

Examples of specific actions system partners could take to develop a Stewardship Group

The stewardship approach is in marked contrast to a traditional steering group or programme management framework, with performance indicators to be measured and monitored. The focus is on helping connect the system, testing and learning together, and helping to address barriers to change as they are identified. Some practical ways that the stewardship approach could manifest include:

- Allowing time as part of meetings for people to get to know each other and build trust. For example, getting to know each other's motivations, drivers, constraints they are working within.
- Identifying principles and behaviours for how the group will work together - these should be explicit about what's different to the norm, and how group members will hold each other to account for these 'shifts'.
- Starting with a small group of committed people - with systems change, it often works best to start small, demonstrate what's possible, then attract others in. Everyone in the group should be committed to tackling loneliness and willing to do the work necessary to progress shared priorities (not just read papers/attend meetings).
- Rather than lots of formal agenda items, giving space for meaningful learning conversations - how is the system working at the moment, what needs to change, what are our roles (individually and collectively) in doing this?
- Ensuring insights are fed up from other layers of the system - what role can the group (and each individual) play in helping 'unblock' challenges that people are facing in trying to foster more connected communities? How can the group help share and embed learning from what is working?
- Rather than just focusing on launching new initiatives, examining more fundamental shifts needed in how things are done e.g. underlying relationships, power dynamics and structures.
- Identifying opportunities to reimagine existing initiatives/ways of working e.g. how could we give commissioned services more flexibility to invest in building relationships and promoting connection? How might we reduce monitoring requirements so that organisations can instead spend time on shared learning?
- Identifying practical experiments we can do to help create change. When we don't have a clear solution, experimentation is key.
- Allocating leads for priority areas and experiments, but ensure these are jointly owned and that any working groups formed to progress priorities include colleagues across the system (including practitioners / those working more closely with communities).
- Modelling behaviours you want to see across the system e.g. willingness to accept we don't know all the answers, encouraging creativity and experimentation, valuing stories of what change means for individuals and communities as well as quantitative data.