

Facing into Change: Culture Call at Immigration Enforcement

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Culture Call at IE

This is the third report in the series 'Facing into Change'. While all three reports have been set in a public sector context, they deal with the common human challenges of delivering change in a turbulent environment; restructuring and transformation; cost-cutting against increasing service demands; efficiency and performance management; and often deep-rooted cynicism about change management itself. The setting, however, means that these issues are played out in a political environment with a media seemingly eager for stories of failure and, while individuals strive hard to do their best in the workplace, there is seldom any public recognition or thanks.

Immigration Enforcement (IE)

IE was set up in April 2012 with a law enforcement remit to target criminal activity by preventing abuse, tracking immigration offenders and increasing compliance. It works with the police to regulate immigration in line with government policy. Its 4,500 employees work in the UK and overseas at air and sea ports.

Context

In the broader Home Office context, there has already been a move towards HO Excellence, starting with leadership and board effectiveness to promote a 'Confident Home Office'. The aim is to co-create a vision of the future culture needed for HO2020 and for leaders to commit to facilitate this journey.

Across the HO, various grassroots initiatives are underway: At 'Our Best' in Border Force; 'Appreciative Inquiry (AI)' at UKVI; 'A Great Place to Work' at HMPO; and 'Culture Call' at Immigration Enforcement. This report focuses on the Culture Call story, its aims, activities, and achievements to date, and considers its future direction.

As in the second report in this series about the AI initiative in UKVI, we examine the success of Culture Call as a social movement, where the ability to spread and capture hearts and minds is a precursor to long-lasting change. Not everything in this report is a direct result of Culture Call, but it has sometimes served as a rallying call, highlighting the best of what is already happening within IE in what we might loosely term 'the people space'.

The report is compiled largely from face-to-face interviews and focus groups with around fifty individuals from across IE in January 2017 and from presentations, photographs and communications relating to the work of Culture Call.

Executive Summary

This report considers Culture Call (CC) as a social movement that has attracted a substantial following of people who are keen to make IE a better place to work. Culture has been on the agenda at IE since 2014, but it is accepted that it is a long-term challenge. By 2015, with over 70 volunteers, SLT nominees and Culture Call leads in place, four Community Groups had been set up around the country and a series of events were held for people to start to explore the culture they wanted to see in IE and to learn something about Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology. Using AI to hold conversations and gather stories about people at their best, six foundation statements emerged:

- I trust people and they trust me back.
- I am brave enough to speak out and hear back.
- I seek out and acknowledge the best in everyone.
- We join up and join together to make a difference.
- I take the lead and I can make change happen.
- I am honest and courageous enough to show when I am vulnerable.

Spread and sustainability

The Culture Call movement has rapidly built momentum by:

- Getting more people involved, training them in AI and setting up a network of support; the original list of 100 volunteers has increased tenfold.
- Holding up to twenty 'Outreach' events over the past eight months ranging from community events, lunch and learns, face-to-face discussions and presentations to large-scale change events.
- Generating a growing demand for talks on CC at awaydays and team events with new presenters getting involved, building their own skills and confidence.

Evaluating success

The evaluation of change requires a long-term perspective and CC is still relatively young. This report has therefore drawn on a framework that examines success and failure factors in social movements (Garrow and Cox, 2010). These include:

1. Offering 'a persuasive frame' rooted in values

- CC has built on four themes already tested in IE: pride; feeling valued; being courageous; and connectivity.
- CC used AI methodology to create a vision and inject energy with real examples as people told stories of being at their best.
- IE has invested in staff through the CC events.
- CC has attracted a lot of passionate people who believe that the culture in IE needs to change in order to support the transformation ahead.

A potential challenge at this early stage is:

- Lack of clarity around the different people engagement groups and the dangers of too many brandings.

2. Building a sense of identity

- Spreading the message so that from an initial 100 volunteers/nominees, the database of people interested in being part of CC has risen tenfold.
- Providing opportunities for culture callers to make a personal impact in outreach, role modelling the values and incorporating CC into their other responsibilities.
- SMT has got involved but without needing to lead CC.
- Reaching out to the whole organisation including the vital middle managers.

A potential challenge at this stage is:

- People are looking forward to more events and will need practical activities to maintain momentum. Planning for 'where next' is in the pipeline.

3. Mobilisation

- Enlisting 'culture callers' in action: on the staff survey by the engagement team; working on transformation in Intelligence Analysis; and a potential role in the implementation of the performance management system.
- Embracing existing initiatives and highlighting good practice such as the AI Positive Action Groups in Sheffield.
- Hugh Ind being visible as a keen supporter of CC and taking every opportunity to lend support and attend events along with other senior leaders.

Potential challenges at this stage

- Lack of consistency in understanding what Culture Call is and its future.

- The need for people to see CC translated into a better working environment.

4. Outcomes: early impact

Culture Call is already having an impact at individual, team and organisational levels:

Individual level

- Some leaders report actively developing a coaching leadership style.
- Managers report that their staff seem more independent and empowered to build their own networks.
- Individuals have appreciated having new networks for support and knowledge.
- One interviewee described the positive impact extending outside of work.

Team level

- Team dynamics are changing by using more positive language and 'appreciative' conversations.
- There has been encouragement of more outward-looking activity.
- Teams are connecting with other areas of the organisation to raise awareness of their role in the wider business.

Organisational level

- There is greater staff involvement as people see opportunities to influence decisions.
- This has led to a more collaborative approach to designing organisational change which has ultimately produced a better outcome for staff.
- There are new approaches to transformation using AI techniques to map out what is working well, leading to a better working environment and value for money.
- These approaches are also building staff skills.
- A similarly empowering approach has been taken with the People Survey results, sending out the dual message that the results are being taken seriously and that everyone has a role to play in bringing about change.
- There is a focus on wellbeing through one of the Neighbourhood Action Groups with more preventative help.
- People see signs of a more appreciative environment edging the culture into more positive territory and the organisation has felt more welcoming to outsiders.

