How an organisation could introduce a new communication tool to improve service delivery
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Executive Summary

Homeward Bound 2.0 builds on the work carried out by the design team in Homeward Bound 1.0. The original project aimed to provide improved communication, predominantly, between and again population and the people who matter to them. The result of this Homeward Bound 1.0 was a prototype outcome called My Life Book (MLB), an artefact that could be shared by people who are going through life transitions with the people who are most relevant to their care.

The continuation of the project involves determining whether the outcome created in Homeward Bound 1.0 could also have a professional application. At the same time, Homeward Bound 2.0 would explore how an organisation could introduce a new communication tool to improve service delivery.

In order to do this, the design team worked alongside two projects within Shelter Scotland: Safe and Sound and Supporting Prisoners Advice Services (SPAN). Safe and Sound works with young people aged 14-24 who are at risk of leaving home in an unplanned way along with their families, while SPAN works with prisoners and former offenders. Both projects have a very distinct client group and were ideal environments to introduce MLB.

In order to gain insights into the projects and how MLB could benefit them if used as an assessment tool, a variety of service design tools were used. Initial semi-structured interviews were carried out to gain information about the projects and gauge immediate reactions to MLB. Following this, a joint workshop was carried out with members of the Safe and Sound and SPAN teams. Participants were asked to create personas, empathy maps and service blueprints in order to reflect on their services.

From the interviews and the workshop, insights were gathered regarding MLB and the service processes of each of the projects. These insights then informed the outcome of Homeward Bound 2.0: a set of recommendations for the future development of MLB and its potential to be utilised within Safe and Sound and SPANs existing frameworks.

A project by:
Richard Langton - rdlangton@gmail.com

Service Design Approach

This project was undertaken using a Service Design approach. The design team engaged with people relevant to the context of the project at each stage of development. Throughout the report the most significant methods used to engage with these people will be outlined. The input obtained from the participants was key to the understanding of the issues explored, what could be done to address the issues raised and how to develop these ideas into recommendations.
Setting the scene
Homeward Bound 2.0, how an organisation can introduce a new communication tool to improve service delivery, is a project that builds directly on the work carried out by Aishwarya Iyengar & Lorri Smyth in Homeward Bound 1.0. This project considers the potential professional applications for their outcome and also service-specific adjustments that may need to be made to accommodate the tool.

Professional services employ a broad range of approaches when working with their clients and a host of different assessment tools. Some services focus solely on the presenting issue, while others try to take a more holistic approach. The Homeward Bound design team felt that, whether a service takes a holistic approach or not, it could be assisted by utilising an assessment tool that emphasised a process of self-reflection as a means to understand and address a client’s needs. Although it was designed using the feedback of one particular group (older people), it was felt that MLB had potential applications across a wide range of situations and client types.

As Homeward Bound 1.0 had utilised the feedback of potential users of MLB, the priority of Homeward Bound 2.0 is to gain professional insight. This was important in order to ascertain how a tool such as MLB would fit into an existing service structure, and also to test whether it had the flexibility to be relevant to a variety of different client groups.

By working with a professional service using a service design approach, an additional aim of Homeward Bound 2.0 was to provide a fresh perspective to the service provider. By doing this, the design team could act as a conduit for them to reflect on the way that they provide a service and engage with their clients. In undertaking this Homeward Bound 2.0 it could bring value to a professional service which goes beyond MLB itself.

For the purpose of context within this report selected sections of the 1.0 report have been incorporated directly, in their original formatting.

If you would like to read the original report in full please access the following URL: https://masterofdesignforservices.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/homeward-bound.pdf

Homeward Bound is a project which aims to enable improved communication, predominantly, between an aging population and the people who matter to them.

The design team undertook a process of gaining insights from older people which highlighted that in most cases they did not necessarily share relevant information with their family or carer regarding their health needs and day to day aims or wants. Instead they have informal conversations about these subjects with their friends, who may or may not have a caring role in their life. The project aim is to engage these older people and stimulate them to communicate more with those who are most relevant to their care.

This begins with the need for people to think about what they want to do in their lives. The design team looked at methods of intervening in this lack of communication at an earlier stage & how people share their thoughts, fears and habits with their family, carer or health professional before they need significant medical intervention. From these insights the project then developed to examine how people can form improved communication habits.
Reshaping care for older people

Homeward bound – redesigning transitions between hospital and home is a project undertaken in response to the Scottish Government’s Reshaping Care For Older People Agenda. Throughout this report, ‘older people’ should be understood as anyone over the age of 65.

