

Purpose-driven approaches using self-organising teams - a transformation in workforce and service models



What are purpose-driven approaches?

Purpose-driven approaches are a form of work innovation used to improve productivity, job quality and client responsiveness. This is done through stronger engagement of the workforce to provide high quality services, while managers shift from a supervisory to a supportive role. There is no single model, but such approaches often include the following:

- People working with more discretion in a high trust environment
- Self-organising teams which take on more functions and accountability
- Supervisors adopting a coaching rather than managing role
- Staff sharing a vision, values, and explicit ground rules of behaviour which allow simplified procedures and policies
- Multiskilling and broader job roles
- Strong investment in training and professional learning
- User-friendly IT that simplifies administration and encourages workers to communicate easily.

Would it work in disability?

High performance or purpose-driven work practices can work well in the social care sector where quality depends on the relationship between worker and client. There are well-developed examples internationally (such as the Dutch neighbourhood care organisations, Buurtzorg, JP van den Bendt and in the UK, Cornerstone).

Social care providers are typically values-based and workers draw satisfaction from the intrinsic rewards of the job, taking pride in being able to make a difference to people's lives. When workers apply so-called 'discretionary effort' – that is, using their initiative beyond following rules and procedures – the care

is usually better and more responsive. Consumers appreciate consistent staff relationships with people who can make decisions.

What's the evidence?

In Europe and North America, such practices have been found to create:

- Personalised, responsive services with high levels of client satisfaction
- Productive, sustainable businesses with lower back office costs (overheads at Buurtzorg are 8 per cent compared to 25 per cent among competitors)
- Organisations that attract and retain talented staff.

What is NDS doing?

NDS has created a network of organisations experimenting with these new ways of working, to encourage sharing of information and techniques and to distil lessons from their experiments.

Purpose-driven approaches and self-organising teams in the Australian disability sector will look different to Buurtzorg or any others. Regulation, pricing, client planning, the philosophy of support and the profile of the workforce in Australian disability all differ to those elsewhere.

However, the principles informing approaches overseas have stimulated innovation in Australia. Many providers are now well-progressed in their trials and keen to share and learn with others.

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If you want to know more:

NDS Workforce Hub

www.nds.org.au/workforce-hub/optimising-your-workforce

Jos de Blok presentation, Humanity above bureaucracy, Nov 2014.

www.thersa.org/events/2014/11/humanity-above-bureaucracy

Public World, Learning from Buurtzorg, How ZorgAccent and Amstelring Wijkzorg improved their services, jobs and finances, Dec 2016.

[www.publicworld.org/files/Learning from Buurtzorg.pdf](http://www.publicworld.org/files/Learning_from_Buurtzorg.pdf)

Unison, Applying the Buurtzorg care model in Scotland, Jan 2016

www.unison-scotland.org/2016/01/28/briefing-072-bargaining-buurtzorg-care-model-jan-2016

Helen Sanderson Podcasts about self-management, Conversations with Yumi Stamet, NDS, 2016

helensanderson.net/podcasts/podcasts-self-management

Contact

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