- People are starting to see their senior managers in a different light and feel that they will be listened to. Senior managers are also said to be more visible.
- Organisational communication has reflected the new positive mood and people see a greater willingness to celebrate success.

Looking to the future: challenges and requirements

One of the challenges for Culture Call is to demonstrate long-term benefits, particularly behaviour change. Suggested success measures and aspirations are:

- shifts in the People Survey in the coming years;
- the ease in which the new performance management system is embedded;
- the numbers of people signing up to become culture callers;
- evidence of a more human way of approaching problems through front line conversations across the organisation about how things could work better; and
- less reliance on central transformation teams and more projects and programmes that deliver transformation across organisational boundaries.

To do this they will need organisational support. Some of the requirements will be:

- Continued top-level and middle management support, both financial support and the approval for time and space to carry out CC work. Some suggest it may require dedicated staff resources.
- Succession planning to ensure there is a pipeline of people who will ensure the movement continues to grow, nurture IE's cultural values and respond to its changing needs.
- Opportunities for culture callers to be involved in change projects throughout the organisation, with further opportunities to build skills and be recognised for their contribution.
- Conscious embedding of cultural values into every organisational process such as recruitment, reward, performance management and communication.
- Defining a clear direction and sense of identity while avoiding the sense of becoming institutionalised.

1. The culture journey

Building something from the bottom-up using the principles of AI has captured the imagination of people across the organisation. It doesn't feel like the organisation has decided that we need Culture Call. It really does feel like something a group of people across the organisation have proactively built. Equally, it has been really helpful for the senior management team to realise that that this is a better way. It has captured their imagination. It seems to have caught fire across the organisation. It is a really good vehicle to talk about the kind of organisation we want to be in the future and celebrate success.

What is Culture Call?

Culture Call is an evolving movement, encouraging people to join with others in making IE a workplace in which they can be at their best. It isn't particularly well-defined. People variously describe it as: a series of events designed to promote engagement; a vehicle for delivering the IE People Strategy; an Appreciative Inquiry methodology to change mindsets; a rallying call to highlight and amplify good people practice throughout IE; a set of foundation statements for culture; and other variations on a theme.

This has implications for the future direction of Culture Call. Some feel that it will endure beyond 2020, others suggest that its work will be done when a more positive and open culture is embedded and becomes 'business as usual'. As Culture Call is currently reaching a point where it reviews its progress and considers the future, it is an opportune time to look at its achievements and consider where it might go next.

Why culture?

Following the break-up of the Border Agency, Immigration Enforcement (IE) became a purely functional department:

IE was charged with making people go home. It was all about numbers to get more people out. For IE, the challenge is that it all happens at the end of a long process, not having sight of, or influence over, other activities and whether people should be allowed in.

The culture was predominantly 'command and control' in case things went wrong and one interviewee described it as 'jokey, blokey'. Staff survey scores have been quite

depressed in terms of both the numbers who participate and the ratings themselves, which one interviewee felt reflect the lack of good news stories in the type of work the uniformed staff does.

We have had people surveys for three years that have said 'here are some areas that are not good: leading, visibility, managing change, investing in people'.

The early work

Former DG Mandy Campbell instigated a piece of work in IE in 2014 to look at developing a set of values. This was already happening in Border Force and Mandy felt that it would also be helpful for IE. Gillian McGregor was asked to take it forward and began by having conversations around the Home Office and then within IE itself. One of her key findings was that people struggled to agree on words. Suggested values such as 'being truthful' prompted questions about whether it was felt people were not generally honest. Some felt that they should stick with the Civil Service values and having a unique set of values didn't seem to work for anyone. There was also a feeling that a set of values would simply be 'laminated and forgotten'.

The next step was a workshop with mixed grades to prompt some thinking about what kind of organisation people would like to work for. Participants highlighted some of the constraints in the systems, procedures and beliefs that were holding the organisation back from achieving the culture they wanted to see.

The results from that exercise were taken to an IE conference, where the culture group proved very popular and people seemed to enjoy talking about culture and values. They sent a strong message about IE being 'one organisation' in spite of the uniformed/non-uniform split and geographic spread. Breakout groups tested out the aspirations and distilled them into four key themes:

- Feeling proud
- Feeling trusted
- Having courage to challenge
- Feeling connected

The follow-up was to get small groups to concentrate on each theme. These had varying degrees of success. Some didn't get off the ground for various reasons, while others flourished and a core of committed people had the idea for Culture Call. Gillian reflects on this evolution:

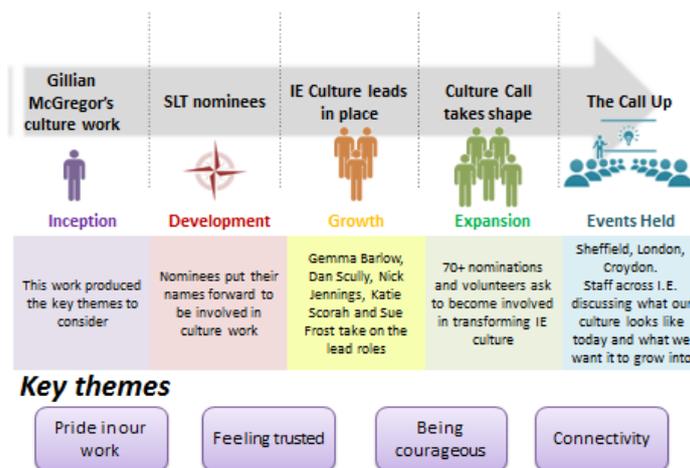
Based on feedback we realised you can't just snap your fingers and get a new culture. It is an iterative and organic process. We talked almost of a 'subversive' movement that could act differently to promote the culture by actively supporting

people, challenging if we didn't agree, including senior managers. Some got the courage to tackle some specific behaviours and that had a big impact. So that is how Culture Call started.

