Briefing 3: Understanding psychological influences on practice change: Capability, Opportunity, Motivation

Why do we need to know about psychological influences?

- Successful service transformation is organisational change at multiple levels.[1]
- Organisational change depends on individuals (commissioners, managers and frontline practitioners) changing their practice.
- If individuals don't change their practice, transformation won't work.[2]
- Understanding psychological influences can tell us what is helping or hindering individuals making a change to their practice.
- Having a good understanding of this means managers can put in place the right support.
- In the Teams Together programme, we worked **in collaboration** with teams to **co-identify** barriers to making changes to practice in new models of care.

Which psychological factors influence practice behaviours?

Over a hundred years of behavioural science research has shown how **thoughts** and **feelings** influence everything we do and don't do. Researchers have summarised these into three kinds of broad factors, known as **Capability, Opportunity** and **Motivation** for Behaviour, or COM-B[3]. These can be further subdivided into **physical** vs. **psychological capability**, **physical** vs. **social opportunity**, **reflective** vs. **automatic motivation**.

When a health or social care professional in a team is asked to make a change to what they do at work, this depends on:

Opportunity

Their **physical** and **social** environmental factors helping or hindering the behaviour, including time, equipment or social pressures

Capability

Their **psychological** or **physical** ability to do the new behaviour, including knowledge, skills, strength or stamina

Motivation

Their desire to do the behaviour, including **reflective** (weighing up pros and cons) and **automatic** motivation (habits, impulses, needs)
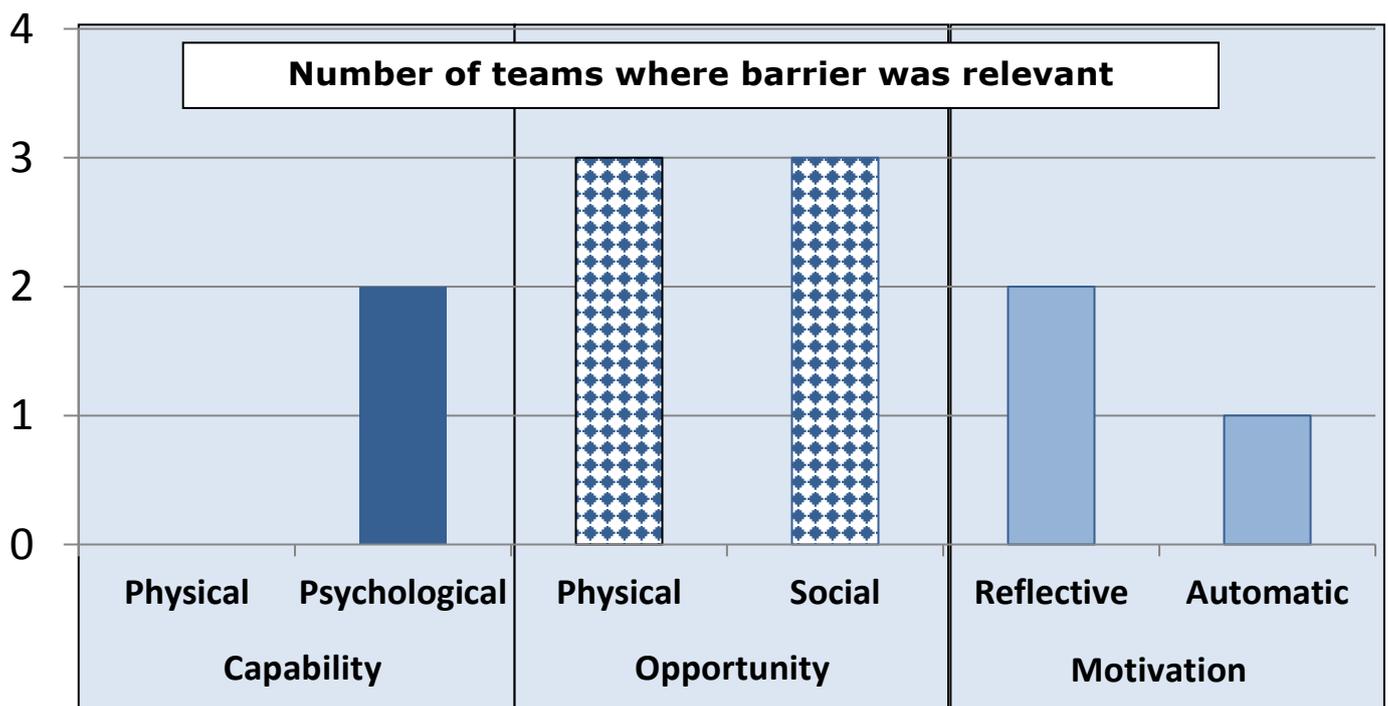
How can we investigate the barriers?

