

# The 3-Step Improvement Framework for Scotland's Public Services





# **‘Changing The World’**

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## **Introduction**

We want to change Scotland’s place in the world and to do this we must find new and better ways to achieve the outcomes we want. This 3-Step Improvement Framework has been developed to help unlock and channel the collective knowledge and energy of our people towards a common goal of real and lasting improvement across our public services.

The Framework is designed to prompt self-assessment and debate. It is about getting started and ‘doing’: creating conditions for and implementing the improvements that will make a difference.

## **Summary of strategic context**

The Scottish Government is embarking on an ambitious programme of change and in response to the independent Christie Review of Public Services it set out the following ‘Four Pillars of Public Service Reform’:

- a decisive shift towards prevention
- greater integration of public services at a local level driven by better partnership, collaboration and effective local delivery
- greater investment in the people who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership
- a sharp focus on improving performance, through greater transparency, innovation and use of digital technology

These changes are taking place at a time when the global recovery is fragile, economic growth is muted and prospects in the labour market are becoming tougher, particularly for young people. Wages and public spending are being reduced in real terms and positions are being lost in the public and voluntary sectors.

This reality will require more from us than driving better value for money and securing incremental improvement in existing services. The public spending climate has increased the appetite to find new ways of doing things, including developing new forms of partnership and new approaches to complex problems. Our capacity to innovate, to design and to implement transformational change will be significantly tested in a period of financial stringency.

Now more than ever we need to have a strong set of commonly shared and evidence based principles to succeed. They need to cover large scale strategic change, the management of complex systems<sup>1</sup> and the specifics of improvement methods to provide a guide for action to use at every stage of our change programmes.

The 3-Step Improvement Framework that follows may seem common sense and appear obvious, but we know how easy it is to become distracted by a series of assumptions based on how things have always been.

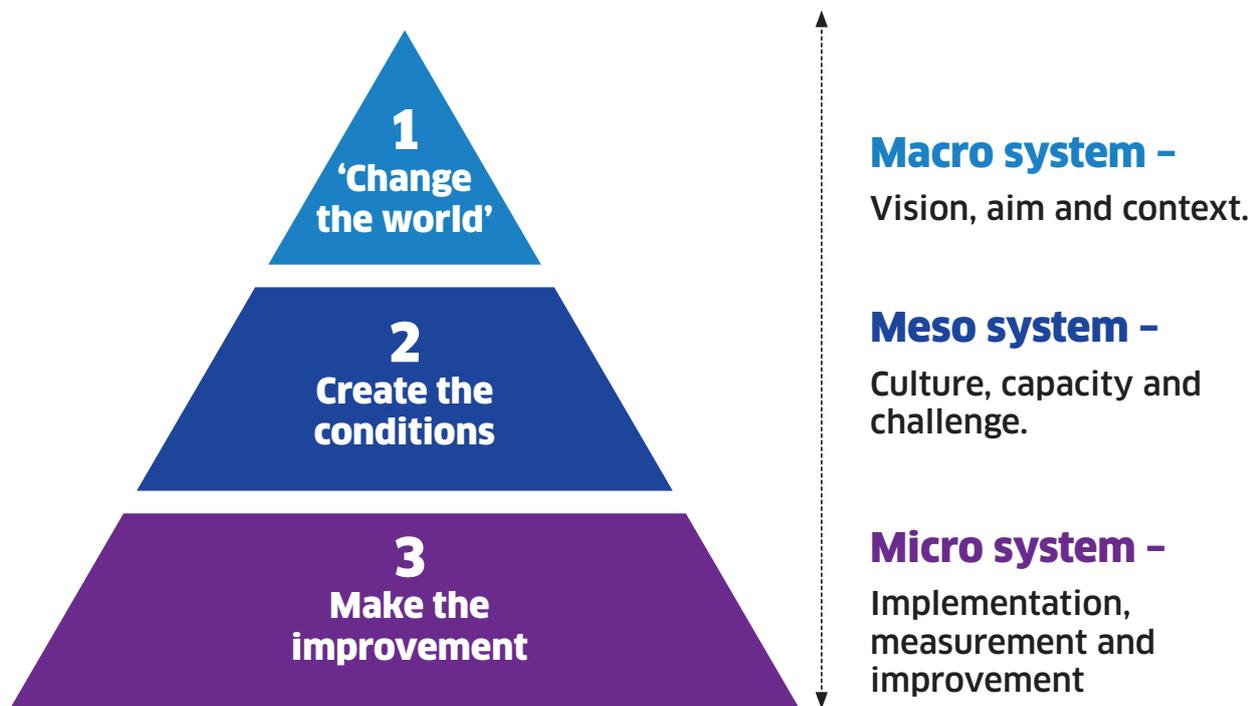
The full strategic context of our approach to improvement can be found in *'Changing the World' An Approach to Public Services Improvement in Scotland - The Strategic Context* that can be accessed on Saltire, the Scottish Government intranet site.