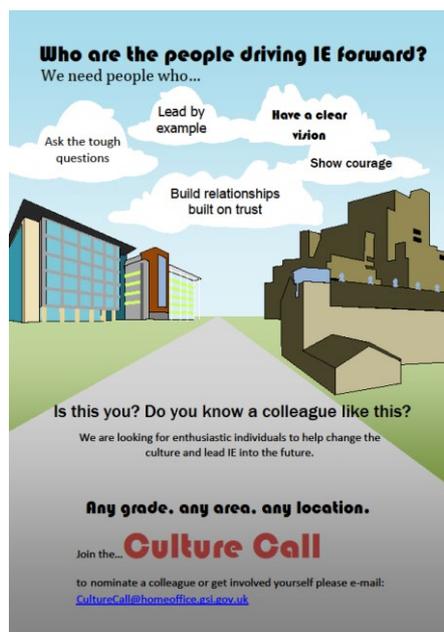
The early work had identified some key principles that people felt were important for driving this work forward. These included having a consistent message from all leaders and agreeing that people would start by modelling the behaviour they expected from others. In essence it was a signal that a set of words was not enough.

Moving forward

Where did it all begin?



Over the next few months Culture Call began to broaden its reach through various events, outreach work, the appointment of leads and through a dedicated and growing number of volunteers who were either nominated or responded to the poster below.



Tasking the culture callers

With over 70 volunteers, SLT nominees and Culture Call leads in place, four Community Groups were set up around the country and a series of events were held for people to start to explore the culture they wanted to see in IE and to learn something about Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology. AI has become a central tool for Culture Call and enables conversations to focus on people at their best. (The next section explains more about AI).

One interviewee described the experience of the Community Groups,

Culture means different things to different people and it was useful in those communities to have the discussions with people that you didn't necessarily know from different work environments. But what was interesting was that when you pulled it all together, common themes kept coming out; worded differently but common themes that helped us to understand what our culture is and, for me that felt better than coming from the Home Office. It meant something to people.

The volunteers or 'culture callers', were tasked with holding at least three conversations with other colleagues to explore the four themes of pride, trust, courage and connectivity. Using an AI approach they listened to people's stories about when they had felt most trusted or had been proud at work. These conversations were sent through to the Culture Call inbox and some of the culture callers and leads stuck them around the walls and read them in silence.

'Some of the stories were so personal, people really laying themselves bare in a conversation with their colleague. It was touching. Some were difficult to hear as they felt they were being treated badly but were able to turn those conversations into something quite positive.'

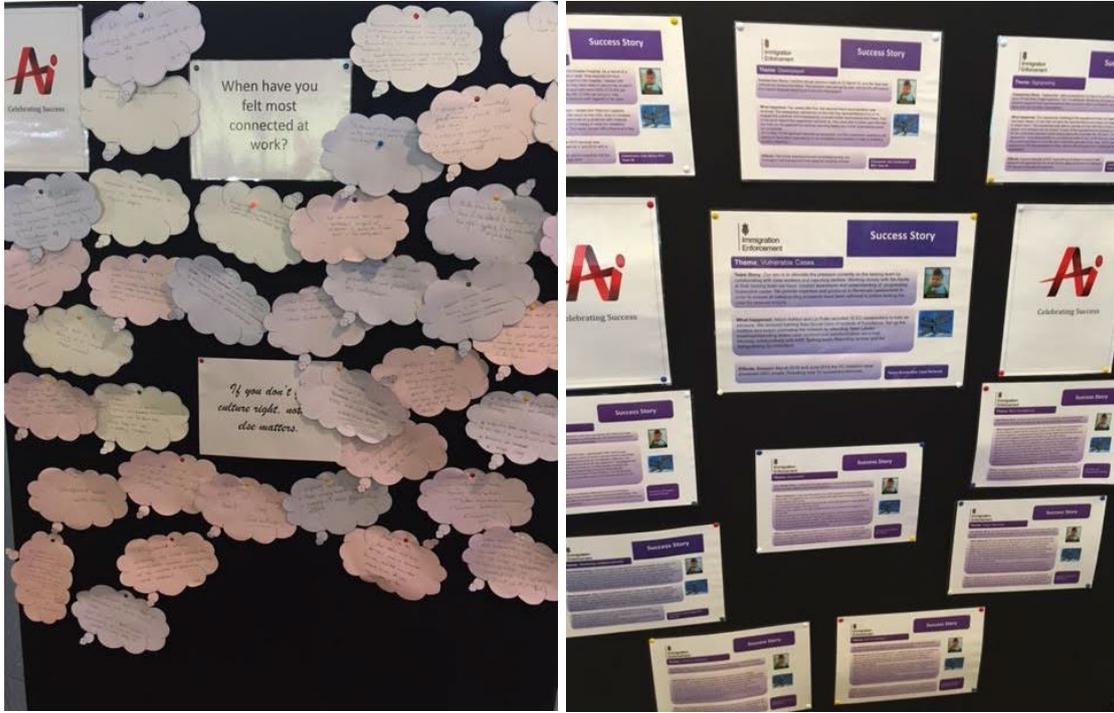
The analysis of the stories led to the development of six Foundation Statements:

I am at my best when:

- ☺ I trust people and they trust me back.
- ☺ I am brave enough to speak out and hear back.
- ☺ I seek out and acknowledge the best in everyone.
- ☺ We join up and join together to make a difference.
- ☺ I take the lead and I can make change happen.
- ☺ I am honest and courageous enough to show when I am vulnerable.

The leadership conference

The leadership conference in July 2016 provided an opportunity to brief leaders on the progress and activities of Culture Call but also to engage them in further conversations around the key themes.



The success stories were brought together from the culture callers' conversations to bring the themes alive for the leadership and to give them a sense of how AI was working.

The Summit

When there have been events, you can feel the difference. For example, at the summit in Sheffield there were people there who we didn't think would have gone near it in previous guises, but their active participation and their willingness to have very open conversations was cathartic.

The next large-scale change meeting was 'The Summit' in August 2016, which was held at the HUBS, the Student Union building in Sheffield, chosen because it was a completely different type of environment with fairy lights and music as people came in.

It is a multi-cultural environment with lots of posters everywhere and ways of thinking that you don't see in a Civil Service building. We asked everyone not to wear uniform. That is probably one of the most divisive features of IE and makes it harder to talk about the culture of one organisation... It was a huge burst of energy for the people that were in that room.



