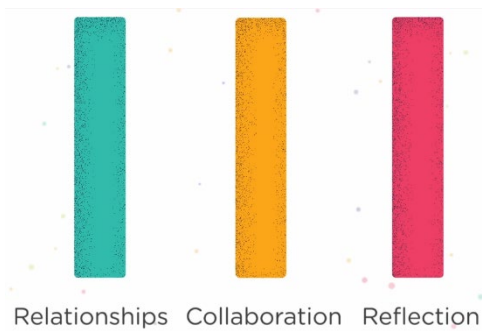


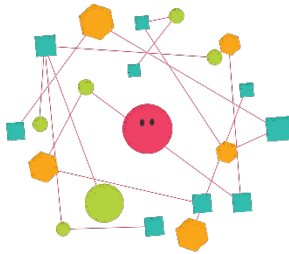
The Three Pillars



People who experience combinations of problems like homelessness, substance misuse, contact with the criminal justice system and poor mental health can find it difficult to get the support they need. Services are mostly set up to deal with one of these issues at a time, so accessing joined-up support is not straightforward. People in this situation can be viewed as “falling through the gaps” or “stuck in revolving doors”.

When people face these combinations of issues they are often described as being complex or having complex needs. When thinking about how we can do better at helping these individuals, it can be useful to understand the meaning of the words complex and complexity.

Understanding complexity



The words complexity and complex could refer to:

- a person who has many different issues or needs
- an issue, a problem or a decision that does not seem to have a simple or obvious solution
- an organisation or system with lots of different people or parts
- or ...combinations of all these things

When something is complex:

- There will be lots of different things going on at the same time and they will all be closely connected.
- Unexpected things can happen when you try and change something.
- Different people will have different perspectives on what is happening and what should be done, with people only seeing part of the situation
- You might be able to see some patterns, but predicting the future is difficult and levels of uncertainty are high.

In complex situations:

- it is difficult to say decisively what is the right thing to do

At Golden Key we have noticed that when people feel overwhelmed by the complexity of something they can often try and oversimplify things or get stuck in viewing the situation from one perspective. We can sometimes start to blame other professionals or processes or organisations for doing the wrong thing, or accuse people of making bad choices.

We have found it useful to think about how we can deal with complexity better. Can we lean into it rather than pretend it's not happening? If we can let go of thinking that we have control, or that we know what is going to happen, we get less stressed. This gives us more space for thinking differently and creating positive change.

In our own work and in the amazing work we have seen all over the city there are three closely connected elements which seem to help people to work more effectively with complex problems, complex people and complex situations.

The Three Pillars

We've called these things the **three pillars** because they have proven themselves to be strong, reliable and supportive ways of dealing with complexity. It doesn't matter whether you are working with a caseload of people in the community, sat at a desk writing reports all day, or chairing a board meeting. The three pillars can help you to take positive action and find your way through complexity.

Pillar 1: Relationships



Relationships connect us with people: building trust and giving us confidence to try out new things whilst learning about ourselves. They help us understand how other people see a situation or problem. Relationships also exist between ideas, aspirations and outcomes.

Relationships

Good relationships are the foundation for creating change. If we can focus on improving the quality of our relationships with the people we support, the people who work around us, the people with whom we work in partnership, and with different aims and aspirations, this can have a transformational effect.

Pillar 2: Collaboration



Successful outcomes in complexity happen when we bring together multiple perspectives to tackle problems together.

Collaboration

When things are complex, we don't have all the answers ourselves working collaboratively with others can help us to build trust and accountability and enable us to hold risk as a collective. When collaborating it is useful when we are prepared to try and do things differently.

Pillar 3: Reflection



When we say reflection, we mean the process of being reflective. In simple terms this is just thinking or talking about what you do, what you did, what happened, or how you felt. It is a way of noticing and capturing learning from experience. It is an opportunity to think about what you would do differently next time.

Reflection

Reflection supports learning. It helps us to understand how to manage our own and each other's wellbeing. It can be an opportunity to notice when you or someone else is struggling. It can help to notice biases or assumptions that might be affecting the way people are thinking or acting.

We can use these three pillars to explore ways in which we can work more effectively in complexity. By exploring our interaction with each pillar, we can start to recognise the things we already have in place and areas in which we can improve.

We hope that the pillars can help you to navigate through the messiness and complexity of your work as much as they have helped us in ours.

For more information, please get in touch or visit our website:

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