

# TMA 07 / 2010

T306 Managing  
complexity – a systems  
approach

Steve Dabson,

“A review of the project team arrangements for the implementation of personalised social care in a town in England”

**Statement of attributable work**

I certify that the work contained in this project is mine, and where applicable, references to other sources of information have been acknowledged.

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## 1) TUTOR REPORT

### a) Abstract

A project team was set-up in 2007 at XXX Council, charged with implementing 'personalised' social care services in the local area as a result of the previous government's agenda to offer service users more choice and control in achieving outcome-focused care to meet their specific needs.

Since joining the project team as a Project Accountant, I have noticed a number of themes that, when taken as a whole situation constituted a 'mess' and therefore, in consultation with the Interim Head of Personalisation, decided to make this the subject of my T306 project.

In carrying out this project work, I used the Viplan Viable System Model (VSM) as a diagnostic tool to focus on the project team's resources and relationships, to test its medium-term viability. OK

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My study found that the project team, while fundamentally sound in understanding its objectives needed for implementation, showed weaknesses in terms of work-stream activity cohesion, causing bottlenecks and a disproportionate allocation of work.

The report concludes by drawing together the whole analysis, recommending certain ameliorative actions and organisation learning that could feasibly be taken forward.

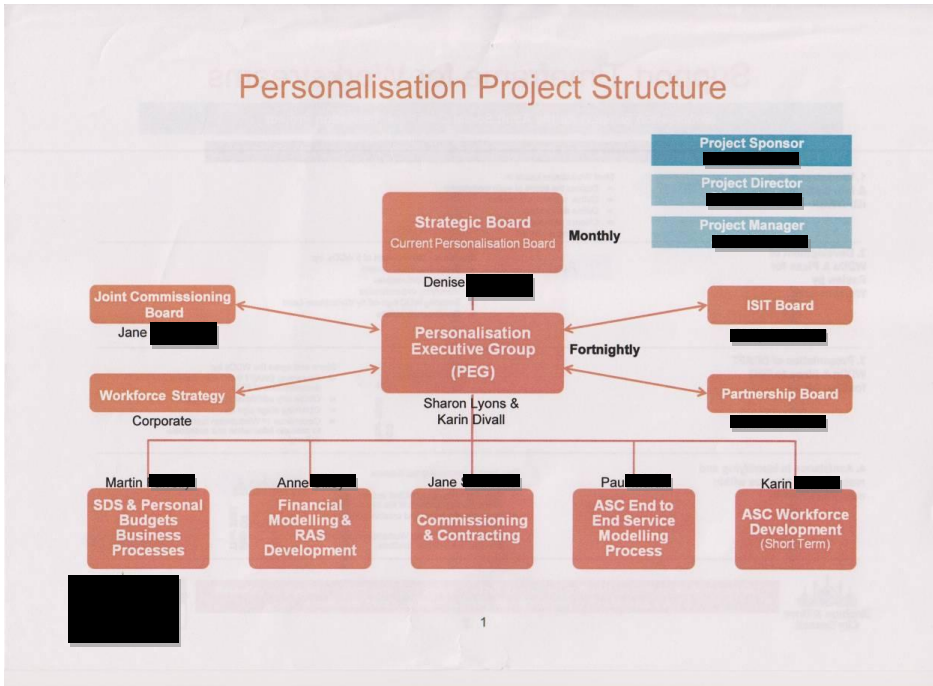
## b) The situation of interest

### i. Background

XXX Council, along with other local authority adults' social care services has been given the task of changing the way in which these services are provided which aligns with the previous government's 'Putting People First' agenda (*Department of Health, 2007*) to promote 'personalised' social care. A project team was set up in 2007 to implement this transformation, an organisation chart for which is shown in figure 1 depicting the five 'work-streams' whose purpose is to implement the project's planned activities; these are overseen by the project's management team – Personalisation Executive Group (PEG). **OK**

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Figure 1: Project team Organisation chart Noted



(Courtesy of XXX Council)

ii. Description of the problem situation

The project team has to implement personalised social care services in \*\*\*\*\* that offer choice and control over people’s lives that involves dealing with many stakeholders, but also with an unquantifiable budget crisis leading to conflicts of interest.

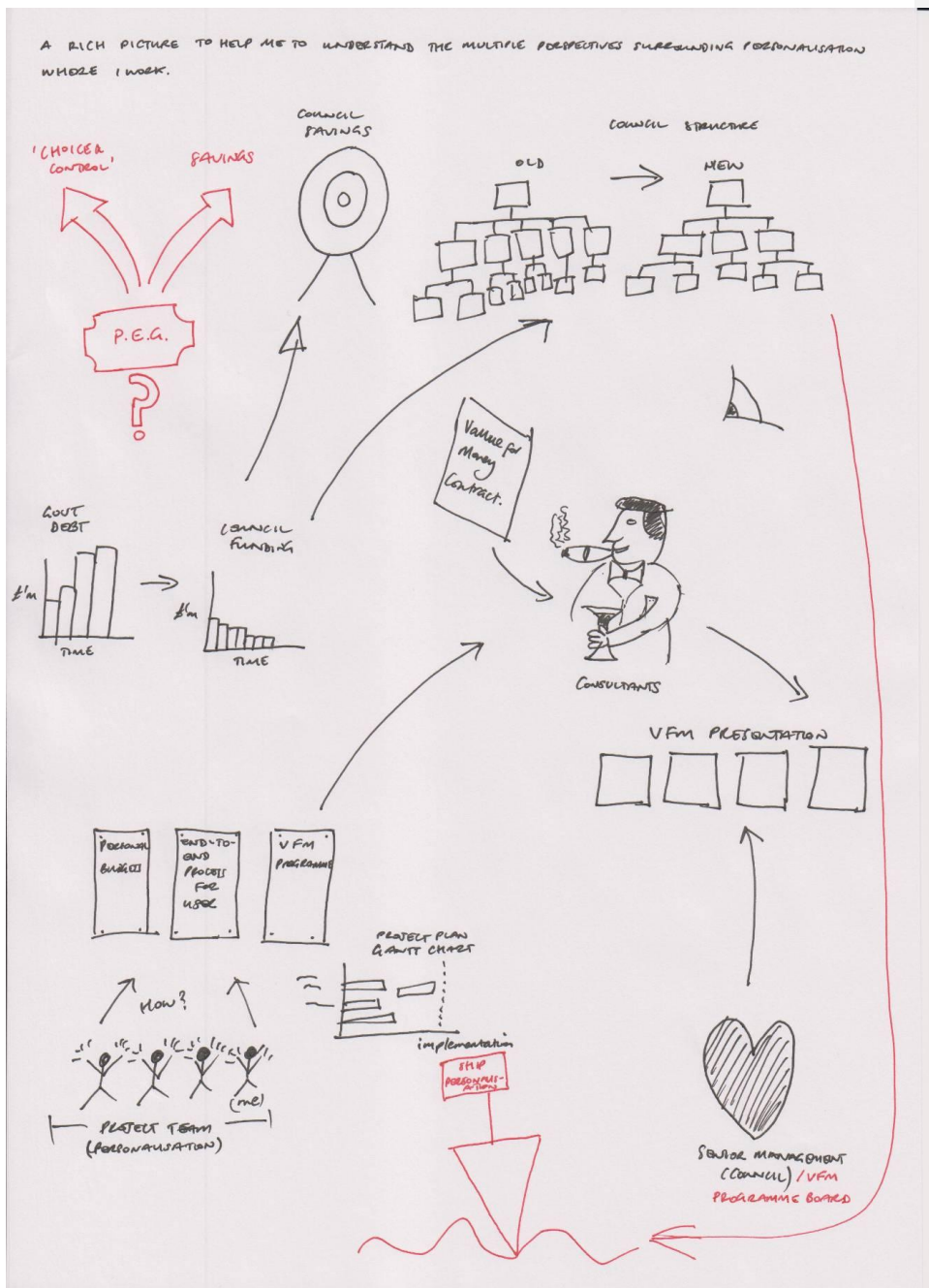
There are also divergent perceptions of the project’s progress: management think all is well, whereas others’ views don’t correlate; symptomatic of communication problems. A council-wide restructure is also causing uncertainty among social care staff, providing a sense of ‘listlessness’ that some fellow project workers have mentioned.



I have iterated a previous version of a rich picture (figure 2) to summarise in an unstructured way, the 'messy' situation I have perceived, against which I intend to test the project team's ongoing viability. OK

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Figure 2: Rich picture of the situation

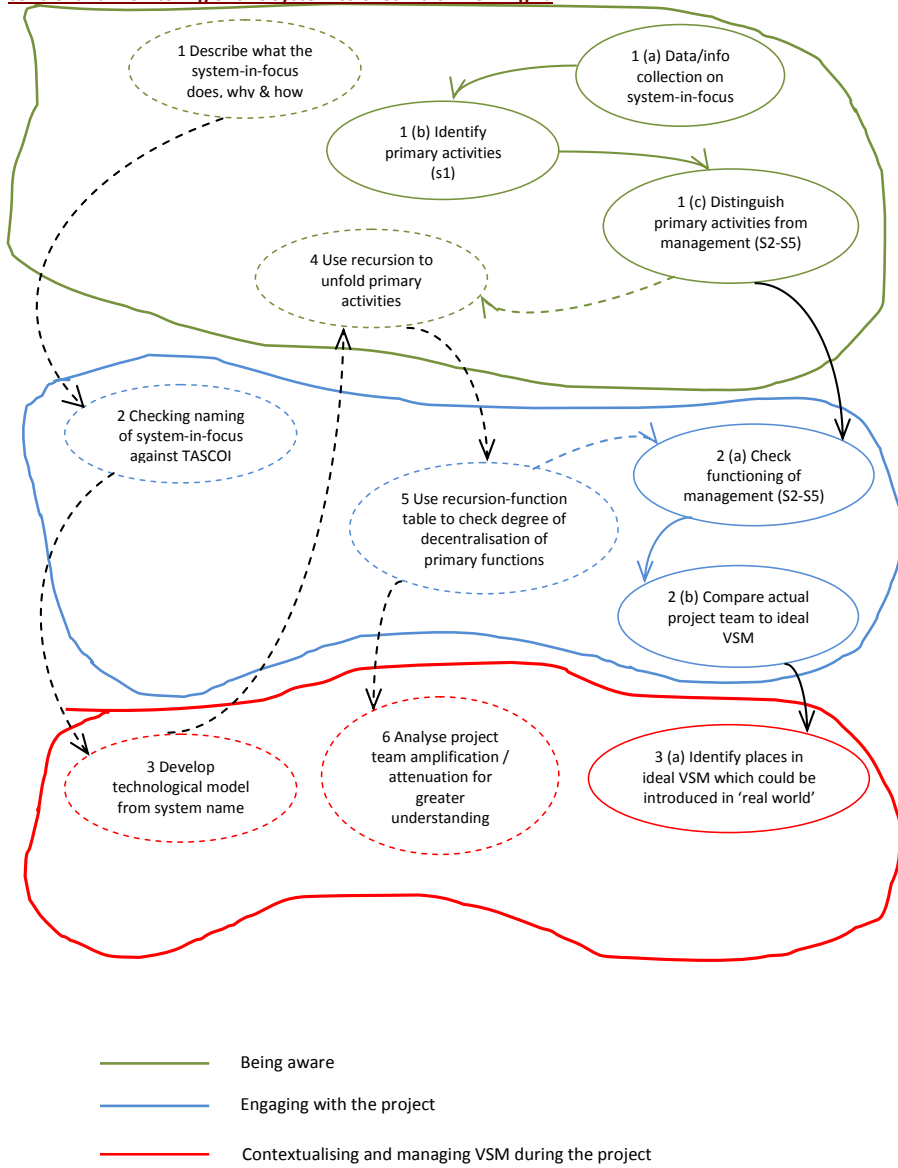


iii. Methodological approach

From my perspective, I'm unsure of the effectiveness of the project management, its decision-making processes and ability to work synergistically, and therefore its viability in achieving the project's aims and timescales.

Figure 3: An activity sequence diagram to represent the stages in the VSM approach I intend to take for my project OK, though what of the level "above" this (it as part of a learning system) and the control and monitoring of this system to check it is "working" ?

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In reflecting on the influences that led me to choosing the VSM approach, I have sought to answer a number of diagnostic questions<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 1: Diagnostic questions for choosing systems approach**

| Question   | Response  |
|--|---|
| <b>What is the situation I face?</b>                               | I'd like to understand how best the organisation for which I work (BHCC) <sup>2</sup> can implement the personalisation of social care government agenda for its service users      |
| <b>How is the problem expressed?</b>                               | In terms of the system-in-focus (project team) and a recursive level up (council) and down from the system-in-focus (individual work-streams)                                       |
| <b>What sort of problem is it?</b>                                 | There appears to be an organisational problem where a lack of communication between work-streams within the project in trying to implement the changes seems to be creating tension |
| <b>What does it offer relative to the strengths of the method?</b> | "It can provide an efficacious organisational structure for doing it well" <sup>3</sup>   |
| <b>What does the method offer to the situation?</b>                | A means of making sure that any changes suggested ensure that the project team has requisite variety in its dealings with its environment   |

My 'first pass' through the systemic analytical process from TMA06 used the basic Viable System Model (VSM), as represented by the solid ellipses and arrows in figure 3, to diagnose the project team's viability; however, following tutor feedback, I have decided to 'drill down' in my next iteration by using the Viplan VSM to gain further insights into my chosen system-of-interest (dotted ellipses and arrows). The diagram above also maps the VSM approach onto the BECM cycle (Open University, 2004) to show the stages of my understanding as I progress through the project. OK

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<sup>1</sup> T306 Project Guide, p27

<sup>2</sup> XXX Council

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Block 3, p94

Having used the basic VSM to extract themes around communication problems, I now intend to use the Viplan VSM (mode I) to focus on the resources and relationships necessary in supporting the project team’s viability, to find further synergies within the project to enhance its viability in the medium term. And, modelling the Viplan VSM onto the BECM cycle also provides a chance for *reflection-in-practice* that will provide me with a systemic way of reporting each stage of the process and to even conflate system approaches: I’ve used the rich picture in figure 2 (soft systems approach) as the starting point of my analysis in becoming aware of the situation I perceive. OK

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### c) Ethicality statement

My ethicality statement (table 2) incorporates the values for which I hope will bring about an inclusive interaction between me as the practitioner and fellow project-workers. And in so-doing, provide a collaborative platform from which I can help them to decide for themselves about the future direction of the project.

