

Finding the missing piece :
a story about knowledge sharing in a
community health & social care team



by Vicky Ward

with illustrations by
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This story is based on data collected by observing the work of a community health and social care team during an independent research project funded by the National Institute for Health Research. The characters named in the story are fictional and not based on any one individual.

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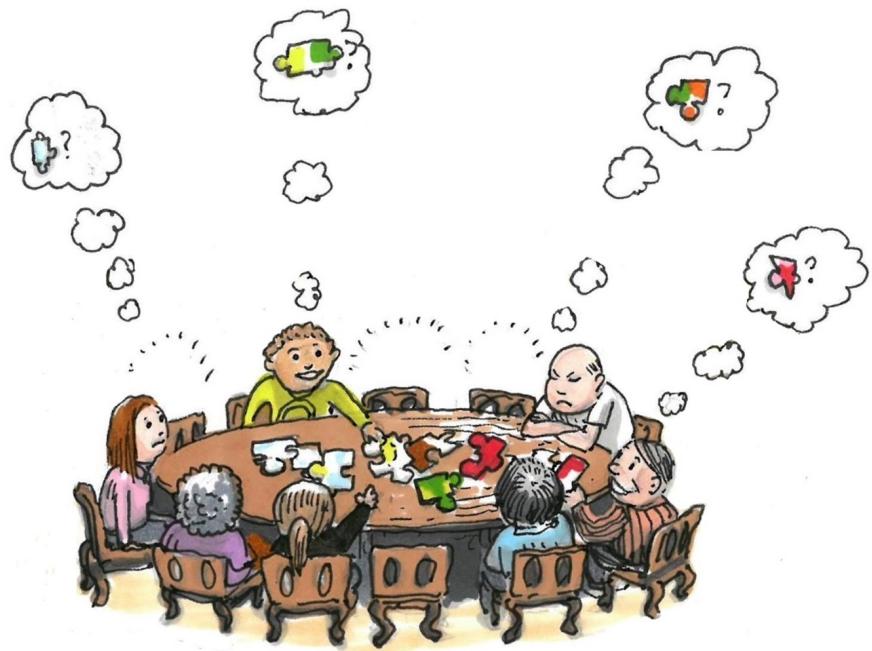
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This story is about the Riverford community health and social care team. The team is made up of lots of different health and social care professionals like nurses, social workers and physiotherapists. Their job is to work together to look after people living in the local community. This is a story about what their knowledge sharing looks like.

The story is designed to illustrate a number of lessons about how groups of people share knowledge. At these points you will find a box containing a short commentary and some questions which could be used to encourage knowledge sharing. At the end of the story you will find a short summary of these lessons and some further details about the questions.



This is the Riverford team. Every week they get together around a table to talk about the people they are looking after. Sometimes it seems as if everyone there has a different idea about what the meetings are for – they have all got different agendas.

Meetings are an important setting for groups of people to share knowledge with one another. It can be difficult to share knowledge if people in the group have different ideas about what they should be doing. Focusing on a common goal could help. A question to help is “what is the issue we need to address?”



Some people seem a bit prickly while others are warmer and more receptive towards other people's ideas. But the people who are there know that they need to be there because they are part of the picture, even though they can't quite see what the picture looks like and what they are aiming for.

