

Tool 26: Reflection on a different (intersectional) system

This tool helps you to consider what an intersectional system looks like.

1. Read the reflection below.
2. Reflect on the questions and discuss these with colleagues.

What would it look like if we did better things?

'The significant problems we have cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which we created them.'

(Albert Einstein)

In our journey towards progress and improvement, we often find ourselves striving to do things better. We search for innovative solutions, challenge existing norms, and seek ways to make positive change.

However, amidst this pursuit, we sometimes overlook a crucial aspect: the power of doing better things in social care through intersectionality.

Intersectionality, a concept championed by scholars and activists alike, teaches us that the complexities of our identities and experiences must be considered when addressing social issues. Let us explore why the embrace of intersectionality is not just vital but also transformative in our endeavours to improve social care.

Imagine, for a moment, a world where we approach social care with an intersectional lens.

Where the needs and experiences of individuals are acknowledged and understood, not as isolated fragments, but as intricate pieces of a larger puzzle. Intersectionality challenges us to recognise that we are not defined by a single dimension of our identity, but by an interweaving patchwork quilt of race, gender, disability, sexuality, class, ability, and more. It urges us to recognise that our struggles and privileges are interconnected and cannot be separated.

In social care, intersectionality dismantles the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach.

It compels us to recognise that marginalised communities face unique challenges that intersect and compound, resulting in compounded forms of discrimination and marginalisation. By adopting an intersectional framework, we reject the idea that a singular solution can adequately address the complexities of people's lives. Instead, we strive to understand the overlapping systems of oppression and privilege that shape their experiences.

By embracing intersectionality in social care, we create spaces that prioritise inclusivity and equity.

We acknowledge that systemic discrimination can manifest differently for different individuals, and that our responses must reflect this reality. We amplify the voices of marginalised communities, making them active participants in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. We recognise that true empowerment comes from listening, understanding, and respecting the diverse experiences that shape our society.

Intersectionality changes social care into a collaborative endeavour, where individuals and communities work together to dismantle oppressive structures. It encourages us to examine our own biases and privileges, fostering a culture of empathy and compassion. By centering intersectionality, we challenge ourselves to confront the discomfort that arises when we confront the harsh realities faced by marginalised groups. We recognise that our own liberation is intimately tied to the liberation of others, and that no one is truly free until everyone is.

Moreover, intersectionality compels us to reevaluate the distribution of resources and opportunities. It prompts us to ask difficult questions about who is benefiting from existing systems, and who is left behind. By recognising the unique needs of intersecting identities, we can develop targeted interventions and policies that bridge the gaps and foster genuine equality. In doing so, we move beyond superficial diversity and inclusion, and create lasting change that is rooted in justice.

In conclusion, the importance of using intersectionality in doing things better in social care cannot be overstated. It calls us to challenge the status quo, to break down barriers, and to build a society where every individual is seen and heard.

Let us not settle for simply doing things better but let us strive to do better things.

Together, with intersectionality as our guiding light, we can forge a path towards a more inclusive, equitable, and compassionate future in social care.'

Reflection from Clenton Farquharson, written for the Change Project in 2023.



Reflective questions:

- > Where, when and for whom does your system lead to a one-size-fits-all approach?
- > How do you recognise the unique challenges faced by marginalised communities in your area?
- > How do you work collaboratively with individuals and communities to dismantle oppressive structures?
- > Who is benefiting from existing systems, and who is left behind?
- > What does it mean to you and to people in your organisation that your own liberation is tied to the liberation of others, and that no one is truly free until everyone is?

You may find these thoughts from those who took part in the Change Project helpful:

- > *'The system is geared against certain groups of people.'*
- > *'We need to be taking action to challenge at a systemic level and acknowledge the active role for leaders.'*
- > *'We need to listen to learn - to understand the systematic barriers that people from marginalised groups face.'*