



One minute guide

Human Learning Systems



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What is Human Learning Systems (HLS)?

Human Learning Systems is an approach for making improvements to outcomes that focuses on:

- Human relationships: building strong connections between people.
- Continuous learning: encouraging learning and improvement.
- Systems Thinking: viewing things as interconnected and interdependent.

It aligns with Our Nottinghamshire Approach, and Our Nottinghamshire Approach to Participation, because it is a relational, restorative approach that prioritises the experiences of children, families and practitioners as being drivers for change.

What are the key elements to Human Learning Systems?

The key elements are summarised here and explained in the boxes further below:

1. Understanding the System – so that we can see how things are interconnected and interdependent.
2. Co-Design – to ensure those with lived experience and those working with them participate in planning for improvements.
3. Test and learn – so that we can try things out in very complex circumstances and understand the system better.
4. Grow – once we are happy with improvements that we would like to implement.

Across all the above is what we call System Stewardship – managing the learning between the elements.

How do we understand the systems?

- By defining our 'system of interest' around an outcome or a theme.
- Thinking about the people who are involved/affected and the factors which contribute such as policies/processes.
- By seeing how all parts of that system are related, including the strength and impact of those relationships.
- Looking at the whole picture so that we appreciate the cumulative effect of those relationships that lead to patterns of outcomes.
- Recognise that the system is complex and contains dynamic relationships, so we need to continuously learn and adapt.

This helps create more responsive change in services.

What is co-production in Human Learning Systems?

Co-production is a collaborative process where services, and the people who use them, work together to design, deliver, and assess services with:

- **Equal Partnership:** children, adults, communities share power and responsibility in delivering change.
- **Shared decision making:** Decisions are made together ensuring the voice of those with lived experience are at the centre.
- **Mutual learning:** Both parties learn from each other, leading to more efficient and responsive services.

This approach ensures services and change are tailored to the needs of those most impacted leading to better outcomes and greater satisfaction.

What is 'test and learn'?

- **Testing/experimentation:** Trying out new approaches and ways of doing things based on the learning from co-production activities. This involves testing, evaluating, and refining to see what works best.
- **Continuous Learning:** Constantly learning from each other and the system. Regularly feeding this back into the process. Realtime feedback helps services adapt quicker.
- **Reflective practice:** Regularly reflecting on what has been learnt. Using the learning to inform future actions.

This approach encourages innovation and helps services adapt quicker, so they are more effective and responsive to change.

What is 'grow'?

- **Embedding:** Integrating successful practices and learning into everyday work. This helps new methods become standard practice and encourages longer term sustainability.
- **Influencing:** Using success and learning in an effective way. i.e. sharing knowledge with other services, influencing policy, becoming advocates for change.

What is system stewardship?

Learning Cycles exist at different scales: with individual people/practitioners, within teams, across organisations or a place (a wider geographical area), and at a regional/country scale.

System stewardship means:

- Managing and governing the cycle of ongoing learning.
- Having a decision-making framework that is logical, robust, and repeatable.
- Defining the roles and responsibilities of the project team and others involved/affected.
- Good project governance - being accountable and aligning the project to the organisation's goals.
- Creating a supportive condition for continuous learning and development. Including the ability to fail.
- Fostering trust and collaboration amongst everyone involved/interested/affected.
- Helping people/different services work towards a common goal/ shared purpose e.g. supporting a family to help them achieve similar goals and outcomes.