Participants were asked to work with the foundation statements and turn them into a concrete vision. Using AI language, this is the 'Dream Phase':

Dream phase

Imagine it is 2020 and the foundations are deeply embedded in the way we do things



The Summit was a real high point for the movement and set the challenge of how to maintain the momentum that was building.

Outreach and action

The Culture Call movement is building support and getting more people involved, training them in AI, setting up a network of support and the original list of 100 volunteers has increased tenfold.

Its spread has been aided by up to twenty 'Outreach' events over the past eight months, ranging from community events, lunch and learns, face-to-face discussions and presentations to the large-scale change events. The objectives of these have been to build awareness of the need for culture change, to introduce the vision and benefits of Culture Call, and to create a desire for people to support and participate. The demand for talks on Culture Call at awaydays and team events continues to

grow and new presenters are being encouraged to get involved, whilst at the same time building their own skills and confidence.

Reaching the middle managers - the SEO and HEO event

A key group of people in all organisations are the middle managers and it was vital to ensure this important group of around 900 people was not just informed about, but also engaged with, culture change and Culture Call. Grassroots initiatives in particular can feel uncomfortable for the middle of an organisation, particularly when there is enthusiastic top-down endorsement. They feel squeezed between delivering targets and managing staff expectations, but they have a vital role to play in allowing time and space for people both to act as culture callers and to bring about the change they want to see. This was a direction encouraged by the DG and other senior leaders.

It was a new departure for the Culture Call leads as they had never chosen to be grade-specific before, sending the message that events were for everybody. Culture callers were informed that this event would be important to give the SEO and HEO grades the skills they would need to support culture change. They were asked to think about what an event might look like and what additional support they felt that grade needed to have.

Two events in December 2016 were organised in nice venues in London and Manchester to accommodate as many SEOs and HEOs as wanted to attend. An invitation was sent out. It was deliberately left somewhat ambiguous as to what the format of the day would be.

At the start of the event, there was a simple symbolic gesture from some SLT members who were at the door handing out name badges as delegates arrived.



It was brilliant because they had great conversations and from the outset that changed people's perceptions. Little things will convince people that things have changed.



There was an element of fun with some personality testing using animal imagery.

Feedback from the event (see below) was largely positive. Nearly all said that they enjoyed it and people welcomed the investment made in them with two-thirds saying they felt empowered as leaders.



Where next?

Culture Call is now at the point of thinking about where to go in the future and we consider this more fully in the final section of this report. A number of dates are in the diary for February through to May for future events, extending its reach by providing practical tips and advice and supporting new facilitators. It is testament to its popularity that 120 people are already signed up to attend.

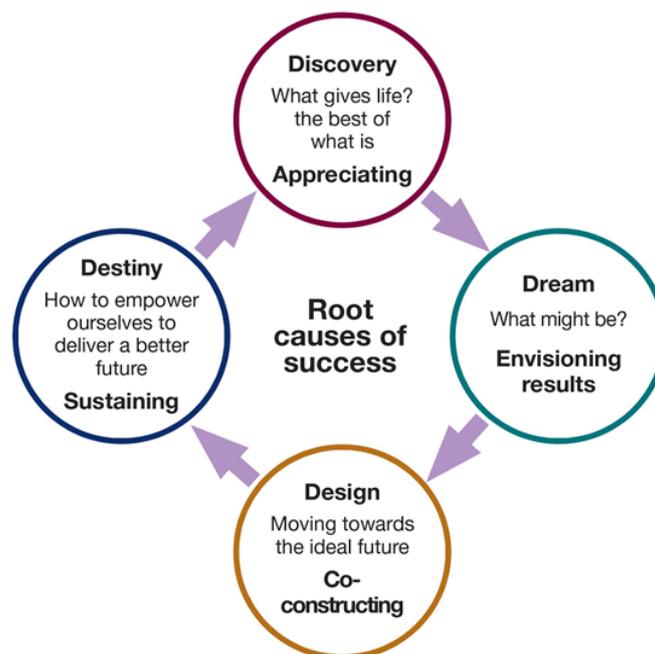
2. Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

The concentration was on AI because one of the themes was about being proud of what we do, celebrating success rather than always feeling beleaguered and that what we do is distasteful.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a central tool for Culture Call. It is based on the following principles:

- Amplifying what works rather than fixing what doesn't.
- Discovering real stories of excellence to show what is possible so that others can be inspired to try something similar in their teams.
- Generating energy as people tell stories of when they themselves, the team or the organisation as a whole have been at their best and when they have experienced real pride at work.
- Identifying the root causes of these successful experiences and spreading them widely as the conditions for excellence.

The AI four D process



AI had already been introduced with some success into one area of IE by former UKVI staff members. With an initial team of three volunteers, they collated data from a questionnaire and carried out AI interviews to find out what people were most proud of. The process led to several successful Positive Action Groups (PAGs) that continue to reach out to capture people's imagination and energy for change, such as this one below.



This poster advertises the Positive Action Group's work in learning and development. Another recent PAG took the leadership conference by storm as it presented an engaging, grassroots case for Job Shadowing across IE.

One of the interviewees described the impact and benefits that he had seen in his own central team:

They have really captured the job shadowing as a way of letting people know more about what they do and ways in which they can get out into the business. In central teams you lose touch quite quickly with the operations and it is a really good way of keeping in touch and building links into the wider organisation. If you manage transformation programmes in the centre, just having a network of people across the organisation to talk through the real life impact is very important.

Although this pre-dates Culture Call, the level of interest and top level support that Culture Call has generated has meant that it has provided a platform to showcase existing similar initiatives that demonstrate people at their best.

3. Embedding CC into the people strategy

We can't disentangle transformation from all the culture work that is happening alongside it. Part of that is being able to demonstrate that what we have done is more than just trying to enthuse a small group of people; it is about supporting the business to embed the transformation.

