How Philanthropy Can Advance Social Service Systems Reform
By Madeleine Clarke, Founding Director, Genio
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The international challenge of social service reform

As we are living longer and depending on fewer, many countries are having to confront shortfalls to be able to provide current levels of services to future populations. Throughout the world awareness is increasing that standardised social services in fields such as housing, disability and mental health that are not tailored to meet individual needs are expensive and unsustainable. In terms of outcomes *and* economics, personalising services and making them cost effective is becoming an imperative across the globe.[1]

There is potential to significantly enhance the impact of philanthropy and social investment on social services in Europe. Since the early 1920s philanthropists have sought to influence these services through funding research on effective approaches and developing exemplar demonstration projects. Whilst research evidence and advocacy are important aspects of service reform, they do not in themselves create change within deeply ingrained systems and often have a marginal impact. There is now extensive evidence that reforming systems requires close partnerships with key actors. Given the scale of involvement of social services in addressing many of the challenges which European philanthropy and social investment seeks to address, a realistic and sophisticated approach to helping to reform these complex systems is needed.

Personalising Social Services 2008 - 2016

Genio is a non-profit organisation developing approaches to improving services to populations in need. Genio currently works in Ireland in the fields of dementia, disability and mental health. The model we have developed is transferable to reforming services for other groups and in other countries. We have been invited to assist in bringing about service improvements and efficiencies in two other areas of need. We have also decided to explore opportunities where we can work with others to help bring about sustainable improvements at scale in Europe and other regions.

Our aim is to ensure that people who are disadvantaged have opportunities to live as included and valued citizens. This requires social services to become personalised and cost-effective rather than standardised, 'one-size-fits-all' and

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[1] Delivering Public Service for the Future: Navigating the Shifts Accenture (2012): 5/6
https://www.accenture.com/t20150527T210823__w__/ca-fr/_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Local/fr-ca/PDF/Accenture-Delivering-Public-Service-for-the-Future-112712.pdf

unnecessarily expensive. Personalising services means giving people what they need, when and where they need it. Personalised social service systems respond in timely and flexible ways that put the person at the heart of service design and delivery. They involve listening carefully and developing responses that address priorities identified by the person in need. For the homeless person it can mean a home, support to maintain a tenancy and to develop relationships within the community; for the neglected child it can mean the care of a consistent adult, regular meals and knowing that he or she will be able to get to school Monday to Friday; for the person with a disability it can mean living as part of the community with support to participate in activities that most people take for granted; for the person with dementia it means having the right kind of help to remain connected to the life he or she has been living at home with family and friends. Personalising services in cost-effective ways means relying on paid professionals only where needed. See www.genio.ie/personalised-supports-film.

We have spent the last eight years developing and implementing system change strategies in the areas of disability, mental health and dementia. This has involved facilitating an alliance between philanthropy (the Atlantic Philanthropies) and government using private funding as a catalyst to refocus public spending to produce better outcomes, cost effectively. At this point we have supported service improvements to reach over 5,000 people in need and we have provided training, advice and support to a further 9,000 staff, family members and carers. For example, in the disability area we are working alongside the service system to accelerate the movement of people out of institutions to the community where they can receive personalised services to create the lives they want to lead www.genio.ie/videos/tanya. In mental health we are supporting the introduction of a 'recovery' focus in services where the person is actively involved in identifying ways of leading a full and included life in the community despite have a mental health difficulty www.genio.ie/videos/DORAS. Independent evaluation has demonstrated sustained improvements in the quality of life of those with disabilities and mental health difficulties involved and the potential for cost savings at a national level to fund increasing demand in the context of demographic trends www.genio.ie/uu-evaluation-personalised-supports1. In dementia we have supported innovation to develop a system-wide response to people with dementia which has resulted in a 'community supports model' of service delivery which was launched on International Alzheimer's Day 21 September 2016 www.genio.ie/community-supports-model. This approach to informing the design and delivery of a national service system to people with dementia on the basis of funding and testing innovative service models is unique. Independent evaluation of the community supports model designed for people with dementia demonstrates better outcomes and cost efficiencies compared to other approaches.

Core Activities

We manage funding, provide expertise and gather evidence of impact to assist philanthropic and government funders to achieve scalable service reform that leads to sustained positive changes in the lives of people who are disadvantaged. Our core activities include:

- **Managing funds** (government and philanthropic) to bring about service transformation. This is allocated on a competitive, performance-managed basis to service providers to cover additional costs of moving from older models of service delivery, which are often expensive and deliver poor outcomes, to new models which are more cost effective and produce better outcomes. Genio has disbursed over €24m which has leveraged a further €32m to support service reform. We continue to work in collaboration with Government and the Atlantic Philanthropies and are now establishing and co-managing a '*Service Reform Fund'* of €50m to scale the reforms demonstrated over the past five years in disability and mental health services and to bring about systemic change in these areas.
- **Building capacity** of key stakeholders to implement the required changes to enhance both supply and demand for better services.
- **Undertaking and commissioning research** to measure impact and costs.[2]

Accountability and measurement

As an organisation we place a high priority on being accountable and on providing objectively measured impact.

