

Design Community of Practice— November 2025

Question and answer summary

Executive Summary

Dr Jackie Stirling (Clinical Psychologist) of Dumfries and Galloway Adult Mental Health Service shared their inspirational work within the mental health services in Dumfries and Galloway in conversation with Ashley Hose (Senior Improvement Advisor) of the Transformational Change Mental Health Unit in Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Chamithri Greru (Service Design Advisor of the Transformational Change–Systems unit in Healthcare Improvement Scotland). They talked about how using service design tools such journey maps and pathway visualisations enabled a collaborative approach to understand their services and acted as lever for leadership engagement.

1. How can we use visualisation to influence senior leadership and get their buy-in?

Jackie shared a helpful tip that you could plan to use visualisations when relaunching pathways once the mental health review ends. Their use will help stakeholders understand the service, improve communication and support service development. They are useful for managers when assessing whether the service is meeting the expectations of the pathway in use.

The visualisations allow other boards to fully see what they can do and give them confidence on what's possible. Visualisation offers the '360 degree' view and is a great way to influence change because they are easier for boards to share and can help them influence even at a national level. Ashley highlighted an example of an 80-page pathway being turned into a visual tool for staff in West Lothian, which they found usable.

The conversation also highlighted an important distinction between staff-facing and leadership-facing outputs. While detailed visual pathways are valuable for teams implementing services, senior leaders are more interested in outcomes—“Is it working? Is it efficient? Is it value for money?” This reinforces the need to tailor how visualisations are presented, depending on the audience.

2. What are the benefits of teams creating visualisations together?

Jackie and Ashley highlighted that the biggest benefit is the process itself. Bringing people together to create the visualisation helps teams understand how work is done, not just how it's meant to happen. It gives everyone a voice, surfaces differences in understanding and helps staff recognise challenges and where flexibility is needed. The visual output is important, but it's mainly a by-product of the shared discussion and learning.

We also discussed the possibility of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for visualisation work that may help speed things up, but Ashley and Jackie both highlighted that shared sense-making, ownership and learning together during these types of visualisation exercises remain the most important thing.

3. Do journey maps or visualisations have a life beyond the project?

Jackie highlighted that the use of journey maps in staff training as evidence of work can demonstrate skills gaps. They plan to continue to regularly use journey maps monitor patient experiences over time and reflect on what is changing in practice

Once journey maps are created, they can be used for years. Ashley gave the Early Intervention Psychosis journey maps as an example as they are still actively used even after 3 years. They capture real, human experiences—showing what happens before someone accesses a service, during their care and when services are unavailable. This makes journey maps particularly valuable for boards or areas without established services as it helps them understand the impact of gaps in provision. They also support decision-making at a time when resources are tight, keeping the focus on people's lived experiences.