The People Strategy in IE covers four areas:

- Learning and skills
- Workforce
- Talent and valuing difference
- Better leadership and reward

The aim is for Culture Call to run through these like 'a golden thread' and underpin each area of the people strategy by:

'...providing our people with the tools, skills, attitudes and experience to survive and thrive during, and after, transformation'

There is a lot happening within this 'people space' and staff not closely involved with HR issues can find it difficult to navigate. Work is ongoing across all of the People Strategy areas to provide clarity and link-up across the different initiatives. This was demonstrated through the 'Investing in Ourselves' HEO and SEO events which deliberately brought together the leads of People Engagement, Career Conversations, Leaders in Action and Culture Call. It is essential that IE continues to use all the tools in its armoury to engage its people and ensure that transformation is embedded.

Culture Call is an avenue to talk about the future. It has enabled conversation with people talking to each other as equals and peers. As we start to embed broader transformation, which will need different skills and continuous improvement, Culture Call will have a crucial part to play.

Performance management

One potentially important role is in the introduction of the new performance management system where culture callers will be involved in helping to embed the new approach. The changes in the performance management system in themselves represent a major cultural shift away from a forced distribution model to a more forward-looking, coaching regime with regular line manager conversations. The transition will call on new skills in coaching and mentoring from managers and Culture Call is likely to be a key means of support for them.

Leadership

The leadership element of the people strategy is also impacting the culture of the organisation through interventions such as specific leadership programmes, working with the business units to understand their requirements and with staff to understand how they can learn from each other.

The main message of leadership work is that it is for everyone across the organisation, so influencing begins with us. If you start influencing and go outwards it will get across to senior leaders. Other work is ongoing in the HO space on role modelling behaviours, which complements our work. Our DG says we are trying to nurture organic change but that change comes from within.

Culture Call is therefore seen as an independent strategy that paves the way for the people strategy but works towards the same end.

4. Early impact

A key challenge for any culture change programme is how to evaluate success. For IE, one of the biggest hurdles was to kindle a belief that change could happen through the actions of individuals and teams.

These are a few of the examples that interviewees identified in their own words as being early benefits or signs of success for Culture Call at individual, team, organisational level and beyond. Again, some of these outcomes are likely to be the combined impact of Culture Call and other initiatives such as Leaders in Action.

Individual level

Some leaders are making deliberate shifts in their style to create an environment where people feel more empowered.

Developing a coaching leadership style

For me, the big area is leadership. I have moved towards day-to-day mentoring and supporting of staff, role-modelling some of the more positive aspects so that people moving up the grades have some of those skills demonstrated right at the very beginning. That is something I want to focus on. I have a few staff that have moved through promotion and, even though they are no longer on my team, they still come to me and we have conversations. It is not formal or set up as mentoring, it is knowing you are there if there is something you need help with. It is hard when you are busy, but it means a lot to people.

In turn this has led to an increase in trust and empowerment.

Staff empowerment

People seem more independent. I was very hands on over the years and, reflecting on that with my staff, I have now empowered them to do a lot more engagement work. One SEO went out and invited the Head of another team to come and spend the day with us. They are building ties with the police and using their initiative to make these connections. Rather than me starting those conversations they just get on with it. We have a goal we need to deliver but how we do that is for them to decide and they are in a better position to do that than I am. I cannot possibly retain all that knowledge, so I need SEOs to step up and build the contacts themselves. They have to work outside their grade more. They know where I am if they have difficulties.

Individuals have appreciated having new networks for support and knowledge.

Support networks for managers

I went to a smaller group of front line managers who were discussing how to discuss poor performance and support each other in managing quite big operational teams.

Team level

As well as more specific actions below, one interviewee had taken back ideas such as the animal personality exercise to do with his team in order to foster greater appreciation of team dynamics. Others have introduced the AI principles.

More 'appreciative' conversations

One described the different dynamics in team meetings by using more positive language.

One of the business teams has come back and 're-framed' how they have business conversations. At the end of meetings he used to say 'what is your biggest problem?' but now says 'what is your biggest success?'. In Criminal Casework SMT, the last item used to be 'what is keeping you awake at night?' but after the Culture Call event we now go round and say 'what is your highlight of the week? What are you most proud of?'

There has also been encouragement of more outward-looking activity.

Connecting teams

We have a monthly full team meeting and I have started inviting someone from another area of the business to give a 15 to 20 minute presentation on what they do. I am just trying to raise awareness across my team of where they sit within the wider business. It builds those connections to get them to start networking more, some of that has got lost over the years as we focused on the day jobs.

Organisational level

The changes in leadership style and greater staff empowerment mean that more people are getting involved in decisions that impact them.

Greater staff involvement

For the first time in a long time people were beginning to have an involvement in, and an opportunity to make, some of the decisions and persuade and influence the system. It was a collective solving of a problem.

It has led to a more collaborative approach to designing organisational change which has ultimately produced a better outcome for staff.

A new approach to 'transformation'

After attending the Culture Call event we were just about to start our transformation and say 'this is what Intelligence Analysis will look like', and we put a halt to that. Instead we said 'rather than give you a plan and say this is what it is going to look like, this is what we are going to do'. We just said 'these are the outputs we have got to give; you tell us how we can best do that'. A few groups put forward ideas. We used AI techniques to map out what is working well. Various proposals looked at structures and processes and we are currently in the middle of finalising that. Interestingly, they didn't start with the customer, they started with the staff first. There were just simple things such as 'if we did it this way, we would get experience in all these kinds of areas so that will increase our skills and we will do better on learning and development and the knock on effect is that the customer ends up with something better'. For me, that was a different approach. I hadn't thought about it from the perspective of giving staff a better working environment, and it just happens to give better value for money at the end of the day. They presented the proposals and staff felt that they were able to contribute and felt valued. We were responding and challenging them, asking them whether they had considered various things. They were able to respond to those challenges and build their skills up at the same time. It is challenging them to come up with the ideas. We are right at the end of that now. The transformation piece is getting geared up from 1 April so we will have a new structure.

A similarly empowering approach has been taken with the People Survey results, sending out the dual message that the results are being taken seriously and that everyone has a role to play in bringing about the changes required to improve their working environment.

