



CYNEFIN CENTRE  
MAKING SENSE OF COMPLEXITY

# HEALTH & CARE: MAKING SENSE OF THE LANDSCAPE

A CYNEFIN CENTRE PROGRAMME



2022

## Introduction

**“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.”**

- Arundhati Roy

In many ways, the pandemic has forced to the surface multiple interconnected and entangled issues which have been simmering and sputtering for some time. Awareness of social inequalities, complexities of chronic disease, microbial and soil health and their role in nutrition, intersecting cultural attitudes to health and healing, and the role of [social] media and technology - to name but a few - whilst in no way “new”, are all arguably much more tangibly coalescing.

As the ramifications of the global pandemic continue to emerge in obvious and not-so-obvious ways, prioritising the multiplicity of lived experiences and distributed sense-making in a timely manner for people living with complex conditions, for healthcare workers on the frontline, and leaders taking a systemic approach will only increase in importance for ongoing learning and responsive adaptation.

This iteration of the Cynefin Centre’s health and healthcare programme is designed to provide complexity-informed tools and methods for those working in health and healthcare to assemble their own processes of collective sense-making, narrative capture, real-time feedback, journaling and observational/ descriptive self-awareness and monitoring as evaluation. Situating change and transformation in context, and as a part of the dynamic nature of human-system interaction.

The programme provides support and guidance in making use of the distributed ethnographic methodology known as SenseMaker® and embeds this tool in a wider ecosystem of methods and approaches to complexity.

## Programme Areas



As we start to make sense of “the road to recovery” collecting narratives from frontline workers, clinicians and leaders on key workforce issues such as wellbeing, stress, burnout and engagement provides an essential pulse point to stay in touch with the workforce and evolving system needs. Collecting stories in the here and now, and reflecting together to define the next best steps enables the weaving of real-time feedback and sense-making into daily practice.



Clinical pathways afford certain types of action, both for clinicians and for service users but very real time and resource constraints can sometimes render invisible the day-to-day lived experiences that we assemble in our personal journeys with care. Exploring multiple perspectives on patient journeys helps to situate individuals in a wider context of culture, health systems, media, and societal and environmental structures. The overarching message is that by focusing on the patient journey, medical and situational complexity interweave with the patient experience.



In the current context of global complexity and radical disruption, the role of leadership is both challenged, and in many ways more vital and central than before. The idea of “expertise” being concentrated in those “at the top” is being questioned, and the traditional structures of leadership are disrupted as distributed ways of working are increasingly becoming more normalised in organisations. Encouraging descriptive self-awareness in leaders as a means of observing system constraints is made possible by Cynefin and SenseMaker methodologies.



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## Case Studies & Capabilities



### The Royal College of Nursing N Ireland

RCN Northern Ireland commissioned a piece of work using the SenseMaker tool to conduct an oral history of nurses and nursing during the Covid pandemic. The objective was to give voice to nurses' experiences of delivering care and treatment across a range of settings during the period April 2020 to March 2021.

The Cynefin team and Anne McMurray (an independent research consultant) undertook monthly sense-making and analysis with the RCN team who were then to be able to take the direct data back to their board of directors. No longer speaking on behalf of the nurses and mediating meaning, the team were now sharing the stories that had been willingly told, with a very different relationship and accountability structure through this distributed approach to doing research. You can read the full report [here](#).

<sup>1</sup> rcn.org.uk - SenseMaker: the lived experience of nursing in Northern Ireland during a pandemic 2020/2021



### Operationalising Narrative Monitoring Learning and Development

Social and residential care (and its regulation) have traditionally operated using primarily numerical and medical data to record, monitor and evaluate practice. Bringing a human sense-making element to this space, The Cynefin company has been working with local partners to develop the operationalisation and application of multi-perspective narrative in monitoring, evaluation, learning and development in the Netherlands for the last 2 years. This has involved ongoing collection of narrative with patients, staff and family members within health and care settings, to understand how these perspectives and experiences intersect and differentiate; in order to make better decisions and provide a more holistic service.

## WORKSHOPS TO GET YOU STARTED

Alongside our SenseMaker tool we have a number of workshops to get you started with our methods and approach. Timings are indicated for virtual workshops, however we can deliver in-house if required.

### Introduction to Cynefin (3 hours)

This short half day introduction to Cynefin in Health and Care workshop has been put together to introduce small teams to the framework, encompassing a mixture of theory and practice to get you started on your journey with sense-making. It is designed to be held both as a one-off, and as a precursor to a longer term engagement. If you are interested, please get in touch for a quick call where we can give you more information and ask a few questions about your context-specific objectives for this workshop.

### Complex Adaptive Systems and Sense-Making (3x 3 hours)

Complexity can be a bit of a buzzword in health at the moment, and there are lots of tools, models and frameworks out there to navigate. This comprehensive 3 half-day workshop will introduce you to our ecosystem of methods; an opportunity to create a unique composition that fits your own context building on principles of anthro-complexity and naturalising sense-making.

### Measuring and Monitoring in Complex Adaptive Systems: safe-to-fail experimentation design

This series of workshops is designed to equip you with the skills and know-how to co-design "safe-to-fail experiments" in your organisation and/or across your network. We will walk you through the theory behind vector-based change and targets, and use the principles from the Cynefin framework and other methods in our toolkit to help you to identify the situations where this type of approach is best put to use, and where you might wish to use more traditional linear methods.

## DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE?

If you are interested to learn more, we have created two demo sites for you to experiment with.

The first invites you to [share the stories that you feel matter](#) in healthcare at the moment.

The second offers a space to reflect on [what the future of healthcare might hold](#).

ARE YOU THINKING OF GETTING INVOLVED? - CONTACT US



### Who Is This For?

This programme is open to governmental, not for profit, academic institutions, and occasional commercial organisations who orient themselves towards the public good. We also welcome students who are interested in...

### Why Participate?

As a membership-focused organisation, The Cynefin Company aims to provide practical and methodological scaffolding for practitioners in healthcare looking to make use of sense-making in their organisations and...

### What Does This Programme Include?

Like all our programmes, members of the health & care programme have access to the following support:

A network of practitioners in their area of expertise and beyond...

### More Information

Our previous projects includes:

10,000 Voices (Public Health Agency, Northern Ireland)

An evaluation of the School for Change Agents, Continuing partnership...