Additional information to support you on your improvement journey can be found in the Improvement pages on Saltire, the Scottish Government intranet site.

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<sup>1</sup> A system is an interdependent group of items, people or processes with a common purpose - *The Improvement Guide*, Langley et al 2009, 2nd edition.

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**To ensure transformational change the following key characteristics must be in place in any change programme:**

## **Step 1 - Seven points to 'change the world'**

- **A vision** - capable of stirring the heart of the community and able to serve as a constant reference and anchor point as the change moves forward
- **A story** - to enable people to recognise where they have been and where they are going
- **A set of actions** - to take us to the next steps towards releasing the vision
- **A clear framework for improvement**
- **A strategy to engage and empower the workforce** - to provide the stimulation, development and opportunity our staff need to fully release their deep commitment to public service
- **An understanding of how the change will work locally (everywhere)** - recognising communities are different and creativity should be nurtured and released at a local level
- **A guiding coalition** - a team of key people to drive the change when the going gets tough, and to sustain support.

## Step 2 - Creating the conditions

- We need to consider how to create the right conditions for improvement, including how to empower and engage local leaders and think about the characteristics leaders should demonstrate to deliver the outcomes we want.
- We must communicate the changes, empower the citizens and workforce, model and change the culture.
- We should ask all six questions below to test whether the right conditions exist to support true improvement.

### The six questions to be asked of EVERY change programme:

<p><b>1</b> <b>Aim</b> Is there an agreed aim that is understood by everyone in the system?</p>	<p><b>2</b> <b>Correct changes</b> Are we using our full knowledge to identify the right changes and prioritising those that are likely to have the biggest impact on our aim?</p>	<p><b>3</b> <b>Clear change method</b> Does everyone know and understand the method(s) we will use to improve?</p>
<p><b>4</b> <b>Measurement</b> Can we measure and report progress on our improvement aim?</p>	<p><b>5</b> <b>Capacity and capability</b> Are people and other resources deployed and being developed in the best way to enable improvement?</p>	<p><b>6</b> <b>Spread plan</b> Have we set out our plans for innovating, testing, implementing and sharing new learning to spread the improvement everywhere it is needed?</p>

Remember, improvement is unlikely to occur without clarity around these questions.

## Step 3 – Making the improvement – Aim big – start small

- This is the implementation phase: all improvement happens locally.
- Will and ideas are not enough at this level – we need implementation. We need a theory of change (**what** we will change to improve) and the ability to test and implement the changes.
- We also need to determine **how** we will change and ensure we have a clear method. The methods we use may include; Collaboratives, User/Community empowerment and performance management.
- Getting on and testing change can influence our ideas about change and improvement – leading to new learning and opportunities to spread and scale-up.