A new approach to the People Survey results

I volunteered to look at the People Survey and the initial thinking was that we must focus on this and this. But I felt we needed to go backwards on this, so rather than giving them the results and saying 'this is what we need to do', we now say 'here are the results, what do you think we ought to work on and how do you think we ought to do it?'. So, we are currently pulling together some action groups of volunteers and they will set the direction of what they want to do with the People Survey. At the Viewpoint event where we presented this approach it went down really well. And there has been some really positive feedback and volunteers. They have been really quite honest about some of the negative stuff but in a way that says 'well actually, although we didn't get a great score on leadership, when it was working well, what was the positive aspect? How did it make you feel? What about people on the team, and what about the performance?'. Those conversations have been the best conversations about the People survey I have ever seen in Intelligence. We have asked for volunteers of any grade, any role, keeping it in the local business areas rather than in teams. You are empowering them to take forward what they think is important stuff.

A focus on wellbeing

One of the Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) set up after the Culture Call Summit has tackled the issue of staff wellbeing.

The Wellbeing group is all about trying to provide support and arrangements for people, to make sure they are looked after and there is a range of proactive aspects at work to help people such as arranging health clinics, simple blood pressure tests; anything that will help them not have to think about arranging it and, at the same time, sending the signal that we care about people and believe they are worth investing in. That is what staff came up with. More upstream, preventative treatment and having someone face to face. It was simple and powerful.

Another ongoing piece of work relating to stress is also likely to benefit from the culture work.

In Sheffield we are doing a Stress Survey, working with the Union, Local Authority and HR to see whether there are any underlying things. We haven't had results yet but if you look at the initial findings and the causes of stress and sick leave, it is some of the same things that Culture Call is trying to highlight, such as having some control over your work. It is irrelevant what grade or type you are, if you have no control, it is detrimental. We can build those sort of things into our culture work. If people feel valued and that they are contributing, it will save us, the NHS and managers a lot of time in dealing with sickness.

Signs of a more appreciative environment

AI has been an important tool in edging the culture into more positive territory.

We are using AI as one of the tools/methods we use in all aspects of work. How can we do this piece of work in a positive way, thinking back to other pieces of work that went well? When did we feel most trusted? When did I feel most able to challenge? When did I feel at my best?

Some feel that they can see the signs of a more appreciative environment and the organisation has felt more welcoming to outsiders.

We have a lot of agency workers. The way people welcome new staff and behave towards them is a bit more inclusive because, at one time, it could be a bit of 'us and them'. I think people are more open with those who are not HO staff.

It has also felt more positive and people are starting to see their senior managers in a different light.

I think people see the good in things more. There is less doom and gloom. It might just be little things, but people are a lot less 'moany'. They see that if they complain about

things, managers will listen. Before Culture Call people wouldn't necessarily know senior managers. They only used to come to certain events to deliver a not very good or indifferent message, but over the last twelve months they seem to have been a lot more visible, and telling us 'we are going to try to make things better' really helps. I have seen two Viewpoint sessions which used to be just a slideshow about 'this is what is going to happen in the future'. It is now more personal and authentic, tailored to the audience, showing that managers understand what the challenges are. That feeling ripples out, so people feel that things are changing for the better.

Communication has reflected this new positive mood although there is some way to go and some commented that the focus should be less on target numbers than on the quality and impact of the work.

There have been changes and it feels as though it is moving in the right direction. Since Culture Call, there is a bigger enthusiasm to start talking about the positive things we do and the communication that we have, both with staff and externally, and to be more robust in the conversations we have. We do some really amazing work that doesn't get out to the public or to our staff. For example, the Syrian resettlement team have put in a lot of effort to make sure the children have support and housing, and a lot of care goes into it. They ought to really celebrate that work. That shift is starting but is a long way from where it needs to be. The positives are the impact on people's lives and how the teams have delivered that, not that they met their target. That is where Culture Call really plays a part.

And beyond...

One interviewee described the far-reaching impact the positive approach and enthusiasm of culture callers has had both at work and beyond.

It (Culture Call) will continue to grow. The enthusiasm the leads have, lots of people, it is infectious and people do want to come. It does change our view and it changes you in your home life as well. It isn't just work. It can put a positive spin on a lot of things that you might have found challenging or struggled with. It does make you feel much more positive about things.

5. Working with paradox

It has been a movement and some of the events are quite energetic and different. We are conscious that we have been asked to input into various meetings in certain ways, using certain templates. We want to make sure this is different and not put in a box. There has to be a tangible outcome, we need to get better at demonstrating that, but we also need to make sure that it is about culture and not formalised in the way that other pieces of work are.

Top down v bottom up

While social movements are thought of as being grassroots-led, as they start to grow rapidly, they also require supportive structures. Strong, but enabling leadership and a level of 'organising' that prevent the movement from breaking down into anarchy. In organisations, top-level support for grassroots change sends a strong signal that managers are there to nurture the right environment for change, by allowing space and time for the movement to grow. They need to role-model behaviours such as trust and empowerment, but are not there to impose or direct change.

The Director General, Hugh Ind, sent out a clear message to the Culture Call and Leaders in Action teams that there was a 'need to create space for our people to improve our organisations from within' and that he was keen 'to respect, but foster, this organic mode of delivery'. His backing of time, authority and money to support Culture Call has been a great enabler.

One senior manager feels that Culture Call crosses grade boundaries effectively and that leaders might emerge from any level in the organisation.

People are going along just to get involved as a member of the organisation. That is a different way from 'I have to go to this because I need to lead it' but 'I am going to this because I want to be part of it'. No matter what their level, people wanted to go.

The middle of the organisation is often where the most resistance lies. Caught between top-down endorsement and bottom-up enthusiasm, middle managers can feel disenfranchised. The Culture Call event designed specifically for SEOs and HEOs recognised this dilemma and the relatively low percentage of attendees may also signal the extent of the challenge.

Nevertheless, for social movements to succeed, the passion for change has to reach deep into the organisational fabric at all grade levels.