Reshaping Care for Older People aims to improve the quality of health and social care provision for the older population through supporting projects to develop new ideas and new ways of working. Across Scotland, a Change Fund of £80 million is funding projects to meet these aims.

A change in the shape of our population has prompted the need to act. People are living longer while at the same time we have a decreasing working-age, tax-paying population to fund services.

It is estimated that by 2031, the population aged 65 and over will increase by 62% and the population of those over 85 will increase by 144%. (COSLA, 2012) A growing population of older people means demand for health and social care support is steeply on the rise. Providing health and social care in the same way as we have done in the past is financially unsustainable for the future.

With the increasing need for care and the lack of availability of professional carers, there is high dependency on family members, friends and neighbours to take on the role of caring and become informal carers for older people.

It is understood that the economic value of informal carers is £119 billion per year, which is higher than the total annual cost of the NHS which stand at £98.8 billion. (Buckner, L & Yeandle, S (2011), Valuing Carers)

For informal carers, providing care for more than 20 hours a week can impact their employment which in turn affects their financial standing. Providing care also has a significant impact on the health and well being of the carer, often resulting in stress-related conditions.
Key issues

These are issues identified by the Institute of Research and Innovation for Social Services

Providing Services
- lack of understanding of available services
- delays and inadequacies in the provision of services

Poor Communication
- lack of communication between patient and their family members
- failure of health and social care to work together
- older people aren’t always being listened to

Discharge Planning
- lack of medication
- lack of transport
- inadequate notice of discharge

HOSPITAL to HOME: Re-designing a positive pathway for older people

Homeward bound was conducted in partnership with the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS). Between March and August 2014, the Homeward Bound Design team and IRISS have supported each other by sharing key learning and collaboratively conduct workshops.

Their project, Hospital to Home has been funded from the Change Fund and will be running in Tayside over 20 months, between July 2013 and March 2015.

The Hospital to Home project, aims to improve the experience of older people transitioning from hospital, back into the community.

Through workshops and group discussions, IRISS have brought together older people, carers and a variety of people who currently work in providing health and social care in Tayside. Their goal, as a group, has been to identify key problems and develop a new idea to be refined and piloted in NHS Tayside.

Initial research is being undertaken by IRISS between July 2013 and March 2015 in which they are speaking with people working in health and social care and experts from private, public and voluntary sectors.

From this, they gained insights of the ways in which people experience different routes through the current health and social care system. Within each route, some recurring issues were identified within three themes:

- Provision of services
- Poor Communication
- Discharge Planning

Homeward bound’s area of focus

Homeward bound took the decision to build an understanding of the challenges of communication between older people and their family members using a Service Design approach.

It was noted by IRISS that communication was the overarching issue that linked all of the issues identified. This theme was the most feasible to work towards as other issues would require NHS ethical clearance in order to pursue further research; this was not obtainable within the timeframe of the project.
The brief

How might we use communication tools to create opportunity for people—older people and their informal carers—to have an enjoyable conversation within their family about what is important to each of them in life?
Design criteria

Design criteria or constraints is important because the Designers can focus their ideation in a particular direction even while exploration. This allows strategic thinking about the development of the product or service that we are set to design for a particular target audience with a definite purpose.

For this book, four key criteria were identified by the design team which are as following: visual style, language and tone, physical form and aesthetic appeal.

- visual style
  - gender neutral and age neutral to appeal to a broad range of people
- language and tone
  - simple - no jargon
  - friendly and conversational
  - unintimidating
- physical form
  - easily producible
  - no bigger than A4
  - bound photo album or book style, not separate worksheets
  - physically inviting to engage with the prompt
- aesthetic appeal
  - engaging
  - inviting
  - unintimidating
  - fun
  - informal

Ideation

Based on the analysis and reflection upon all the research conducted during the project, a decision was made to develop a paper based communication tool, inspired by the function of a creative journal.

The design team aims at creating a book that is of value to people in the sense that it enables reflection, strikes conversations around their anecdotes and gives people an opportunity to reconnect with their family members with more emphasis on wants and desires than needs in life.

With the initial seeding of better understanding and empathy between family members, there is definite room to extend these conversations to be around people’s health and care needs in later life.