Table 2: Ethicality statement Noted

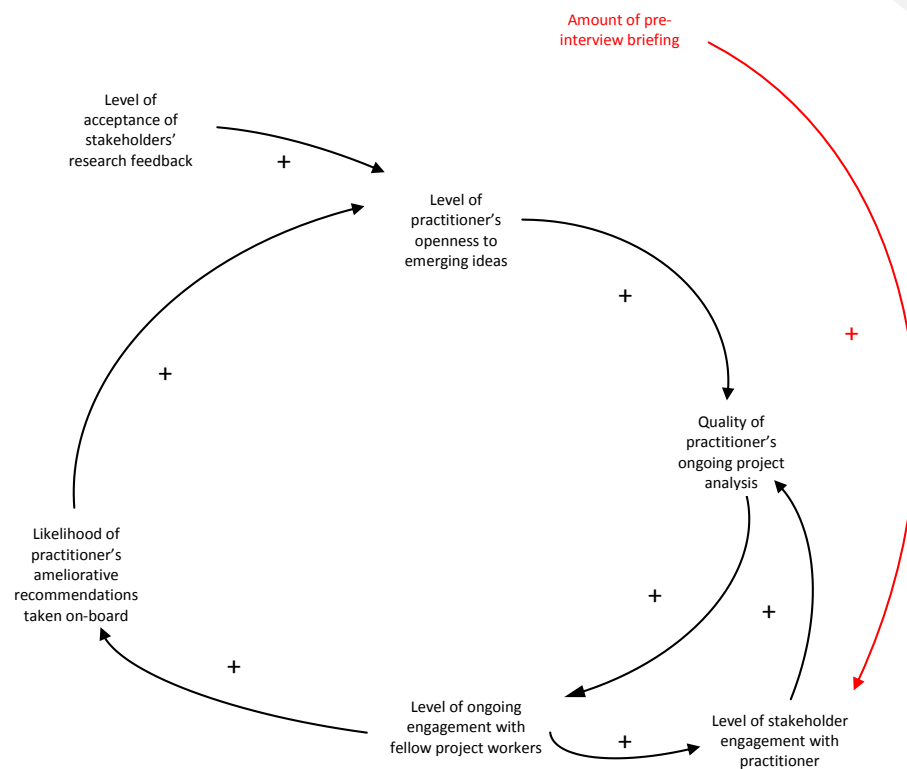
| Statement description |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1.                    | The perspectives of all people interviewed as part of my research will be held by me to be of equal value, regardless of the person’s status within the organization.  |
| 2.                    | All perspectives collected, regardless of their origin or nature will be used as part of my project so that the broadest possible picture may be built up to inform my ongoing investigation.  |
| 3.                    | In order to inform my own systems practice throughout the project lifecycle, I will ask for feedback in the way in which I have engaged with stakeholders, such that they feel that their views have been received, and made use of (if wanted), in the final analysis.  |
| 4.                    | Any such feedback will be treated by me as an opportunity to improve the quality of my systems practice and therefore the ongoing research.  |
| 5.                    | Research material will be sourced through the project team’s own documentation and via an interview process. As such, and with whatever research method used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Permission to use documents or interview stakeholders will be sought beforehand;</li> <li>→ Information gathered will be used in such a way as to retain anonymity where requested;</li> <li>→ Participants will be free to withdraw from an interview, or have their views removed from the research material at any time</li> </ul> |
| 6.                    | The research will make use of best practice in the field of systems practice in order to help stakeholders to understand the perceived situation.  |

**Statement description**

7. The results of my research will be made available to all stakeholders should they so wish for which comments and/or observations will be welcomed.

With reference to point 7 above, the sign graph below provides insights into the systemic implications from use of this practice by looking at the relationships between variables in this scenario, and to likely effects of changes therein.

**Figure 4: Sign graph of providing research results**



Thus, in welcoming stakeholders' feedback, a *positive feedback loop* could ensue from being open to others' ideas, further enhancing my engagement with the

project as it proceeds. Pre-interview briefing can provide a *feed-forward*\* (Wikipedia) variety enhancement which could help stakeholders to be amenable to working in tandem with me on mine - and the wider – project. Ultimately, this can provide a template for my future engagement with stakeholders in situations-of-interest as they arise and for ongoing analyses. \* This type of feedback (sic) can be represented on a control model if you are interested!

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#### d) Stakeholder analysis

Table 1 contextualises an overview stakeholder analysis in order to inform whose views could be considered as part of the project. A fuller analysis is contained in appendix 1, which covers a range of worldviews from those with responsibility in the situation (PEG), to those who will participate in terms of achieving the personalisation project’s aims (project work-streams), and those on its receiving end – social care users.

**Table 3: Stakeholder analysis**

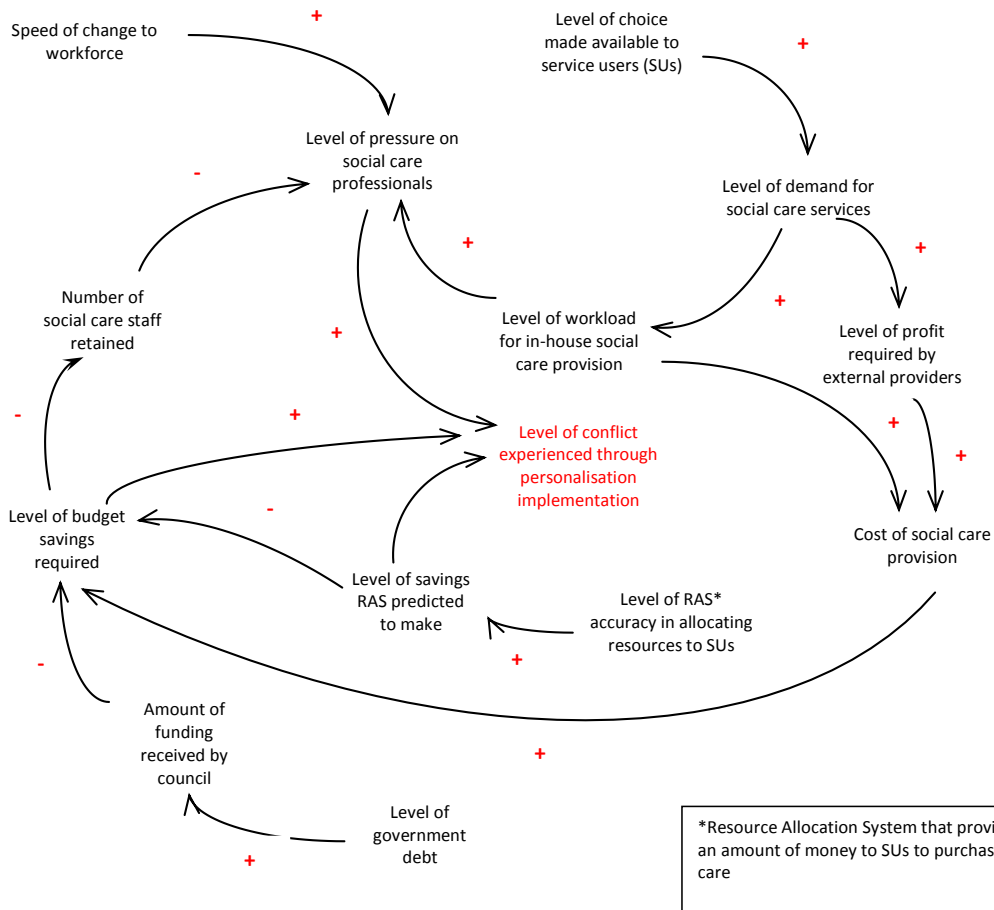
|             | Unlikely to affect   | Likely to affect   |
|-------------|--|--|
| High impact | <b>Social care frontline staff</b> – will want to be sure that structural changes to staffing will not affect them | <b>PEG</b> – management implementation of personalisation and make savings;<br><b>VfM programme Board</b> – requiring PEG to make significant savings;<br><b>Various project team work stream groups</b> – the project’s success will be down to the project’s operational units |
| Low impact  | <b>Service users / interest groups</b> – changes in social care provision should provide benefits                  | <b>Externalised social care provider organisations</b> – will want to make sure that changes to services they provide will mean their business are viable  |

To help me identify where possible ethical conflicts might arise from the different stakeholders' perspectives, I've drawn a sign graph which can help to think about the likely side-effects of changes that personalisation could promote in a project context and to possible interventions. Good

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Figure 5: A sign graph to show how differing stakeholders' worldviews might lead to conflict in the implementation of the personalisation in \*\*\*\*\* Good

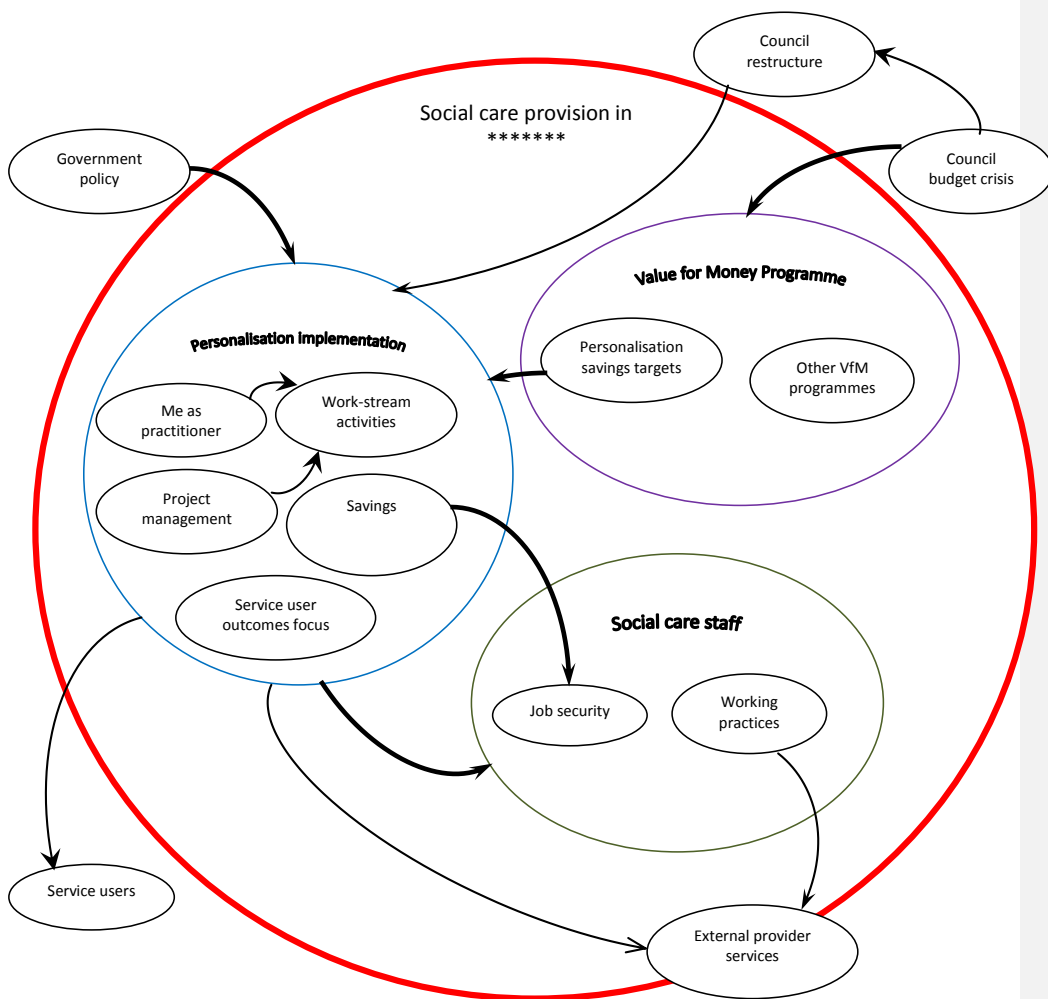
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In order to explore the ethical implications of the different stakeholders' perspectives, I have drawn an influence diagram to represent the main structural interrelationships within the system-of-interest. OK

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Figure 6: Influence diagram of the factors influencing the implementation of personalisation in \*\*\*\*\*





The diagram shows how the influence of the value for money programme has a big impact on personalisation implementation, which simultaneously, has to provide service user outcome-based social care which will cost more money. Also, as a systems practitioner within the system-of-interest, I have to be wary to not fall into the *trap* of influencing work-streams' activities in such a way as to satisfy any personal needs in applying my analysis to the project team, i.e. to put forward interventions that I would like to see from my own perspective. Further analysis of these dilemmas, would entail changing the *boundary* of my system-of-interest, to investigate the issues. Good

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However, because my focus is on the project team's resources and relationships, I'm now going to use the Viplan VSM as a diagnostic tool to test its medium-term *viability*, starting with looking at the identity of the system-in-focus. OK

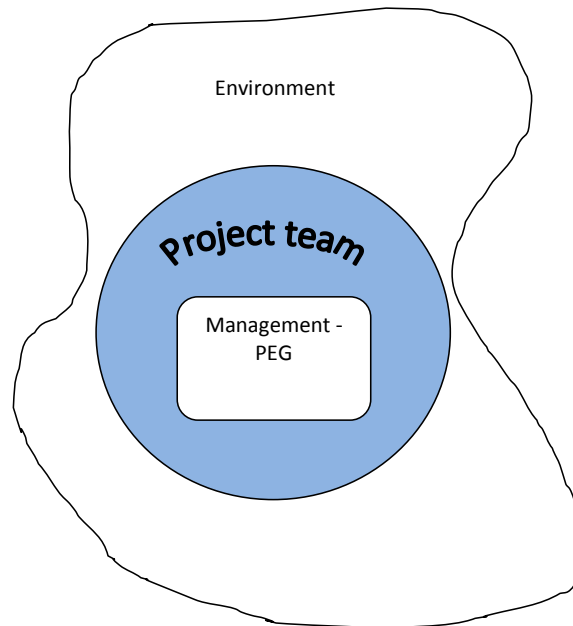
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## e) Viplan Viable System Model analysis

### i. Description of the System-in-focus

My system-in-focus is the council's Personalisation project team, and can be illustrated below as a recursive sub-system which has an environment and is run by PEG – its management.

