# Understanding and Leading Change

This is the seventh 'tool of the month' from the IHR Project's Workforce Development Team. We are sharing our favourite concepts, models, hints, and tips that resonate with us and really helped us out in different work environments. Please come back each month to see what we are sharing. As with any concepts, models, hints and tips – these do not represent a fixed way of doing things, they are not hard and fast rules – if they resonate with you please make use of them – if they don't that's fine too!

There are many different types of change that can happen within an organisation or team, not only will you be involved in ensuring the technical and operational changes run smoothly – you will also be responsible for the staff who are supporting and subject to the change. To help you understand the potential impact of change on your staff, and the helpful ways to provide support we are sharing a commonly used change model along with hints and tips to help you navigate the journey.

What is change?
Change can be described as the process of causing a function, practice, or thing to become different compared to what it is at present or what it was in the past. The change might apply to an individual, a team, department, or whole organisation and in some cases a whole system, which may involve external partners and service users
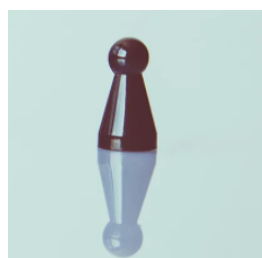
The impact of change on you and your colleagues

The individual
People experience change differently – because we are all shaped by past experiences, our personalities, and value. It is important to appreciate individual circumstances.
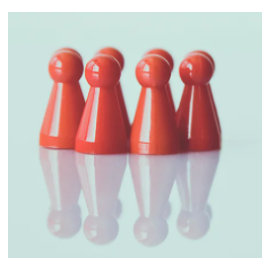
The Team
Each team had a different experience of change, some teams have experienced a lot of changes together, others may have been 'static' for several year. It is important to appreciate the 'journey' on which the team has been.

The Change Journey

The following model applies to individuals, teams or may be organisation wide. The Kubler Ross Change Curve is based on a model originally developed in the 1960s by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross to explain the grieving process.
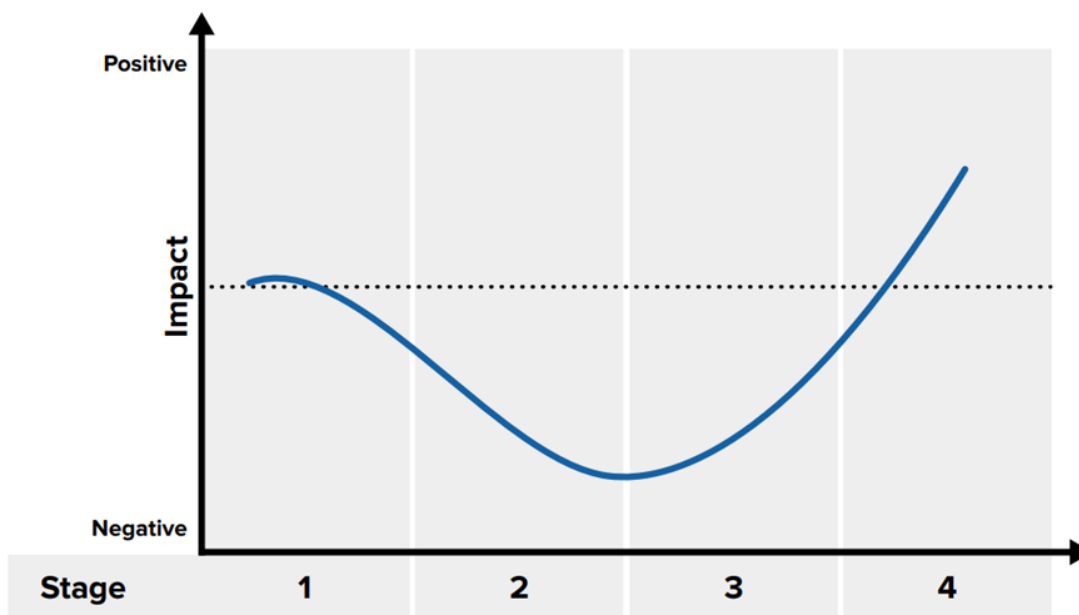
People move through the change curve at their own pace, based on their previous experiences, their personality traits and the impact of the change on them at that moment in time