To stir up light-hearted conversations, it was essential to take inspiration from pre-existing sources like journals, greeting cards and other artefacts that people are familiar with and combine it with the some of the positive aspect of other communication tools like talking mats.
Final Design

Based upon observations and feedback from participants who tested the book, the final design has been significantly restructured.

It was understood that people felt the requirement to complete the book chronologically. In order to give people greater choice as to what topics to discuss, the book has been divided into four sections associated with a conversation theme. To make the book easier to navigate these sections have been colour-coded and divided with tabs.

Feedback also suggested that the quick fire question pages were very enjoyable and easy to do. The new structure has included a quick fire questions page in each section. The questions are now directly related to the conversation theme of that section.

Further development of this book will explore appropriate paper types and bindings and final decisions will also be based upon user observations and feedback.
What are the implications of this project?

The changes to the way in which health and social care services are being delivered means that we are currently in a state of flux. The government indicates a requirement to cut expenditure on services, and the services must respond by making adjustments to what they can provide. Additionally changes to legislation, such as the introduction of combined health and social care services, overseen by the Joint Improvement Team mean that the structure of services must adjust and address new ways of engaging with the people who use them.

Going forward, the Homeward Bound design team will investigate how My Life Book could be made relevant to organisations within the health, social care and third sector.

Initial research suggests that My Life Book, in a professional context, could be used as an evaluating tool, used to reveal the underlying needs and concerns of service users that may commonly be missed by other evaluation methods.

The Homeward Bound design team will be speaking to people who engage with service users, finding out whether the implementation of MLB would be more effective than existing tools that they already use. It is envisioned that this information will be gathered using primarily interviews, using the prototype as the basis of conversation. This will build on the existing research that has already been carried out in this area.

By working with professionals working in health and social care and the third sector, further development of My Life Book has the potential to assist the day to day working practices of professionals working in these sectors.
The goal of Homeward Bound 2.0 is to ascertain whether a new tool for communication could be incorporated into an existing organisation with their own objectives, methods and outcomes. It was important to find an organisation which works with a diverse range of clients and provides a user-centred service.

Shelter Scotland is one of the most prominent charitable organisations in the country. Its client base covers a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, seeking help with a variety of issues related to housing and other areas such as debt, welfare benefits and family support.

It was felt that Shelter Scotland was an appropriate organisation for the designer to work with for a number of reasons. Due to the broad range of clients that Shelter Scotland comes into contact with, it was an ideal way to test MLB’s potential to be applied across a variety of different client groups. This would be made easier by the number of distinct projects that operate within Shelter Scotland and the different clients that they work with.

Choosing a professional organisation

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It is clear that the work that Shelter Scotland carries out has had a positive effect on both an individual and societal level – in 2013 alone Shelter Scotland gave advice to 12,000 people (1).

Working with an organisation such as this presented an opportunity to ascertain whether MLB could bring value to the individual service user. Working with a nationally renowned organisation such as Shelter Scotland meant that MLB could gain the professional insight that is required to turn it into a useful, working tool which brings value to both the service user and the organisation itself.
An overview of Shelter Scotland

Shelter Scotland is a charitable organisation whose key aim is to “alleviate the distress caused by homelessness and bad housing” (2). In order to achieve this, Shelter Scotland takes a wide range of approaches. In addition to their core Housing advice provision, they also provide a diverse range of services such as money and debt advice, family support, legal representation and advocacy. The provision of advice and support services is supplemented by the organisation’s campaigns and policy arm, which aims to influence and inform policy makers, the media and the general public regarding areas related to housing and homelessness.

Shelter Scotland has highlighted the fact that the country is currently facing a housing crisis. They have published figures showing that, as of March 31 2013, there were 184,487 households on local authority housing lists across Scotland. Meanwhile, only 974 new dwellings were built by local authorities in the financial year 2013/14. This means that Scottish local authorities were only able to build enough new housing to accommodate approximately 0.5% of those households on the waiting lists for housing.