**Figure 7: Embedding of the project team**



The system-in-focus's reason for existence is shown in relation to an *Identity Statement*, captured via interviews (see below) with fellow project workers which specifies "... what the project team does, who does it, who they do it for, and on whose behalf they do it ..." (Open University, 2001). This also acts as the sensing stage for me becoming systemically aware of the situation.

**Table 4: Interview questions with fellow project workers**

| Description of question   |
|---|
| 1. How would you describe what the project team does and why (in broad terms)?                                |
| 2. How is the complexity of its operations managed (management and frontline)?                                |
| 3. How does the project team adapt to changes in its circumstances (i.e. plan for the future)?                |
| 4. What communications channels are there within the project team?  |
| 5. Does your experience suggest bottlenecks are holding up the project team's progress in achieving its aims? |

The collective answers to question 1, gave me the parts from which to capture the Identity Statement (or 'system name') which is shown in table 5 below:

**Table 5: Identity Statement** OK

| Identity statement   |
|--|
| The Personalisation project team is an autonomous unit within XXX Council charged with implementing the previous UK government's 'Putting People First Agenda' by using its, and other organisations', expertise in order to provide outcome-focused local social care users with choice and control over their lives within a fixed budget, to an agreed timescale. |

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ii. **Check the Naming of the System against TASCOI mnemonic**

In order for me to engage with the complexity I perceive and to understand what the project team is trying to achieve, I've used the identity statement to express a means to do 'A' by way of 'B' in order to achieve 'C' and then checked it using the mnemonic TASCOI, below.

**Table 6: TASCOI analysis**

| TASCOI element        | Description  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Transformation</b> | Council-led social care provision to service user outcome-focused social care that offers choice and control in implementing the 'Putting People First' agenda |
| <b>Actors</b>         | XXX personalisation project team work-streams; Personalisation Executive Group (PEG); Strategic Board  |
| <b>Suppliers</b>      | Government agenda; shared expertise  |
| <b>Customers</b>      | Service users  |
| <b>Owners</b>         | PEG  |
| <b>Interveners</b>    | Government; PEG  |

I've then used the Identity Statement as the basis for linking the system-in-focus's reasons for doing what it does and why, to how the tasks that underpin the transformation are structured in the organisation. The development of a technological model will help me to identify the ideal structure for the project team in order for it to absorb and meet, the *Law of Requisite Variety* - "only variety can absorb variety" (Ashby, 1958). OK

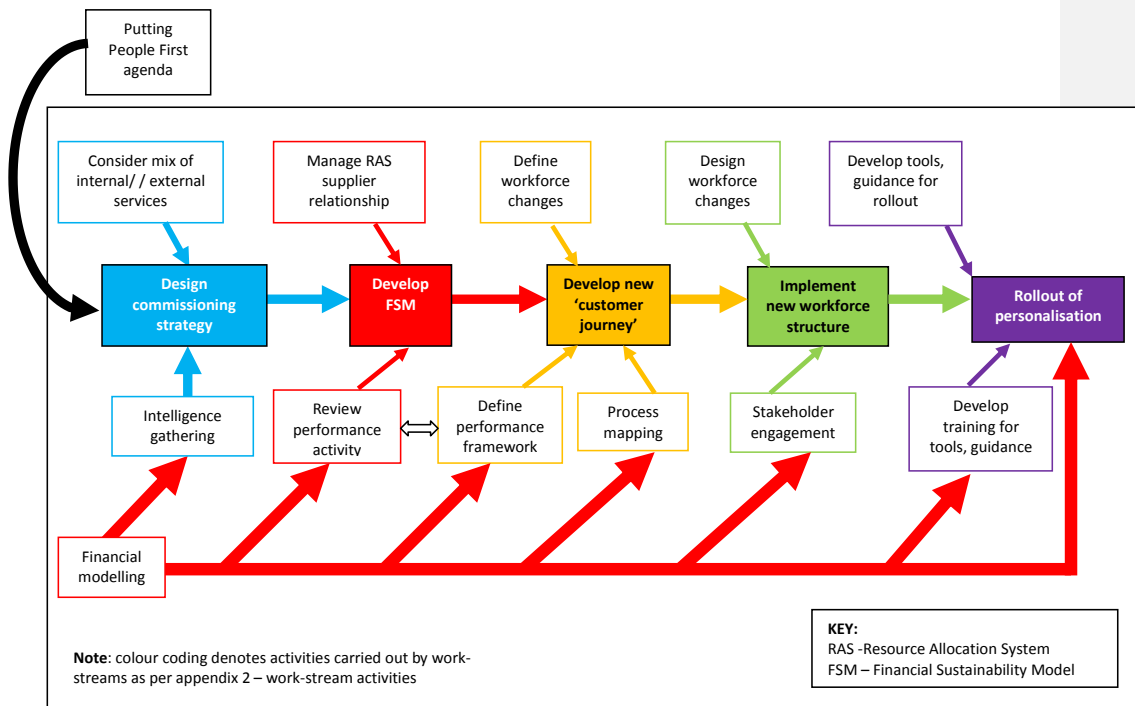
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### iii. Development of Technological Model

In order to create a technological model that will show how the personalisation agenda is transformed into *purposeful* action, as inferred in the [Identity Statement](#) above, I've used the detailed work-stream activities shown in table 7 to 'chunk' together the main strands of complexity faced by the project team.

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Figure 8: Technological model of personalisation transformation



The process of drawing the technological model was enlightening for me in that it showed the overlaps in some of the primary activities' tasks (financial modelling featuring throughout the transformation process) and to possible synergies between the work-streams.

This concludes my first circuit of the BECM cycle having become aware of what and how the system-in-focus does; engaged with its complexity in checking its Identity Statement, and contextualised and managed its complexity through developing a technological model of its transformational processes.

#### iv. Check for primary activities

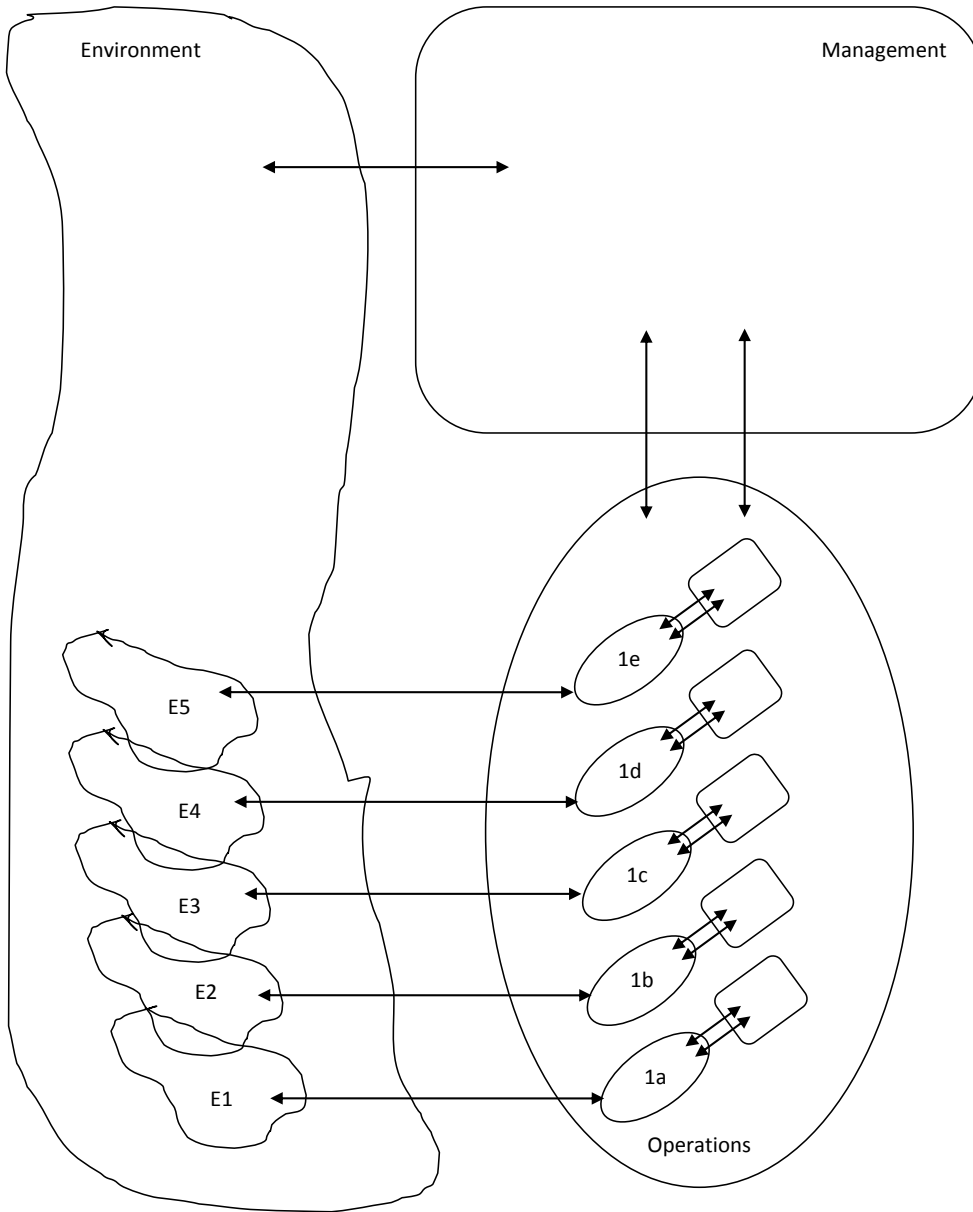
The high-level project deliverables noted in table 7 are the main tasks carried out by the project team work-streams, which are the system-in-focus's primary activities (operations – 'system 1').

Figure 9 shows System 1 (Operations) at two levels of recursion and indicates the five primary activities 1a to 1e and the variety each faces from its environment (E1 to E5), all of which is summarised in table 7. In order for the project team to be a viable system, it will have to match the variety it faces.

**Table 7: System 1 (Operations) primary activities and the variety faced**

| Primary Activity  | Environment variety  |
|---|--|
| <b>1a – Commissioning &amp; contracting</b>                                 | E1 - Other project work-streams; market engagement; regional forums; other local authorities |
| <b>1b – Financial modelling &amp; RAS development</b>                       | E2 - Other work-streams; IS/IT solutions; data quality; RAS model developers                 |
| <b>1c – End-to-end service modelling</b>                                    | E3 - Other work-streams; IS/IT solutions; data quality; RAS model developers; communications |
| <b>1d – Workforce development</b>   | E4 - Other work-streams; IS/IT solutions; communications                                     |
| <b>1e – Self-Directed Support &amp; personal budgets business processes</b> | E5 - Other project work-streams; Other council services                                      |

Figure 9: Viable System Model representation of System 1 at two levels of recursion



v. **Distinguish primary activities from management**

The ‘engine’ of the project team is its group of ‘work-streams’, and their high-level project objectives are referred to in appendix 2, which help to guide the implementation programme. Each of the work-streams has a work-stream lead (WSL), who reports to the project’s management team – Personalisation Executive Group (PEG). WSLs are accountable to PEG via a monthly monitoring meeting, at which performance against 12-week milestone targets are measured.

