

# Tool 4

## How can I contribute to the team?

*This tool is designed to help you map your team contribution statements and create a better understanding of each other's skills, knowledge and experience.*

### **Making time to understand each other as team members**

We each bring a lot more to the team than the core discipline and job role suggests. We have work and life experiences that when combined make us the people we are.

To bring out the best in us, we must be willing to share our knowledge and experiences. Likewise, to get the best out of our new colleagues, we must really listen, understand and appreciate the capabilities and know-how they too add to the team.

### **Going beyond perceptions**

If we fail to take time to understand one another, we will fill our gaps in our knowledge by drawing on our perceptions. And what we know of perceptions is that they can be wrong.

In a recent project we asked GP's, nurses and pharmacists to share their perceptions of one another. Practitioners were split into their respective professional groups and asked to prepare a reality check playback, sharing their insights about what is really like. By sharing their reflections, new insights were gained and some myths busted. The team learnt that nurses were treated as the 'lowest of the low' by some staff, that GP's strength lies in risk management rather than just diagnostic, and the myth busted was about pharmacists not having a structured day, they do.

### **Do it yourself, rather than relying on externals**

We also know that in-house teams bring a practical focus that external consultants simply don't have. Sharing our knowledge helps engage team members and builds our confidence to work collaboratively.

The Planning Advisory Service (2008)<sup>1</sup> sum it up when they say "... the taken-for-granted common wisdom of how you successfully pursue collaboration is often contradicted by the reality of practice."

So repeated experience of being part of a number of shared projects will hone the skills of the in-house experts. They can then go on to teach and train their colleagues building the capacity even further.<sup>2</sup>

This is supported by our many opportunities<sup>3</sup> of observing inexperienced team members lose influence in the early days of discussions to more experienced team members from other partners and finding it very difficult to redress the imbalance during the project.

Therefore, by not equipping team members with the skills and insights in building multi-agency/ multidisciplinary teams are, in effect gambling with the success or failure of their involvement.

*"There is an obligation on those who have appointed Members or senior managers to a shared service role, to rapidly equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to 'get it right first time.'"<sup>4</sup>*

The alternative is to be led through the design of multi-million pound shared services by representatives who are learning on the job and stumbling their way to success.

<sup>1</sup> Planning Advisory Service (2008) *Real Collaboration: A guide to establishing effective collaborative relationships in planning services*. London: IDEA Publications

<sup>2</sup> Lank, E. (2006) "...because of our collective failure to recognise the connected nature of the organisational world, we have to date largely failed to educate managers and leaders sufficiently in the art of making collaborative work effective."

<sup>3</sup> We have been involved in or observed almost 30 shared service design teams in action.

<sup>4</sup> SSA Collaborative Transformation Magazine (2009)

## Step 2: Understanding each other

*The tool enables you to identify the strengths in your group. It also enables you to identify the gaps in knowledge that may impact on the project.*

### Exploit the gold under your feet

If we could combine and made available to all in our team, the skills, knowledge, networks and energy we collectively bring, imagine how this could really power-up the collaboration.

Imagine the mutual 'support structure' it can create to help us sustain the team.

By sharing our personal contribution statements, we will learn quickly how each team member adds value to the team. But beyond that, we will begin to understand the people, what makes them tick, their best hopes for the team, any concerns and fears they might have, aspirations to learn new things and so forth.

So Tool 4 is an important tool that should be used early in the formation of your workgroup, so that there is a clear recognition of the available skills, experience and resource that can be drawn on for your project.

There are two reasons for using this tool.

We first used the tool with a group of engineers from five councils at their first meeting. We asked them to fill in the brief CV prior to the meeting and used them to provide introductions. For example: "*Kevin you spent three years working in your previous job on something similar to this... maybe you could tell the group a bit more?*"

Allowing each person in turn to share their CV, and their view on the project, resulted in the group understanding the professional and social background to colleagues they had not met before. An added value is the development of a mutual respect between team members.

### Identifying gaps

The tool enables you to identify the strengths in your group. It also enables you to identify the gaps in knowledge that may impact on the project.

For example there may be specialist areas in IT that are not currently covered in your group's skills and knowledge.

### How to use this tool:

Tool 4 helps you to identify if there are appropriate skills in your workgroup when setting up the multi-agency/disciplinary team.

**Step 1:** Create a blank version of the mini-CV layout shown on the opposite page.

Email the CV layout to your group. In your email explain the purpose of the tool is to help the team understand its strengths and experience. Invite them to fill in as much or as little of the CV as they like.

Also confirm that it is not a compulsory exercise, but would be helpful to the group. Ask them to send it back to you before the next meeting.

**Step 2:** In the next meeting, use the information in the mini-CVs to encourage each member to talk, for a couple of minutes, about the experience they can bring to the project.

For example, using the content of a CV you could start by saying something like, "*Sally, you worked on a private sector collaboration in 2016. What do you feel about this project, compared to that one?*"

Then ask them about what they can contribute and what they feel are the biggest challenges.

Do this for each member of the workgroup. They should feel comfortable responding, as they have prepared what they could say in the mini-CV they sent you.

**Step 3:** Use the Mini-CVs to map the skills of your existing group identifying where the strengths of the group are and gaps that may need to be filled during the team building phase.

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## Understanding each other

By way of introduction, can you please complete this mini CV as a means of introducing yourself to the wider team:

<p><b>What is your job title?</b></p>	
<p><b>What do you do?</b></p> <p>What are the key responsibilities in your day job?</p>	
<p><b>What can you bring?</b></p> <p>What skills, experiences and networks can you bring in collaborative working? (i.e. beyond your day job)</p>	
<p><b>How can you contribute?</b></p> <p>How do you feel you can best contribute to the team in its role (i.e. to accelerate the transformation and integration of services) ?</p>	
<p><b>What are your challenges?</b></p> <p>Intuitively, what do you feel are the biggest challenges we will experience?</p>	
<p><b>Who do you know?</b></p> <p>Which contacts do you have, who you feel could add value to the team and help extend its knowledge?</p>	

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## USER LOG

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Project & date tool used	What was the desired outcome of using this tool?	What actually happened?	What would you do differently next time?