The lack of social housing has been exacerbated by the Right to Buy legislation that has resulted in 69,000 local authority and housing association properties being lost in the last decade alone (3). In order to tackle these issues, Shelter Scotland has a substantial physical presence across the country. This includes four “Community Hubs” in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh. Each hub contains a diverse range of projects and services. The Dundee Hub, for example, contains the following services in addition to providing more general housing advice:

- The Tayside Housing Law and Money/Debt Advice Project
- Advice Plus
- Supporting Prisoners Advice Network (SPAN)
- Safe and Sound

When it came to developing MLB in a professional context, the decision was made to work with Safe and Sound and SPAN for a number of reasons. Despite falling under the Shelter roof, both projects fulfil very niche functions and have an especially well-defined client group which the other projects described do not young people in the case of Safe and Sound and prisoners in the case of SPAN. Choosing two very distinct projects within the same organisation provided the opportunity to test the flexibility and robustness of MLB when used as a professional tool.
The Safe and Sound Project was started in 2012 as a partnership between Shelter Scotland and Relationship Scotland. It focuses on young people who are facing housing instability, family relationship breakdown, and other problems that stem from this. The project aims to:

- Prevent the negative impacts of unsettled family life that lead to youth homelessness
- Offer young people a safe route back home, where appropriate
- Support young people who need to move away, in setting up and maintaining tenancies
- Offer support to younger siblings in the family group, to build resilience and coping skills to lessen the chances of them becoming homeless in the future
- Through family mediation, help to improve communications and skills in conflict resolution within the family environment

Despite being active for only 2 years, Safe and Sound has garnered a great deal of praise and positive feedback. In 2013 the project won a Scottish Social Services Council Care Accolade Award (4) and this year it received a positive evaluation from the Centre for Research on Families and Relationship (CRFR), which stated in its conclusion:

Achieving these outcomes can involve a variety of approaches. At one end of the scale is more practical assistance such as housing advice, help with benefits, and financial education. At the other end is deeper support centred around issues such as self-esteem, anger management and family relationships.

Safe and Sound have a number of Support Workers who carry out these broad range of duties when working with clients. The nature of the role and the project’s client group means that the Support Worker must take a holistic approach when working with a client and look at any underlying factors and not just the presenting issues.

Shelter Scotland provides the support and advice element of the project while Relationship Scotland provide the family mediation. The amount of support or mediation required varies on a case-by-case basis but, according to Service Manager and project lead, Richard McGilvray, Safe and Sound will work with a client for an average of 6 months.

Why Safe and Sound?

While it is clear that Safe and Sound has built up a very strong reputation during its short existence it is believed that Homeward Bound 2.0 can bring additional significance to the service and help the project provide an even better facility to its clients. This is supported by the CRFR report which, in its recommendations, suggests that:

Could be found to record the added value of the project that can occur in seemingly minor or less formal interactions and do not always fit current monitoring systems. Seeing the initial assessment process as a part of the service – the offering of advice and discussion of options – could become and explicit part of the project.3

Furthermore a service design approach can assist in realising one of the project’s outcomes. Indicator (f) of outcome two looks for the service to:

Establish a group consisting of young service users and ex-service users who will meet regularly for the dual purpose of providing mutual peer support and informing the project of their views on the design and delivery of services and policies for young people at risk of homelessness

These considerations, along with the nature of the project in general and the age range of its clients, made it an obvious choice to work with when it came to exploring the potential applications of MLB in a professional setting.
The Supporting Prisoners Advice Network (SPAN) was launched in 2013 in response to some of the housing related challenges facing ex-offenders that were identified by Shelter Scotland. These included a shortage of social housing, problems with affordability and the perception that ex-offenders are risky or undesirable tenants. SPAN is a partnership between Shelter Scotland, SACRO (formerly known as Safeguarding Communities – Reducing Offending) and Inverness Citizens Advice Bureau.

Shelter Scotland has been involved in successful prison advice projects in the past, and the charity’s Director, Graham Brown, has emphasised the benefits to the wider society of providing prisoners with sound housing advice and support, pointing to the fact that: “Keeping people out of prison has not only social benefits but also economic benefits – reducing the burden on the public purse by £44,447 per prisoner, per year.” This is highlighted by figures released by Shelter Scotland indicating that 74 per cent of ex-prisoners who have difficulties with housing and employment re-offend within a year of release, compared with 43 per cent of those without such problems.

Through this, SPAN hopes to achieve three broader, overarching goals for their clients:

- Preventing homelessness
- Successful life transition
- Creating better life chances

In order to achieve these goals, the project is made up of two distinct components. Initially, a Housing Adviser with Shelter Scotland or Inverness CAB will provide housing advice through face to face visits in prison prior to release and following the client’s release. This advice covers such areas as homelessness, rent arrears, Housing Benefit, housing applications, and keeping a tenancy.

