do everything,” he explains.

“You now think about, what’s the best way of tackling this problem – probably you need a bit longer than you might have done, because the setup, the datasets, the metrics are key. You keep coming back to, why are we doing this, which is a really good discipline to get into.”



‘We needed to change hearts and minds, not just systems and processes’

Laura Gaudion, assistant director for commissioning and partnership and head of continuing healthcare, Isle of Wight Council

● “Everyone thought it was a great idea but also impossible,” recalls Laura of the change project she brought to Accelerate. “It was like a unicorn on the horizon – everyone wants to go and touch it, but nobody’s sure it will be there when you arrive.”

She’s referring to Isle of Wight’s mission to implement new care commissioning arrangements. These include moving to an outcome-based model, developing a financial framework to support the shift away from time and task, and nurturing a personal assistant marketplace to complement the island’s traditional domiciliary care offer.

While stakeholders liked the broad concept of the project they were mindful of difficulties experienced during similar transitions elsewhere and concerned about the potential fallout, explains Laura, a lawyer by trade. “We needed to change hearts and minds, not just systems and processes.”

Laura says the Accelerate programme appealed because of its ethos of driving this kind of collective, rather than top-down, change – which threw down a personal as well as organisational gauntlet to her.

“It’s the nature of me, the nature of my professional background, to run ahead without necessarily thinking about how to take people with me,” she acknowledges.

“A key learning point from the Assess module was: slow down – it’s only if you can articulate what’s going on in your head that you’re going to get to where you need to.”

When Laura returned to the Isle of Wight and sat down with partners to set out her vision for a homecare contract, she felt she had the tools to convince everyone to get behind it. “I came back with a skeleton, really, of what I saw the design phase needing to look like, and at that point everyone started to buy in because they were able to help put the meat and the muscle on those bones,” she says.

This consensus has endured through some difficult interactions, with both partners and elected members, around the details of the project. Laura describes Accelerate’s focus on planning how to communicate change as giving her a “totally different way of managing” challenging conversations, keeping focus on substantive points and not being drawn into unnecessary arguments.

“We’ve now got our three locality partners in place, we’re working with them on a weekly basis, and building lines of engaged communication to make the next 10 years of this programme what they need to be,” Laura says.

 *I came back with a skeleton of the design phase, and everyone started to buy in to help put meat and muscle on those bones”*

Gaining financial confidence

Clare Deards, head of social work for adult services, Swindon Borough Council

● For Clare Deards, the idea of applying for Accelerate came “out of the blue” thanks to a suggestion made by her line manager.

Clare, who was about to take charge of a change programme – which, as with Cath Gormally, involved implementing a community-led support model – initially had little idea of what her involvement with Accelerate might entail.

She had, however, previously worked alongside consultants from Newton during another project at Swindon. “Having that benefit was massive for me, because I already had an awareness of some of the key concepts – but I was now looking at them through a different lens,” she says.

Clare describes the knowledge gained around finance, such as being able to break down invest-to-save approaches, as one of Accelerate’s most important benefits. Part of the process was being encouraged to recognise that this was an area of relative weakness for her, and to make the case to her employer that she needed support, given her change programme’s potential to save £9.5 million annually.

“The programme also helped me realise that you don’t need to apologise for trying to find some extra money, because looking at where we are nationally, life is going to get harder,” she says. “If you want to keep delivering good outcomes as a local authority, you’ll need to make savings – I had a broader conversation with my team, and everyone was OK with that.”



A change of perspective on sheltered housing



Richard Parry, strategic director for adults and health Kirklees Council

● Richard, the experienced DASS at Kirklees, says the appeal of Accelerate was about “teaching an old dog new tricks”, given that people in top-level roles can become distanced from the nitty-gritty of change programmes.

“You need to be continuously challenged, and reflecting on what you do and don’t know,” he says. “I’m more of a strategist than someone who does detail, and am quite organic in my approach, so for me there was just something about the challenge around putting in a rigorous methodology.”

After concluding that his original change project was too broad-brush,

Richard refocused narrowly onto a review of 19 sheltered housing schemes’ future. This had already begun, but the learning Richard had gleaned through the initial programme modules enabled him to coach colleagues involved in the review, taking them back to the visioning stage to reassess motives and KPIs.

“Without Accelerate we’d have been looking at it through the lens of, we have a housing problem to solve, rather than going back and having a more

 *I’m more of a strategist than someone who does detail, so for me there was a challenge around putting in a rigorous methodology”*

fundamental conversation with social care about how we might use these assets,” he says. “We thought through how we’ll demonstrate success, in terms of reduced numbers of people moving into residential care or savings on the adaptations budget because we’ve got better adapted accommodation.”

It’s envisioned that some of the schemes will remain as they are while others may be repurposed to support people with learning disabilities or complex physical disabilities. With care homes closing as a result of the pandemic, a number of properties may also present opportunities for providers to partner with the council “and deliver care into some of these sheltered schemes, almost stepping them up to become mini-extra-care schemes”, Richard says.