Freedom v structure

As with leadership, there is a real dilemma between the need for some supportive structure and the fear of stifling the energy in the movement. While unbridled enthusiasm in social movements often proves dangerous and IE must maintain its Law Enforcement brief, one senior manager warned:

It is not the sort of thing you want the organisation to wrap its arms around and squeeze the life out of. There is a tendency for organisations to want to put so much structure around these things and control them that, with the best intentions, it is no longer something that is led by the business. It is led corporately and it is at that point that it really stops being valuable.

The challenge is to retain accountability in a system that is starting to encourage and experience an increase in bottom-up change.

What is tricky is that we are a law enforcement organisation and carry a lot of risk. You have to follow policy, so there is a lot of process and assurance. It isn't the easiest environment.

Processes and policy remain important parameters as well as clear lines of communication and responsibility.

Clarity v emergence

Culture Call has experienced rapid growth in its database of culture-callers and people wanting to get involved. In the interviews and focus groups, however, people struggled to describe what it is or remember any of the foundation statements or themes. Few could suggest how you might measure success.

It is a struggle to understand how you would measure positive behaviours. For me to make it so clear is to make it more tangible. I am still not clear what they want it to look like by 2020. I attended a lot of events and I understand where they are going and what they want from it but I get confused over their key aims.

There are mixed views about how Culture Call sits with other people strategy activities.

For me, it pulls together all the other initiatives and allows them to be presented in a coherent message every now and again. No one else seems to have that overarching delivery so it works in that respect but, again, it is a method of delivery and not something of itself.

There are the four themes, six foundation statements, HO values, leadership values and people do not remember what they are or distinguish between them.

For some, there is a fine line between defining something that is more organic and having something more tangible that might simply become another piece of paper to add to the people strategy. Invitations to events have been deliberately vague.

The question is how to embed a shared set of assumptions and values in every aspect of the organisation when people are unable to express them. The advantage of more clarity is that it is easier to communicate a clear set of principles that people can use to evaluate and make sense of their own experiences in the workplace. The disadvantage is that they become set in stone and people stop looking for 'what keeps us at our best'. The AI mindset is helpful here in continually inquiring into success factors and seeking to amplify them.

One of the Culture Call leads described the challenge:

We need to strike that balance and do things in a different way. So we might stand up instead of sitting down or go for a walk instead of having an agenda. We need to balance the formal and tangible with not falling into the same category.

Results v intuition

The stated aims of Culture Call are:

- **TRANSFORMATION:** by attracting enthusiastic and influential individuals.
- **SYSTEMATIC CHANGE:** by equipping culture callers with Appreciative Inquiry (AI) techniques to change mindsets.
- **STAFF DEVELOPMENT:** by encouraging grassroots initiatives and leadership of change.

Some focus group participants felt that some people would remain sceptical that change could be achieved until they saw results, although they were less sure how those results might be demonstrated. Suggested measures include:

- improvements in the People Survey scores;
- outcomes from bottom-up change projects; and
- numbers of people involved as culture callers.

One of the leads remembers explaining with some trepidation the concept for Culture Call at the outset to the former DG:

It is about being 'positively deviant'. You set things off and let them roll and no, it won't give you immediate rises in productivity, because that is not what it is about. It is about people feeling better.

This commitment to making IE a better place to work has been a central principal of Culture Call to the point that there was a discussion about whether to link it in any way to the People Survey in case it was viewed as a cynical way to increase scores or improve productivity.

Walking a fine line into the future

Culture Call has reached a point where it must now consider its future and make some decisions with regard to its aims and plans. The next section evaluates its progress to date using a social movement model.

6. Culture Call as a social movement

You are trying to maintain that subversive element as well, getting the grassroots moving themselves, having those conversations and thinking in a different way. That is how we have been trying to embed it.

The second report in this series plotted the progress of Appreciative Inquiry in UKVI against a social movement model and this seems an appropriate way to consider the spread and progress of Culture Call. The model below (Garrow and Cox, 2010) summarises the literature on the success and failure factors associated with social movements.

The central part of the diagram shows the evolution of a movement from a values-driven proposition, through developing a shared identity, mobilisation and a call-to-action, leading to outcomes in the form of permanent behavioural and attitudinal change. It is a linear model of change unlike most OD models. This acknowledges that although change may require iteration and reinforcement, once a tipping point is reached (with a critical mass of followers), attitude change is permanent (consider attitudes to smoking, environmental issues, acceptable language when referring to minorities).

Indicators of success and failure in social movements



Source: Garrow and Cox, 2010

Success factors and challenges for Culture Call

Moving from left to right of the model above it is possible to trace the development of Culture Call in the manner of a social movement, identifying some of the success factors (top half of the diagram) and some of the negative pressures (bottom half of the diagram).

1. Offering 'a persuasive frame' rooted in values

A social movement is kindled by 'framing' a message of change that resonates with the personal beliefs and experiences of individuals.

- ☺ The early culture work in IE started with four key themes of pride, feeling valued, being courageous and connectivity but concluded that words alone would be unlikely to inspire change.
- ☺ Conversations using AI methodology brought the words to life through real examples and injected positive energy as people told stories of being at their best.
- ☺ Feedback from the CC events shows that staff appreciated the investment in them.
- ☺ CC has attracted a lot of passionate people who believe that the culture in IE needs to change in order to support the transformation ahead.

Potential challenges:

- ☹ Lack of clarity around the different people engagement groups and the dangers of too many brandings.

2. Building a sense of identity

Culture Call has grown rapidly and initiated conversations that have spanned the organisation across boundaries and grades.

- ☺ From an initial 100 volunteers/nominees, the database of people interested in being part of CC has risen to almost 1000. The message continues to spread.
- ☺ The CC champions are making a big personal impact in outreach, role modelling the CC values and incorporating CC into their other responsibilities.
- ☺ SMT members are going along just to get involved and not to lead CC.
- ☺ CC has not shied away from trying to reach the whole organisation. In particular it has reached out to the middle managers, who are crucial to the success of change.

Potential challenges:

- ☹ People are looking forward to more events which might be difficult to keep up, so they will need practical activities to maintain momentum. Planning for 'where next' is in the pipeline.