The Housing Adviser will assess whether they feel that the client would require additional support on release from prison and, if so, will make a referral to a SACRO support worker. The support worker will then provide through care support to assist the client in their transition back into the community, and link up with other specialist support agencies as appropriate.

Like Safe and Sound, SPAN is also Big Lottery funded, and has three outcomes listed in its funding agreement:

- Offenders and their families will be enabled to find and keep appropriate housing
- Ex-offenders have improved confidence and skills to address their wider support needs, leading to better life chances
- Increased local capacity of Prison Officers and Local Authorities to provide basic housing advice and increased awareness of housing issues faced by offenders and their families

On the face of it, the SPAN outcomes seem more straightforward when compared to the Safe and Sound outcomes. However, within the first two outcomes there is a lot to address when working with the client for both the Housing Adviser and the Support Worker.

Why SPAN?

Prisoners and ex-offenders may initially not seem like the most obvious choice for a tool such as My Life Book, but this means that working with SPAN would provide a good test for the tool and how it can be applied to a broad range of client groups. Furthermore, it compliments Outcome Two of the SPAN’s funding agreement and could help the project in this area. Service Manager and project lead, Michelle Harrow, has also stated that she would like the family element of SPAN to be expanded in the future, so this would open up other possible applications for the tool going forward.
Service Design Methodologies

In order to gain insights into the Safe and Sound and SPAN projects, it was necessary to form a deeper understanding of what the projects do, who they engage with and how they interact with the clients. This section will look at how a service design approach was used to gain such insights, and how these insights were used to formulate recommendations for the integration of MLB as a tool within the projects.

The following section will begin by highlighting the methods used and the reason for their use. From there, insights derived from the methods will be outlined and discussed.
Semi-structured interviews

The first priority was to learn, first-hand, about the work of projects. This was done by carrying out separate semi-structured interviews with the Service Managers of each project: Richard McGilvray of Safe and Sound and Michelle Harrow of SPAN. The format of a semi-structured interview allowed each Service Manager to introduce their project and for the designer to introduce MLB to them.

A semi-structured interview involves a mix of closed and open questions. This format was chosen as it allows the interviewee to tell their story of the project while the interviewer can employ probes and prompts to guide the interview along in a non-biased way (9).

Using this method had largely positive results. It allowed insight to be gained into the similarities of the projects, it also served to highlight important differences in the service delivery.

At the end of the interviews, Richard and Michelle were both given a copy of MLB in order to provide feedback. Both parties were asked to give their feedback regarding the content of MLB and how feasible the introduction of a new tool within their service would be. Richard provided Safe and Sound’s feedback and Michelle asked one of her Housing Advisers to provide SPAN’s. This feedback was then able to inform further insights.
After collating the information from the initial interviews and the written feedback provided in relation to the content and feasibility of MLB, it was important to gain a greater understanding of each project’s service users. Both projects were asked to take part in a joint workshop to explore the service that they provide. Richard McGilvray and Project Worker Terri Watson attended for Safe and Sound and Michelle Harrow attended for SPAN.

Using a workshop format has a number of advantages. It is useful for collecting multiple viewpoints, for highlighting areas of consensus or conflict, and for encouraging different groups of people to work together (10). It would have been useful to have a greater number of participants, however this was not possible due to staffing commitments and the fact that research took place during the summer holiday period. Even with the small number of participants, the workshop was still very fruitful. It resulted in some cross-pollination of ideas between the two projects and also highlighted the differences in the what provision Shelter provides for each project. Shelter provides the support worker element of Safe and Sound, yet SPAN provides the Housing Adviser element of SPAN. This results in different views regarding the application of MLB and the way in which each project engages with their clients. During the workshop, the designer asked the participants to complete a number of exercises in order to gain further insight into their projects.
### Personas

The first exercise that the participants were asked to carry out was to create personas based around their service users. Personas are a fictional profile with which the client and the designer can engage. The aim is to allow the designer to look past the demographic data and outcome agreements in order to get an idea of the real person and their service needs (11).

Asking the participants of the workshop to create personas based on their service users was important as it gave the designer a picture of who was using each service and how this could feed into recommendations for MLB. The Safe and Sound participants commented that it was difficult to create a persona due to the wide range of backgrounds that their clients come from. This information itself was useful, as it reinforces the need for a holistic assessment tool such as MLB which is neutral and can be used with clients of all backgrounds.