So did the programme teach this old dog new tricks? Richard says that while there was “not an awful lot that was profoundly new”, the experience spotlighted areas he reflexively tended to avoid, and others he had got so comfortable with that he sometimes coasted through them.

He compares his participation favourably to the advanced driving test he put himself through a few years back. With Kirklees colleague Amanda Evans also an Accelerate alumnus, Richard adds that the council aims to embed both their learning as “the way we will do change projects in the future.”

The Newton perspective

Stephen Knight, partner at Newton, is responsible for the Accelerate programme at Newton. He works alongside Matt Lees, who delivers the programme, and in partnership with ADASS colleagues in both course design and delivery.

Q How has the Accelerate programme evolved over the years in response to learning from the people you've been delivering it to?

While the core structure of the Accelerate programme has remained consistent over the years, in that it is aligned to the key stages of a successful change programme, we are always evolving the content. For example, we reflect the continually changing landscape of adult social care through both the case studies and our guest speakers. This year, topics included the use of resources, leading change across complex organisations with multiple stakeholders, and working successfully within an integrated care system (ICS).

We are also very passionate about ensuring we adapt the course based on participant feedback – which has led to a number of adaptations. For example,

a stronger focus on the strategic, operational, behavioural and political elements of any transformation agenda, and tweaking the criteria and content to ensure Accelerate is an attractive offer to both directors and assistant directors.

Q How has the Accelerate programme had to adapt in response to the pandemic and how successful has this been?

We define the success of Accelerate on how much our participants value the programme, so it was right to be led by them on how they wanted to adapt. Ultimately this year's participants were totally committed to their programmes and the course so while we made some tweaks – like changing course dates and taking some of the modules online – we carried on as planned. For me, the stories in this report are testament to that absolute focus and commitment – even

where some programmes had to be adapted or paused.

Q What's next for Accelerate?

We are always seeking to evolve the Accelerate offer. This year, we'll be refining the content to take into account topics such as the evolving ICS agenda, and the impact of adult social care reform. We also want to ensure we are reacting to the changing world around us – so we are looking at how we can bring through innovations in digital and technology and consider the impact this can have on adult social care.

We often talk about how much participants value the opportunity to build their network through Accelerate. That's why I'm really excited about the emerging alumni network – and continuing to strengthen that. We are hoping to get all three cohorts face to face for the first time later this year!



Meet the 2021 cohort

Back row (L-R)

Andy Biddle
Director of adult social services, Portsmouth City Council

Caroline Baria
Deputy director for integrated commissioning, Leeds City Council

Ros Cox
Deputy director for integration and transformation, Bristol City Council

Fiona Musgrave
Assistant director for integration and partnerships, Cumbria County Council

Front row (L-R)

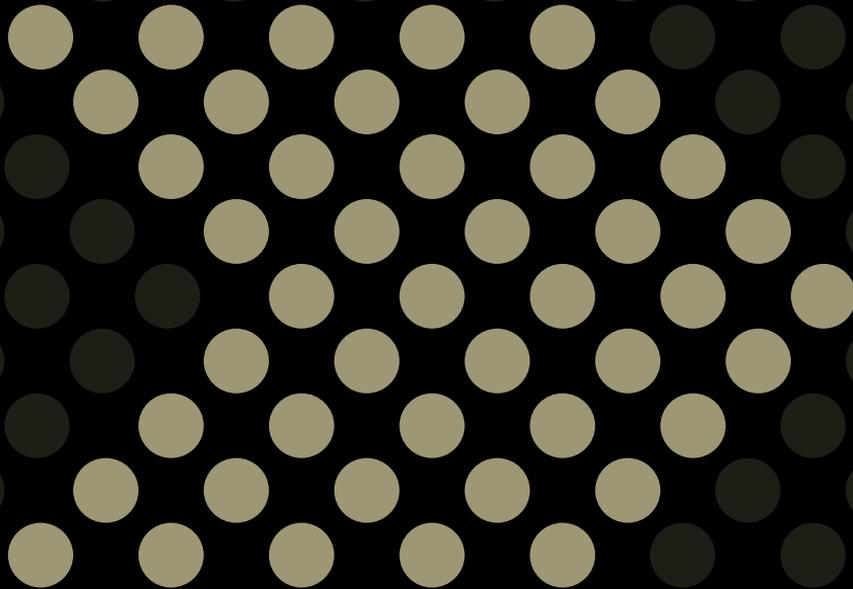
Tracy Meyerhoff
Assistant head of adult social care, Hull City Council

Nathan Atkinson
Assistant director of strategic commissioning, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Claudia Brown
Divisional director of adult social care, Tower Hamlets Council

Nick Pryke
Director of integrated discharge, Norfolk & Waveney Sustainability and Transformation Partnership

Sam Fitzgerald
Assistant director for adults' services, North Northamptonshire Council



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