It can be useful to take a range of approaches, depending on team preferences and time. In the Teams Together programme we worked with four clinical teams from paediatric, midwifery, heat failure and older adult mental health specialties at four NHS New Care Model vanguard sites. With team members we explored the psychological barriers to specific identified changes through:

Interviews to explore COM barriers with individual team leads and members

Discussion/focus groups with 3-8 team leads/members together

Observations of individual practice to see barriers in action

Behavioural questionnaires to collect individual views on barriers using rating scales

# What are the common psychological barriers for teams?

Collating together findings at the team level, the four teams we worked with most often identified **opportunity** and **motivation**, rather than **capability** as the main barriers to making practice changes needed for new models of care, which pointed towards targeted interventions to help (see briefing 4).

Number of teams where barrier was relevant

Capability		Opportunity		Motivation	
Physical	Psychological	Physical	Social	Reflective	Automatic
0	2	3	3	2	1

So what?

- Those leading change need to explore individuals' **capability**, **opportunity** and **motivation**
- This will help teams engage in change and leaders can offer more **effective**, **targeted** and **well-spent** support to kick-start change.
- For example, investing in a training course to increase team capability to work in a new way would be a waste of resource if capability isn't a barrier to change.
- Teams and leads can benefit from setting aside time to understand **what behaviour changes will be required** and **what psychological barriers** are in the way, thinking **beyond capability** when planning change.

Thinking behaviourally helps us better understand health and social care professionals' experiences of transformation and help them adopt new care models
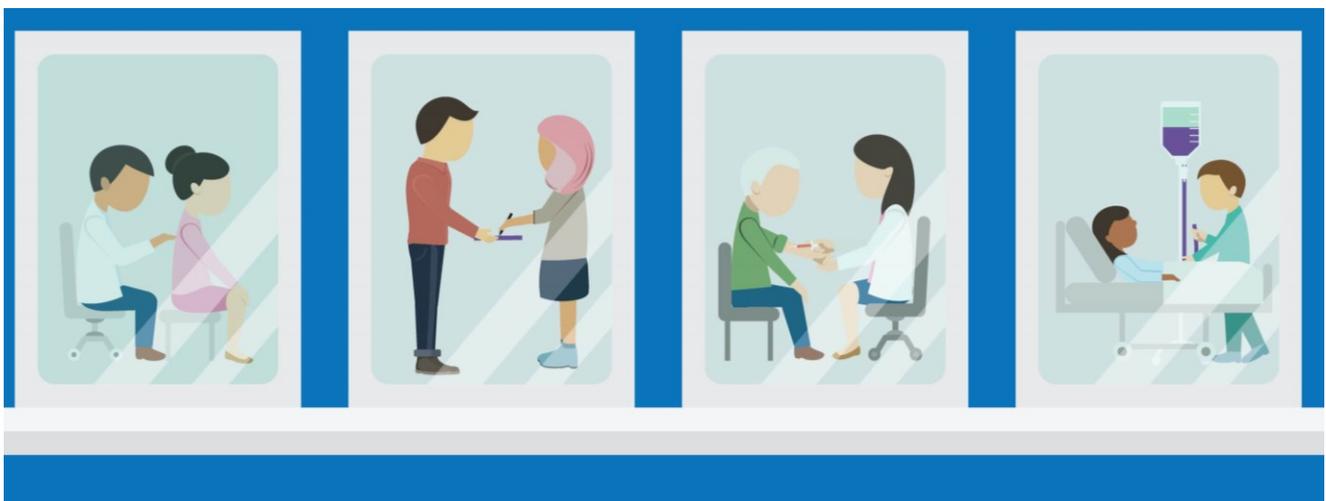
The Teams Together programme

- This brief was written by Eleanor Bull, Dr Joanne Hart, Juliette Swift and Dr Lucie Byrne-Davis from the Teams Together Programme
- The Teams Together Programme helps health and social care teams transform their practice using behavioural science. Health Education England commissioned Health Psychologists at the University of Manchester to support teams from four New Care Models Vanguard sites in the North West England.
- Working in new ways may mean changing workforce culture. Teams Together looks at this with a behavioural lens, working with teams to understand practices they are finding difficult to change and the psychological drivers behind this, to develop tailored interventions to help.
- For more information, please see http://www.mcrimpsci.org/teams-together/

References

1. Goffman E. (1986). Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
2. Clark, P. G. (2013). Toward a transtheoretical model of..institutional change. Journal of Interprofessional Care, 27, 43-9.
3. Michie, S., Van Stralen, M. M., & West, R. (2011). The behaviour change wheel: a new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation science*, 6(1), 42.