### Empathy Maps

The participants were then asked to complete an empathy map for the personas that they had created. The purpose of an empathy map is to build a deeper, more detailed picture of the service user’s thoughts. While a persona is about building an idea of a person, the empathy map helps the designer to understand how that person feels and thinks (12).

This is important in order to try to understand the service user fully and understand the challenges that they face. It also helps the professionals to step into their clients’ shoes and, through being able to better empathise with them, understanding what parts of their service may help or hinder the client’s progress. This allows for better informed recommendations to be made for MLB and the two projects.
The final exercise was for the workshop participants to create a service blueprint for their projects. A service blueprint is a map of how the service works, in the context of the user and the service's functions. It consists of:

- The user journey: how the service user will progress through the service, phase by phase, from beginning to end.
- The touch points: how the service user contacts, utilises and engages with the service throughout their journey as a service user.
- The backstage processes: what actions the professional carries out at each stage of the service user's journey and what other agencies or departments maybe involved in this (13).

The service blueprints are useful in order to analyse the two Shelter projects. When looked at in conjunction with the personas and empathy maps, it allowed the designer to gain an understanding of:

- The type of person who is using the service.
- How that person may be feeling when they are using the service.
- The journey that they go through when using the service.
- How the service carries out its role at each stage of the client journey.

Taken together, using these service design tools provided valuable insight and data regarding the projects and their service users. This can then be used to adapt MLB for the individual needs of Safe and Sound and SPAN, and for the wider needs of Shelter and other agencies. At the same time, it helped the participants of the workshop reflect on the processes that they go through as professionals and on the service users that they work with on a daily basis.
1. Referals are by a 3rd party

Interaction with the service predominantly comes from a third party and is generally not from self-referral.

2. Young people can lack assertiveness

Support workers often need to speak-up for the needs or wants of their clients.

3. A two-stage assessment

The initial client meeting takes place over two sessions, with an assessment form for each session. These sessions try to gain insight into the history of the client before they entered the service.
4. Professional partners do not share information.

While Shelter and Relationship Scotland are partners in the Safe & Sound project they do not share information regarding a client, unless they are at risk of harm.

5. Clients rarely have only a housing issue.

Through the conversations which support workers and clients have they look deeper than simply the housing needs.

6. Male clients take longer to open-up.

The project deals with a ratio 2 female for each male client, however the male clients are less forthcoming in the issues they are experiencing.

7. Repeat runaways.

Those referrals that come via Police Scotland are predominantly repeat runaways.

8. Unnecessary data collection.

Concern expressed that going through the steps to gain holistic insight may be unnecessary for the service.

9. Trust is vital.

Many clients feel that they are being 'messed around' by the system and don't want to engage with the support worker.
1. **Referrals are by a 3rd party**

As referrals come mainly from a third party, it would be prudent for the service to undertake an initial assessment which is more holistic in nature, incorporating more generalised questions to establish need at an earlier stage. MLB could facilitate this by having additional sub-sections, which are specific to project needs, and incorporate a concise series of questions that would indicate areas of need for future conversations.

2. **Young people can lack assertiveness**

The client group for Safe & Sound can be confronted with complex information from housing officers, which given their age and likely experience of housing matters means that the support worker is vital in securing the best outcome for them. In doing this the support worker relies on information gathered throughout conversations with the client, and MLB can assist in this way by underlining what matters most to the young person. This information would come from a guided section of MLB which examines home life and locality.

3. **A two-stage assessment**

A Safe & Sound support worker currently meets with a client on two occasions to establish their initial assessment. The first is to gather basic personal information and their situation in general. The second meeting is to go deeper into the client needs. By using MLB as a boundary object to direct the conversation it could be possible to condense the questions covered in these meetings into a single session, and thereby make the process more efficient for the support worker and more engaging for the client.
Shelter Scotland and Relationship Scotland do not share specific information regarding their clients. This has an impact in that either party may hold valuable information regarding their clients’ needs, which unless there is a risk of harm to a specific person, will remain with that side of the project. A way for the service user to circumvent this would be to use a further new section of MLB, which is co-designed with both Safe & Sound and Relationship Scotland with agreed content. While the client is using mediation services provided by Relationship Scotland, they can reflect directly into the section of MLB and use this to facilitate relevant conversation with Safe & Sound staff. This would provide a fuller insight into the life of the client & allow for fuller analysis of their situation by the support worker.