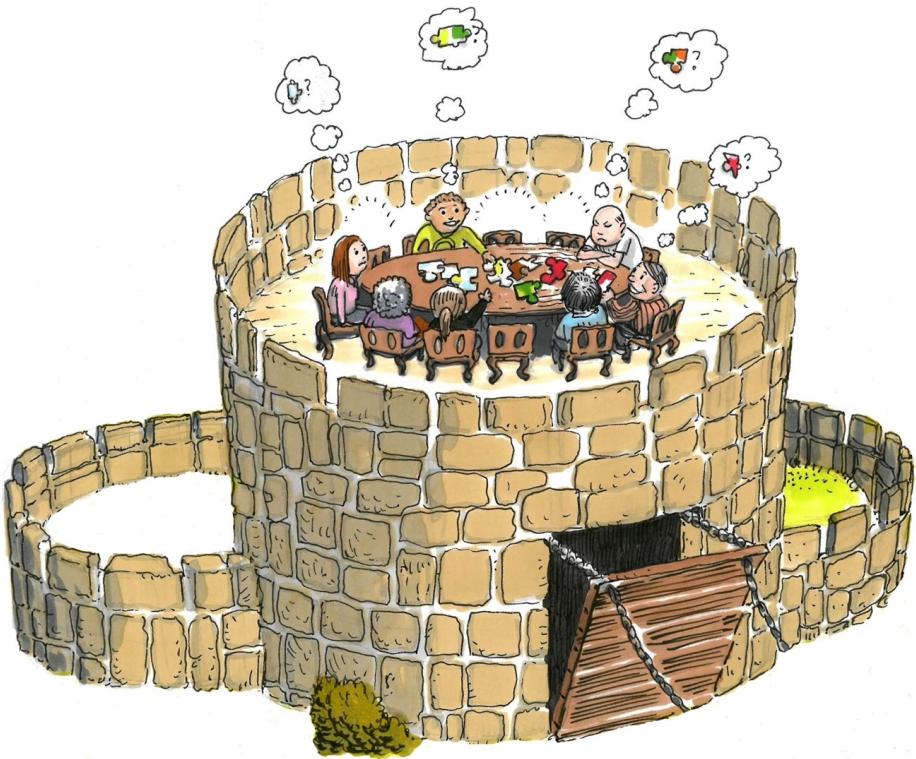
Creating an open atmosphere where knowledge and ideas are welcomed is an important part of how and why groups of people share knowledge. It can be difficult for groups of people to achieve this. Questions to help include "what do we know or think about the issue we are discussing?" and "do we all know or think the same?"

The Riverford team often get stuck when they try to talk about the people they are looking after because there are always people missing from the meeting.



They know that they need star people in the room with different ideas and agendas who can help to move their conversations forward. But they don't really have a clear picture of how the meetings should look and who should be there, so it's difficult to know how to get those star people in.

Different perspectives are a valuable source of knowledge when groups of people are trying to work out what to do in challenging situations (like how to help someone with complex needs). It can be difficult for groups of people to access this knowledge. Questions to help include "who else might know something about this situation?" and "who do we need to talk to?"



It's also difficult for those star people who are outside the meeting looking in. They can't see what is going on inside the room, or what the people inside are aiming for. This means that they can't see the value of the meetings.

Groups of people who work together on a regular basis share and create a range of knowledge. This includes knowledge about what they are trying to do together. It can be difficult for groups of people to share this knowledge with others. A question to help is "how do we share what we know with others?"



So instead of joining the meeting and joining in with the discussions these star people stick to their own conversations in their own worlds. They don't see the key which would allow them to unlock the door and bring their knowledge into the meeting.

Knowledge from elsewhere is vital when groups of people are dealing with difficult situations (like how to help people with complex needs). When groups of people are unclear about how and why they are sharing knowledge and what they need to know it can be difficult for people outside the group to recognise the value of their knowledge. Questions to help include "what do we need to know?" and "how do we find the knowledge we need?"

This story has illustrated a number of important lessons about knowledge sharing. In summary, the Riverford team are able to share knowledge with one another when they meet together regularly and welcome one another's knowledge.

The team face a number of challenges when trying to share knowledge. They find it difficult to agree on why they are sharing knowledge and what they are trying to do and to share their aims with others. This means that they also struggle to access knowledge from elsewhere.

One way of dealing with these and other challenges is to ask questions like those shown in the boxes on the previous pages. These questions have been designed to help groups of people to share knowledge when they are dealing with difficult situations where there are no clear answers (such as how to help people with complex needs). The questions focus on helping groups of people to think and talk about their main area of concern, what they do and don't know and how they will access and use knowledge to address the situation they are dealing with.

For details of where you can find out more about these knowledge sharing questions please turn the page.

About the author

Vicky Ward is an academic from the University of St Andrews. Her work focuses on how people share knowledge with each other and how they can be supported to do so.

Between October 2014 and November 2016 she looked at how knowledge was shared during case management meetings in community health and social care teams. She also developed and tested a set of questions designed to help these teams to share knowledge.

To find out more about the project and download resources please visit

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st-andrews.ac.uk/](https://mobilisinghealthandsocialcareknowledge.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/)

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