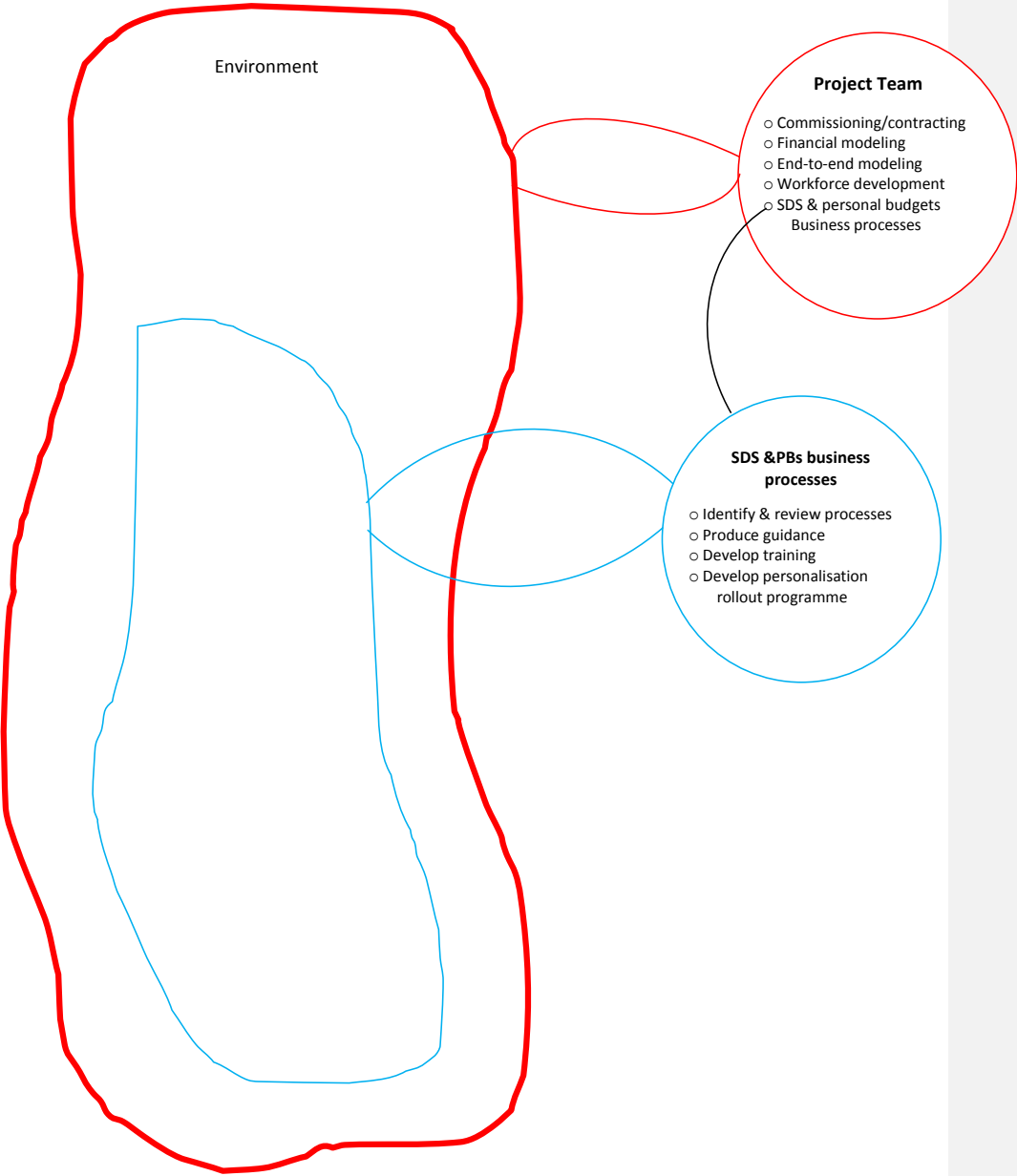
vi. **Unfolding of primary activities using recursion**

The structural model in figure 10 provides a way of identifying the mechanisms by which the transformation process is carried out and at which levels of recursion down to the point at which a team completes the work.

The amount of discretion, and therefore autonomy, for primary activities to implement the personalisation agenda depends on the degree to which it is held centrally: management (PEG) level, or devolved to the work-streams.

To check this out, I will re-engage with the situation’s complexity by using the recursion-function table analysis (table 8) to assess this distribution of discretion. [This table needs a little more explanation, along with how it “fits” with the other tables and diagrams below](#)

Figure 10: Unfolding complexity in implementing personalised social services





vii. Check the degree to which primary activities are devolved

**Table 8: Recursion-function table (personalisation project team) Where does the list of the regulatory functions originate?**

| Regulatory Function                                  |   | Recursion            |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|--|---|----------------------|-----------------|----------|-------|------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
|  |   | Financial monitoring | Human Resources | Training | Legal | Administration support | Procurement | Performance & development |
| <b>PROJECT TEAM</b>                                  |   | X                    | X               | X        |       | X                      | X           | X                         |
| <b>Commissioning &amp; contracting</b>               |   |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             | X                         |
|  | Develop commissioning strategy          |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Gather intelligence                     |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Plan for affordable balance of services |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Maintain/develop commissioning          |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             | X                         |
| <b>Financial modelling &amp; RAS development</b>     |   | X                    |                 |          |       |                        | X           |                           |
|  | Develop FSM                             | X                    |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Calculate unit costs for all services   | X                    |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Model charging options                  | X                    |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Manage RAS supplier relationship        | X                    |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Review performance data                 |                      |                 | X        |       |                        |             | X                         |
| <b>End-to-end service modelling</b>                  |   |                      | X               | X        |       |                        |             | X                         |
|  | Map revised 'customer journey'          |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             | X                         |
|  | Devise workforce changes                |                      | X               |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Define performance framework            |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             | X                         |
|  | Communicate revised 'journey'           |                      |                 | X        |       |                        |             |                           |
| <b>Workforce development</b>                         |   |                      | X               | X        |       |                        |             | X                         |
|  | Design revised long-term structure      |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Deliver care management savings         |                      | X               |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Implement revised structure             |                      | X               |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Communicate key messages                |                      |                 | X        |       |                        |             |                           |
| <b>SDS &amp; Personal Budgets business processes</b> |   |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |
|  | Devise new SDS processes/tools          |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |

| Regulatory Function |                                    | Financial monitoring | Human Resources | Training | Legal | Administration support | Procurement | Performance & development |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------|-------|------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Recursion           | Identify training needs            |                      |                 | X        |       |                        |             |                           |
|                     | Revise current processes/training  |                      |                 | X        |       |                        |             |                           |
|                     | Develop rollout plan for processes |                      |                 | X        |       |                        |             | X                         |
|                     | Identify performance data issues   |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             | X                         |

Financial monitoring is strong within the financial modelling work-stream (and at the global level where the work-stream lead for financial modelling is also a member of PEG).

This financial expertise is lacking in other work-streams and, in my experience, has led to communication problems where bottlenecks are caused through non-financial work-streams not knowing what to ask of the financial modelling work-stream.

Diagnostically, there would appear to be a lack of cohesion between primary activities, vital for the achievement of the transformation process.

The next stage of analysis is about checking the management functions by way of mapping the regulatory functions onto the VSM.

#### viii. Checking of the management functions

The mapping of the regulatory functions Why have these been selected? On what basis? onto the VSM via the table below provides a lens for seeing whether

all the management functions required for ongoing viability are present and working well.

**Table 9: Mapping of recursion-function table onto VSM**

| Regulatory Function \ Recursion | Financial monitoring | Human Resources | Training | Legal | Administration support | Procurement | Performance & development |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------|-------|------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| <b>PROJECT TEAM</b>             | X                    | X               | X        |       | X                      | X           | X                         |
| <b>Policy</b>                   |                      | o               |          |       |                        | o           | o                         |
| <b>Intelligence</b>             | o                    | o               |          |       |                        |             | o                         |
| <b>Corporate Intervention</b>   | o                    | o               |          |       |                        | o           |                           |
| <b>Resource Bargaining</b>      |                      |                 |          |       |                        |             |                           |
| <b>Monitoring</b>               | o                    |                 | o        |       |                        | o           | o                         |
| <b>Co-ordination</b>            |                      |                 | o        |       | o                      | o           | o                         |

**Financial monitoring** provides intelligence through forecasting and also monitors by comparing the unit costs of in-house and externally-provided social care, and corporate intervention through defining financial regulations.

There is **human resources** representation in the workforce strategy group which advises on policy and stakeholder engagement; intelligence through engagement with other local authorities and regional/government bodies, and corporate intervention in applying employment laws.

**Training** is co-ordinated by the SDS & personal budgets processes team and practice standards are monitored through the RAS development work-stream when reviewing assessments by social care assessors.

There is no **legal** function at the project team recursion level as it sits at the council level (two levels of recursion upwards).

**Administration support** provides co-ordination for the project team in support of its management role, i.e. setting up workshops, etc.

**Procurement** sets out the corporate strategy for engaging suppliers, exemplifying corporate intervention and is highly centralised thus restricting autonomy for work-streams.

**Performance and development** gathers intelligence from other local authorities in developing training; monitors the results from training, co-ordinating business processes throughout the organisation and develops policy to roll-out personalisation.

What *emerges* is that **resources bargaining** is missing; there is no negotiation with primary activities as to how they are allocated resources to carry out their work-stream activities.

An *unintended consequence* is that some work-streams are over-stretched whilst others have more slack and therefore, no *ameliorative* action to re-allocate resources.

The final part of engaging with the situation's complexity is for me to compare the actual structure to the ideal VSM.

#### ix. Comparison of actual structure to ideal VSM

**Table 10: Comparison of the project team to the ideal VSM**

| VSM system                      | Actual structure of project team  | Ideal VSM structure†   | Comments  |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|
| 1 – Implementation (operations) | Five work-streams carry out the transformation as per appendix 2  | Primary activities that produce the transformation process of the organisation | Each work-stream is able to make its own decisions (autonomous) although legal decisions are taken at council level (two levels of recursion above PEG). <b>Some difficulties experienced where work-streams not working synergistically (see co-ordination).</b> |
| 2 – Co-ordination               | Insufficient mechanism in place to deal with ongoing tensions between work-stream leads   | Co-ordination of primary activities to avoid conflict without interference     | Ongoing tensions between certain work-stream leads and a lack of knowledge is causing bottlenecks and further tensions.   |
| 3 – Cohesion                    | Work-streams do work together on an ad hoc basis but there is no co-ordinated mechanism for so doing  | Looks inside the organisation to maximise co-operation amongst operations      | Cohesion between operations is ad hoc and relies upon existing working relationships to smooth 'bumps in the road'. <b>No formal cross-work-stream problem-solving is in place.</b>   |
| 3* - Monitoring                 | Work-stream leads report progress on 12-week 'chunks' of activity to PEG meetings   | Monitors the operations as part of the cohesion function                       | There's no recourse for management outside of PEG meetings to check the whole picture, i.e. bypass work-stream leads to find out what's going on. <b>PEG unaware of difference in work-streams' workloads.</b>  |
| 4 – Intelligence                | Intelligence is gathered through conferences and shared practice with other local authorities but there is uncertainty over the wider council restructure and little management engagement with frontline staff and user-groups | Looks outside the organisation and makes plans for the organisation as a whole | There is good intelligence gathering at the lower level of recursion within work-streams but seemingly, no open channel back to PEG to highlight issues as they arise (to inform policy).   |
| 5 - Policy                      | Implementation and communications strategies in place   | Develops overall policy for the whole organisation                             | Implementation and communications strategies have seen little iteration, symptomatic of the   |

| VSM system | Actual structure of project team | Ideal VSM structure† | Comments  |
|------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|---|
|            |                                  |                      | uncertainty over the project's future direction and lack of adaptability between intelligence and cohesion. |

†(Open University, 2004)

The comparison shows problems with co-ordinating work-streams' activities (lack of synergy), no resources bargaining to accommodate changing workloads and a lack of adaptability between intelligence and cohesion.

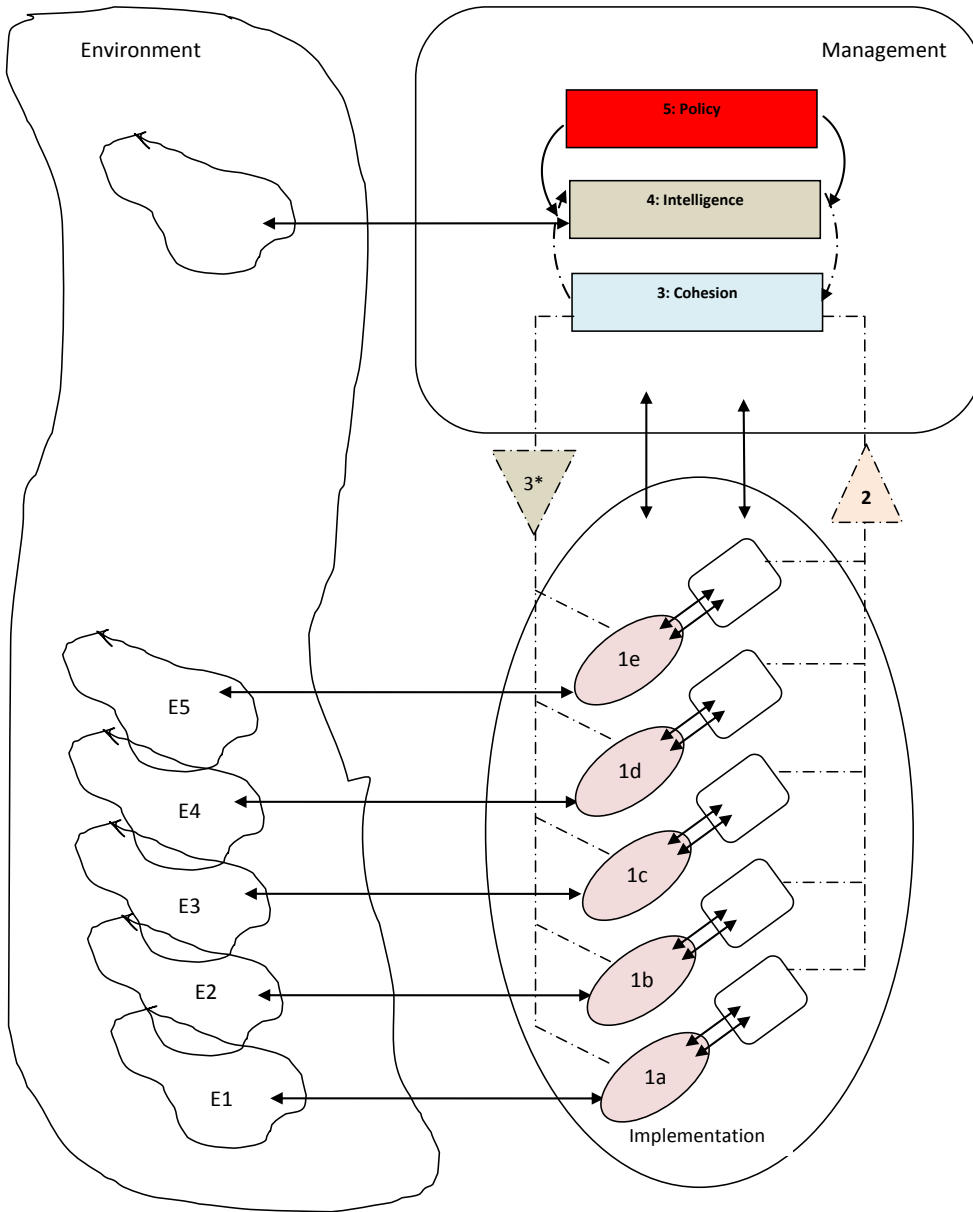
The following VSM diagram and table try to compare the actual VSM structure (and any missing elements) to the ideal structure.