Clients rarely have only a housing issue. The service already functions effectively enough to gain some insight into their client needs and much like point 1, an additional section to examine additional needs to the fullest would bring more value to the service.

Male clients take longer to open-up. The observation that male clients take longer to open up than female is something which may be inherently gender related, however by using MLB it is projected that this would stimulate a conversation pathway to facilitate better communication. This could result in more emotionally driven needs being observed in males clients and as such the support worker can function more effectively to assist them.

Repeat runaways. MLB would be an especially useful tool for those clients who are referred by Police Scotland. These clients have been identified by Shelter Scotland as repeated runaways and as such it could be that there are underlying issues within this cross-section with whom further work would be required to get to the root cause of their actions. This reinforces the idea that further holistic analysis of needs may be required within the project and that MLB could be a tool to facilitate this.

An apprehension raised was that using a tool like MLB would result in copious amounts of data which may not be useful. However it was conceded that clients often do not think to speak about what really matters to them, as they are more concerned with immediate issues such as housing benefits. This could be counteracted by having an ‘About me now’ page. This would function as a conclusion and summary to the section within which the client was working, providing them with subtle, but relevant questions to be answered for their support worker. This page is then copied by the support worker and used to formulate case notes for the client. This would bring a concise method of record keeping and relevance.

Trust is vital. It was noted that many young people feel disenfranchised by the support systems that exist, having different support workers based on holidays, or caseloads, or services. Should the summary section from point 8 be implemented, then a support worker will have an overall insight into the client in their own words. This would lend itself to showing that a service can maintain the importance of the individual, even when their regular support worker cannot see them.
The aim of Homeward Bound 2.0 was to determine if MLB could be utilised in a professional context and whether it would bring value to both the service and the client. Through engaging with Shelter Scotland, the design team was able to gain a great deal of useful feedback that helps to point the way forward for the Homeward Bound project. This feedback, and the insights drawn from it, support the design team’s original position that MLB can be a successful and valuable tool within a professional setting.

The main focus of both Safe and Sound and SPAN is the needs of their clients. The insights and positive feedback gained from working with the two projects emphasise the benefits that MLB can bring to their clients. Through working with the tool, the client will have a greater degree of self-awareness. MLB will help to highlight both the positive and negative facets of their life which, in conjunction with the service, will be a positive action that will assist in them confronting any underlying issues.

The value that MLB brings to the service is clear. It provides the opportunity to gain deeper insights into the client’s life and needs. This will, in turn, provide a far broader picture of the client which will allow for an even more effective support plan to be drawn up. This may result in a greater sense of job satisfaction for the professional if they are able to address more of the underlying issues facing their clients.

Using MLB in the long run will also provide the service with valuable insight into their client base that may be difficult to gain using other assessment tools. This information, gained using quantitative analysis of the data gained using MLB, would mean that the service would be able to target certain user groups more effectively. It would also be of assistance when applying for funding for future projects, as the service will be able to demonstrate that they are using MLB to gain insights that could have broader societal benefits in the long run.

In order to be successfully implemented, both the tool and the service need to be open to adaptation and change. Any necessary adaptations would be carried out in conjunction with the Homeward Bound design team using a service design approach. Due to the time scale involved in Homeward Bound 2.0, some recommendations could not be observed and therefore would require testing. Therefore, further engagement with Shelter Scotland and other organisations is vital in order to ensure that MLB is a robust, flexible and useful tool that brings value to both the client and the service itself.

There is still more work to be carried out before MLB is the finished project. However, based on the feedback from Safe and Sound and SPAN, the outlook is positive and there is a clear way forward for the project. It is the intention of the Homeward Bound design team to continue to engage with Shelter Scotland and other organisations with the aim of establishing MLB as a widely used professional tool that brings benefits to services, clients and wider society.


How an organisation could introduce a new communication tool to improve service delivery.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the content, methodology or concepts of Homeward Bound 2.0 please feel free to contact me directly by email: rdlangton@gmail.com

Endnotes


(2) ‘Who we are’, Shelter Scotland website. Available at: http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/about_us/who_we_are

(3) National Housing Statistics, Shelter Scotland website. Available at: http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/housing_policy/key_statistics/the_facts_about_scottlands_housing

(4) Winners and Finalists 2013, SSSC Care Accolades website. Available at: http://www.sssccareaccolades.uk.com/?page_id=907


