Integrated Care Policy: Progress and Pitfalls of Implementation

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A brief history of integrated care

STAGE ONE
Recognising the cost of fragmentation

STAGE TWO
Focus on clinical pathways

STAGE THREE
Identifying the tools of integration
System integration
Organisational integration
Professional integration
Clinical integration
Functional integration

Partner Boards
Mergers
Practice network
Shared record
Shared pathway
Care co-ordinate
Transfer staff
Joint teams
Pooled budgets
United vision
What is the evidence of such interventions?

- Positive impacts identified for single interventions
- But rarely as great as hoped
- Negative impacts also found
- Insufficient understanding of contributory factors
- Difficulty in implementing consistently
A brief history (continued)

STAGE FOUR: Holistic & person-centred

STAGE FIVE: Wider determinants of health & wellbeing

STAGE SIX: Integrating across the system
Accountable Care Organisations

INTEGRATED PRIMARY AND ACUTE CARE SYSTEMS
JOINING UP GP, HOSPITAL, COMMUNITY AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

ACO stands for an accountable care organization. They are formed when healthcare organizations — like institutional health, substance use treatment, and other specialty care providers — merge into integrated centers of care.
Health Care Homes
The challenge of implementation

“The science of integrated care has contributed much to our understanding of the building blocks that need to be put in place for the effective deployment of integrated care in practice. What appears to be far more problematic is our understanding of how these different components need to combine together to ensure that new or existing programmes understand the ‘how’ of integrated care as well as the ‘what’. The field of integrated care is thus weak in terms of implementation science that enables research findings and evidence to be used to support health care policy and practice.”

(Goodwin 2013, p1)
Multi-layered & complex

“In order for the person centred and integrated care to become an operational reality, it is necessary to create an enabling environment that brings together all stakeholders to undertake transformational change. This complex task will involve a diverse set of processes to bring about the necessary changes in leadership and management, information systems, methods to improve quality, reorientation of the workforce, legislative frameworks, financial arrangements, and incentives.”

(WHO 2016, p1)
Frameworks can help...
But the key components are generally in the ‘softer components’

- Culture
- Engagement
- Leadership

Moving to an integrated working approach is fundamentally a change process and this needs to be managed
Culture

- Often used a *post-hoc* rationalization for why things haven’t worked.
- Debate over whether it is possible to change or influence culture.
- ’The way we do things round here’
Engagement

- Communication is a crucial part of collaborative processes.
- If stakeholders don’t feel engaged and know why it is important to change ways of working then they won’t do so.
- Pay attention to messaging up and down organizations and to external partners.
- Sometimes this gets forgotten when we are busy with structures and processes.
Leadership

- Like culture, often given as a reason when things go wrong ‘we didn’t have strong leadership’.
- Need to work out what ’strong’ leadership looks like in particular context.
- Leaders don’t always reside at the top – need to think about distributed leadership.
- Integration needs champions who will keep on pushing when others are flagging.
Integration as ‘craft’ and ‘graft’

- Ultimately, making a reality of integration is hard work and requires sustained attention.
- Although frameworks and case studies can help, need knowledge of local context, good judgement and hard work to bring it about.
Key questions for success: how many would you say ‘yes’ to?

- Do you understand the elements and influences of the problem you are trying to address by integration?
- Do you have a sense of where the work of different partners overlaps or conflicts?
- Have you agreed the outcomes to be achieved with relevant evidence sources?
- Have you engaged with professionals, consumers and other stakeholders around your integration plans?
- Have you identified leaders at all levels to support your program?