**Table 11: Detail of current VSM systems**

| System                    | Sub-system                                 | Details   | Environment  |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>1 – Implementation</b> | 1a – Commissioning & contracting           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop commissioning strategy;</li> <li>Gather intelligence;</li> <li>Plan for affordable balance of services;</li> <li>Maintain/develop commissioning;</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(E1) Other project work-streams;</li> <li>(E1) market engagement;</li> <li>(E1) regional forums;</li> <li>(E1) other local authorities</li> </ul>               |
|                           | 1b – Financial modelling & RAS development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop FSM</li> <li>Calculate unit costs for all services</li> <li>Model charging options</li> <li>Manage RAS supplier relationship</li> <li>Review performance data</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(E2) Other work-streams;</li> <li>(E2) IS/IT solutions;</li> <li>(E2) Data quality;</li> <li>(E2) RAS model developers</li> </ul>                               |
|                           | 1c – End-to-end service modelling          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map revised 'customer journey'</li> <li>Devise workforce changes</li> <li>Define performance framework</li> <li>Communicate revised 'journey'</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(E3) Other work-streams;</li> <li>(E3) IS/IT solutions;</li> <li>(E3) Data quality;</li> <li>(E3) RAS model developers;</li> <li>(E3) Communications</li> </ul> |
|                           | 1d – Workforce development                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design revised long-term structure</li> <li>Deliver care management</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(E4) Other work-streams;</li> <li>(E4) IS/IT</li> </ul>   |

| System  | Sub-system   | Details   | Environment   |
|---|--|---|---|
|   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>savings</li> <li>Implement revised structure</li> <li>Communicate key messages</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>solutions;</li> <li>(E4) Communications</li> </ul>   |
|   | 1e – Self-Directed Support & personal budgets business processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise new SDS processes/tools</li> <li>Identify training needs</li> <li>Revise current processes/training</li> <li>Develop rollout plan for processes</li> <li>Identify performance data issues</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(E5) Other project work-streams;</li> <li>(E5) Other council services</li> </ul>   |
|   | <b>2 – Co-ordination</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training – SDS processes/guidance;</li> <li>Administration support – booking of meetings/workshops;</li> <li><b>No mechanism for resources bargaining, i.e. reallocation of resources to match workload variety</b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government initiatives;</li> <li>VfM programme targets;</li> <li>demographic changes, ageing population;</li> <li>workforce issues,</li> <li>communications;</li> <li>wider council restructure</li> </ul> |
|   | <b>3 – Cohesion</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application of employment laws;</li> <li>Procurement strategy;</li> <li>Financial regulations</li> </ul>   |   |
|   | <b>3* - Monitoring</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparison of unit costs</li> <li>Reviewing assessments</li> <li>Results from training</li> <li><b>No verification from work-streams (below work-stream management) of current situation</b></li> </ul>                        |   |
|   | <b>4 – Intelligence</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial monitoring</li> <li>Engagement with other local authorities / regional bodies on latest practice / developments</li> </ul>   |   |
|   | <b>5 – Policy</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall personalization strategy;</li> <li>Communications strategy;</li> <li><b>Policy stasis as intelligence and cohesion not balanced</b></li> </ul>   |   |
| <b>NB - Colours used to identify systems in VSM figure 11</b> |  |   |   |

Figure 11: Complete VSM of project team (current situation)



----- Weakness within the system



x. **Identification of feasible changes to real-world structure** Yes- suggested interventions to address these issues are needed and with them a systemic assessment of the merits and downsides of the suggested interventions

Synergy between work-streams is ad hoc, relying on existing working relationships. And, because there is no resources bargaining to reallocate staff to meet changing circumstances (further causing bottlenecks), PEG should consider forming a '*community of practice*', made up of individuals from each work-stream to work together to solve problems as they arise. This could have a positive consequence of easing any intra-PEG relationship tensions if work-streams were seen to be producing results.

This will not necessarily be easy and therefore, facilitative practice, whereby a practitioner with suitable knowledge, could be engaged to help the process. Not a complete sentence

Monitoring is rather formalised, relying on PEG meeting updates from work-stream leads. Therefore, an intranet communications tool such as 'survey monkey' (Survey Monkey, 2010) should be used to provide anonymous, sporadic monitoring of workers' concerns and ideas and as an intelligence-gathering tool to balance cohesion with intelligence as a means of *adaptation*. But will this work, especially in conditions of organisational stress?

Consideration should also be given to looking at work-streams' activities because, as shown in the technological model (figure 8), there are overlaps in work-stream deliverables which could be better-accommodated into single

work-stream activities: defining and designing workforce structures sit in separate work-streams currently.

xi. **Conclusions** Good to see this

In writing this report, I set out to analyse the 'messy' situation I perceived as a member of the project team charged with implementing personalised social care services in \*\*\*\*\*.

In deciding which systems approach to use in this context, I sought to answer a number of diagnostic questions which led to me choosing the Viable Systems Method (Viplan) to gain a deeper engagement.

The approach provided a number of insights into the project team's situation, especially relating to communications: tension among work-stream leads, leading to bottlenecks in workflows; PEG only gets a partial view of intelligence through monthly meetings.

In mapping the regulatory functions Please see the query about the applicability of these into the VSM, resources' bargaining was found to be missing; the rigid project structure has led to some work-streams becoming over-stretched whilst others contain slack.

The five systems required at all levels of recursion throughout the organisation for it to be viable are not all present, calling into question the project team's medium-term viability. Indeed, the project continues to produce good work due to the dedication of the staff involved.

A number of possible changes were therefore put forward as ameliorative actions to help the situation:

- A 'community of practice' amongst work-streams (below work-stream lead level) was suggested as a way to promote synergy and cohesion;
- Workers' anonymous surveys were also suggested as a way of providing PEG with sporadic intelligence-gathering and worker-engagement; and
- A suggestion to re-look at the work done by work-streams to see if some activities were better-suited elsewhere within the project set-up.

Culturally, these changes would present a challenging path for the project team to take, especially given the uncertainty surrounding the project and the council as a whole, likened to 'a listless ship' by a fellow project-worker. [Yes the tests of systemic viability, cultural feasibility and systemic desirability are all relevant in evaluating these measures](#)

*[Word count tutor report (including abstract (184), excluding tables, diagrams) - 2,752]*

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## Appendix 1 – detailed stakeholder analysis

Table 12: detailed stakeholder analysis

| Stakeholder / stakeholder group  | Stakeholder worldview  |
|--|--|
| <b>Commissioning &amp; contracting project work-stream</b>                         | Our objective is to develop an integrated commissioning model that fits with the personalisation agenda and directorate vision and to plan for market reshaping of local social care provision, whilst supporting service users, their carers and citizens to make informed choices to achieve their targeted outcomes*  |
| <b>Financial modelling &amp; RAS development project work-stream</b>               | We'll need to undertake financial modelling and Resource Allocation System (RAS) activities and communicate the future impact of policy decisions in order to deliver services within a VfM framework*   |
| <b>End-to-end service modelling project work-stream</b>                            | Our job is to design a revised 'customer journey' through social care services, taking into account amendments to existing policy and so providing direction and standardisation for the service user and social care staff*   |
| <b>Workforce development project work-stream</b>                                   | It's important for the directorate's viability that we identify future workforce structure options that contribute to achieving VfM targets whilst delivering changes to the 'customer journey' as part of the Personalisation agenda  |
| <b>Self Directed Support personal budgets business process project work-stream</b> | For our part of the project, we'll be developing business processes that support the end-to-end process and 'customer journey' such that emerging personalisation requirements are met through staff being enabled to work in new or improved ways*  |
| <b>Social care front-line staff</b>  | Most of us know the changes coming with personalisation will be good for the service users as they'll be given the choice of the type of care that will achieve their preferred outcomes. Let's hope that this is not just a money-saving exercise where there'll be less of us to do the same amount, or more, work.  |
| <b>Personalisation Executive Group (PEG)</b>                                       | Although the personalisation agenda is a government initiative, we need to make sure that all the personalisation work-streams meet their objectives which, as presented to us by external consultants and ratified by the VfM Programme Board and the council's top management team, will provide significant savings, especially in light of the current government funding crisis |
| <b>Externalised social care provider organisations</b>                             | As businesses, we're here to make sure that we provide a good level of care but that we also make a profit. So long as the changes don't mean the council somehow forces us to lower our prices which could put us out of business, we're happy to work with them.   |
| <b>Service Users' interest groups</b>  | The choice and control of services for service users is a welcome shift in the provision of social care. However, it is imperative that these changes are not simply used as a council vehicle to 'penny-pinch' which might have a detrimental effect for service users  |
| <b>Value for Money Programme (VfM) Board</b>                                       | It is crucial that, as part of the long- and medium-term financial strategy that these changes to social care provision achieve the large savings as presented by the consultants employed to report on the areas of greatest potential to succeed   |

\*Adapted from XXX Council Personalisation work-stream project documents

## Appendix 2 – Work-stream activities

Table 13: work-stream (primary) activities

| Work-stream  | High-level project deliverables (XXX Council, 2010)  |
|--|--|
| Commissioning & contracting (primary activity A)                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a commissioning strategy, and supporting operating model, which reflect Personalisation;</li> <li>Develop a model of gathering intelligence, data and information to drive future commissioning decisions;</li> <li>Consider the current and future role of internal / external services, including activities to understand the future long-term profile of service users;</li> <li>Work with the Financial Modelling &amp; RAS development work-stream to develop a long-term strategy and plan for an affordable balance of internal and external services based on forecast demand;</li> <li>Maintain and develop a commissioning structure within Adults' Social Care that is sensitive and supportive of the emerging corporate and strategic commissioning model</li> </ul>  |
| Financial modelling & RAS development (primary activity B)                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine a long-term plan for financial sustainability;</li> <li>Calculate and compare the current unit costs for the provision of internal and external services;</li> <li>Identify further financial analysis to understand the detailed options each work-stream defines;</li> <li>Produce a financial analysis of the potential charging policy decisions available, and their associated financial impact;</li> <li>Perform an impact assessment on, and subsequent update of, the medium term financial strategy under personalisation;</li> <li>Manage the supplier relationship with FACE (RAS model supplier) to ensure delivery of a fit-for-purpose Resource Allocation System;</li> <li>Undertake a review of activity data, and financial management information, with a view to ensuring continuous improvement ...</li> </ul> |
| End-to-end service modelling (primary activity C)                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop the council's thinking about how the end-to-end customer journey needs to be developed to embed SDS and delivery of associated targets;</li> <li>Revise and refine customer journey processes to develop a suite of detailed process maps to reflect the new customer journey;</li> <li>Define any workforce changes required to the workforce structure based on the revised functions;</li> <li>Define the performance management framework and management information requirements for the redefined customer journey;</li> <li>Communicate the design into other project work-streams to provide direction and advice as to the creation and implementation of the new end-to-end customer journey</li> </ul>   |
| Workforce development (primary activity D)                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design a long-term workforce structure which will deliver against personalisation objectives;</li> <li>Deliver a one-off 10% saving on care management and assessment costs through changes to roles and responsibilities;</li> <li>Implement the revised structure through stakeholder management and union engagement;</li> <li>Actively and regularly communicate key project messages to the workforce</li> </ul>   |
| Self Directed Support & personal budgets business processes (primary activity) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, produce and compile a set of SDS processes and tools which form the basis for new end-to-end processes and produce guidance for users;</li> <li>Identify all contact, and appropriate back-office, staff and teams that require training to use the new processes, tools and guidance;</li> <li>Review the current SDS processes, tools, guidance and training being delivered across all service areas;</li> </ul>   |

| Work-stream | High-level project deliverables (XXX Council, 2010)   |
|-------------|---|
| E)          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a targeted implementation plan to roll-out the new processes, tools and guidance;</li><li>• Implement the SDS roll-out plan with agreed dates for reporting progress back to PEG;</li><li>• Review options to increase the Review Team capacity to offer more existing service users PBs in place of traditional services;</li><li>• Identify data quality issues and areas for targeted improvement across ASC</li></ul> |

## 2) CLIENT REPORT Good to see an express structure to this through the use of sub headings

### a) Introduction

In consultation with the Interim Head of Personalisation at XXX Council, this study set out to review the project team arrangements in implementing the 'Putting People First Agenda' in the provision of social care services and this resulting report provides the key findings and recommendations.