You as a leader can try to understand at what stage each member of the team is at in their individual journey and understand how you can help them move to the next stage…
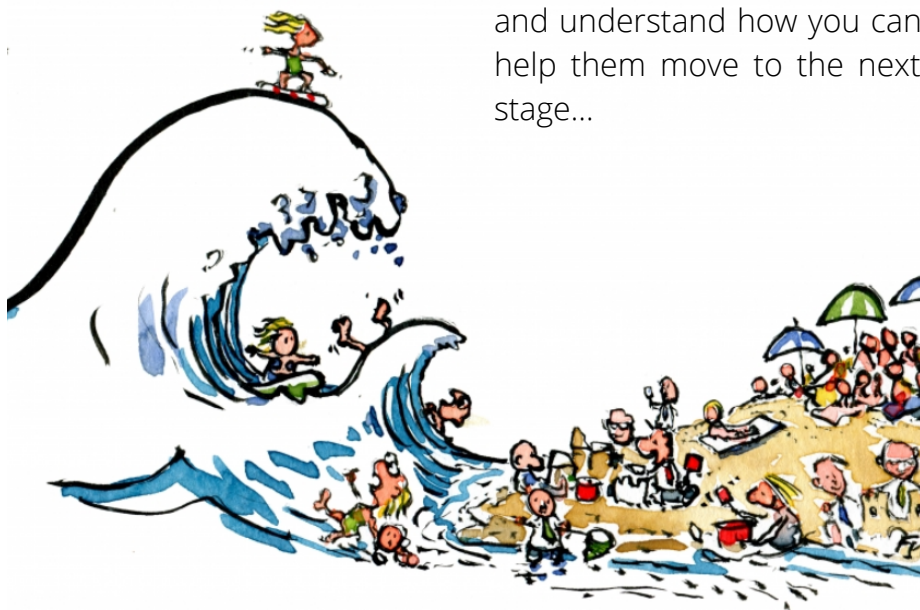
Understanding the individual.

To understand the individual we need to
- Listen actively and observe them
- Show them that their experience matters to you
- Be open minded about what they share

Having understood the experience of the individual – you will be able to identify that they may be coping in one of two ways:
- **Escape coping** which is based on avoidance or
- **Control coping** which is positive and proactive

It is helpful to understand what you might find on a stage by stage basis - and how you as a leader or manager can help your staff ride the wave of change. Here is what you might expect…

Stage 1 – Shock / denial

Staff understand what is happening but need time to adjust and process the information. There may be a desire to 'shoot the messenger'

What should I do?

At this stage staff need information as such it is helpful to communicate often (without overwhelming people). Staff should also be directed to additional sources of information about the change.

Stage 2 – Anger / Fear

Staff may react in different ways – they may resist the change actively or passively; this could mean being very vocal or very quiet, they might be fearful of that this means to them in terms of career, status or financial implications. This is can be a sensitive and challenging time for the leader/manager – if handled incorrectly it could make the impact of the change a lot worse.

What should I do?

As a manager/leader it will mean carefully listening to the concerns of your staff and communicating with clarity should receive clear communication with an offer of support to minimize and mitigate the problems that they might experience.

What should I do?

As a manager or leader, you can understand the needs of individuals and ensure that they are given early opportunities to receive training and development opportunities to prepare them for their new environment. Staff may not be very productive at this stage and contingency must be built in so they are able to navigate this time without too much pressure.

Stage 3 – Acceptance

As your staff's acceptance grows they will want to explore what the change really means to them, it might mean a career change, new skills required, or moving out of the organisation.

Stage 4 – Commitment

At this time the changes are in place and the changes are embedded at in individual and team level and you will start to see the benefits of the change.

What should I do?

The most important time for you as a leader/manager is to acknowledge the efforts that your team has made, celebrate their successes, and do what you can to reinforce the changes that have been made.