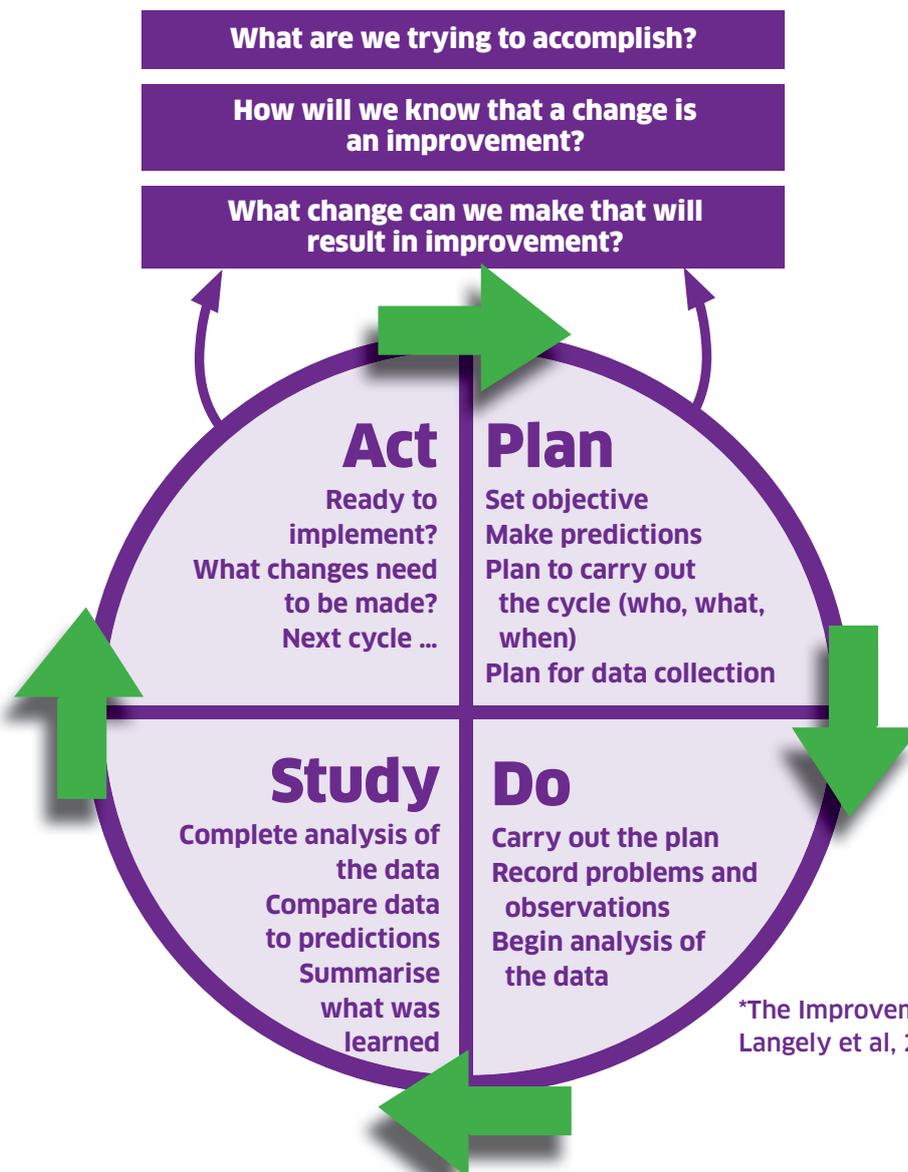
**We must choose the improvement methods (locally) that best meet our needs and stick with them for the long haul.**

**All our improvement action should be based on the simple formula of aims, measures, testing and changes.**

The following Model for Improvement\* provides an overarching approach to testing improvement at the local level, but we recognise there are also other approaches that work.

### Model for Improvement\*

The cycle can be used to turn ideas into action and connect action to learning so that the right changes can be developed and spread to maximise improvement.



\*The Improvement Guide, Langely et al, 2009, 2nd edition.



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