A series of interviews with stakeholders within the project team was conducted to gain various people's perspectives, in such a way as to gain a rich vein of information in which to take forward this study but not as a mechanism for apportioning blame in areas where problems are perceived.

### b) Analysis of key findings

In carrying out this study, I have used a systems approach called the 'Viplan Viable System Model' (VSM) which is used as a tool to look at an organisation's structure and resources it employs to achieve its stated aims and objectives.

The approach provided a number of insights into the project team's situation, especially in relation to communications: there appeared to be tensions among work-streams leads, leading to bottlenecks in workflows. Diagnostically, there seems to be a number of problem areas within the project team set-up, as summarised below:



- The hierarchical nature of the project team structure meant that while some work-streams were over-stretched, others contained slack – there is no mechanism in place for reallocating resources to match the peaks in some work-streams’ workloads;
- There appears to be a difference in perspective between PEG – and others’ – of the project’s progress towards implementation. The main mechanism for checking project progress is at the monthly PEG meetings that only consider the feedback from the various work-stream leads; there are no other means for monitoring progress that will build confidence between PEG and those working ‘on the ground’, i.e. by engaging with the wider views of other stakeholders within the project context.
- Some of the modelling techniques used as part of the VSM approach showed that some of the work-streams’ activities seemed to significantly cross-over, possibly leading to bottlenecks in the system, suggesting that there could be scope to re-look at how these activities fit together.

My study also acknowledges that workers in the project team continue to do a remarkable job despite the messy situation that I’ve perceived.

### **c) Recommendations and conclusions**

A number of possible changes are therefore recommended as actions to help the situation.

- A 'community of practice' amongst work-streams (below work-stream lead level) to promote cross-working between work-streams to unblock bottlenecks;
- Workers' anonymous surveys to provide PEG with a wider appreciation of stakeholders' views of project progression; and
- A suggestion to re-look at the work done by work-streams to see if some activities were better-suited elsewhere within the project set-up.

Culturally, these changes will not be easy to achieve and will need to form part of an iterative process of understanding the need to allow work-streams the autonomy to carry out their activities and for PEG to provide the necessary framework and resources to co-ordinate and underpin the transformation process.

[Word count client report: 502]

### 3) PROJECT LOG

#### a) Weekly summary

| Week commencing | Activity  | Methodological log  | Project management  | Notes  |  |
|-----------------|---|---|---|--|--|
|                 |   |   |   | Project  | Self   |
| Pre-19/07/10    | <p>Early on in the course I suspected that I might be looking at a work-related project, mainly because I thought it might be of benefit to me in my role. The first couple of months coincided with an announcement by the new Chief Executive that a council-wide restructure was being considered and, when I engaged with the complexity inherent with something of this scale, considered this as an initial project topic. However, I quickly dismissed this when I realised the scale involved and therefore decided to re-set my system boundary and to drill-down further into the organisation's inner-workings, and in particular the project team implementing personalisation in social care.</p> <p>The workload and time-commitment for T306, the course material and TMAs meant that I didn't start to think about the project in any real detail until July, although I had mentioned it to my manager back in June.</p> |   |   |  |  |
| 19/07/10        | <p>One-to-one meeting with my manager at which I set the scene for what I'd be doing. I mentioned investigation to which exception was taken. Ended okay with further discussion.</p> <p>One interview booked in for next Friday.</p>   | <p>Setting the scene for my stakeholder analysis (through interviews). Noted the need for interview preparation being the key to getting honest project situation.</p>            | <p>I need to be looking - and planning - forward so as to not get behind.</p> <p>Development of an activity sequence diagram should help me to focus on the steps required.</p> <p>TMA05 submitted.</p> | <p>Slightly behind where I'd like to be; previous TMAs taking up a lot of time</p> <p>My TMA05 answer included a full stakeholder analysis so will need to test against actual interview findings.</p> | <p>Following one-to-one with manager, the need for political sensitivity brought home to me, especially when interviewing.</p> |
| 26/07/10        | <p>Conducted five interviews in the project scenario; all went well, but in <i>reflection-on-practice</i>, wondered whether I'd 'led' some of the conversations, instead of letting interviewees 'open-up' more; note for self.</p>   | <p>Gathering of information in terms of people's true perspectives on project team's work.</p> <p>Looked at rich picture from TMA05 and thought this would be a good starting</p> | <p>Trying to juggle consideration of data gathering alongside doing TMA06</p> <p>Beginning to think that basic VSM will not provide enough depth to analysis – take in tutor</p>                        | <p>Still a bit nervous about timescales; plus having to do TMA06 as well.</p>  | <p>Although political sensitivity used in interviews, still found myself getting into long-winded conversations</p>            |

| Week commencing | Activity  | Methodological log  | Project management  | Notes   |   |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|
|                 |   |   |   | Project   | Self  |
|                 |   | point for project, regardless of approach   | feedback to make final decision as to whether to apply Viplan VSM   |   |   |
| 02/08/10        | Working towards TMA06, currently running through the first project pass.  | Basic VSM applied to project situation; also, re-vamped analytical method diagram to include Viplan VSM incorporated into BECM cycle; full stakeholder analysis tabulated                         | Now decided on Viplan VSM following tutor feedback.<br><br>Will give me a chance to iterate and to analyse the situation more deeply, to get a more systemic view of the situation. | My project timetable was fairly simplistic and will need to be reviewed so that I can easily check my progress against expectation.   | Although having gained a decent mark for TMA06, there are still nagging doubts in my mind about some aspects of the course: the need to make good use of diagrams; thinking more systemically; keeping my project log up-to-date!   |
| 09/08/10        | TMA07: laying out the document (headings, contents page, etc. so that the analysis can be slotted into the correct parts easily to help with overall document flow).<br><br>Collected relevant documentation: organisation chart of project team; past PEG meeting notes; highlight reports | Some of the initial parts (description of situation-of-interest, ethicality statement, etc.) already done in TMA06. Check against TMA06 feedback to see if requiring updates / further iteration. | TMA06 tutor feedback suggests a deeper analysis required so have taken the decision to use Viplan VSM for the full project analysis approach.                                       | Having done a full 'pass' through the project via TMA06, I'm now more confident about the overall project direction. Will have to take care with some aspects of Viplan for which I'm still lacking a little confidence in their use. | Printed off some of the archived past student projects – has provided a focus for content and layout of report and the depth of analysis required. Feel as though I'm on the right lines, though none seem to have used the 'full' Viplan model. Now wondering if I should be using SSM as well to bring out the softer issues. |
| 16/08/10        | Iterated TMA06 versions of the situation-of-  | Pre-analysis stage almost completed: just   | Now widening my scope of analysis by  | Giving consideration as to where I  | Not feeling too overwhelmed at the moment   |

| Week commencing | Activity  | Methodological log   | Project management  | Notes   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|---|---|--|
|                 |   |  |   | Project   | Self   |
|                 | interest, problem situation and methodological approach and inserted into report.   | need to work on systemic implications for my ethicality statement – started to draw a MCD around receiving feedback on my systems practice   | questioning statements I make, to try to bring out the systemicity ??of the situation, and my involvement therein.<br><br>Time-wise – okay I think, but I still haven't revised my project.   | can make use of diagrams to help with the analysis (and keep the word-count down!); MCD/sign graphs will be useful for understanding why something might or might not be happening.   | but aware that the deadline is only 4 weeks away! My real worry is that my analysis will not uncover anything more than my TMA06 attempt; however, letting things emerge as I go along is the key and to not lead myself down a reductionist path that comes up with easy answers! |
| 23/08/10        | Sign graph to complement ethicality statement.<br><br>Influence diagram to give systemic view of stakeholder analysis<br><br>Viplan identity statement and TASCOI   | Mostly setting the scene to the situation-of-interest.<br><br>Sunday – starting on Viplan VSM.   | Seemed to spend ages on sign graph – still not sure if it provides required systemicity.<br><br>Now only just onto Viplan VSM – am I going into too much detail?<br><u>Yes</u>  | Need to be careful about making the report too 'perfect' and to just get on with the analysis – will have to iterate anyway.<br><br>Three weekends to go after this one!  | Domestic difficulties have not helped with focus this week.  |
| 30/08/10        | Development of technological model<br><br>Check for primary activities (model onto VSM)<br><br>Distinguish primary activities from mgt<br><br>Unfolding of primary activities (diagrams)<br><br>Check devolution of primary | Using the model to check activities' processes<br><br>Basic VSM to show primary activities<br><br>Use of diagrams to show how activities are broken down at different recursion levels<br><br>Recursion- | It's been a tough week. Struggled with the recursion-function table; <u>Yes!!</u> do I really understand how much primary activities are able to regulate themselves?<br><br>Not too many parts of Viplan to do, but each part takes so | Time-wise, feeling okay about getting done in time. However, I'm still not sure if I've learned anything in addition to TMA06 first pass using basic VSM. Will just have to see what things <i>emerge</i> .<br><br>Listening to | More focused this week but disruption at work with staff reorganisation are at the back of my mind.<br><br>Lacking in confidence in using Viplan; can't find many worked examples that takes one through the approach in a   |

| Week commencing | Activity  | Methodological log   | Project management   | Notes   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|--|---|--|
|                 |   |  |  | Project   | Self   |
|                 | activities  | <p>function table to see how much autonomy primary activities have.</p> <p>Mapping of regulatory functions onto VSM to think about systemic and desirable changes to the project team's structure.</p>   | long!  | <p>fellow students' work so far on their projects, and tutor notes provided a lens for me to approach the overall structure for my project, pointing towards a few more diagrams that could be of use in my final report.</p> | <p>systematic way, which I prefer.</p> <p>However, the process of drawing the technological model was enlightening for me in that it showed the overlaps in some of the primary activities' tasks (financial modelling featuring throughout the transformation process) and to possible synergies between the work-streams</p> |
| 07/09/10        | <p>Check mgt functions</p> <p>Comparison of actual to ideal VSM</p> <p>Draw final VSM diagram</p> <p>Client report</p> <p>Project log summary</p> | <p>Mapping of regulatory functions onto VSM</p> <p>Used tabulation to help unclutter final VSM drawing</p> <p>Made sure client report was written using non-systems language</p> <p>Made use of control diagram to contextualise reflection-after-action</p> | As of Sunday, project finished; just need to tidy up and lose some words | <p>Positive to have finished with only some tidying-up and rationalisation to do with a couple of days to spare</p>   | <p>Found that in reflecting on the project log and over my course notes, I've learnt some interesting things about me as a person and the fact that systems thinking seems to be creeping into my psyche more and more.</p>  |

[Word count: 1,413] – Weekly project log

## b) Overall project log summary

For this part of the TMA, it provides me with a chance to take stock of the whole project process and to assess and reflect on my own practice before, during and after the project. Yes

In so doing, I have contextualised my weekly project log summaries into reflection-before-action, reflection-on-action and reflection-after-action<sup>4</sup>. Good

### i. Reflection-before-action

My first thoughts into a suitable project context centred around my place of work and, with the grave economic situation gripping the UK over the last couple of years, the council's need to make big savings through a council-wide restructure of its services.

My initial rush into what seemed like a rich and potentially 'messy' situation soon became somewhat overwhelming when I stood back to take in the enormity of a radical reshaping of an organisation employing more than 8,000 people. I was surprised by the way in which I had first decided to look at a project context: as a normally *introverted* person with an orientation towards experiencing 'harder complexity' (depth of understanding of a context, i.e. following accounting rules in my day-job) I would not normally have sought the breadth offered by such a situation.

It was at this point that the realistic side of my sensing of the task ahead brought me around to reconsidering the potential system boundary of my project

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<sup>4</sup> T306 Managing complexity: a systems approach, block 5, p 36

context-to-be, and to drill down into another aspect of the council's business: the personalisation of social care services.

From my learning album, the notes I made for activity 19 of block 5, contained some pointers for me in terms of reflective practice in what I would like to improve during the course of my project, "*I would like to improve my use of diagrams in order to cut down on the need to write reams of text to contextualise a situation.*" This had been, and still is, an issue for me in being able to make use of diagrams so that I can contextualise the situation I perceive in order to help someone else's understanding of my work.

#### ii. Reflection-on-action

The next chapter in reflecting on my systems practice traces my thoughts as I contextualised with the project as it progressed over the last few weeks.