See below for further helpful tips on roles for those involved in the change process, with thanks to the Organisational Design and Development Team, UKHSA:

Senior Leader's role in change

- Spokesperson – be the 'face' of the change by being visible and accessible to those impacted and speaking about the change at key senior meetings. For example, holding staff live question and answer sessions
- Role model – be a role model for the change. When you speak about it speak with passion and communicate the purpose and benefits. Start to be the change e.g. model new ways of working now
- Listen – listen to feedback from staff and stakeholders and seek to find solutions or explain when things can't alter
- Behaviours – reiterate that effective behaviours need to be maintained and poor behaviour will not be tolerated
- Resource – ensure the change is properly resourced and/or backfill provided so 'business as usual' is not compromised and staff are not overburdened

Manager's role in change

- Understand - the rationale for change, timing and how it will impact on individuals in your team
- Include - staff in the change process
- Policies and procedures – be clear what policies and procedures you may need during the change process
- Be supportive – recognise that different people are affected by change in different ways
- Identify resistance – feedback issues from the team on their behalf, seek clarity when there is ambiguity, identify areas where quick wins could be achieved
- Be a role model – try to be an early adopter of change, demonstrating that you are willing to try new things

Individual's role in change

- Keep up to date – read information that has been circulated to you. Visit the relevant pages on the intranet. Know who your key contact is
- Participate - attend team meetings and briefings, participate and ask questions if you are unclear
- Plan for change – think how the change will affect you and what steps you may need to take personally to help make the change successful. For example, identifying training and development needs, researching new bus routes to work, archiving files etc.
- Look after yourselves – change can be stressful and raise anxiety levels. Speak to your line manager if they have any questions or concerns. Know what health and wellbeing resources are available to you and how to access them. Look out for other colleagues and signpost them to help if you are concerned

In summary...

There are significant demands on you as a leader /manager during the change process, not just planning and implementing the changes, but supporting your staff through their journey. The three key things that you can do for your staff during the change process...

1. Plan changes taking in to account the impact of your staff
2. Understand the impact of the change on staff by listening carefully to them
3. Act based on the feedback given, responding with support and development opportunities

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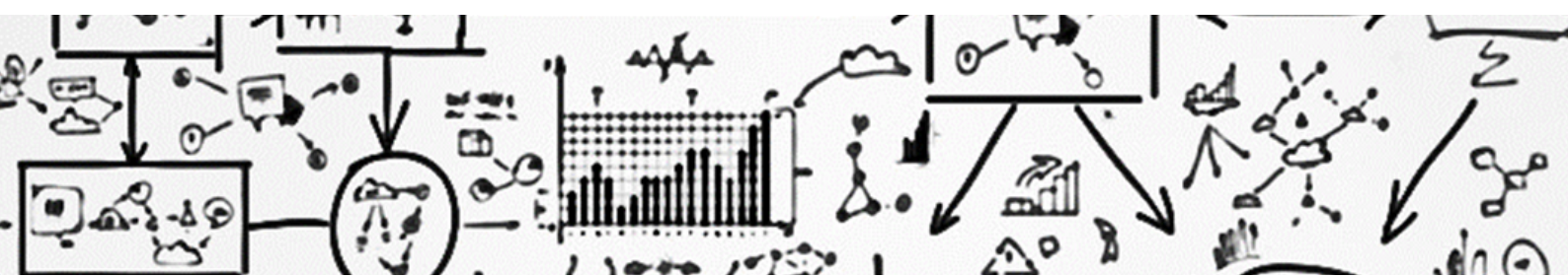
References and further reading

Leadership skills

- The Essential Skills of a Change Leader (accipio.com)
- 7 Change Leadership Skills Everyone Needs | The Muse
- Leading Your Staff Through Change | Lab Manager

Planning change as a leader

- How to Lead Your Team Through Change (entrepreneur.com)
- Successful Change Management — Kotter's 8-Step Change Model • Leadership Thoughts Blog
- Leading Change? Seven Principles to Guide Your Work (ihi.org)
- Coping With Change - Facing Fear and the "New Normal" (mindtools.com)