Leveraging the impact of Genio's work 2016 - 2020

What we are learning is transferable to other fields and in other countries, notwithstanding variations in operational environments and cultures. Our exploration of developments within an international context suggests that we have developed some unique expertise that would be helpful in improving the lives of many more people who are disadvantaged, by developing and transforming social services in other regions of the world. Genio's particular expertise arises from our:

1. Focus on systems change as a primary objective - in all of its complexity.
2. Experience of how philanthropy and government can collaborate to achieve systems change.
3. Integration of funding, expertise and evidence to bring about change.

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[2] See www.genio.ie for a range of commissioned research reports focusing on outcomes, costs and other issues.

1. Our Focus is on Systems Change

We are an unusual organisation in that our focus from the outset is on helping to create *system-wide* change in social services. We have spent the last eight years developing and implementing system change strategies garnering learning along the way and adjusting accordingly.

What do we mean by systems change?
Systems change often involves a fundamental or paradigm shift i.e. a change in the usual and accepted way of doing or thinking. Systems change is a collaborative endeavour as systems are not owned by one person or entity and cannot be changed by one organisation alone. Our experience tells us that effective system change strategies need to take account of all of the key stakeholders identifying what each needs to do in order to bring about the required changes. A range of key stakeholders need to be supported to achieve change including policy-makers, politicians, funders (philanthropic and public), public service commissioners, service providers and people who rely on services (and their families/carers).

What is the difference between systems change and scaling?
There is currently a confusion between 'scaling' and 'systemic change'. Approaches to scaling from private and philanthropic perspectives generally involve finding new resource to grow organisations or to replicate or multiply projects often established in parallel to existing service systems. This can be a rewarding and worthwhile endeavour but creates little or no change in the system serving the majority of those who depend on services unless a deliberate strategy for doing so is developed and implemented. Scaling for systemic change may involve growing organisations but is more focused on changing mind-sets across multiple stakeholders and scaling practice across a range of organisations and agencies.

Acknowledging and dealing with complexity
Too often approaches to scaling and to systemic change are simplistic focusing on only one stakeholder group (usually service providers). For example, the majority of resources invested in social services are spent on enhancing the quality and supply of services with little or no resource invested in supporting those in need to effectively articulate the 'demand' for improvements. As in any market, both demand and supply are crucial. Other approaches can be overly optimistic, based on the belief that demonstration of improvements through evidence-based programmes will secure adoption by 'the system'. Lack of recognition of the conflicting demands on public service systems and the challenges of having systems adopt and mainstream projects that they have had no role in co-creating, have led to many disappointments on the part of philanthropic organisations and NGO service providers.

2. The role of philanthropy, social investment and of government

Our approach is based on an understanding that complex systems, with ingrained practices and vested interests, face major challenges in reforming themselves. Philanthropic funding can be a catalyst in creating systemic change if targeted strategically. Philanthropy can encourage real innovation, involving risk-taking that those holding public purse strings feel they should avoid. Governments are best placed to sustain and scale services to whole populations of people in need, often in the context of meeting statutory obligations or implementing national policy. Philanthropy and social investment can be critical in moving beyond demonstrations to achieve impact at scale by offering resources on condition that government refocus public resources in the desired direction. Philanthropy and government together can achieve what neither can secure alone by creating and supporting the conditions necessary to achieve whole system change that focuses on animating demand and improving supply. This sets out an optimistic view of the possible ambitions of philanthropy and social investment. We believe that there are philanthropic foundations and social investors that are ambitious, sophisticated and strategic. Funders who understand the complexities and challenges involved in creating change and who recognise the value of collaboration where all parties make a distinctive contribution to achieve a common objective. We also believe that there are public servants who value the contribution of philanthropy – not as a means of shoring up gaps created in shrinking public spending budgets – but because of their potential to provide an impetus for proactively creating positive change for vulnerable citizens. For philanthropy, this kind of public-private relationship provides opportunities to invest in worthwhile projects that align with their areas of interest and can be sustained, scaled and ultimately, become available to whole populations in need. Ambitions regarding eventual impact can be clarified from the outset while exit strategies form an integral part of the collaborative arrangement. For government bodies, philanthropy can be an external stimulus for reforming services and achieving policy objectives.

3. Integration of funding, expertise and evidence to bring about change

Philanthropists, social investors, government officials and politicians are increasingly aware that providing funding alone is rarely enough to bring about change. Those who are critical to implementing change must have the motivation, confidence and skills to do so and therefore building capacity and capability is necessary. The development of venture philanthropy which provides financial, human and intellectual capital to create impact is essentially based on this principle. Genio invests substantially in building the capacity of service providers and those who use services. We also work closely with policy makers to develop and implement policy that personalises services to best effect in the interest of those who rely on them to live as valued members of society. There has been an increasing focus internationally on the need to measure impact. Our interest is in making a measurable difference to improving lives and ensuring cost effectiveness in order

that as many people as possible can avail of improved services now and in the future. We measure the progress of all those receiving funds through Genio and gather evidence of changes in outcomes for those who use services and on the costs of providing improved services compared to more traditional models of delivery. We have methodologies to aggregate data across different initiatives to show progress on a national (and international) basis towards achieving policy objectives for the particular group in question.

Conclusion

Given the societal challenges facing Europe it is critical that we develop cross-border approaches to harnessing expertise and scaling solutions that are tried and tested in particular countries. With this in mind we are actively seeking partners to scale this model of service reform across Europe and other regions.