The first major reflection came early on in the project when I mentioned my project to my manager (finance work-stream lead in the project team) at work (week commencing 19/07/10). Exception was taken to my use of the word 'investigation' into the project team's set-up; she contextualised this to mean 'blame'. Upon reflection, I realised that I had not spent enough time on *reflection-before-action* in mentally being prepared for what I was going to say at the time, and therefore the need to be sensitive in the use of language given certain situations. This led me to consider how to engage with fellow project workers when I interviewed them to gain initial views of the project team's progress. In the context of providing the research results of my project to stakeholders as part of my ethicality statement, I formed the idea that I needed

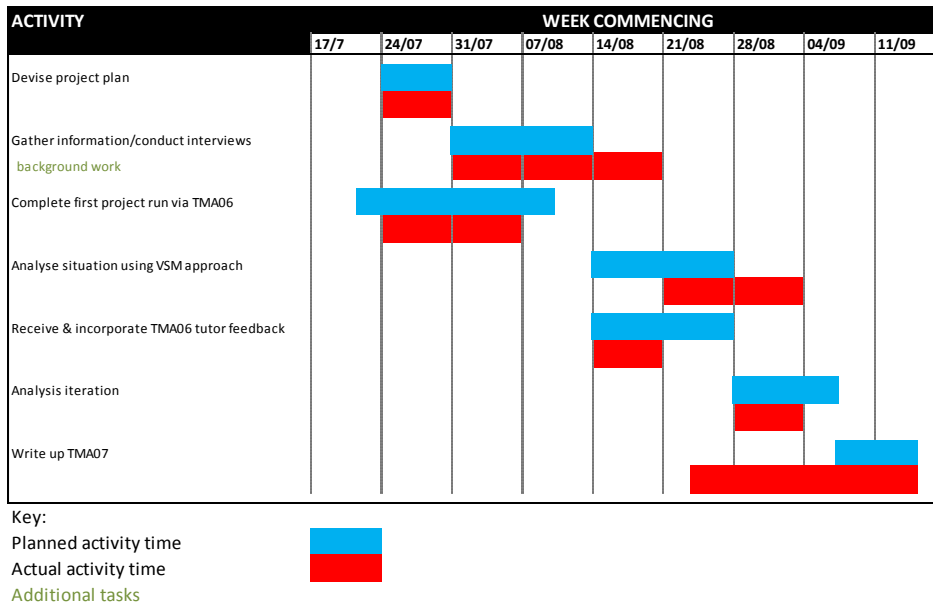


to contextualise my project as not a means of apportioning blame but as a way of teasing out possible ameliorative actions to help, shown as a 'pre-interview briefing' in figure 4.

Another reflective point I picked up from my project log was the fact that, during the interviews, I tended to 'lead' some of the discussions, with the possible unintended consequence of producing a *reductionist* view of the situation by not providing the interviewee with the necessary *autonomy* to freely express their perspectives, thereby missing potential *emerging* themes. This has provided further considerations for *reflection-after-practice* which I will come back to later.

In terms of the methodological log, I quite liked the way in which the VSM provided a systematic (logical sequence of steps) as well as systemic, methodology with which to build-up my project. This again, provided me with an insight into my 'usual' character in liking to follow set steps, one leading to the next. Paradoxically, my overall project management was much more ad hoc in that, although I did provide a simple Gantt chart to show the timescales for particular tasks, I did not get too worried about the infinite detail.

Figure 12: Revised project plan Gantt chart



As with most plans; they never go to plan. I spent an extra week in understanding the situation-of-interest by, for example, drawing a sign graph for providing feedback on my research and an influence diagram to understand the conflict I perceived from the start of the project. I also found myself doing most of the TMA writing-up as I went along instead of making lots of notes and then writing them up.

I recognised through tutor feedback from TMA06 that the use of Gantt charts for project-planning contexts does not adequately allow for inevitable iteration, especially as unforeseen events emerge during the analysis, i.e. where I had a mental block in completing a sign graph (requiring several attempts) which I'd not experienced before.

Another interesting insight emerged from my project management in that I appear to not be so worried about sticking to narrow channels of activity (strict project plans) but used more of the undeveloped side of my 'shadow' personality to see what emerged as the project progressed.

### iii. Reflection-after-action

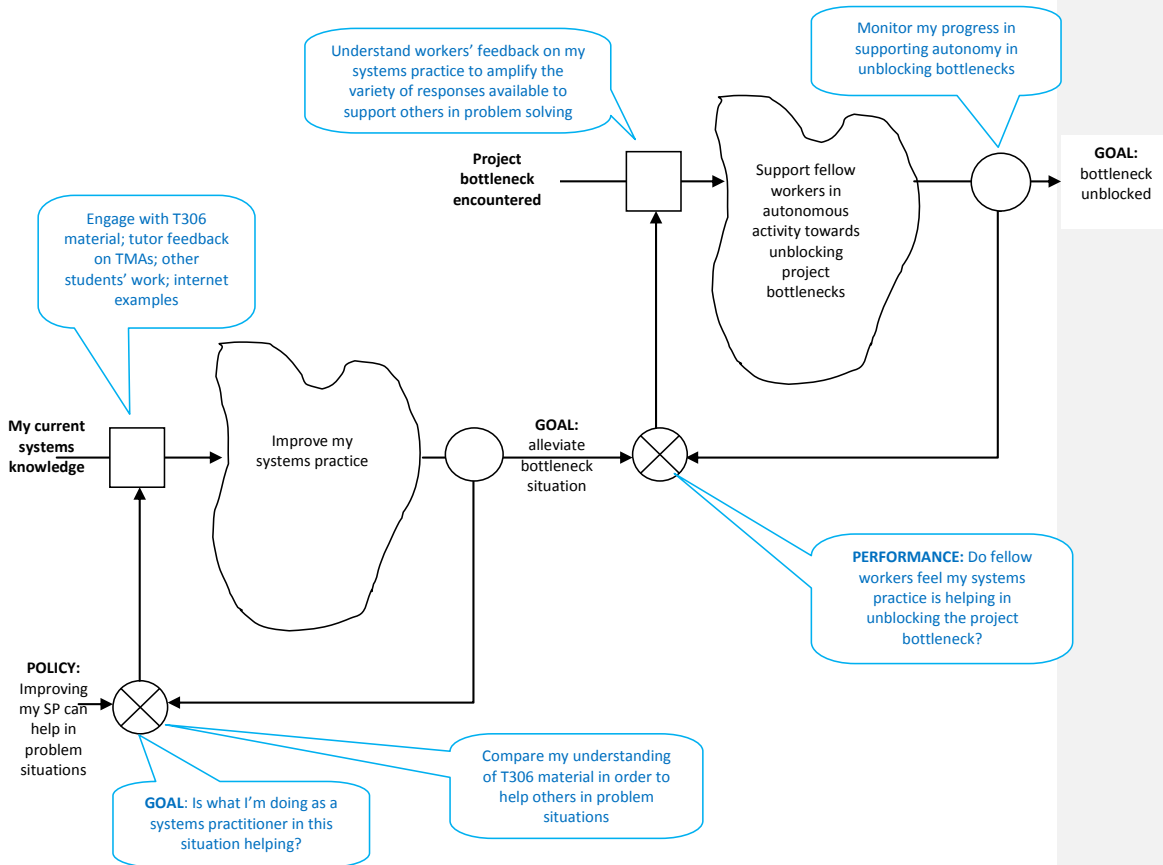
Looking back now on my finished project, I have learnt a great deal in terms of new ways of thinking about situations, and about myself.

The VSM provided me with diagrams to help me to tease out areas within the project context that were either missing or inadequate. However, I also recognise that my appreciation of these, and other systems diagrams and techniques, is still in its infancy, though overall, I think I'm heading in the right direction.

One of the main concerns regarding my project is that, having experienced the difficult situation with my manager during a one-to-one meeting, I subsequently missed out on a further perspective of the situation and a possibly wider systemic appreciation, by avoiding a further interview with her.

I now hope that I can make practical use of the knowledge I've gained in taking an *epistemological* position in being more aware of others' views in a situation, which leads me to think that a control model (figure 13) could be useful in helping to embed systems thinking into situations where I find myself as a facilitator in problem-solving contexts: the ultimate goal of my study of systems.

Figure 13: Double-loop learning in my support of autonomy



Thus, if I was the facilitator in helping to unblock bottlenecks in the project team, I would ask myself "how am I doing?" in helping others to unblock bottlenecks, given what I am doing in making use of my systems knowledge to help in supporting others in the overall goal. With a greater understanding of T306 material and other systems literature, I feel I will be able to help others in working collaboratively to solve issues arising in the project context. Good to hear

[Word count overall summary 1,152]

## 4) TMA 06 (with tutor comments)

### a) Description of the problem situation

The project team has to implement personalised social care services in \*\*\*\*\* to provide social care services that offer choice and control over people's lives that involves dealing with many stakeholders, but also with an unquantifiable budget crisis leading to conflicts of interest.

There are also divergent perceptions of the project's progress: management think all is well, whereas others' views don't correlate; symptomatic of communication problems. A council-wide restructure is also causing uncertainty among social care staff, providing a sense of 'listlessness' that some fellow project workers have mentioned.

To me, these are all characteristics of a 'messy' situation against which I intend to test the project team's ongoing viability. **OK- the messiness is brought out well- but can a diagram be used to capture or summarise this defining messiness?**

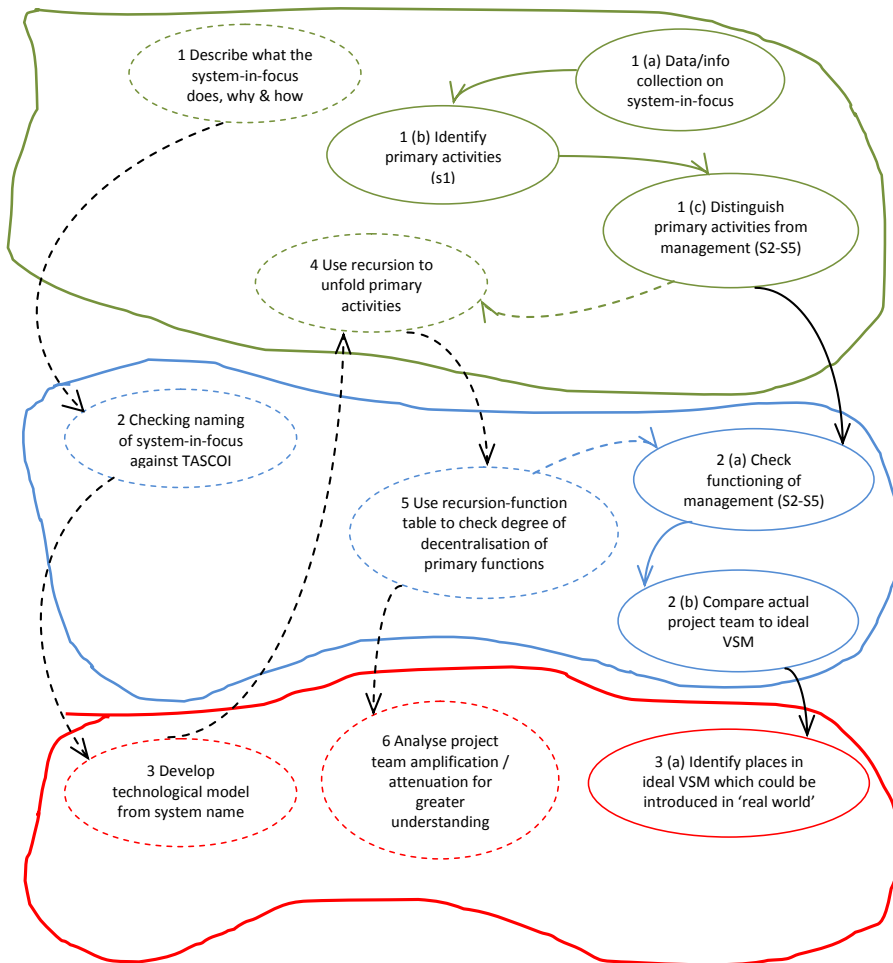
### b) Diagrammatic representation of the analytical method chosen

From my perspective, I'm unsure of the effectiveness of the project management, its decision-making processes and ability to work synergistically, and therefore its viability in achieving the project's aims and timescales; hence my preferred systems approach is VSM (mode I).

The dotted arrows and ellipses in figure 1 represent a deepening engagement with the situation-of-interest by making use of the Viplan VSM, the use of which will be considered during the project. The diagram above also maps the VSM approach onto the BECM cycle

(Open University, 2004) to show the stages of my understanding as I progress through the project. OK, but how does this approach “fit” with the parts of the SSA cited in your appendices?

Figure 1: An activity sequence diagram to represent the stages in the VSM approach I intend to take for my project **Good**



**Clear and helpful**

- Being aware
- Engaging with the project
- Contextualising and managing VSM during the project

### c) Ethicality statement

How does this relate to that shown in the appendices?

- The perspectives of all people interviewed as part of my research will be held by me to be of equal value, regardless of the person's status within the organisation.
- All perspectives collected, regardless of their origin or nature will be used as part of my project so that the broadest possible picture may be built up to inform my ongoing investigation.
- In order to inform my own systems practice throughout the project lifecycle, I will ask for feedback in the way in which I have engaged with stakeholders, such that they feel that their views have been received, and made use of (if wanted), in the final analysis.
- Any such feedback will be treated by me as an opportunity to improve the quality of my systems practice and therefore the ongoing research.
- Research material will be sourced through the project team's own documentation and via an interview process. As such, and with whatever research method used:
  - Permission to use documents or interview stakeholders will be sought beforehand;
  - Information gathered will be used in such a way as to retain anonymity where requested;
  - Participants will be free to withdraw from an interview, or have their views removed from the research material at any time
  - The research will make use of best practice in the field of systems practice in order to help stakeholders to understand the perceived situation.

→ The results of my research will be made available to all stakeholders should they so wish for which comments and/or observations will be welcomed. **Do any systemic implications arise from this pattern?**

#### d) Stakeholder analysis

The following table contextualises a stakeholder analysis in order to inform whose views could be considered as part of the project. A fuller analysis is contained in appendix 1, which covers a range of worldviews from those with responsibility in the situation (PEG), to those who will participate in terms of achieving the personalisation project’s aims (project work-streams), and those on its receiving end – social care users. **OK**

Table 4: Stakeholder analysis

|             | Unlikely to affect  | Likely to affect  |
|-------------|---|---|
| High impact | Social care frontline staff – will want to be sure that structural changes to staffing will not affect them | PEG – management implementation of personalisation and make savings;<br>VfM programme Board – requiring PEG to make significant savings;<br>Various project team work stream groups – the project’s success will be down to the project’s operational units |
| Low impact  | Service users / interest groups – changes in social care provision should provide benefits                  | Externalised social care provider organisations – will want to make sure that changes to services they provide will mean their business are viable  |

The stakeholder analysis has provided a means to listing potential stakeholders to interview in order to gain further insights into my situation-of-interest. **OK, but again, does this pattern have any systemic implications, such as adding to the complexity of the situation or in setting any traps for the unwary analyst?**



## e) Development of project from TMA 05

My system-in-focus is XXX Council's personalisation project team charged with implementing the 'Putting People First' (Her Majesty's Government, Department of Health, 2007) agenda into local social care provision. My initial project proposal (appendix A) from TMA05 shows my first iterative thoughts around my project and TMA06 represents my first pass through the project. **OK**

### Stage 1 (a) – Data collection

I have conducted a series of interviews with fellow project workers to gain some background understanding of the project team's inner workings, along with gathering information on reporting mechanisms. **OK. Will this be reported (in summary)?**

### Stage 1 (b) – Identify primary activities (system 1)

The 'engine' of the project team is its group of 'work-streams', and their high-level project objectives are referred to in table 2 below, which help to guide the implementation programme. Each of the work-streams has a work-stream lead (WSL), who reports to the project's management team – Personalisation Executive Group (PEG). WSLs are accountable to PEG via a monthly monitoring meeting, at which performance against 12-week milestone targets are measured.

Table 2: Project work-stream activities- **how do these compare with the function actually discharged; and the functions which should be undertaken to deal with the variety faced?**

| Work-stream                                      | High-level project deliverables (XXX Council, 2010)  |
|--|--|
| Commissioning & contracting (primary activity A) | <p>Develop a commissioning strategy, and supporting operating model, which reflect Personalisation;</p> <p>Develop a model of gathering intelligence, data and information to drive future commissioning decisions;</p> <p>Consider the current and future role of internal / external services, including activities to understand the future long-term profile of service users;</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Work-stream  | High-level project deliverables (XXX Council, 2010)   |
|  | <p>Work with the Financial Modelling &amp; RAS development work-stream to develop a long-term strategy and plan for an affordable balance of internal and external services based on forecast demand;</p> <p>Maintain and develop a commissioning structure within Adults' Social Care that is sensitive and supportive of the emerging corporate and strategic commissioning model</p>   |
| Financial modelling & RAS development (primary activity B) | <p>Determine a long-term plan for financial sustainability;</p> <p>Calculate and compare the current unit costs for the provision of internal and external services;</p> <p>Identify further financial analysis to understand the detailed options each work-stream defines;</p> <p>Produce a financial analysis of the potential charging policy decisions available, and their associated financial impact;</p> <p>Perform an impact assessment on, and subsequent update of, the medium term financial strategy under personalisation;</p> <p>Manage the supplier relationship with FACE (RAS model supplier) to ensure delivery of a fit-for-purpose Resource Allocation System;</p> <p>Undertake a review of activity data, and financial management information, with a view to ensuring continuous improvement ...</p> |
| End-to-end service modelling (primary activity C)          | <p>Develop the council's thinking about how the end-to-end customer journey needs to be developed to embed SDS and delivery of associated targets;</p> <p>Revise and refine customer journey processes to develop a suite of detailed process maps to reflect the new customer journey;</p> <p>Define any workforce changes required to the workforce structure based on the revised functions;</p> <p>Define the performance management framework and management information requirements for the redefined customer journey;</p> <p>Communicate the design into other project work-streams to provide direction and advice as to the creation and implementation of the new end-to-end customer journey</p>   |
| Workforce development (primary activity D)                 | <p>Design a long-term workforce structure which will deliver against personalisation objectives;</p> <p>Deliver a lone-off??? One? 10% saving on care management and assessment costs through changes to roles and responsibilities;</p> <p>Implement the revised structure through stakeholder management and union engagement;</p> <p>Actively and regularly communicate key project messages to the workforce</p>  |
| Self Directed Support & personal budgets                   | Identify, produce and compile a set of SDS processes and tools which form the basis for new end-to-end processes and produce guidance for users;  |

| Work-stream                             | High-level project deliverables (XXX Council, 2010)   |
|---|---|
| business processes (primary activity E) | <p>Identify all contact, and appropriate back-office, staff and teams that require training to use the new processes, tools and guidance;</p> <p>Review the current SDS processes, tools, guidance and training being delivered across all service areas;</p> <p>Develop a targeted implementation plan to roll-out the new processes, tools and guidance;</p> <p>Implement the SDS roll-out plan with agreed dates for reporting progress back to PEG;</p> <p>Review options to increase the Review Team capacity to offer more existing service users PBs in place of traditional services;</p> <p>Identify data quality issues and areas for targeted improvement across ASC</p> |

#### Stage 1 (c) – Distinguish primary activities from management (systems 2 to 5)

The resolution of conflicts (stability – system 2) and cohesion of activities (system 3) to maximise co-operative working between work-streams lies with PEG through engagement with WSLs at PEG meetings. PEG also has responsibility for planning outside the project team for the long term (system 4) and for developing overall policy (system 5) for the project team’s work which it has by developing the overall project, and communications strategies.

#### Stage 2 (a) – Check functioning of management (systems 2-5)

Although PEG meetings consider the dependencies of other work-streams’ tasks, **stability** (system 2) is perceived as being weak as tensions between WSLs, have been postulated as some WSLs exerting *position power*, causing project delay and disruption.

There appears to be a problem with **cohesion** (system 3) where arbitrary performance targets (budget savings) have been introduced as ‘top-down’ commands via the Value for Money programme board, itself influenced by external consultants – a further cause of conflict. However, PEG does allow autonomy within the work-streams, though synergistic cross-working is not embedded.

The **audit** function (system 3\*) is carried out through consideration of work-stream progress at PEG meetings. However, as postulated above, the fact that management's view of progress is different to those in the work-streams suggests ineffective monitoring.

**Planning** (system 4) is exemplified by management and work-streams' attendance at national/regional conferences and expert users' groups to monitor environmental changes which has guided **policy** (system 5) in formulating the overall strategy, though with ongoing cohesion problems, policy cannot keep pace with reality, affecting the team's *homeostasis* leading to policy inertia.

Stage 2 (b) – comparison of what actually exists to ideal VSM [Consider if this can be systematically tabulated to make the structure of the comparison clearer](#)

Figure 2 below, brings together the VSM stages to show whether the existing project team structure has any parts missing (as shown by dotted lines) when compared to the ideal VSM which should contain all five systems; and whether even if present, the part is effective in its role.

Each work-stream (**primary activity**) tries to match its own environment (dependencies with other work-streams), despite bottlenecks; they therefore have insufficient variety. This is compounded by a weak **stability** function unable to resolve intra-work-stream tensions.

There is only partial **cohesion** that, whilst allowing work-streams' autonomy, does not encourage synergistic working, causing bottlenecks. Monitoring (**audit\***) is carried out at PEG meetings, though WSLs' feedback represents a partial view of reality suggesting management should converse with work-streams directly to gain a fuller picture.

**Policy** is present with detailed strategies for the overall implementation and wider communications in place. However, **planning** is weaker; in part due to uncertainty over the

wider council restructure and little management engagement with frontline staff and user-groups to understand what's really happening.

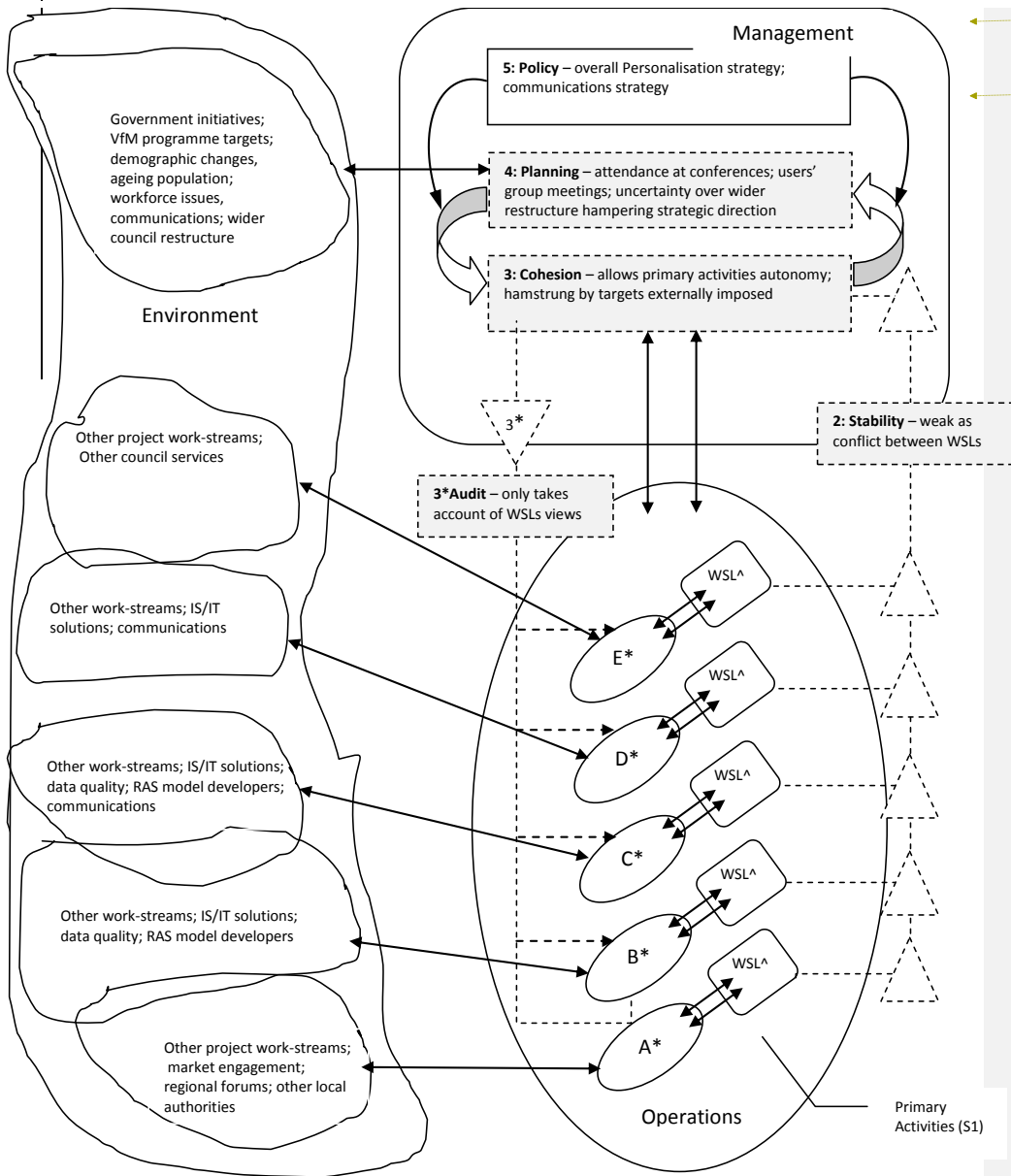
Stage 3 (a) – identify feasible changes

PEG should consider creating a '*community of practice*' among work-streams (not WSLs) to meet regularly, and given autonomy to problem-solve and unblock bottlenecks, creating work-stream synergy. Is this as easy as that?

PEG also needs to strategise **What does this term mean? Please define.** re-connecting with frontline workers (team meeting attendance) as a means of effective, sporadic monitoring away from PEG meetings.

Figure 2: Project team VSM diagram. These diagrams are complicated and difficult to "read". Yes, please consider colour coding or foot notes to explain without more adding more complexity. For example; the sources of variety faced; the identity of who or what fulfils each "part" of the model; parts which are not fulfilled or which do not work well and effectively

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\*Primary activities labelled A to E are referenced by

^Work-stream lead

#### f) A statement of ongoing project development

My analysis thus far, represents a singular pass through my situation-of-interest in using the basic VSM approach to test the project team's ongoing viability, postulating some ameliorative actions. OK. A systemic impact assessment of those suggested actions would now be helpful

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I'm comfortable with the stage at which I'm at in terms of my project plan, especially having completed a basic VSM which has given me a new situation from which to iterate. Yes, good  
In doing so, I will engage with the TMA06 tutor feedback to gauge my ongoing project direction, probably making use of the Viplan VSM. A second iteration might also result in follow-up interviews to check some finer details.

#### g) Progress towards TMA 07

Although I'm relatively happy with my progress so far, I have become increasingly aware that I'm dropping the '(B)eing aware' BECM ball; my own history of understanding the way I learn has meant that I've treated many activities (such as TMAs) as separate, systematic exercises in isolation; a trap to avoid as the project progresses. I am still doubtful of my ability to answer the 'so what?' questions for exemplifying my diagrams. That is where teasing out the implications of the proposed actions will be helpful.

#### h) Abstract

I have become aware of a number of issues with the way the project team charged with implementing personalised social care in \*\*\*\*\* is organised and communicates with stakeholders, concluding that the Viable System Model (VSM) could be a useful systems approach to check its ongoing viability.

I have engaged with my project thus far by using the VSM to identify the project team's operations, checked the functioning of management and tested all of these 'systems'<sup>5</sup> against the ideal VSM.

What I learned was that some of 'ideal' systems were either missing or weak, putting into question the team's viability in the medium term.

I decided, therefore to put forward some actions for consideration by the client which I hope will be taken up.

This has given me a fresh point at which to reiterate over the project again, to gain a more systemic analysis of the situation I've encountered. OK

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[1,613 words, excluding tables, figures and appendices]

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<sup>5</sup> Operations (system 1); management (stability – system 2; cohesion – system 3; planning – system 4; policy – system 5); Open University, T306, block 3, p26