SYSTEMS IN TEAM COACHING

Teams are a system in themselves. And like any other system, attempts to change a small part of them tend to fail, because the rest of the system works to re-establish the status quo. That's why so much one-to-one coaching is less effective than it could be – it doesn't change the systems, of which the coachee is a part.

Teams are also part of wider systems and, in turn, they have internal systems within them. Some of the most common systems include:

- Leader-member exchange (the habits and norms of behaviour between the team leader and individual team members; and between the team leader and the team as a whole)
- Relationships between team members (how they inform and support each other – or not)
- Collective processes and systems (the procedures for getting work done)
- Relationships with other teams + stakeholders (how the team inform and support outsiders – or not)
- Organizational systems and culture (the often subtle influences on how the team perceives its role within the business and how it delivers what it is tasked with.) The ethical climate is a significant factor in this system.
- Societal systems (how the team is influenced by wider societal perspectives)

For a team to become fully self-aware, it needs to:

- Recognise the multiple systems that underpin its performance
- Re-assess regularly how those systems work and how they might be improved
- Understand the difference between systemic and systematic approaches to problem solving

Exercise:
Identify as many systems as you can, with which this team is involved. Classify them as:

- Internal
- External
- Partly internal, partly external

Consider the following questions about each system (or one or two selected systems):

- What is this system intended to achieve? (What is it there for?)
- How does that purpose support the team's vision, priorities and performance?
- To what extent and how is this system dependent upon, or has influence upon other systems?
- When does this system function at its best?
- When does it function poorly?
- How might we improve this system to make it more consistently effective?