3. Mobilisation

This third stage of a social movement is about translating enthusiasm and energy into action and outcomes. It requires support from the organisation in the form of leadership, communication, and participatory structures.

It requires a whole range of things; from management to welcome the innovation, back it, share it, make it real and so on, rather than saying 'you must do it this way'. The intent is to get as much of that going across the piece, but to have an organisational impact, it has to not just be what one team is doing but expand exponentially.

- ☺ Some areas of work are now feeling the impact of CC, such as action on the staff survey by the engagement teams, work on transformation in Intelligence Analysis and a potential role in the implementation of the performance management system.
- ☺ CC has embraced initiatives that were already happening and highlighted good practice such as the AI Positive Action Groups in Sheffield.
- ☺ Hugh Ind has been a keen supporter of CC and takes as many opportunities as possible to lend support and attend CC events along with other senior leaders.

Challenges to beware of:

- ☹ There is not a lot of consistency in understanding what Culture Call is and what it should become in the future. These are discussions waiting to happen but as people look for results, there will be calls for more clarity of purpose.
- ☹ People need to feel like they are making an impact and see that translate into a better working environment. They may need additional skills to do so.

4. Outcomes

Social movements thrive by generating permanent, measurable change that becomes an everyday part of shared values.

The challenge is how to make sure it has currency? How do people make sense of it? There still needs to be something by which people can see it makes a difference. If the organisation doesn't understand it, managers will be less willing to release people.

- ☺ People working on the front line are finding ways to work together and be innovative.
- ☺ Although the Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) have been slow to get going, the Wellbeing Group is doing important work in demonstrating that employees are valued

Threats can persist for many years, particularly at stage number three (above).

People don't really get it entirely, because it is a strange concept that through a conversation you can change a culture. There are some who are open to this idea, although they don't really understand it. Some don't get it and it doesn't speak to them. This is one of the risks for Culture Call and, unless people start to see quite tangible benefits, there will be a risk that it doesn't get buy-in across the organisation and will start to falter. So how do we take people along on the journey?

One of the challenges for Culture Call is to pinpoint specific outcomes, particularly behaviour change. Suggested success measures and aspirations are:

- shifts in the People Survey in the coming years;
- the ease in which the new performance management system is embedded;
- the numbers of people signing up to become culture callers;
- evidence of a more human way of approaching problems through front line conversations across the organisation about how things could work better; and
- less reliance on central transformation teams and more projects and programmes that deliver transformation across organisational boundaries.

Where Next

Participants in the focus groups and interviews had many ideas for the future of Culture Call. For example:

- More generic events bringing people back together in less structured way.
- Using the database when there are issues and thinking about ways in which we can look to that group of people (culture callers) to bounce ideas around and develop the organisation.
- I don't need to define it because the moment we try to draw a line round it too much, we lose the value.
- I don't think we need to force it. If people don't see the value now, let's hope they find value in the future.

- It can't replace the more structured tools we use. It isn't in place of anything else, but it is a really important thing that has grown up and we want to nurture it. The easiest way to kill it is to try to convince people of its worth and use it as a form of communication.
- We need to keep facilitating it but not in a controlling way. There is a natural desire for members of the executive team to want to do that and add their own bells and whistles around it. I think that its real strength is to continue more like a movement delivered by the front line. I don't know how we do that as an organisation. If we leave it, will it take on a life of its own? Our challenge is to figure out how to do that.
- More face-to-face communication in small, targeted areas.
- You need to find the second, third and fourth layers and the generation who will be the ambassadors making this transformation happen.
- Eventually, you won't need a lead, it will just be the way we all live and behave.
- Arguably for 4.5 thousand people we should have 10 or 15 people working on this full time to make it work and break into the areas where there is an issue.
- Trust has to be given, established, rewarded and nurtured and given prominence.
- Build on positive attributes, until it evolves into our culture. It isn't something that we can switch on and it will be there. It will take time. For ten years we have gotten used to micromanaging and that has an impact on the staff. A lot of decisions are out of people's control and driven by rules. We have moved responsibility rather than given people the skills to deal with things such as sick leave. People are not learning how to manage others or to have the confidence to make decisions.
- Simple things such as starting meetings by talking about the foundation statements, by introducing how you are feeling if you are chairing, having ice breakers at the start, taking over meetings and saying you want to talk about AI.
- One thing that would help is to look at the communications strategy. We need to talk to individuals, peers and seniors to influence conversations that happen at grassroots, to really get people's interest and get that conversation going to talk about what their interest is.
- Think how we create the environment. There are standards in the performance management (PM) and some of the values are in there. You could build some more of those statements into the grid. We could use our PM framework as a mechanism to do that so that you are valuing people more when they are creating

an environment to help teams work in this way. The foundation statements are rich.

Finally...

This report has looked at some of the challenges that Culture Call now faces as it goes forward. It has experienced great enthusiasm and attracted a solid base of followers in a relatively short time. It needs now to translate that energy into action to support transformation and the wider people strategy in IE.

The next steps include a programme of 'Extending Our Reach' sessions to grow the next generation of culture callers, ready to act as facilitators, advocates and key players across all people engagement work in IE. These sessions have been designed with input from all the key people engagement leads, to ensure an AI Culture Call philosophy, but drawing together the different leadership and performance management strands.

Social movements tend to falter when there is an over-reliance on emotion and charismatic champions. They need to retain momentum when key people move on, through structures designed to support rather than stifle innovation. These sessions will nurture the next key players and ensure that the grassroots movement continues to grow.

Culture is a nebulous concept and it can be difficult to see change from inside. Taking opportunities to celebrate successes and articulate what it is like when people and teams are at their best is helpful in maintaining the vision of where IE aspires to be. Real stories are more effective than a set of words or abstract values. Culture Call has a great opportunity to keep highlighting those stories and the successes across the whole people strategy, and to involve culture callers in supporting change in every part of the organisation.

References

Garrow V, Cox A (2010), *Large Scale Change – NHS Mobilisation*, NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement