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Recommendations on Improving Change Management in the Case Organisation

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Foreword

Change in all things is sweet. – Aristotle

In this era of rapid and often surprising changes, the ability to lead people and organisations through them can be seen as a managerial core competence.

I have enjoyed this opportunity to dive into the multidimensional question of successful change management. While there may not be a single correct answer, I trust that this thesis contributes to enhancing the practice of change management within the case organisation.

This thesis project was both demanding and rewarding at the same time. It required a lot, yet it also brought immense satisfaction as I progressed, particularly in tackling challenging tasks such as synthesizing literature research into the conceptual framework.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the case organisation, particularly to the director, Anu Mustakari-Ilovuori, and to all those who accompanied me on this journey. I deeply appreciate their openness, commitment, and bravery, which were highly valuable in achieving the objective of this thesis. Furthermore, I want to thank Dr. Mari Hiljanen, Senior Lecturer, and Sonja Holappa, M.A., Senior Lecturer, for all their advice and support throughout this project.

Returning to school after a long time presented its own set of challenges. I devoted countless evenings and weekends to this endeavor, facing moments of despair and struggle. However, looking back, I am grateful for this intensive period in my life, which has equipped me with a wealth of new knowledge to apply in my professional life. I deeply thank my family members for their unwavering patience and support.

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Abstract

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This thesis explores change management within the context of outpatient healthcare at Western Uusimaa Wellbeing Services County. There remains a continued need for reforms in this industry, and improving change management is considered essential. The nature of the thesis was to serve as a practical development project, with the objective being to generate recommendations for the case organisation on improving change management. The research approach, applied action research, incorporating triangulation, was selected accordingly.

The first research phase involved conducting literature research to determine the elements and related best practices for successful change management. These findings were summarised in the conceptual framework created by the author of this thesis. Subsequently, the current state of change management within the case organisation was analysed in each element, according to the conceptual framework, based on the data collected from the stakeholder interviews and the internal documents. The analysis was summarised to determine the weaknesses to be improved. In the third research phase, the initial recommendations for improving the identified weaknesses were formulated in collaboration with the group of stakeholders. The initial recommendations were informed by the collected data and the appropriate best practices in the conceptual framework. The initial recommendations were then validated during the final research phase through collaboration with another group of stakeholders. The outcome of this thesis, 12 recommendations for improving change management practices, was formulated based on the data collected during the validation process.

Additionally, this thesis includes a section of discussion and conclusions, providing, for example, an executive summary and an evaluation of the thesis credibility.

Keywords: change management, transformational changes, organisational changes, applied action research

List of Abbreviations

- OpH: The case organisation in this thesis is a service line called Outpatient Healthcare (OpH) at the Western Uusimaa Wellbeing Services County.
- CM: Change management.
- CF: The conceptual framework on the elements and related best practices for succesful change management.
- CSA: The current state analysis of change management in the case organisation.
- SD: The solution development phase of this study.

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1 Introduction

Finland's social and healthcare service system has been grappling with several challenges for decades. Some challenges stem from long-term trends, such as population ageing, increasing needs and costs, and a diminishing availability of skilled labour. Others are triggered by shocks with widespread consequences, such as the COVID-19 crisis.

In response to these challenges, a national structural reform was recently implemented to ensure equal service availability nationwide and contain cost growth. Beginning in 2023, the responsibility for organising services was transferred from municipalities to the Wellbeing Services Counties. Additionally, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has established national development goals through special programmes and allocated dedicated funding for development initiatives.

These persistent challenges necessitate ongoing and significant changes at the Wellbeing Services Counties over several years to achieve the goals and benefits of the new structure. Therefore, this thesis aims to develop recommendations for improving change management within the case organisation.

1.1 Business Context

The case organisation in this thesis is a service line called Outpatient Healthcare (hereafter OpH) at the Western Uusimaa Wellbeing Services County. The Wellbeing Services County was formed by business transfers from the municipalities of this area and started at the beginning of 2023 with approximately 10,000 employees and a budget of 1.7 billion euros. It provides health, social, and rescue services for the residents of this area.

Figure 1 illustrates the organisational structure of Western Uusimaa Wellbeing Services County, with the OpH shown in green.

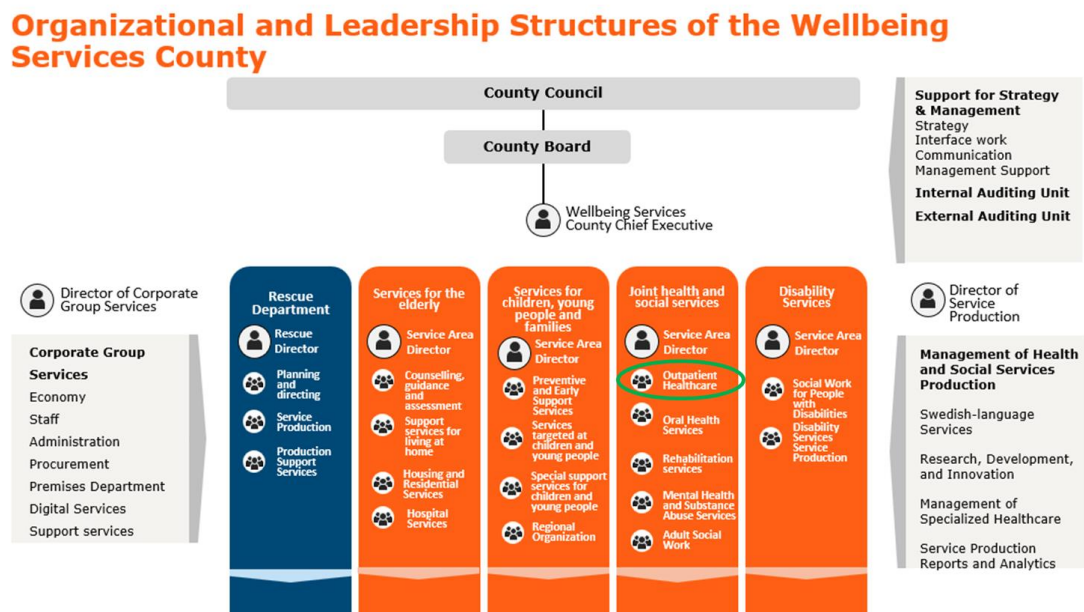


Figure 1. The organisational structure of the Western Uusimaa Wellbeing Services County (The case organisation 2023)

As seen in Figure 1, the OpH belongs to the Joint Health and Social Services service area. The OpH is responsible for offering the people living in this area on-time access to doctors and nurses when they have health problems. The OpH has 827 employees and a budget of 130 million euros. The OpH consists of four geographical service areas, totaling 20 health centres. In addition, there are three other units: one for centralised services, one for outsourced services, and one for controlling infectious diseases.

1.2 Business Challenge, Objective, and Outcome

The OpH is facing an ongoing need for changes in the years ahead. The combination of funding constraints and increasing needs among the population necessitates the development of the organisation, service networks and operational strategies to deliver more services at reduced costs.

The strategic objectives include enhancing the continuity and availability of services, ensuring a competent workforce and supportive management, implementing proactive and balanced financial planning, and optimising operational processes and tools. At the level of health centres, the objectives entail changes in the following directions: increasing digitisation, strengthening local accountability, evolving service networks, renewing operating models, intensifying collaboration, and sharing successes, advancing personnel management, implementing cost-saving measures, and eliminating waste, and utilising shared information systems.

Given that the organisation is still relatively young and in the process of shaping itself, this adds additional challenges to the mix. According to a representative from the case organisation, they have entered to a new era characterised by perpetual need for changes, with no foreseeable future where operations can simply be maintained without adaptation.

Currently, the OpH implements changes through its line management system and with the assistance of project structures, but there is a lack of a clear and coherent concept of change management. Given the challenges they face, it is imperative to enhance change management practices to effectively implement all upcoming reforms. Therefore, the specific objective of this study is to generate recommendations for improving change management. Consequently, the desired outcome is a set of recommendations that will assist the case organisation in implementing the necessary reforms to ensure timely access to doctors and nurses for individuals with health problems.

1.3 Scope and Outline of Thesis Report

This study focuses on managing transformational changes at the health centres, which are in-house production. Here, transformational changes refer to initiatives originating from the executive level and impacting all the mentioned health centres. Local changes at the health centres are not within the scope of this study.

The other parts of the case organisation, including, e.g. centralised and outsourced services, fall outside the scope of this study. The case organisation operates within a comprehensive matrix-type structure, and any change management actions undertaken in other matrix units are also beyond the scope of this study.

This study consists of seven sections. Following the introduction, Section 2 elucidates the selected research approach, encompassing the research plan and the data plan detailing the execution of this study. Section 3 delves into a literature research on the elements crucial for successful change management. These elements are synthesised into a conceptual framework for analysing the current state and developing solutions. In Section 4, the current state of change management within the case organisation is expounded upon, encapsulating the findings from the analysis.

Following the current state analysis, Section 5 is built on the outcomes of sections 3 and 4, and it describes initial recommendations for improving change management in the case organisation. The initial recommendations formulated in Section 5 are validated and finalised in Section 6 based on the feedback from the stakeholders. The final section of this thesis presents the conclusions, including an executive summary and proposals for implementing the recommendations within the case organisation. Additionally, it offers an evaluation of the study and concludes with some final words.

The following section describes the research approach, encompassing the research plan and the data plan detailing the execution of this study.

2 Project Plan

This section delineates the project plan upon which this research is structured. It begins by emphasising the significance of a suitable research approach for ensuring good research practice and subsequently elucidates the approach chosen for this study. The section then introduces the research design, visually depicting the methodology of this study. Following this, it expounds on the data collection process, providing details and rationale for the data collection rounds, as well as discussing the types and significance of the data collected. Finally, Section 2 concludes with a preview of the subsequent section.

2.1 Research Approach

The nature of this thesis is to serve as a practical business development project for the case organisation. This goal requires an appropriate research approach.

According to Kothari (2004: 3), the right research approach for this kind of thesis is applied research because “applied research aims to find a solution for an immediate problem facing an organisation.”

There are several different ways of undertaking applied research. The way Kananen (2013: 20-21) describes applied action research suggests it is the most appropriate approach for this thesis. This approach picks up a few applied research principles applicable to this thesis. This thesis is compatible with the following Kananen's principles: Applied action research utilises mainly qualitative methods, produces functional and practical solutions, combines development and research, and is conducted in organisations to improve operations.

This thesis deals with an organisational issue (*the need to improve change management*) with people directly involved (*representatives involved from all organisational levels*), and the outcome (*recommendations*) aims to improve the case organisation.

The following subsections describe the process and methods in detail: the research design depicts the process, and the data plan explains the qualitative methods used.

2.2 Research Design

This study consists of four research phases and three data collection rounds based on the selected triangulated data approach.

Figure 2 illustrates the research design of this study.

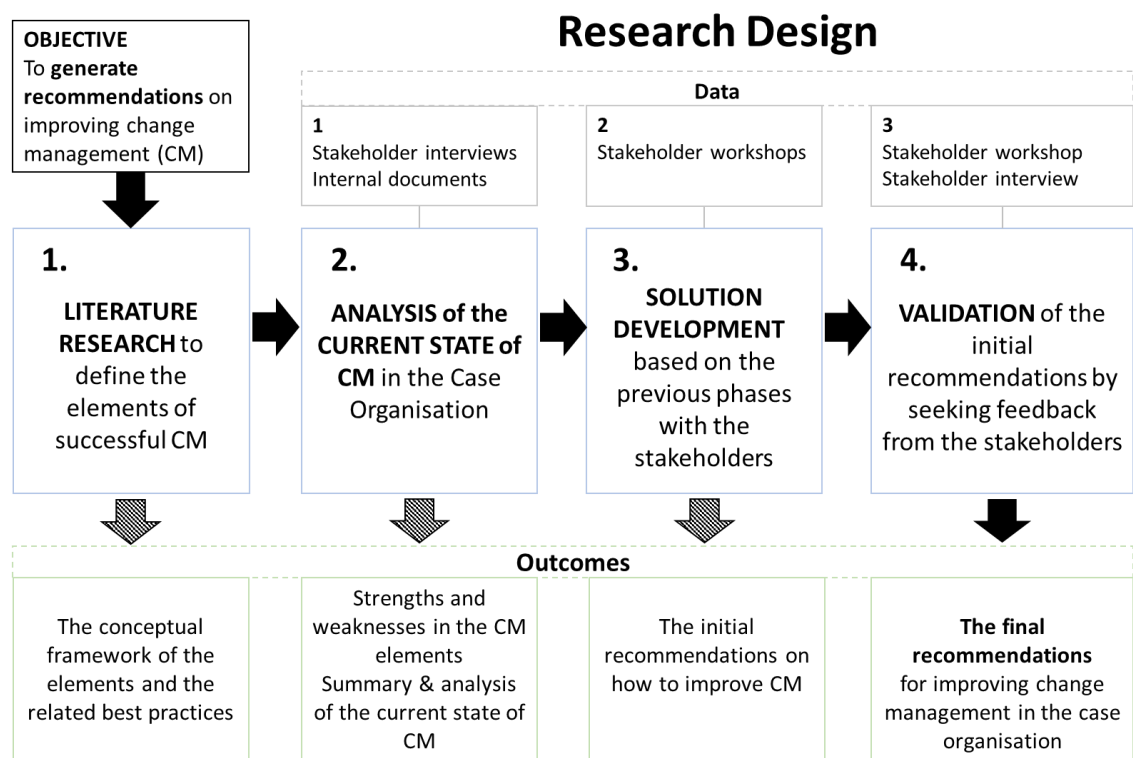


Figure 2. Research Design

As seen in Figure 2, this study has four phases that follow a strict logic to achieve the objective of this study.

As shown in Figure 2, the first phase is the literature research to create a conceptual framework for a proper, structured approach to carry out the current state analysis (CSA) and gain ideas on best practices to utilise in the solution

development phase (SD). The first phase is conducted to discover the elements of successful change management. This is a logical order because change management is a term understood in many different ways, and it is crucial first to define the elements of successful change management. The outcome of this phase is the conceptual framework (CF), which summarises the elements and the related best practices for successful change management as researched in the relevant literature. The CF is utilised to carry out the following phases: the CSA and the SD.

As depicted in Figure 2, the second phase is the analysis of the current state of change management in the case organisation. This phase includes the first data collection round. The outcomes of this phase are a description of the current strengths and weaknesses in CM elements and a summary and analysis of the current state of CM. The CSA is conducted before solution development to determine the current strengths and weaknesses that need to be considered in the SD.

The third phase is solution development with the selected stakeholders, including the second data collection round. The outcome of this phase is the initial recommendations on improving change management based on the CF and the CSA.

As seen in Figure 2, the fourth and final phase is to validate the solution by seeking stakeholder feedback to make the final recommendations. This phase includes the third data collection round. The objective of this thesis is to create recommendations on improving change management in the case organisation, and this final phase is the validation in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure the objective is achieved. The outcome of this phase is the final recommendations for improving change management in the case organisation.

Figure 2 also illustrates the triangulated data approach. This approach was selected due to the nature of this thesis: “a practical development project to deal with an organisational issue with involved people.” Qualitative methods, such as interviews and workshops, provide relevant data about the current state of

change management and for the solution development phase and the validation phase. The three data rounds ensure the trustworthiness of this study since stakeholders are involved in defining the current weaknesses and building and validating the solution.

2.3 Data Plan

The following data plan was made to collect rich data for this thesis. As mentioned in the previous subsection, this study has three data collection rounds. The informants in all data rounds are nominated by the case organisation. Table 1 visualises the data plan.

Table 1. Data Plan

Data Round	Content	Approach	Informant	Documented	Timing	Outcome
Data 1 ANALYSIS of the current state of change management (CM) in the case organisation	Existing structures, frameworks, and methods +/- of current structures, frameworks, and methods	Internal documents Discussions and collaboration One-to-one interviews, a group interview	Documents on the management structures 1 project manager Representatives of each organisational level in the line management system (4 levels), 8 informants 4 informants from other roles: project managers, a change coordinator	Written notes Written notes	Feb	Strengths and weaknesses in the CM elements Summary and the analysis of the current state of CM
Data 2 DEVELOPING recommendations	Creating initial recommendations on improving CM	2 workshops	Selected stakeholders	In digital tools: Mentimeter, Forms	Mar	Initial Recommendations
Data 3 VALIDATION of the initial recommendations	Getting feedback on the initial recommendations	1 workshop One-to-one interview	Selected stakeholders Service line director	Written notes	Mar-Apr	Final Recommendations on improving change management

As Table 1 illustrates, Data 1 is collected during the current state analysis, consisting of stakeholder interviews and internal documents.

The contents of Data 1 concern the existing management structures for change management and strengths and weaknesses in the change management elements defined in the conceptual framework.

Data 1 is collected by interviewing the people representing all four levels of the case organisation. The collected data is categorised and analysed to prepare the summary of the current state of change management. The categorising is done according to the elements defined in the literature research. The data in each category is analysed through thematic analysis to determine common denominators about the strengths and weaknesses. The main weaknesses are identified based on the analysis.

The people who are interviewed include representatives from all levels of the line management structure e.g. executive level managers, supervisors at health centre level, a nurse and a doctor doing clinical work, and three project managers leading development projects in this organisation. This number of interviewees and their different roles ensure a holistic view of the current state of change management. Data 1 also includes internal documents, shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Internal documents for Data 1

ID	Name of the Document	Number of Pages	Description
A	The Management Model of Outpatient Healthcare and the Implementation Plan	29	This document presents the line management structure for the start of the organisation.
B	A Framework for Supervisory work	45	This document is to support supervisors. It presents common principles and clarifies roles and responsibilities.

The documents listed in Table 2 are collected to determine what management structures, frameworks, and methods exist for change management in the case organisation.

The second data collection round is during the solution development phase, and Data 2 is collected by two workshops with the selected people interviewed during the CSA phase. The Data 2 content concerns with initial recommendations on improving change management.

The selected method provides credibility to the solution since it is created in collaboration with the people involved to improve change management.

The third data collection round is during the validation phase, and Data 3 is collected by one workshop with the selected people interviewed during the CSA phase. The people who attend this workshop are different than those involved in the solution development phase. As a second part of Data 3, there is an interview with the director of the case organisation. The Data 3 content is feedback on initial recommendations to finalise them. This approach ensures the quality of the final recommendations and a holistic reasoning behind them.

The following section concerns the literature research, which is the first research phase of this study.

3 Elements for Successful Change Management as Researched in Relevant Literature

This section is built on literature research and discusses successful change management. Based on the relevant literature, the aim is to define which elements are needed in change management to ensure successful changes. The elements and the related best practices are summarised in the conceptual framework (CF). The CF is utilised to define a structured approach for the current state analysis and gain ideas for the solution development phase, achieving the outcome of this thesis: generating recommendations on how to improve change management in the case organisation. This section begins with a short introduction to the theme.

3.1 What Do Change and Change Management Mean?

First, it is essential to define change and change management in the context of the organisational environment. Management literature offers numerous different definitions and approaches to this theme. According to Murthy (2017), change is to make or become something different and can appear on many levels and vary in type. Murthy argues that changes happen on three levels: macro changes affect people universally, people face micro changes in their personal lives, and organisational changes mean any changes in the organisational context that influence people's lives. Cameron and Green (2009: 54) point out that changes can be externally imposed, internally generated, evolutionary, or revolutionary in nature.

Organisational change types can be, e.g. operational or transformational. Operational change means improvements, for example bringing new technology into work processes and focusing on improving existing operations to perform better while keeping the organisational foundations, such as goals, the same. Transformational change widely affects organisational foundations and involves the entire or a more significant part of the organisation. (Murthy 2017: 7–15.)

This study focuses on transformational changes, which mean change initiatives that originate from the executive level of the case organisation and affect the organisation as described in subsection 1.3.

Many researchers have explored change management widely, and several definitions exist. There seems to be agreement that change management is a systematic approach with many elements that touch the involved people's hearts and minds to make the needed journey with them from the present to the desired future. (Cameron & Green 2009) (Kotter et al. 2021) (Zukof 2021) (Gill 2003).

Change management is a continuous and essential part of managers' and executives' work, and there is no explicit truth about how to succeed. According to multiple studies, managing change depends on several parameters, and most initiatives fail. (Cameron & Green 2009: 331–334).

Gill (2003: 307) argues that changes do not happen alone. He states that “any change must be planned, organized, directed, and controlled; it also requires effective leadership to introduce change successfully.”

The following subsections of this section present elements for successful change management as researched in the relevant literature. This approach focuses on transformational changes, which, according to Murthy (2017: 5–17), are relatively big change initiatives and/or affect a significant part of the organisation.

According to a widely cited change management pioneer, John P. Kotter (1995: 9–10), “transformational change is a process that goes through a series of phases and usually requires considerable time. Skipping phases creates the illusion of speed and never ends up with satisfactory results.”

Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model is one view of the right approach. Kotter's model includes valuable insights to consider.

However, it is slightly unclear about ensuring that executives or senior managers are well prepared and have a logical roadmap to execute the change process. Hrebiniak (2013) stresses the need for logical guidelines to help managers succeed in change.

As mentioned earlier, there is no explicit truth about the right approach to making change happen. Hence, in this study, the approach to defining elements for successful change management is formulated based on a collection of the best ideas from several authors. This section is created based on four books and some additional articles as found relevant for reaching the objective of this thesis: generate recommendations to help the case organisation to improve change management.

As previously stated, change management literature contains an astronomical amount of content, and there is no explicit way to define the elements of successful change management. The elements are practically interdependent in many ways. Still, for clarity, in this study, they are discussed using the following themes: **1) put the fundamentals into place; 2) plan how to manage the process; 3) plan how to manage the people; and 4) execute the change.** The logic of the ideal process creates the themes — what needs to be done in a specific order.

The reasoning behind the themes is the objective of this thesis: the conceptual framework needs to help develop solutions for the case organisation. The following approach is suitable for that purpose. The three first themes form a conceptual preparatory phase (preplanning) to ensure that all relevant elements concerning change initiatives are considered. The fourth and last theme is about executing the change.

In practice, change management is not carried out in a linear sequence. Actions concerning elements in different themes can be taken simultaneously. For example, defining change goals can include communication and involvement, and leadership actions are linked to every element.

3.2 Put the Fundamentals into Place

The change readiness of the organisation is a platform for change initiatives. Todnem (2007), as cited by Cameron and Green, underlines a correlation between the level of change readiness and successful change management. Armenakis et al. (2007), mentioned by Cameron and Green as well, state that the change willingness degree is influenced by the degree to which employees are convinced that a change is necessary, possible to implement, and would benefit the organisation and themselves personally. The better the changes are managed concerning all elements, the higher the change readiness will be next time. (Cameron & Green 2009: 338.)

Any change process must be established based on clear fundamentals. These fundamentals are **Reasons and Goals**, and **Available Time**. The fundamentals strongly affect all other elements of managing changes successfully.

3.2.1 Reasons and Goals

Kotter et al. (2021) argue that “successful change processes start with clearly articulated, compelling, and emotionally inspiring opportunities, and the vision of the change initiative must be explained in five minutes at most to anyone.” According to Hrebiniak (2013), change management consists of six general steps, and the first one is about defining the size and content of the change, meaning also an estimation of the complexity of the case. Zukof (2021) stresses the importance of a clear goal and its importance to the organisation. Cameron and Green (2009: 335, 338) have collected results from several pieces of research around the theme: “When the change goes right?” According to them, clear vision and direction are essential to successful change management.

Hence, an element called “**Reasons and Goals**” is among the fundamental elements to be put into place first. Within it, executives must crystallise what needs to be changed, why, the goal, and how complex the path to the desired future is. These definitions strongly affect the later elements, especially success in Communication, Commitment, and Institutionalising.

3.2.2 Available Time

Hrebiniak (2013) points out a critical change management issue in his six-step model. He underlines the importance of defining the available time to make the change happen. Hrebiniak continues explaining the relationship between the size of the change and the available time. According to him, this combination determines the approach, the costs and benefits, and the probability of success.

This is a crucial insight for modeling the change management approach. The “**Available Time**” element correlates to everything in planning and executing the change process, e.g. management tactics vary depending on the case’s urgency, and the selected management tactic strongly affects leadership, communication, and involvement issues.

3.3 Plan How to Manage Process

Zukof (2021) discusses the hard side’s elements of change management. The hard elements of successful change management are related to making the change process doable in practice. Kotter et al. (2021) argue about winning people’s minds through rationality and analyticity in executing the change.

Before executing any change, the following elements, **Management Model** and **Accountability**, must be defined: The aim is to affect the involved people by bringing clarity, logic, and rationality, making it easy for them to follow the process and make the change happen.

3.3.1 Management Model

Planning the **Management Model** for the change must be done based on the available time (as argued earlier) and means considering the following issues: Hrebiniak (2013) discusses a suitable management tactic for the case in his six-stage model. According to him it is essential to ask the following questions: Is executing change slowly and methodically necessary, or must it be swallowed all at once?

Piśla et al. (2010) state that the nature of the change defines the change management approach. Hiatt and Creasey (2003), as cited by Cameron and Green (2009), argue similarly, stating the approach must be suited to the type of change being managed. Kotter (1995: 14) suggests a structure outside the normal hierarchy for transformational changes. This theme is elaborated by Kotter et al. (2021) by presenting the “dual system,” in which networks and leadership are for driving a change initiative and hierarchy and control, (such as line management structures and responsibilities), are for the execution of operational plans. Zukof (2021) claims that change management structures must be based on project management principles. In Zukof’s approach, following the principles ensures the system contains mechanisms for controlling and monitoring the change process.

According to Cameron and Green (2009: 338), control and structure are vital to succeeding, but on an optimal level. They argue that if the amount is excessive, it creates “stuckness” in the organisation.

Hence, there is no one correct answer for defining the management model. Executives must find the right approach for each case, considering the previous suggestions on best practices.

3.3.2 Accountability

The second element in this theme is “**Accountability.**” According to Hrebiniak (2013), defining who is in charge of the change process and the other key responsibilities is essential. Zukof (2021) stresses the importance of clear accountabilities and responsibilities in change execution. According to Zukof, there are several key roles and responsibilities to define: who is the sponsor for the change initiative on the executive/senior management level, who is in charge of the change process, and who are members of the core team. Kotter (1995: 16) favors defining a powerful guiding coalition. According to Kotter, the bigger the transformation, the more critical it is to have a powerful coalition regarding titles, information and expertise, reputations, and relationships.

Kotter also points out that the head of the organisation must actively support the change initiative.

According to Zukof (2021), once the change initiative sponsor is nominated, the process should ideally go further under this person's lead and in tight cooperation with the person in charge. Clear accountability and responsibilities correlate strongly with the elements of "Leadership" and "Communication" discussed later.

3.4 Plan How to Manage People

The soft elements in successful change management try to affect the involved people, raising awareness about the change and increasing willingness to join the journey and commitment to the desired future. (Zukof 2021).

Change resistance is a natural phenomenon for humans for several reasons, and the nature of change can provoke different attitudes and behaviors (Cameron & Green 2009). Change resistance is not an element in successful change management but a phenomenon that affects the change process, and quality in handling it correlates to success. Various insights exist on the theme. Kubr (1996), as cited by Gill (2003: 308–309), states that change resistance can originate in cognitive and behavioral reasons but mainly from emotional, e.g. dislike of surprises, lack of self-confidence, and lack of respect and trust.

Ford & Ford (2010) argue that resistance is blamed for wrong reasons, and it is "in the eye of the beholder". Managers have tendency to go behind this phenomenon and blame it for failures based on three compelling forces: cognitive biases, social dynamics and managerial mistakes.

Communication, Leadership, Involvement and Commitment are the main elements of managing people during change processes and need attention when planning and executing changes. The following subsection discuss best practices for these elements, which are also tools to handle change resistance.

3.4.1 Communication

Continuous and targeted communication throughout the change initiative is essential. Communication is a cutting-edge element for successful change management, and it has value for all of organisational life. (Cameron & Green 2009: 338.)

The author of this thesis acknowledges that the goal, intensity, and techniques for communication vary depending on the phase of the change process and need to be planned.

Elving (2005) states that communication in change processes contains two approaches. 1) Its purpose is to inform organisation and its members about the change and how it affects to their work, and 2) create the feeling of community to support commitment and build trust. The aim is to decrease uncertainty and insecurity around the change and affect positively on change readiness.

According to Hiatt and Creasey (2003), as cited by Cameron and Green (2009: 334–335), employees must hear about change from two people: the most senior person involved in the change and their line manager. This combination ensures the change-related overarching vision and strategic direction are translated into a local context.

Kotter (1995) stresses the importance of communication by saying that communication is essential to executives' and managers' work and that all possible channels should be utilised. Kotter points out that communication is in words and deeds, demoralizing the change process if executives and managers are inconsistent.

Zukof (2021) discusses communication difficulties and extends communication responsibilities to everyone. She states that during change processes, it should never be assumed that people *know* and advises against saying “as you know” because the words are belittling and dismissive.

She states that it is essential to be specific and honest when communicating and tailor the message to the stakeholder group.

Stakeholders on every organisational level have communication responsibilities. For example, executives need to communicate the meaning and importance of the change, and frontline managers/supervisors must localise the message to the operational level and each direct subordinate. Executives/mid-level managers must give tools and support to the frontline in communicating why the change is needed, what the benefits are, and how it affects the operational level. (Zukof 2021.)

Communication is both talking and listening. Zukof stresses that both sides are vital. Besides the formal and planned “talk,” there is always buzz among the people, and it should be harnessed for the benefit of change. According to her, organisations are more successful in change initiatives when circumstances for two-way communication are established, especially for listening to opposite views. Zukof presents a communication plan for a tool to ensure that all aspects are considered and planned. A good communication plan clarifies who needs to hear what, by when, and from whom. The plan also ensures that all stakeholders understand their responsibilities and commitments in communication during the change process. (Zukof 2021.)

3.4.2 Leadership

The concept of leadership is a parallel term to management and has many meanings. According to Gill (2003: 309), it is about showing the way and is a primary tool in change management to win people’s hearts and minds through personal power. Dubrin (2001), as cited by Gill (2003: 310) states that a transformational leader can help the people involved understand the need for change emotionally and intellectually.

Gill continues by formulating dimensions and requirements for transformational leadership. According to him, effective leadership is a combination of cognitive

intelligence (“thinking”), spiritual intelligence (“meaning”), emotional intelligence (“feeling”), and behavioral skills (“doing”).

Cognitive intelligence means a leader’s ability to “perceive and understand information, reason with it, imagine possibilities, use intuition, make judgments, solve problems, and make decisions.” Spiritual intelligence brings meaning to work and a sense of worth to the involved people. A leader with emotional intelligence can understand oneself and others, display self-control and self-confidence, and respond to others appropriately. Emotionally intelligent leaders can inspire and empower people with personal power instead of positional power or authority. A leader's behavioral skills mean using and responding to emotion through body language, communicating differently, and physical behavior (Gill 2003.)

Goleman (1998) stresses the importance of emotional intelligence for successful leadership. According to him, the most successful leaders can be different in many ways, but they are all emotionally intelligent. Emotional intelligence is an ability that can be learned and consists of five components. Three are self-management skills, and two are about a person’s ability to manage relationships with others: 1) self-awareness is about knowing and understanding oneself realistically; 2) self-regulation is the capability to control emotional reactions caused by biological impulses; 3) a high degree of internal motivation; 4) a sense of empathy that helps to understand and consider employees’ feelings in different situations and make intelligent decisions based on that; 5) social skills are the culmination of the other dimensions of emotional intelligence. This capability allows leaders to put their emotional intelligence to work.

The previous chapters explained the concept of leadership and what is typical for good leaders. But who should bring leadership to change processes?

According to Musaigwa (2023), who has gathered results from several studies, leadership is executed in several ways in change management. It is, e.g. about how managers communicate, show their commitment to the change, direct the

process, and treat people. All actions managers take build or ruin trust and, through that, the employee's willingness, and commitment to the change.

Kotter et al. (2021) discuss this theme and point out some interesting insights. According to them, there is a persistent misunderstanding about the link between leadership, organisational positions, and hierarchy. The old-school thinking says that only people in top-level positions are supposed to provide leadership. Natural leaders can be found at any level of the organisation. The dual system as a management model (as presented in 3.3.1) for a change process is a way to involve these people in it and increase the organisation's alignment for the change initiative.

Based on the previous discussions, there is no one recipe for including leadership in change processes. In conclusion, it is an integral part of all managers' work and vital to successful change management. It must be considered and acted out appropriately in each case during the change process.

3.4.3 Involvement and Commitment

Involvement and Commitment are interrelated elements in a change process at every level of the organisation.

According to Sirkin et al. (2005: 169,172), two groups of people must commit to the change to make it happen: 1) the top managers and 2) the people who must deal with the outcome of the change process. The top-level commitment comes first. Employees who do not see managers backing the change are unlikely to change. They state that there is no limit to top-level support in the change process — the more, the better.

Gill (2003: 308) elaborates on this theme by stating that top managers show their commitment (or lack of it) in many ways: "unequivocal acceptance of ownership and responsibility for the success of the change initiative, eagerness to be involved, willingness to invest resources, willingness to take tough

decisions when required, awareness of the impact of their behavior, a consistent message, and the holding of regular reviews of progress.”

According to Gill (2003: 308), commitment is hard to achieve if the evidence for the benefits of change is missing. Also, lack of communication, inconsistent messages, and unclear messages concerning the change process hamper the achievement of commitment.

Involvement is a way to generate commitment, and Zukof (2021) presents a tool, namely stakeholder analysis, for planning it. According to her, stakeholder analysis is vital for successful change execution. A stakeholder analysis is prepared, e.g. for clarifying: “who is affected by the change and how, the level of impact each stakeholder group will experience, the degree to which each stakeholder group can influence successful adoption of the change, stakeholder concerns and points of resistance, and preferred methods for involving and communicating with each stakeholder group.”

3.5 Execute Change

The previous subsections discuss preparing (preplanning) change initiatives by presenting the elements and the related best practices to be considered and defined for success through the following themes: put the fundamentals into place, plan how to manage the process, and plan how to manage the people. The last theme in this literature research concerning successful change management is about executing the change process, fed by the previously presented elements' outcomes but deepening into details.

In practice, preplanning and executing a change process are not entirely linear. Actions can be taken simultaneously, e.g. concerning communication, to prepare the organisation for the change process. This subsection presents elements and related best practices for successful execution.

The elements are **Phasing, Action Plans and Operational Responsibilities, Monitoring and Controlling the Actions.**

3.5.1 Phasing

According to Lewin (1951), as cited by Cummings et al. (2016), there are three main phases in a change execution. The first is called “Unfreeze”. This phase is about preparing the organisation for the change. The second phase is called “Change,” in which the change is implemented. The last phase is “Refreeze,” meaning the change must be institutionalised in the organisation. Lewin’s model can be seen as a main framework for many other theories that enrich and deepen the phases, as illustrated in Figure 3.

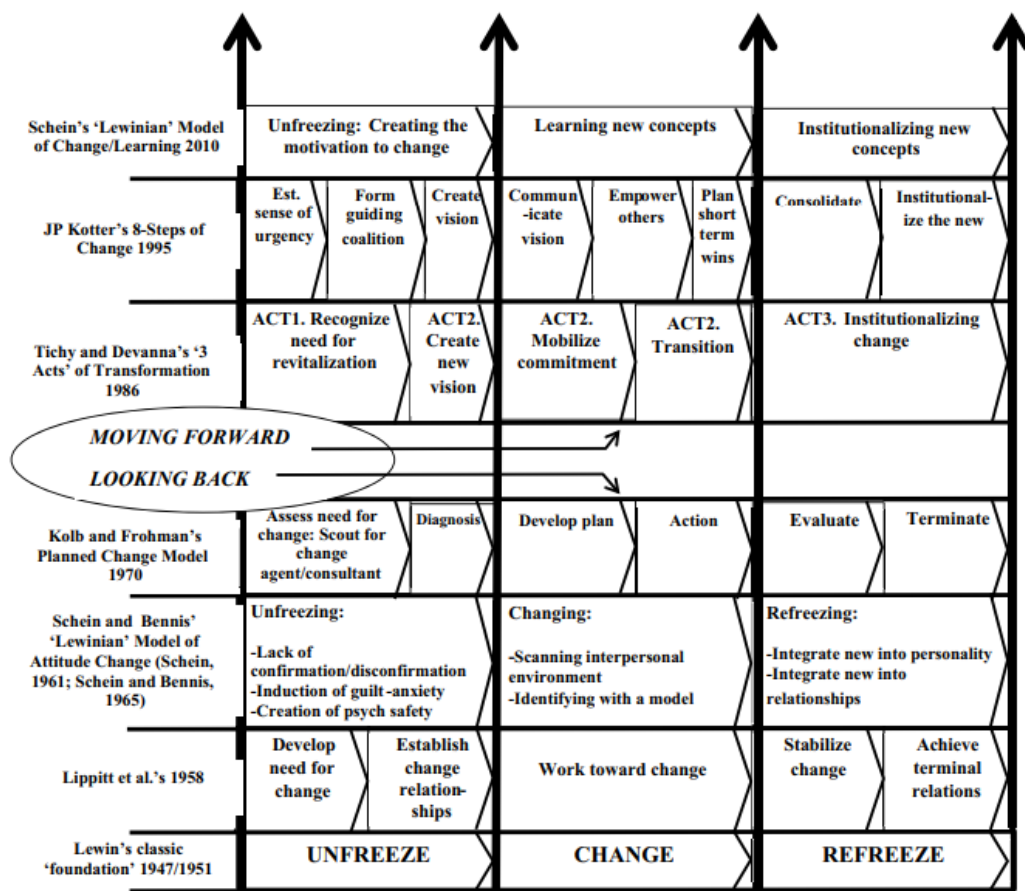


Figure 3. Change phasing theories (Cummings et al. 2016)

As seen in Figure 3, Cummings et al. (2016) state that Lewin’s three-phase model is a foundation for newer theories that can be placed on them.

Hence, change execution can be approached by phasing it into three phases: preparing, implementing, and institutionalising.

3.5.2 Action Plans and Operational Responsibilities

Actions and responsibilities in each phase (preparing, implementing, and institutionalising) must be planned. Zukof (2021) suggests that changes are planned as projects because the project management approach ensures a clear and systematic path through the phases.

Zukof stresses that both the soft and hard side actions, (discussed in subsections 3.3 and 3.4), must be included in the plans. Features of a good project plan include timeframes and milestones with objectives and outcomes, needed actions, and related responsibilities.

Sirkin et al. (2005) state that managing change is *tough* and, interestingly, argues that one reason for failures is that organisations overestimate the importance of the soft side elements, e.g. leadership. According to them, the essential hard side elements are **duration**, **integrity**, **commitment**, and **effort** (DICE), which must be assessed before launching a change initiative. As best practices in planning, they state: the shorter duration, the better; integrity is about having the right people with proper skills in the project team; commitment means leaders support and communication (discussed more earlier in 3.4.3) and the less extra effort employees need to adopt the change, the better.

Mento et al. (2002: 55–56) highlight the importance of including measurable metrics in the plans to make monitoring and control reasonable. According to Zukof (2021), action planning must be done to clarify who is doing what and when. Mento et al. (2002: 51) argue that the plans must balance specificity and flexibility to ensure feasibility in evolving circumstances.

Resources and skills must be considered when planning actions and addressing responsibilities. According to Gill (2003: 308), a lack of necessary resources and skills is among the reasons for failures in change management.

Resources include time, budget, information, and people with essential knowledge and skills.

3.5.3 Monitoring and Controlling Actions

Once plans are made and actions are taken, it is time to monitor and control to ensure the objectives are achieved. According to Mento et al. (2002: 55–56), change progress must be monitored and controlled based on measurements.

Pîsla et al. (2010) underline that control is feedback based on progress monitoring. Gill (2003: 56) states that reflection on “lessons learned” must be integrated into these processes to develop the quality of the change process continuously.

Kotter (1995) argues about building and celebrating small victories to reward the involved people and keep motivation up. He also states the importance of recognising and removing obstacles that prevent achieving the objectives. Kotter also warns about declaring victory too soon and emphasises that institutionalising change requires significant time for continuous monitoring and control.

Zukof (2021) presents an action review as a concept for monitoring and controlling actions. The idea of an action review is a regular and structured gathering with the relevant people involved. An action review aims to monitor and control activities by asking the following questions: what is supposed to happen according to the plans, what is happening and why, and what should we do about it?

3.6 Conceptual Framework

This subsection pulls together all key findings from the literature research into the conceptual framework (CF) as seen in Figure 4. As discussed in the previously cited studies, change is not "a quick fix" but a systematic approach with many elements to consider.

The conceptual framework is devised by the author of this thesis, and it is employed in the subsequent research phases to accomplish the objective of this study: to furnish practical and well-founded recommendations to the case organisation on how to enhance change management.

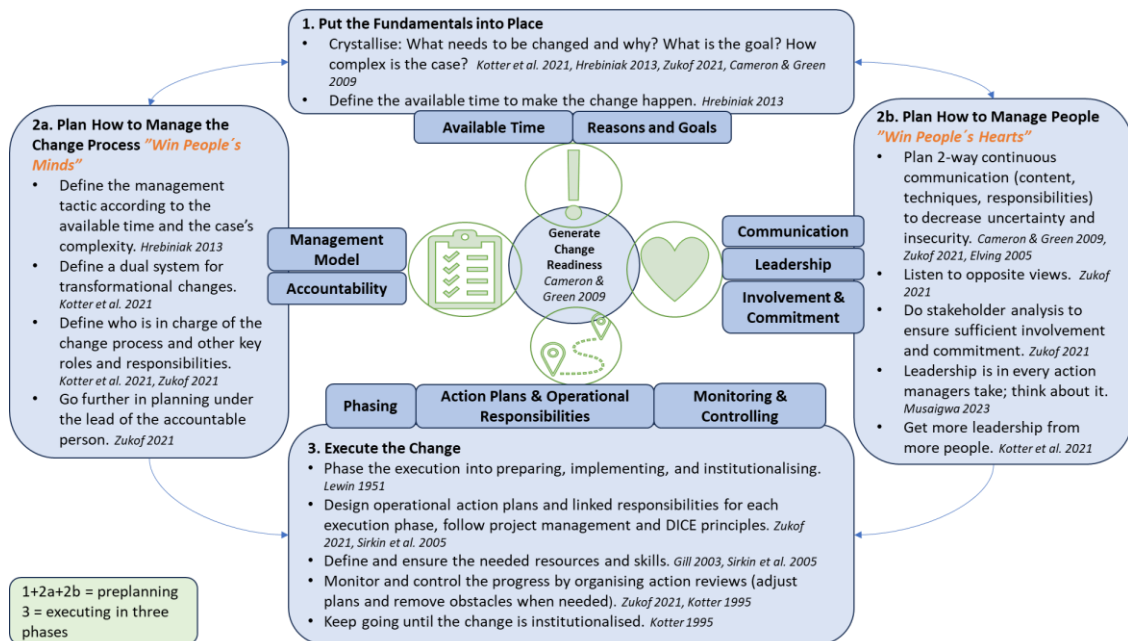


Figure 4. The conceptual framework on elements for successful CM

Figure 4 shows that the CF is divided into three themes that represent the related elements. Themes 1, 2a, and 2b formulate a conceptual preplanning phase to ensure the quality of the change initiative before Theme 3 execution begins. The execution must be divided into three phases to do it successfully.

As Figure 4 illustrates, the elements of successful change management are interdependent. The quality of managing change initiatives feeds the change readiness in the organisation: the better the change processes are, the more willing the organisation will be next time. Clear reasons and goals are the foundation for any change initiative. Going forward with a change initiative is impossible if these are missing. Defining the available time is essential because it correlates with the approach to other elements.

Defining accountability and key responsibilities is an element of gaining progress. If it is clear whose head is on the plate, it generates actions. The management model is about defining the management approach and structures for the change initiative.

Figure 4 shows that communication, leadership, involvement and commitment are related to managing people. Communicating must be continuous, including telling and listening. Leadership is an abstract element about personal power that is present in each element. Involvement must be planned based on stakeholder analysis, and it is a tool to ensure commitment to the change, especially by top managers and the people most affected by the change.

Change execution must be phased, and detailed action plans and related responsibilities must be defined. Change execution requires resources and appropriate skills. Action reviews are a concept for monitoring and controlling progress. The last phase, "institutionalising," requires significant time, effort, and persistence.

The following section is the second research phase, and it is about the current state of change management in the case organisation. The CF is utilised in carrying out interviews to obtain data about the current state related to each change management element.

4 Analysis of Current State of Change Management

This section outlines the current state of change management within the case organisation. The description is supported by the conceptual framework (CF) introduced in the previous section, which incorporates crucial elements for successful change management. The current status in each element is analysed. Additionally, an introduction to the case organisation's change management is provided, highlighting the relevant main managerial structures.

4.1 Overview of Data Round 1

This subsection provides an overview of the first data round. Data 1 was collected and analysed during this phase of the research. It was gathered in Finnish through interviews and from a few internal documents. 12 informants participated in the interviews, ensuring representation from each organisational level.

Before the interviews, the informants received an interview template outlining the key questions. The questions are listed in Appendix 1. The interviews, conducted online in Finnish, began with a brief introduction to the thesis project, key terms, and the conceptual framework. Data was collected in written notes simultaneously with informant responses, allowing for immediate validation of the information. Additionally, one informant supplemented her answers afterward in written notes.

The total duration of the interviews was 13 hours and 35 minutes. Although not all informants answered every question, the interviews were structured to gather responses on all themes, resulting in over 24 pages of data. Due to confidentiality issues, the raw data is not presented in this study.

Internal documents provided insight into the management structure (A) and the framework for supervisory work (B). This data was augmented through discussions and collaboration with one informant.

4.2 Introduction to CM of Case Organisation

Change management in the case organisation is influenced by other parts of the Wellbeing Services County and, as a result, is not entirely within their control. Analysing and developing CM-related actions taken in other parts of the Wellbeing Services County organisation are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Change management-related organisational structures in the case organisation (Outpatient Healthcare, OpH) are presented below according to the scope of this study. This means the structures concerning the health centres which are in in-house production. The structures are briefly discussed at the level of accuracy required for the purpose of this thesis.

The line management structure in the OpH consists of the executive level, four regional levels and 20 health centres. Figure 5 illustrates this structure and is designed based on data from an internal document and discussions/collaboration with one informant in Data Round 1.

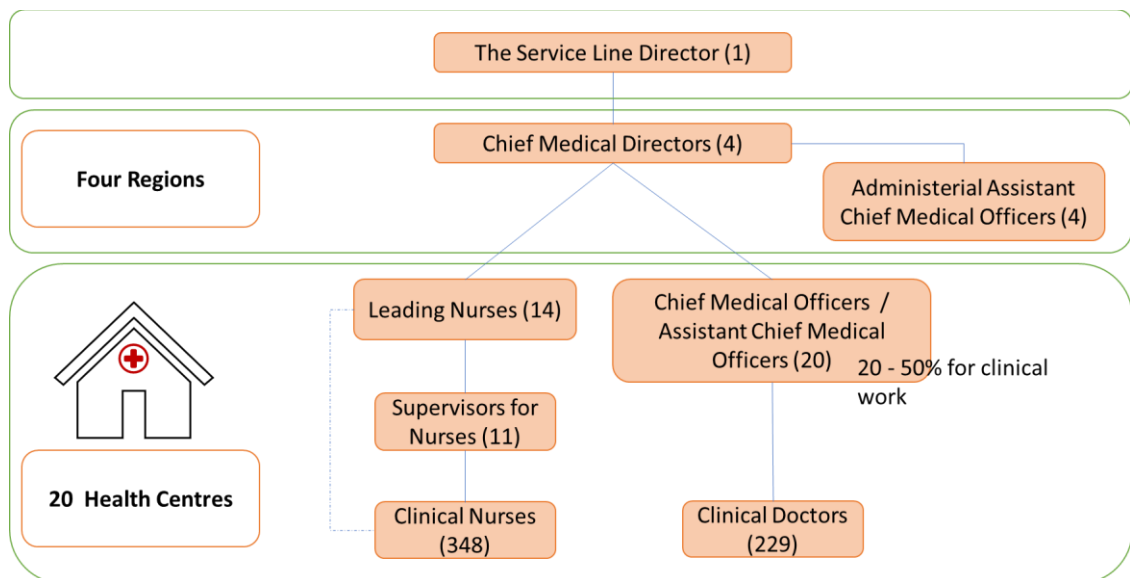


Figure 5. The line management structure of the OpH for managing the health centres. (Data 1)

Figure 5 shows the supervisor structures from the executive level to the frontline nurses and doctors on an indicative level. There may be some exceptions and

different titles compared to this, but it is not significant for this thesis. The numbers after the role titles indicate the number of employees in those roles. Doctors in the supervisory role at the health centre level also do clinical work for 20 – 50 % of the working hours.

Currently, the line management system is the main structure to manage changes in the OpH concerning health centres. Besides, there is a project management model for specific, bigger development initiatives, which brings certain structures with it. In addition, some coordinative and cooperating structures/networks for development exist. Figure 6 illustrates these structures on an indicative level and is designed based on the stakeholder interviews, internal document A, and discussions/collaboration with one informant in Data 1. While there may be some exceptions and variation to this, this accuracy is sufficient to describe the structures related to change management required for the purpose of this thesis.

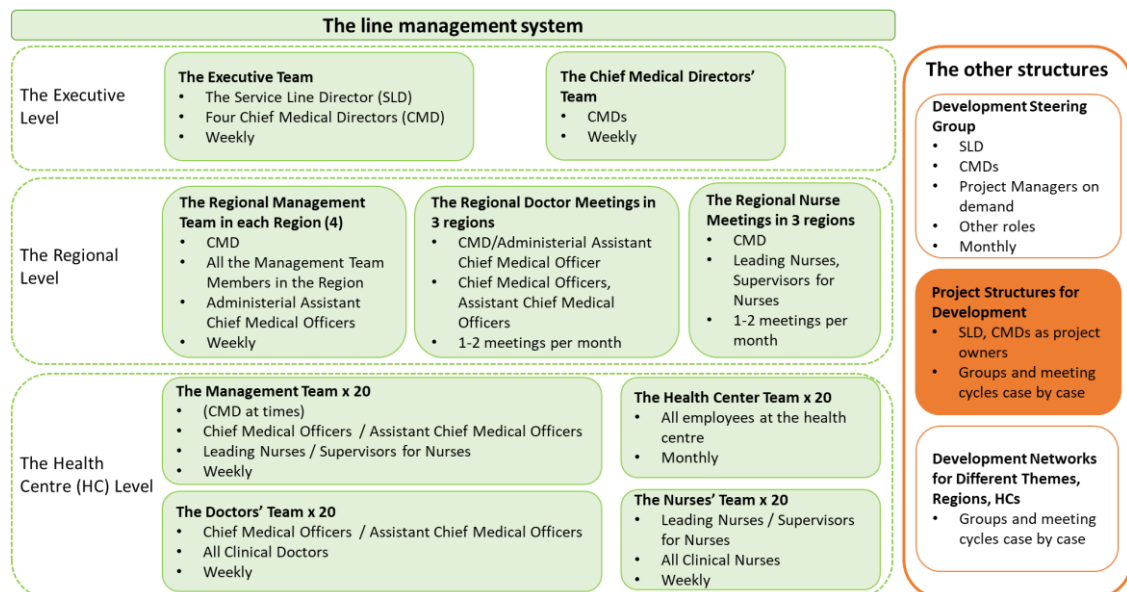


Figure 6. The organisational structures for change management in the OpH (Data 1)

As seen in Figure 6, multiple structures exist. Both line management structures and the project structures have strengths and weaknesses, and those are analysed later in connection with the related CM elements. Figure 6 also shows the main stakeholders in each structure and the intensity of meetings.

The structures for the meetings involving the doctors and the nurses separately at the regional level vary between the regions. The health centre-level structures are predominantly present in each health centre.

There is a concept called a framework for supervisory work (internal document B). The framework clarifies the responsibilities and roles of the supervisors, whose purpose is to enable effective management in everyday work. This framework includes some content on managing local development at the health centre level, for example it presents PDCA-cycle principles and elements supporting a culture of experimentation.

4.3 Strengths and Weaknesses in CM Elements

The OpH is a young organisation combined with people and cultures from ten organisations. When the CSA was conducted, the OpH had operated for 13 months in highly challenging and demanding circumstances. Everything inside it and in its operating environment had continuously changed due to the national reform concerning the Wellbeing Services Counties. At the same time, it has been necessary to maintain and even develop operations (services for the residents of the Western Uusimaa area) and create a new organisation from scratch.

This background has affected change readiness in the case organisation. The informants discussed this theme as follows:

“There were a lot of changes last year. The existing stress conditions affect change readiness. It is difficult to get motivated for changes if one can barely manage.” Data 1: Informant I

“In an overloaded state, changes are often perceived as additional work, even though the goal is to improve things.” Data 1: Informant D

“Culture and history have an effect. The way things have been done traditionally shapes the culture. Units that have operated with different cultures have merged, and creating a common culture takes time.” Data 1: Informant B

During the hectic first 13 months in the new organisation, most change processes have not been entire success stories, which has generated

frustration for the organisation. The reasons for the frustration are discussed later as weaknesses in the connection with the CM elements.

At the same time, the informants agree that the continuous need for changes is a new *status quo*. In the words of informant D in data 1:

“Changes are constantly happening, and developing change readiness capabilities is important.”

Another informant highlighted the communication culture as a platform for change readiness as follows.

“The culture of communication is a significant factor. It is easier to go towards changes if there is an open and confident atmosphere.” Data 1: Informant C

The following subsections describe the current state of each CM element. In practice, the elements are linked to each other and interdependent but analysed here by each individually. A few general findings can be drawn based on interviews in Data Round 1. A coherent and comprehensive concept for CM is missing, and it is a significant weakness affecting weaknesses in all CM elements. A strength is that the importance of CM is recognised, and there is a willingness to improve it.

4.3.1 Reasons and Goals

The CM element reasons and goals is about how clearly change initiatives are defined and reasoned concerning particularly in answering the following questions. What needs to be changed and why? What is the goal of the change? What benefits will be gained as a result?

Generally, two types of change needs exist in the case organisation: 1) urgent changes mandated by legislation, and 2) changes aimed at standardising or improving operations. The current strengths and weaknesses are identified as follows based on the interviews conducted in Data Round 1.

Strengths Regarding the Element Reasons and Goals:

The political and strategic goals, as well as their reasons, appear clear to the informants. There is a common understanding that reforms are necessary to ensure that customers with health problems have sufficient and timely access to services.

Additionally, ongoing development is being conducted on a tool called the "8-goal" to integrate individual change initiatives with strategic goals. The "8-goal" refers to eight target directions for the development of operations at the health centre level.

Change initiatives organised as projects tend to have clearer definitions of reasons and goals compared to those executed through the line management system.

Weaknesses Regarding the Element Reasons and Goals:

Concrete operational-level definitions of reasons and goals are lacking. Especially at the health centre level, it is seldom evident why a particular change is made and what benefit it brings. Fragmentation of change initiatives also affects that level. There is not always clarity about which larger context/strategic goal each change relates to, making it difficult to understand the reasons and committing to change.

Many changes are implemented within the organisation with inadequate preparation. This includes insufficient communication and dialogue to clarify objectives, reasons, and benefits, as well as to define the means available and allowed at the health centre level to reach the goals. For example, if change initiatives that significantly affect the frontline workers are decided and defined without dialogue, it has consequences such as a significant risk that the change initiative is not feasible in local circumstances and not accepted by the frontline. The frontline workers refer to employees (and their supervisors) at the health centres who are involved in practical processes of serving customers.

The informants described the questions and needs of the frontline as follows:

“Is something done for the sake of doing it, or does it have some real significance?” Data 1: Informant F

“The reasons for the change must be watertight.” Data 1: Informant D

Unclarity on the meaning of the change creates frustration in the organisation. This weakens the chances of a successful implementation of the change.

4.3.2 Available Time

The available time for the change initiative impacts many other elements in change management. Defining the available time for each change initiative is also about prioritising. The current strengths and weaknesses are identified as follows based on the interviews conducted in Data Round 1.

Strengths Regarding the Element Available Time:

Change initiatives are typically communicated with a timeframe for execution, and sometimes the schedules are realistic.

Weaknesses Regarding the Element Available Time:

There is inadequate prioritisation, resulting in too many simultaneous changes compared to the reception and implementation capacity in the organisation.

Some changes are rushed and lack proper consideration of practicalities, making it difficult to implement participation appropriately. The haste is not rationally justified.

One of the interviewees emphasised this as follows:

“A thousand irons in the fire, and nothing is progressing.” Data 1: Informant A

Change initiatives are not defined, communicated, or executed according to their priority. This may cause unnecessary congestion and a rush to the frontline.

4.3.3 Management Model

The management model pertains to the management tactics and structures suitable for the change initiative.

The central management structures for change management in the case organisation were presented in Section 4.2, and this subsection describes the strengths and weaknesses of each. Some issues here are closely connected to other change management elements, such as monitoring and controlling, responsibilities, resources, and skills, but they are also included here for clarity.

Many informants stated that the frontline supervisors play a critical role regardless of the structure in which the change is executed.

The current strengths and weaknesses are identified as follows based on the interviews conducted in Data Round 1.

Strengths Regarding the Element Management Model:

The line management system works quite well for minor “let’s do it this way” changes.

The project management model supports systematic planning and phasing after a change initiative is decided to be a project.

Weaknesses Regarding the Element Management Model:

The main weaknesses concerning the line management system in the context of transformational changes are:

- Basically, the structures and resources are meant to keep daily operations running.
- A paradox: plenty of structures but not enough structures.

“Plenty of structures exist but are mainly for daily ad hoc issues and not suitable forums to think about and discuss transformational changes. For example, a major transformational change was presented in a fifteen-minute slot between issues related to running out of toilet paper and broken lamps.” Data 1: Informant E

- A goal-oriented change management and reward system is missing.
- Managing with data is at a level that does not support goal-oriented CM.

The main weaknesses concerning the project management structure are:

- The projected changes do not adequately connect to the line organisation, and action plans and responsibilities concerning the implementation, and especially the institutionalising phases, are unclear.
- Missing structures to ensure institutionalisation.

There is a tendency to have ad hoc structures for discussing and deciding issues, primarily related to change initiatives, which are not clearly inside the line management structures and are not yet projects. One informant explained this in the following way:

“Things are being discussed in many forums by many people, and everyone is changing plans.” Data 1: Informant A

Some informants consider the management structure to be built based on administrative purposes and is hierarchical as grounded in the long history of healthcare. For example: 1) the organisation contains many layers of administration, issues go back and forth through all structures, and it is time-consuming; 2) the frontline at health centres is mainly managed in two

professional streams, carrying separate structures for nurses and doctors. In addition, there is also a shared structure, but its intensity is lower.

4.3.4 Accountability

Accountability means clarity concerning who is in charge of the change process and the other key responsibilities. One informant stated this as follows:

*“Giving responsibility where the work is done is a good management practice.”
Data 1: Informant G*

The current strengths and weaknesses are identified as follows based on the interviews in Data Round 1.

Strengths Regarding the Element Accountability:

The line management system is clear concerning the core of the management structure: who is in each role and who are the subordinates. In principle, this brings managerial accountability to change processes.

The project management system contains clarity in specific accountabilities (e.g. who is the project owner) and key responsibilities, such as who is the project manager.

Weaknesses Regarding the Element Accountability:

Problems occur when change initiatives are not minor ones and are insufficiently prepared. The weaknesses presented in other elements (such as disagreement on the reasons and means, lack of communication, and involvement) weaken the willingness to act out one's accountability and responsibilities in the change execution.

4.3.5 Communication

Communication in change processes is a through-cutting element related to all other elements and generated a wide range of views in the interviews in Data Round 1. There was an agreement among the informants on the importance of communication and the need to develop it. One informant stressed the matter as follows:

Communication does not receive the attention and weight it deserves. It is a central object of development in CM. Data 1: Informant B

The theme was discussed from many perspectives, e.g. structures, channels, content, timing, resources, and responsibilities. One informant highlighted the broad spectrum of communication, stating as follows:

"Normal interaction is communication." Data 1: Informant A

The current strengths and weaknesses are identified as follows based on the interviews in Data Round 1.

Strengths Regarding the Element Communication:

Several channels and structures exist for internal communication, e.g. the line-management system (including meetings, memos, etc.), a communication network, different newsletters, intranet, a digital instruction information centre, and emails. There are also some structures for external communication.

In the changes implemented as a project, there is some systematic activity for communication planning.

The line management structure works to deliver one-way messages to the health centres.

Weaknesses Regarding the Element Communication:

Multiple weaknesses in communication were identified, and they are grouped into the following headlines:

1. Lack of identification of relevant stakeholders and insufficient planning accordingly.
2. Communication is not proactive.
3. Open, two-way communication is mainly missing, including a lack of time for discussions and listening.
4. Lack of repetition and persistence.
5. It is not clear what is communicated through which structure and channel.
6. Lack of localised communication at the operational level.
7. There is a partial separation of communication from managerial work.

Below are two examples of what the interviewees stated about communication:

“There are big gaps in communication. If people do not know, it causes unnecessary “foaming”. There are too many different channels to get more information.” Data 1: Informant I

“The proactivity of communication should be increased, especially about negative issues. Better to openly say the problems yourself than to wait for someone to find them.” Data 1: Informant K

Based on the previous statements, communication can be seen as a critical tool for creating trust.

4.3.6 Leadership

Leadership is not an exact form of managerial work. It is built on, e.g. words, actions, and behaviour. And it is not necessarily related to the organisational position. A great amount of data was accumulated on this theme in Data Round 1. The informants described the term leadership as visualised in Figure 7.

Below is an example of what one informant described:

“I have a good supervisor; an example of how supervisory work can be done simultaneously firmly and flexibly. My supervisor provides security and support and maintains control and peace amidst busyness. I have the freedom to carry out my area of responsibility according to my vision. Trust is important.” Data 1: Informant H

Weaknesses Regarding the Element Leadership:

Continuous busyness and difficulties allocating time for discussions, listening, and presence were seen as significant weaknesses. More trust is needed at every level in the organisation, meaning, e.g. people should have room to operate in their responsibility areas. Also, the need for an open and safe culture was identified, including tolerance of disagreements. A lack of forums to create a shared understanding of the vision and direction was also pointed out.

4.3.7 Involvement and Commitment

Involvement and commitment are elements that often determine success in change processes. They are heavily related to communication and leadership.

The informants pointed out many interesting views on this. The current busyness in the organisation's frontline and not-so-good history of change processes might be reasons for the following statements: One informant pointed out that there are different mindsets related to involvement: do I have to, or is this a possibility for me? Other informants continued to state that involvement must also be justified - why it is done and what the information is used for. There was also an opinion on the risks of excessive involvement, meaning that managers must not hide behind it but must have the courage to decide when needed. But in the end, there is an agreement that the experience of being valued and involved is a significant source of motivation and generates commitment to the change process.

One informant stated the meaning of being involved as follows:

“It is important that those who are the target of the change get to define the methods of operation by which the goals are reached.” Data 1: Informant G

The current strengths and weaknesses are identified as follows based on the interviews in Data Round 1.

Strengths Regarding the Element Involvement and Commitment:

The following practices were identified as strengths: There have been change processes where those affected by the change get to define the operating methods by which the goals are reached. Dividing development-related tasks according to each individual's areas of expertise and interests creates the feeling of being involved. The systematic personnel survey and other surveys are reasonable means to sense the general atmosphere throughout the organisation. The change agents were seen as essential to generating commitment. Managers' and supervisors' presence on-site in change processes shows their commitment.

Weaknesses Regarding the Element Involvement and Commitment:

There was a widely agreed-upon understanding among the informants that the frontline competence is heavily underutilised in change processes. This radiates effects to all CM elements. One informant stated this as follows:

The development work is mainly focused on the people in the administration, and it is detached from the daily work. The networks and frontline professionals' expertise are currently poorly utilised in development work. Everyone has particular areas of expertise—how to bring them out and consider them. It is hard to feel involved if no one is listening. Data 1: Informant L

Several informants pointed out that ostensible involvement exists at times and that it is frustrating and time-consuming, weakens motivation, and prevents commitment.

4.3.8 Phasing

Phasing means a systematic approach to preparing the organisation for a change, implementing it, and persisting until the change is institutionalised.

The current strengths and weaknesses were identified as follows based on the interviews in Data Round 1.

Strengths Regarding the Element Phasing:

There is systematic planning when a change is executed as a project.

Weaknesses Regarding the Element Phasing:

Changes carried out through the line-management structure are not as systematic and controlled in phasing as the projects.

“The threshold for initiating changes is quite low in the line management. Things are tried to be implemented without proper preparation and are returned due to ambiguities.” Data 1: Informant F.

There was a joint agreement among the informants that a lack of systematic phasing is a weakness with many harmful consequences, such as insufficient time at the health centre level to make the needed local preparations.

The lack of collaboration between the line organisation and the project structures generates problems regarding implementation and institutionalisation. Two informants described this weakness as follows:

“At the health centre, we usually hear about the change when it should already be implemented. At that point, any uncertainties and problems are often bypassed with the reasoning that 'we just need to do it this way now.' There is inflexibility in making changes at this stage. There is no understanding that when the project is finished, the matter is not finished. A completed project is the beta version of the change, and when users join, practical problems start to emerge. There are not enough processes to solve problems at this stage.” Data 1: Informant L

“There is no owner for the project deliverables. It should have been originally defined who in the line organisation is responsible for implementing and monitoring the institutionalisation.” Data 1: Informant A

4.3.9 Action Plans and Operational Responsibilities

Action plans and linked operational responsibilities clarify the change process and generate progress in practice. This element also contains the needed resources (e.g. people, time, and money) and skills (e.g. competence in the operations or area that is the object of the change, skills in project and change management) to carry out the plans.

The informants agreed that the available management models enable quality in this theme if appropriately utilised. The question about resources and skills evoked plenty of thoughts in the interviews. Many informants highlighted the disproportion between the change initiatives and available resources. There are two examples of what the informants said on this theme:

“The development work (necessarily) requires resources from the health centres, and at the same time, there is a huge amount of change and development work going on. From the point of view of the health centres, there are too many change processes going on at the same time.” Data 1: Informant F

“There are not enough resources at the health centre level to push through the changes. The staff is already really tired of the changes. A tired person cannot take things in.” Data 1: Informant L

There were also opinions that enough resources do exist. A few informants stressed that taking care of the employee's ability to cope is essential for the success of the changes.

The current strengths and weaknesses are identified as follows based on the interviews in Data Round 1.

Strengths Regarding the Element Action Plans and Operational Responsibilities:

The line management system contains the areas of responsibility and the resources for carrying out the plans. *(At least in theory; see the affecting issues in the previous parts of this section.)*

The project management model involves systematic action planning and defining the linked responsibilities. *(At least technically, see the issues affecting the previous parts of this section.)*

The resources and skills needed to carry out the changes can be found in the organisation.

There is a framework for supervisory work, and it was seen as a good platform to support the frontline management in developing change management skills.

Weaknesses Regarding the Element Action Plans and Operational Responsibilities:

As discussed earlier, the frontline competence is underutilised in changes that affect them. In correlation to this, there is a lack of systematic staffing responsibilities in a way that ensures sufficient competence for the change process.

There is a weakness in the line management system concerning proceeding with the change execution without proper planning, generating unclarity in the process.

Due to a lack of collaboration between the line organisation and the project structures, many times it is not clear who is doing what and when, especially in the implementation and institutionalising phases.

4.3.10 Monitoring and Controlling Actions

Monitoring and controlling the actions are related to the selected management model. The aim is to see whether the change process is proceeding as planned, adjust the plans, and remove obstacles when needed until the change is completed done and the organisation is acting in a new way.

As presented in 4.2 and 4.3.3, several organisational structures are utilised in the change processes. The current strengths and weaknesses were identified as follows based on the interviews in Data Round 1.

Strengths Regarding the Element Monitoring and Controlling the Actions:

See the related strengths in [4.3.3. Management Model.](#)

Weaknesses Regarding the Element Monitoring and Controlling the Actions:

See the related weaknesses in [4.3.3. Management Model.](#)

The existing structures do not adequately support consistency and persistence in monitoring and controlling until the change process is fully completed.

“Institutionalising is the most challenging phase. It requires time, repetition, and persistence. It does not happen by itself. This phase of the change must be actively monitored and supported. Frontline management is responsible for this.”
Data 1: Informant E

“Returning to the past is easier than sticking to a new way of doing things.” Data 1: Informant G.

There is a lack of a system for recognising and removing obstacles.

“This is mainly reactive. When the situation is on, we wonder how to get around the problem.” Data 1: Informant B

The following subsection summarises the current state of change management in the case organisation.

4.4 Summary of Current State of CM

This subsection summarises the key findings from the current state analysis. The summary is presented as a visualisation within the same logic used with the conceptual framework.

Figure 8 summarises the current state of CM in the case organisation.

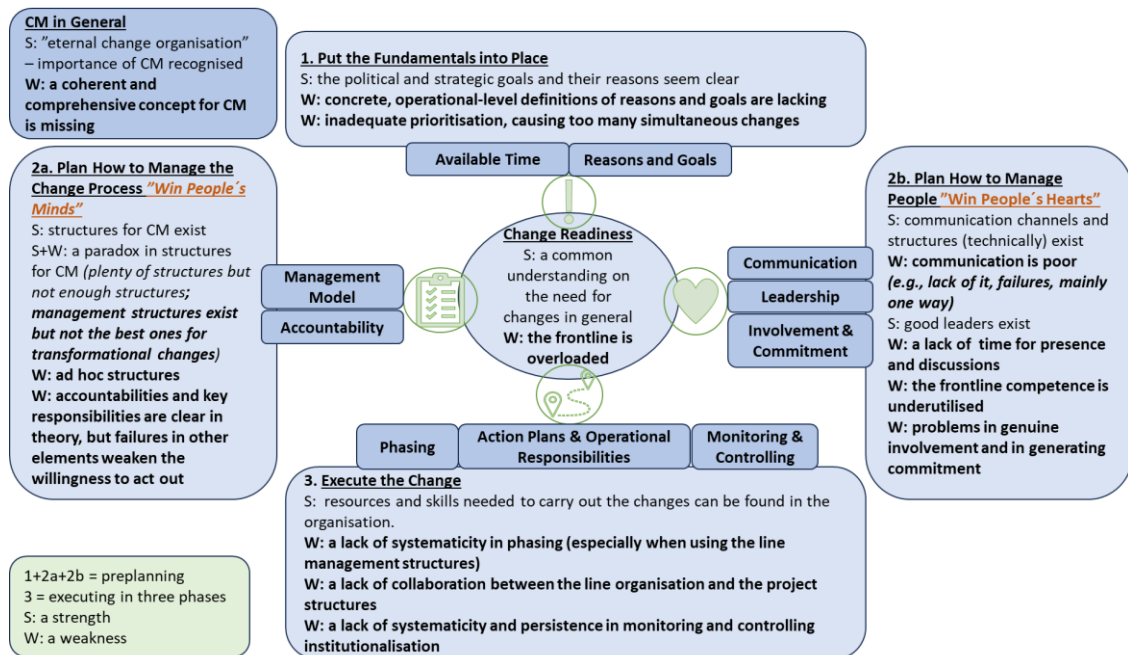


Figure 8. Summary of the CM in the case organisation.

As shown in Figure 8, the main strengths include an agreement on the need for changes in general and a willingness to act accordingly. The primary weaknesses can be summarised as follows: There is a need for a coherent and comprehensive concept for change management as a part of the management system. Several challenges in change management arise from the lack of concrete operational-level definitions of reasons and goals. These must be clear and understood before it is meaningful to proceed further. Underutilisation of the frontline competence (related to the element of involvement and commitment) in preparing and executing change initiatives creates significant problems in several aspects of change management, such as the feasibility of implementing

changes in practice and individuals' willingness to demonstrate accountability and commitment to the change.

Figure 8 also illustrates that there are structures for change management (the line management system and project structures), but there is a lack of collaboration between these structures (especially related to the action plans and operational responsibilities element), resulting in flaws, particularly in the implementing and institutionalising phases, and hence weakening the probability of successful change implementation at the operational level. Improving collaboration between project structures and the line management system is crucial in the context of transformational changes because major changes are usually executed as projects. Poor performance in communication and a lack of time for presence and discussions (related to the leadership element) heavily influence the quality of change management and are thus essential targets for improvement.

The aforementioned weaknesses can be viewed as root weaknesses, and improving them also yields positive consequences for other aspects of change management.

The following section of this thesis describes the third research phase of this study and focuses on solution development, which involves collaborating with the selected stakeholder representatives to create the initial recommendations for improvement.

5 Improving Change Management in Case Organisation

This section describes the process and the outcomes of the solution development phase (SD) of this study. The root weaknesses identified in the current state analysis are in focus in this phase. The relevant best practices determined in the conceptual framework feed the initial recommendations on how to improve the identified weaknesses.

5.1 Overview of Data Round 2

This subsection provides an overview of Data Round 2, which was collected and analysed during this research phase. Data 2 is in Finnish, and it was gathered from selected informants in two workshops. All informants interviewed during the CSA were given the option to participate in either solution development or validation. Based on their responses, informants were divided into two groups: six were invited to contribute to solution development, while five were involved in the validation phase. One interviewed informant did not have the opportunity to participate in either.

The solution development phase was organised as online workshops. Four out of the invited six informants attended the first workshop, and 5 out of 6 attended the second. The current state analysis and workshop materials were sent to the participants in advance. The workshop materials included a summary of the CF and the CSA. Additionally, there was a template of a summarising framework for linking the selected weaknesses to the appropriate best practices from the literature review, and to the initial recommendations for improvements. The workshops were conducted in Finnish.

The objective of the workshops was to conduct Data Round 2 by gathering ideas from the informants (Data 2) to generate the initial recommendations for improving the identified weaknesses. During the first workshop, Data 2 was collected using a digital tool called Mentimeter. Participants inputted their ideas into Mentimeter for each weakness.

Subsequently, these ideas were collectively discussed and voted upon. Two informants who were unable to attend the first workshop submitted their ideas via email afterward.

Between the workshops, the author of this thesis drafted the initial recommendations in the summarising framework. The example of the framework is visualised in Figure 9.

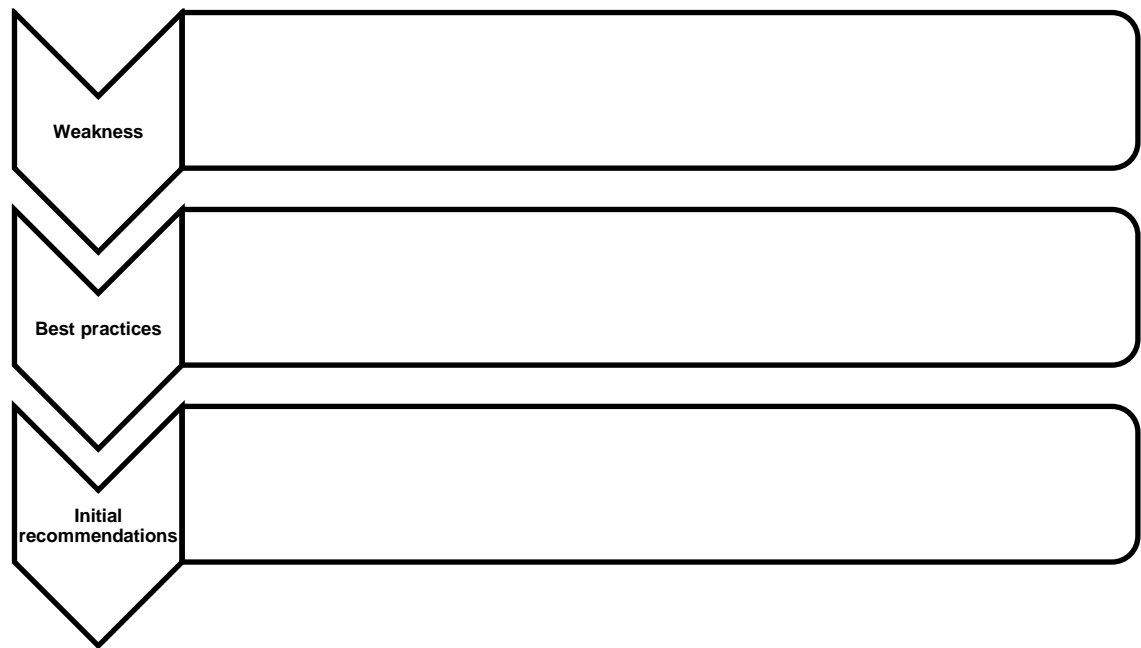


Figure 9. Example of the used summarising framework.

As shown in Figure 9, the drafts of the initial recommendations were presented in the link to the selected weakness and the relevant best practices based on the conceptual framework.

The final versions of the initial recommendations were developed collaboratively with participants during the second workshop, facilitated through the use of a digital tool called Forms. The initial recommendation drafts were presented in the form of a survey, and participants were asked to indicate whether they fully agreed with them, preferred some adjustments, or disagreed (Data 2).

The final versions of the initial recommendations were formulated through discussion based on the results of the survey. There was a consensus on the outcome among the participants in the second workshop. Due to confidentiality issues, the raw data is not presented in this study. The following subsection presents the initial recommendations formulated as described above.

5.2 Initial Recommendations for Improving CM

This subsection presents the initial recommendations on improving the selected weaknesses. When drafting the following recommendations, their practical feasibility has been assessed, and efforts have been made to align the corresponding actions with the organisation's existing strengths, such as structures and tools.

The recommendations are grouped according to the estimated time required for implementation. The short-term improvements can be executed within 12 months, whereas the long-term improvements require more time than that.

5.2.1 CM in General

The following Table 3 presents the initial recommendations on how to implement the CM elements with the relevant best practices in the management system.

Table 3. Initial recommendations to improve CM as a part of the management system

Weakness	A coherent and comprehensive concept for CM is missing.
Best Practices	The conceptual framework: the elements and best practices for CM.
Initial Recommendations	<p>Short-term: (1) Enhance the framework for supervisory work with supporting content for change management and implement communication and training regarding it.</p> <p>Long-term: (2) Incorporate the elements of change management and the selected best practices systematically and timely into the appropriate structures, processes, and responsibilities of the management system.</p>

As seen in Table 3, there are two recommendations to improve the current state of missing a coherent and comprehensive concept for change management. Recommendation 1 is formulated based on the reasoning that the frontline supervisors are pivotal, especially in implementing and institutionalising changes, and it is beneficial to provide them with perspectives and tools related to this theme. The rationale behind Recommendation 2 is that continuous changes are a permanent part of the organisation's future, and the line organisation is the central mechanism through which they can be implemented and institutionalised. Both recommended actions are based on the conceptual framework and implement the elements with the relevant best practices for successful change management.

As an additional note, it is advisable to develop the organisation towards a target-oriented management system. Developing should be based on researched knowledge and related best practices. This supports the integration of change management elements into line management structures and clarifies what is done, why it is done, how it is done, etc., for all levels of the organisation.

5.2.2 Element Reasons and Goals

The following Table 4 presents the initial recommendations for improving the weakness regarding ambiguity in defining the reasons and goals of the changes.

Table 4. Initial recommendations to improve the CM element reasons and goals.

Weakness	Concrete, operational-level definitions of reasons and goals are lacking.
Best Practices	Crystallise: What needs to be changed and why? What is the goal? How complex is the case? <i>Kotter et al. 2021, Hrebiniak 2013, Zukof 2021, Cameron & Green 2009</i> Define the available time to make the change happen. <i>Hrebiniak 2013</i> Listen to opposite views. <i>Zukof 2021</i>
Initial Recommendations	<p>Short-term: (3) Create a model where, before commencing concrete progress planning, a "one-pager" is developed for the change initiative, outlining all known relevant aspects. Consider in the model's creation the definition of its applicability area (the level or size of changes for which it is used), ownership, and maintenance of the model. Incorporate bidirectionality into the model (used when applicable): the staff should have the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments on the change initiative, and this feedback needs to be considered in the concrete planning and communication of the change. The supervisors utilise the "one-pager" in communicating the change. Additionally, investigate the use of the intranet as a communication channel for the "one-pagers."</p> <p>Long-term: (4) Further develop the 8-goal by creating a general framework and a bidirectional process that translate the organisation's strategic objectives guiding its activities into operational goals and justifications for all levels of the organisation. Include a prioritisation mechanism in the process to ensure that the number of concurrent changes does not exceed the organisation's capacity for reception and implementation.</p>

As seen in Table 4, there are two recommendations to improve the weakness concerning the lack of concrete operational-level definitions of reasons and goals concerning the change initiatives.

Recommendation 3 is formulated based on the reasoning that this is a practical way to ensure that everyone quickly shares the same understanding of what is

being done, why it is being done, what the goal is, and how it affects the operational level. Furthermore, the model includes mechanisms for bidirectional communication and participation, leading to improved quality of the change initiatives (e.g. practical feasibility).

The rationale behind Recommendation 4 is that it supports the organisation's shared vision of change needs and specific goals, improving the likelihood of successful implementation of the change initiatives.

Both recommendations implement best practices according to the conceptual framework to clarify goals and justifications, as well as to allow for and listen to differing opinions in the change process.

5.2.3 Element Involvement and Commitment

The following Table 5 presents the initial recommendations for improving the utilisation of the frontline competence to foster greater involvement and stronger commitment to the changes.

Table 5. Initial recommendations to improve the CM element involvement and commitment.

Weakness	The frontline competence is underutilised.
Best Practices	Define and ensure the needed resources and skills. <i>Gill 2003, Sirkin et al. 2005</i> Do stakeholder analysis to ensure sufficient involvement and commitment. <i>Zukof 2021</i>
Initial Recommendations	Short-term: (5) Conduct an internal stakeholder analysis or assessment during the preplanning phase and make plans on how the practical expertise and the immediate supervisors of those affected by the change are integrated into the various phases of the change process. Carry out the analysis or assessment in a manner appropriate to the scope of the change. Long-term: (6) Develop the format of the target-setting discussions so that the interests and areas of expertise of the staff are mapped with the future change processes in mind. Determine how information is gathered and kept up-to-date. Provide opportunities for the staff in positions to participate more extensively, from both the perspectives of substantive expertise and development skills utilisation.

As seen in Table 5, there are two recommendations regarding this CM element. The rationale behind Recommendation 5 is that the stakeholder analysis or assessment and subsequent planning systematise the identification of relevant internal actors and ensure that the appropriate expertise is connected to different phases of the change process, thereby improving the implementation and institutionalisation capabilities of the changes.

Recommendation 6 is formulated based on the premise that there is untapped expertise potential within the organisation. The recommended actions institutionalise a system for identifying interests and skills and for increasing opportunities for participation in the change processes accordingly.

Both recommended actions are practical implementations of the best practices outlined in the conceptual framework, and they enhance the current situation where the frontline competence is underutilised.

Furthermore, by adhering to these recommendations, the quality of change processes improves when the necessary expertise and skills are incorporated into the changes in the right phases.

5.2.4 Element Action Plans and Operational Responsibilities

The following Table 6 presents the initial recommendations for improving the collaboration between the line organisation and the project structures in the change processes.

Table 6. Initial recommendations to improve the CM element action plans and operational responsibilities.

Weakness	A lack of collaboration between the line organisation and the project structures.
Best Practices	<p>Define a dual system for transformational changes. <i>Kotter et al. 2021</i></p> <p>Define who is in charge of the change process and other key roles and responsibilities. <i>Kotter et al. 2021, Zukof 2021</i></p> <p>Design operational action plans and linked responsibilities for each execution phase, follow project management and DICE principles. <i>Zukof 2021, Sirkin et al. 2005</i></p> <p>Define and ensure the needed resources and skills. <i>Gill 2003, Sirkin et al. 2005</i></p>
Initial Recommendations	<p>Short-term:</p> <p>(7) Establish general role and responsibility definitions for the change processes for the various phases of the project (e.g. define the roles and responsibilities of subject matter experts, project personnel, and supervisors). Concretize these definitions into role-specific tasks (action plans) on a project-by-project basis during the project planning phase.</p> <p>Long-term:</p> <p>(8) Define the service line's own network strategy, reflecting the 8-goal framework. Determine the necessary networks and how they will be resourced. Describe the networks and their operating models, including their utilisation in the change processes and the maintenance of new operating models.</p>

As seen in Table 6, there are two recommendations regarding this CM element.

Recommendation 7 enhances the quality of project plans and supports the successful implementation and institutionalisation of the changes by implementing the related best practices to clarify roles, responsibilities, and associated action plans.

Recommendation 8 ensures that the strategic change initiatives have the necessary expertise network and simplifies and systematises the model for linking the relevant expertise at the health centre level to the change initiatives implemented as projects. This recommended action is a practical implementation of the best practice from the conceptual framework regarding the definition of a dual system for major changes.

Additionally, the goal is to avoid creating new networks for every new change initiative. Both recommendations increase the likelihood of having the necessary resources and skills to execute the change.

5.2.5 Element Communication

The following Table 7 presents the initial recommendations on actions to improve communication concerning the change initiatives and the change processes.

Table 7. Initial recommendations to improve the CM element communication

Weakness	Communication is poor (e.g. lack of it, failures, mainly one way).
Best Practices	Plan 2-way continuous communication (content, techniques, and responsibilities) to decrease uncertainty and insecurity. <i>Cameron & Green 2009, Zukof 2021, Elving 2005</i> Listen to opposite views. <i>Zukof 2021</i>
Initial Recommendations	Short-term: (9) Clarify and simplify the structures, responsibilities, tools, channels, etc., used for daily operational communication and for communication related to the change processes. Short-term: (10) Better utilise the intranet in the service line's change communication: a single location where essential information is always available (including links to relevant locations) on upcoming and ongoing changes (e.g. as a yearly calendar), as well as the presentation of results and benefits obtained. Investigate how to enable two-way communication. (Related to Recommendation 3 regarding the one-pagers for the change initiatives)

As seen in Table 7, there are two short-term recommendations on improving communication permanently.

Recommendation 9 facilitates the planning and implementation of change communication by clarifying the structures, channels, and tools used for each type of information. This action also makes it clear to the recipients of the messages how to obtain additional information on matters and which channels to follow for each issue, etc.

The rationale behind Recommendation 10 is that it provides a practical solution to improve two problem areas in change communication (lack of information and one-way communication) by introducing a straightforward two-way format for sharing information and receiving feedback.

Both recommendations are based on the best practices in change management according to the conceptual framework and improve several weaknesses in change communication.

5.2.6 Element Leadership

The following Table 8 presents the initial recommendations for actions to improve circumstances and skills for leadership.

Table 8. Initial recommendations to improve the CM element leadership

Weakness	A lack of time for presence and discussions.
Best Practices	Leadership is in every action managers take; think about it. <i>Musaigwa 2023</i> Get more leadership from more people. <i>Kotter et al. 2021</i>
Initial Recommendations	<p>Short-term: (11) Improve the situation within the existing structures: Prioritise more precisely what needs to be addressed in joint encounters (e.g. identify what is for information and what requires discussion, and determine the appropriate forum for change issues within the service line, area, or health centre). This recommendation is closely related to Recommendation 1, which suggests that the number of simultaneous changes should be carefully considered, as if there are too many, the time allocation becomes impossible.</p> <p>Short-term: (12) Enhance the framework for supervisory work to facilitate supervisors' development of leadership skills, and implement communication and training related to this matter.</p>

As seen in Table 8, there are two short-term recommendations on improving leadership.

Recommendation 11 frees up time for presence and discussions within the existing structures and is thus, considering the organisation's situation, almost

the only possible approach to developing the matter. It brings this CM element better to the everyday ways of working and hence develops the organisation in this matter in the long term.

Recommendation 12 is based on the premise that the frontline supervisors play crucial roles in the changes, and it is meaningful to provide them with perspectives and tools on this theme.

Both recommended actions are based on the relevant best practices according to the conceptual framework and improve the identified weakness both structurally and through increased expertise.

5.2.7 Summary of Initial Recommendations

This subsection offers a summary of the initial recommendations. The following Table 9 presents them grouped below the related CM element.

Table 9. The summary of the initial recommendations

Change Management in General	
Initial Recommendations	<p>Short-term: (1) Enhance the framework for supervisory work with supporting content for change management and implement communication and training regarding it.</p> <p>Long-term: (2) Incorporate the elements of change management and the selected best practices systematically and timely into the appropriate structures, processes, and responsibilities of the management system.</p>
The Element Reasons and Goals	
Initial Recommendations	<p>Short-term: (3) Create a model where, before commencing concrete progress planning, a "one-pager" is developed for the change initiative, outlining all known relevant aspects. Consider in the model's creation the definition of its applicability area (the level or size of changes for which it is used), ownership, and maintenance of the model. Incorporate bidirectionality into the model (used when applicable): the staff should have the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments on the change initiative, and this feedback needs to be considered in the concrete planning and communication of the change. The supervisors utilise the "one-pager" in communicating the change. Additionally, investigate the use of the intranet as a communication channel for the "one-pagers."</p> <p>Long-term: (4) Further develop the 8-goal by creating a general framework and a bidirectional process that translate the organisation's strategic objectives guiding its activities into operational goals and justifications for all levels of the organisation. Include a prioritisation mechanism in the process to ensure that the number of concurrent changes does not exceed the organisation's capacity for reception and implementation.</p>
The Element Involvement and Commitment	
Initial Recommendations	<p>Short-term: (5) Conduct an internal stakeholder analysis or assessment during the preplanning phase and make plans on how the practical expertise and the immediate supervisors of those affected by the change are integrated into the various phases of the change process. Carry out the analysis or assessment in a manner appropriate to the scope of the change.</p> <p>Long-term: (6) Develop the format of the target-setting discussions so that the interests and areas of expertise of the staff are mapped with the future change processes in mind. Determine how information is gathered and kept up-to-date. Provide opportunities for the staff in positions to participate more extensively, from both the perspectives of substantive expertise and development skills utilisation.</p>
The Element Action Plans and Operational Responsibilities	
Initial Recommendations	<p>Short-term: (7) Establish general role and responsibility definitions for the change processes for the various phases of the project (e.g. define the roles and responsibilities of subject matter experts, project personnel, and supervisors). Concretize these definitions into role-specific tasks (action plans) on a project-by-project basis during the project planning phase.</p> <p>Long-term: (8) Define the service line's own network strategy, reflecting the 8-goal framework. Determine the necessary networks and how they will be resourced. Describe the networks and their operating models, including their utilisation in the change processes and the maintenance of new operating models.</p>
The Element Communication	
Initial Recommendations	<p>Short-term: (9) Clarify and simplify the structures, responsibilities, tools, channels, etc., used for daily operational communication and for communication related to the change processes.</p> <p>Short-term: (10) Better utilise the intranet in the service line's change communication: a single location where essential information is always available (including links to relevant locations) on upcoming and ongoing changes (e.g. as a yearly calendar), as well as the presentation of results and benefits obtained. Investigate how to enable two-way communication. (Related to Recommendation 3 regarding the one-pagers for the change initiatives)</p>
The Element Leadership	
Initial Recommendations	<p>Short-term: (11) Improve the situation within the existing structures: Prioritise more precisely what needs to be addressed in joint encounters (e.g. identify what is for information and what requires discussion, and determine the appropriate forum for change issues within the service line, area, or health centre). This recommendation is closely related to Recommendation 1, which suggests that the number of simultaneous changes should be carefully considered, as if there are too many, the time allocation becomes impossible.</p> <p>Short-term: (12) Enhance the framework for supervisory work to facilitate supervisors' development of leadership skills, and implement communication and training related to this matter.</p>

As seen in Table 9, there are 12 recommendations in total. Four recommendations are on actions that require more than 12 months to

implement, while the remaining eight focus on improvements that can be executed within 12 months. These recommendations improve all the selected weaknesses based on the current state analysis.

The following section describes the fourth research phase of this study. It outlines the validation process of the initial recommendations and the subsequent creation of the final ones.

6 Feedback on Initial Recommendations

6.1 Overview of Data Round 3

This subsection defines an overview of Data Round 3. Data 3 was collected and analysed in this research phase. Data 3 is in Finnish, and it was collected from the selected informants in one workshop and by a one-to-one interview.

All informants interviewed during the CSA were given the option to participate in either solution development or validation. Based on their responses, informants were divided into two groups: six were invited to contribute to solution development, while five were involved in the validation phase. One interviewed informant did not have the opportunity to participate in either.

The validation phase was organised as two online meetings. Four informants were invited to participate in a workshop, and all attended. The other part of the validation phase was conducted as an online interview with the director of the case organisation.

The relevant material was sent to the informants beforehand, comprising the summaries of the CF and the CSA along with the initial recommendations for improvements. The workshop and the interview were conducted in Finnish. During the workshop and the interview, the initial recommendations were presented and discussed one by one. Participants were asked to express their opinions on each recommendation, indicating whether they found it appropriate and feasible in practice or preferred changes or additions. Remarks were recorded during the discussion as written notes (Data 3) and the final recommendations were formulated right away based on the joint discussion. There was a consensus on the outcome among the participants after the validation phase.

The following subsection presents the feedback received and corrections made to the initial recommendations.

6.2 Feedback Received and Correction to Initial Recommendations

This subsection presents the feedback received and the subsequent corrections made to the initial recommendations during the validation phase.

The informants who participated in the validation phase found the initial recommendations to be acceptable, and the feedback mainly concerned their refinement. The only significant change needed pertained to the initial recommendation number 6. Participants in the validation phase regarded the target-setting discussions as a poor structure for addressing the issues because the allocated time is typically short and filled with other matters. The recommendation itself was supported, and it was considered necessary to create a model for achieving operation in line with it. An addition was also made to the recommendation to ensure that information about opportunities to acquire responsibility for tasks related to change processes reaches everyone simultaneously. The initial recommendations with change tracking are attached as Appendix 2.

6.3 Summary of Final Recommendations

The recommendations for improving change management within the case organisation, which constitute the outcome of this thesis, are presented in Table 10 below. The final recommendations are provided in the link to the corresponding weaknesses identified in the current state analysis and the best practices defined in the conceptual framework. The justifications for the recommendations remained unchanged during the validation phase (see Section 5).

Table 10. The summary of the final recommendations

Change Management in General	
Weakness	A coherent and comprehensive concept for CM is missing.
Best Practices	The conceptual framework: the elements and best practices for CM.
Final Recommendations	<p>Short-term: (1) Enhance the framework for supervisory work with supporting content for change management and implement communication and training regarding it.</p> <p>Long-term: (2) Incorporate the elements of change management and the selected best practices systematically and timely into the appropriate structures, processes, and responsibilities of the management system. Note: Prioritisation ability is a key area for development, as it correlates significantly with several elements of change management and the practical feasibility of the change processes.</p>
The Element Reasons and Goals	
Weakness	Concrete, operational-level definitions of reasons and goals are lacking.
Best Practices	<p>Crystallise: What needs to be changed and why? What is the goal? How complex is the case? <i>Kotter et al. 2021, Hrebiniak 2013, Zukof 2021, Cameron & Green 2009</i></p> <p>Define the available time to make the change happen. <i>Hrebiniak 2013</i></p> <p>Listen to opposite views. <i>Zukof 2021</i></p>
Final Recommendations	<p>Short-term: (3) Create a model where, before commencing concrete progress planning, a "one-pager" is developed for the change initiative, outlining all known relevant aspects (including the target schedule). Consider in the model's creation the definition of its applicability area (the level or size of changes for which it is used), ownership, and maintenance of the model. Incorporate bidirectionality into the model (used when applicable): the supervisors at the health centres, and more broadly, the staff should have the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments on the change initiative, and this feedback needs to be considered in the concrete planning and communication of the change. The supervisors utilise the "one-pager" in communicating the change. Additionally, investigate the use of the intranet as a communication channel for the "one-pagers."</p> <p>Long-term: (4) Further develop the 8-goal by creating a general framework and a bidirectional process that translate the organisation's strategic objectives guiding its activities into operational goals and justifications for all levels of the organisation. Include a prioritisation mechanism in the process (with a health centre view of ongoing and upcoming changes) to ensure that the number of concurrent changes does not exceed the organisation's capacity for reception and implementation.</p>
The Element Involvement and Commitment	
Weakness	The frontline competence is underutilised.
Best Practices	<p>Define and ensure the needed resources and skills. <i>Gill 2003, Sirkin et al. 2005</i></p> <p>Do stakeholder analysis to ensure sufficient involvement and commitment. <i>Zukof 2021</i></p>
Final Recommendations	<p>Short-term:</p> <p>(5) Conduct an internal stakeholder analysis or assessment during the preplanning phase and make plans on how the practical expertise and the immediate supervisors of those affected by the change are integrated into the various phases of the change process (including how the supervisors receive support during the process, for example, through coaching or training, and what tools are available, etc.). Carry out the analysis or assessment in a manner appropriate to the scope of the change.</p> <p>Long-term:</p> <p>(6) Develop a model so that the interests and areas of expertise of the staff are mapped out with the future change processes in mind. Determine how information is kept up-to-date. Provide opportunities for the staff in positions to participate more extensively, from both the perspectives of substantive expertise and development skills utilisation. Provide timely information about upcoming opportunities so that everyone is informed simultaneously.</p>

The Element Action Plans and Operational Responsibilities

Weakness	A lack of collaboration between the line organisation and the project structures.
Best Practices	Define a dual system for transformational changes. <i>Kotter et al. 2021</i> Define who is in charge of the change process and other key roles and responsibilities. <i>Kotter et al. 2021, Zukof 2021</i> Design operational action plans and linked responsibilities for each execution phase, follow project management and DICE principles. <i>Zukof 2021, Sirkin et al. 2005</i> Define and ensure the needed resources and skills. <i>Gill 2003, Sirkin et al. 2005</i>
Final Recommendations	Short-term: (7) Establish general role and responsibility definitions for the change processes for the various phases of the project (e.g. define the roles and responsibilities of subject matter experts, project personnel, and supervisors). Concretize these definitions into role-specific tasks (action plans) on a project-by-project basis during the project planning phase (including tasks during the post-project evaluation phase). Long-term: (8) Define the service line's own network strategy, reflecting the 8-goal framework. Determine the necessary networks and how they will be resourced. Describe the networks and their operating models, including their utilisation in the change processes and the maintenance of new operating models.

The Element Communication

Weakness	Communication is poor (e.g., lack of it, failures, mainly one way).
Best Practices	Plan 2-way continuous communication (content, techniques, and responsibilities) to decrease uncertainty and insecurity. <i>Cameron & Green 2009, Zukof 2021, Elving 2005</i> Listen to opposite views. <i>Zukof 2021</i>
Final Recommendations	Short-term: (9) Clarify and simplify the structures, responsibilities, tools, channels, etc. used for daily operational communication and for communication related to the change processes (including how change communication is carried out within the line management structure and ensuring that the message has been received). Short-term: (10) Better utilise the intranet in the service line's change communication: a single location where essential information is always available (including links to relevant locations) on upcoming and ongoing changes (e.g. as a yearly calendar), as well as the presentation of results and benefits obtained. Investigate how to enable two-way communication. (Related to Recommendation 3 regarding one-pagers for change initiatives)

The Element Leadership

Weakness	A lack of time for presence and discussions.
Best Practices	Leadership is in every action managers take; think about it. <i>Musaigwa 2023</i> Get more leadership from more people. <i>Kotter et al. 2021</i>
Final Recommendations	Short-term: (11) Improve the situation within the existing structures: Prioritise more precisely what needs to be addressed in joint encounters (e.g. identify what is for information and what requires discussion, and identify the appropriate forum for change issues within the service line, area, or health centre). Adhere to the principle: "The greater the change, the more time is needed for discussion." This recommendation is closely related to Recommendation 1, which suggests that the number of simultaneous changes should be carefully considered, as if there are too many, time allocation becomes impossible. Short-term: (12) Enhance the framework for supervisory work to facilitate supervisors' development of leadership skills, and implement communication and training related to this matter.

As seen in Table 10, the case organisation seems to be ready for several different type of actions to improve change management.

A common denominator can be seen in the effort to increase change management expertise and to incorporate the change management elements and the appropriate best practices structurally into the management system of the organisation. This development trend leads towards a future where there is only "managerial work" through which the organisation operates and evolves, and where successful change management becomes inherent to the managerial process rather than a separate concern.

The following section is the final part of this thesis, offering the relevant discussion and conclusions.

7 Discussion and Conclusions

This section concludes the thesis by providing the executive summary and suggesting some ideas for implementing the thesis outcome. Additionally, it includes the thesis evaluation and a few closing remarks.

7.1 Executive Summary

The case organisation, the Outpatient Healthcare service line at Western Uusimaa Wellbeing Services County, is a young organisation, like all others in the same position due to the national reform in social services and healthcare. It is facing the need for continuous changes as a consequence of the reform and based on the aging population and increasing needs.

The objective of this study was to generate recommendations for improving change management. The nature of this thesis was to serve as a practical business development project within the case organisation, and applied action research was identified as an appropriate research approach including triangulated data.

The literature research was conducted to determine elements for successful change management. The elements and the related best practices found in the relevant literature were summarised in the conceptual framework.

The current state of change management within the case organisation was analysed with the help of the conceptual framework and based on Data 1, which was gathered from the 12 interviewed informants and a few internal documents.

Based on the analysis, the following 6 weaknesses were selected to focus on in the solution development phase.

- i. A coherent and comprehensive concept for change management is missing.
- ii. Concrete, operational-level definitions of reasons and goals are lacking.
- iii. The frontline competence is underutilised.
- iv. A lack of collaboration between the line organisation and the project structures.

- v. Communication is poor (e.g. lack of it, failures, mainly one way).
- vi. A lack of time for presence and discussions.

The solution development phase was conducted through workshops with the selected informants, resulting in the initial recommendations for improving the identified weaknesses. The recommendations were informed by Data 2, which consisted of ideas for improvements gathered from the informants as well as the related best practices presented in the conceptual framework.

The final phase of the research focused on validating the initial recommendations and formulating the final ones as the outcome of this thesis project. This phase included one workshop and an interview with the selected informants, distinct from those involved in the solution development phase. Data 3 was collected as feedback from the informants regarding the initial recommendations, upon which the final recommendations were formulated.

[\(See the summary of the final recommendations in 6.3.\)](#)

7.2 Practical Next Steps for Implementing Recommendations

The implementation of the final recommendations should be approached as a change initiative itself, considering the conceptual framework and the best practices described in this thesis. The executive level of the case organisation needs to take ownership in implementing the recommendations.

The process could proceed as follows:

- i. Communicate that the current state has been analysed, and certain recommendations have been determined with the aim of improving accordingly.
- ii. Allow people to discuss and suggest changes to the recommendations.
- iii. Adjust recommendations if needed, clarify the goals and reasons, and communicate them again.
- iv. Prioritise recommendations into an implementation sequence.
- v. Determine the available time, which management model is utilised and who is the accountable person for the change process for each recommendation.
- vi. Determine the key responsibilities and allow people having them to develop operational plans considering the best practices in each change management element (e.g. phasing, internal stakeholder analysis, communication practices, and leadership issues).

- vii. Communicate the plans and allow people to discuss and suggest changes to them; adjust plans if needed.
- viii. Execute according to the plans, considering the related best practices (e.g. continuous communication, managers' commitment, persistence in institutionalising).

The listed actions above represent in a nutshell the knowledge behind the conceptual framework and hence are very useful in preparing for implementation.

7.3 Thesis Evaluation

The following subsection provides an evaluation of the trustworthiness of this thesis. Relevance and transparency are also addressed.

This thesis has been undertaken to address the genuine need for improving change management within the case organisation. Since the objective of this thesis was to provide concrete recommendations to aid the case organisation in enhancing change management, the selected applied action research was considered the appropriate research approach for achieving this goal. The objective was reached, and the case organisation is preparing its implementation. Therefore, this thesis is evaluated as relevant.

According to Bryman & Bell (2005: 33–35), validity is a term usually reserved for quantitative research. In the context of qualitative research, which this thesis presents, the parallel term is trustworthiness. Trustworthiness includes aspects parallel to those used concerning validity.

Trustworthiness builds on credibility (parallels internal validity), transferability (parallels external validity), dependability (parallels reliability), and confirmability (parallels objectivity). Credibility is about how believable the findings are.

Based on the nature of this thesis (a practical development project to deal with an organisational issue with the involved people), credibility is a key aspect of trustworthiness.

In the context of using qualitative methods, according to Patton (1999), the credibility of a study builds on careful research preparation, employing an appropriate research approach, using rigorous techniques and methods to collect high-quality data, and conducting careful analysis of it. Presenting the status of the researcher is also part of credibility.

Credibility is also about combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and data sources to avoid the intrinsic bias that comes from single-method, single-observer, and single-theory studies (Denzin 1970: 315).

Hence, triangulation is the key approach to building and ensuring research credibility for the research type this thesis represents. It involves using various methods, such as collecting data from diverse sources, drawing upon multiple perspectives in theory building, and being analytical in creating outcomes (Denzin 1978) (Patton 2001).

In this study, the following practices were carried out to ensure trustworthiness, especially thesis credibility: The literature research relied on several credible sources, such as books and journal articles, to ensure that the conceptual framework was grounded in a collection of best practices from several authors. The conceptual framework was utilised to carry out the current state analysis to determine the main weaknesses to be improved. Since the conceptual framework informed the solution development phase, the recommended actions can be seen as applications of the best practices found in the relevant literature.

The recommended actions were linked to the selected weaknesses and, as much as possible, to the case organisation's existing strengths to ensure feasibility in practice as well.

Conducting the three rounds of data collection and involving various informants with different roles during the relevant research phases ensured comprehensive and reliable insights into the current state and the practical efficacy of the proposed solutions. Data was collected from the few internal documents and from the informants representing all levels of the case organisation. Interviews, workshops, and surveys were the qualitative methods used to closely collaborate with the stakeholders, as the nature of this thesis and the selected research approach demanded.

The purpose was to provide an accurate description of the current state. To ensure this, the description and analysis of the current state were sent to the informants for their feedback. Based on the comments received, the description of the current state can be considered accurate.

The number of informants was small compared to the size of the organisation, but even among this sample, the main views on the current state and ideas on improvements saturated quite well. There were also opposing views on some issues. The author of this thesis acted as an external researcher and endeavoured to remain equitable, considering all perspectives while maintaining objectivity and impartiality to ensure confirmability.

On a general note, there is always room for improvement in everything. As a specific example, a slightly better outcome would have been reached if there were more time for the interviews and the workshops.

Based on the descriptions and reasoning provided, it is reasonable to view this thesis as a credible description of the current state, offering well-grounded solutions for improving the identified weaknesses with high relevance to the case organisation. Additionally, despite being applied action research, this thesis offers the potential for transferability: the conceptual framework is

generally valid, and the process to analyse the current state, as well as to build and validate a solution, is replicable in any organisation to enhance change management. The following subsection contains a few closing remarks to conclude this thesis.

7.4 Closing Words

The theme of change management, as well as management in general, is a subject for perpetual development. New research and theories are constantly being generated. This thesis offers one standpoint on the theme of successful change management at a practical level. Improving change management is a matter of change in itself and thus requires planning, commitment, time, and actions to carry out the implementation in the case organisation. Benefits are possible after that.

While working on this thesis, the author found two themes related to change management very interesting. The themes were out of the scope of this thesis and thus not explored in this study. As a suggestion for future thesis authors, the themes are outlined here.

The first theme concerns the elimination of waste from management work by applying lean principles. How optimised or minimised should management work be? Especially in large, hierarchical organisations in the public sector, even seemingly insignificant decisions at the executive level can have significant consequences downstream. If these decisions are unnecessary from the outset, they contribute to significant capacity waste in the organisation.

The second theme is how to create conditions for operational innovations in the context of the public sector. There seems to be currently growing knowledge and expertise in development and project management methodologies. More and more individual, high-quality projects are being launched. However, this trend can lead to a situation where the forest is lost for the trees. The individual change projects consume all available time in silos, preventing people from pausing to consider and discuss together what would actually be worth doing to

remove the root causes of the problems. The preceding questions are crucial for focusing on the most valuable actions when utilising the limited and diminishing amount of taxpayers' money. It does not produce any value if an unnecessary thing is done with high quality and efficiently.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions in Data Round 1

Change Readiness

- What factors do you think affect the organisation's overall readiness for change?
- Are there systematic ways (e.g., structures, processes, responsibilities) in the current state to develop the organisation's general readiness for change?
- What good practices do you identify in the current state to promote readiness for change?
- What development needs related to the organisation's readiness for change do you identify in the current state?
- In your opinion, what is the biggest problem regarding this issue (if any)?
- What other thoughts does this topic evoke?

Communication

- Are there systematic ways (e.g., structures, processes, responsibilities) in the current state to plan and implement communication related to changes?
- What good practices do you identify in the current state?
- What development needs do you identify in the current state?
- In your opinion, what is the biggest problem regarding this issue (if any)?
- What other thoughts does this topic evoke?

Leadership

- What do you think "leadership" means in leading changes?
- What good practices do you identify in the current state?
- What development needs do you identify in the current state?
- In your opinion, what is the biggest problem regarding this issue (if any)?
- What other thoughts does this topic evoke?

Involvement

- What does participation in change mean in your opinion for people operating at different levels of the organisation?
- Are there systematic ways and/or structures in the current state to implement participation?
- What good practices do you identify in the current state?
- What development needs do you identify in the current state?
- In your opinion, what is the biggest problem regarding this issue (if any)?
- What other thoughts does this topic evoke?

Clear Reasons and Goals

- Are the reasons/justifications and goals of changes usually clearly defined?
- What good practices do you identify in the current state regarding defining the reasons and goals of changes?
- What development needs do you identify in the current state?
- In your opinion, what is the biggest problem regarding this issue (if any)?
- What other thoughts does this topic evoke?

Phasing (Preparing, Implementing, Institutionalising)

- Are there systematic methods in use for phasing changes and planning the stages?
- What good practices do you identify in the current state?
- What development needs do you identify in the current state?
- In your opinion, what is the biggest problem regarding this issue (if any)?
- What other thoughts does this topic evoke?

Management Model (Control, Structure, Processes & Accountability, Removing Obstacles)

- How would you describe the current state in the following areas?
 - (i) Responsibility for the overall change process
 - (ii) Defining the available time for implementing the change
 - (iii) Structures and processes through which change is implemented in various phases (preparation, implementation, embedding)
 - (iv) Structures and processes for guiding and monitoring the change process
 - (v) Definition and clarity of responsibilities
 - (vi) Identifying and removing barriers
- What good practices do you identify in the current state?
- What development needs do you identify in the current state?
- In your opinion, what is the biggest problem regarding this issue (if any)?
- What other thoughts does this topic evoke?

Resources & Skills

- Resources and expertise required for the change process – How would you describe the current state in these areas?
- Resources and expertise related to embedding the change / adopting new ways of working – How would you describe the current state in these areas?
- What good practices do you identify in the current state?
- What development needs do you identify in the current state?
- In your opinion, what is the biggest problem regarding this issue (if any)?
- What other thoughts does this topic evoke?

Appendix 2: Initial Recommendations with Change Tracking

The initial recommendations with change tracking are presented in Table 1 below. The bolded are additions and the strikeouts are deletions made during the validation phase.

Table 1. The initial recommendations with change tracking

Change Management in General	<p>Short-term: (1) Enhance the framework for supervisory work with supporting content for change management and implement communication and training regarding it.</p> <p>Long-term: (2) Incorporate the elements of change management and the selected best practices systematically and timely into the appropriate structures, processes, and responsibilities of the management system. Note: Prioritisation ability is a key area for development, as it correlates significantly with several elements of change management and the practical feasibility of change processes.</p>
The Element Reasons and Goals	<p>Short-term: (3) Create a model where, before commencing concrete progress planning, a "one-pager" is developed for the change initiative, outlining all known relevant aspects (including the target schedule). Consider in the model's creation the definition of its applicability area (the level or size of changes for which it is used), ownership, and maintenance of the model. Incorporate bidirectionality into the model (used when applicable): the supervisors at the health centres, and more broadly, the staff should have the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments on the change initiative, and this needs to be considered in the concrete planning and communication of the change. The supervisors utilise the "one-pager" in communicating the change. Additionally, investigate the use of the intranet as a communication channel for the "one-pagers."</p> <p>Long-term: (4) Further develop the 8-goal by creating a general framework and a bidirectional process that translate the organisation's strategic objectives guiding its activities into operational goals and justifications for all levels of the organisation. Include a prioritisation mechanism in the process (with a health centre view of ongoing and upcoming changes) to ensure that the number of concurrent changes does not exceed the organisation's capacity for reception and implementation.</p>
The Element Involvement and Commitment	<p>Short-term: (5) Conduct an internal stakeholder analysis or assessment during the preplanning phase and make plans on how the practical expertise and the immediate supervisors of those affected by the change are integrated into the various phases of the change process (including how the supervisors receive support during the process, for example, through coaching or training, and what tools are available, etc.). Carry out the analysis or assessment in a manner appropriate to the scope of the change.</p> <p>Long-term: (6) Develop the format of target setting discussions a model so that the interests and areas of expertise of the staff are mapped out with future change processes in mind. Determine how information is gathered and kept up-to-date. Provide opportunities for the staff in positions to participate more extensively, from both the perspectives of substantive expertise and development skills utilisation. Provide timely information about upcoming opportunities so that everyone is informed simultaneously.</p>
The Element Action Plans and Operational Responsibilities	<p>Short-term: (7) Establish general role and responsibility definitions for the change processes for the various phases of the project (e.g. define the roles and responsibilities of subject matter experts, project personnel, and supervisors). Concretize these definitions into role-specific tasks (action plans) on a project-by-project basis during the project planning phase (including tasks during the post-project evaluation phase).</p> <p>Long-term: (8) Define the service line's own network strategy, reflecting the 8-goal framework. Determine the necessary networks and how they will be resourced. Describe the networks and their operating models, including their utilisation in the change processes and the maintenance of new operating models.</p>
The Element Communication	<p>Short-term: (9) Clarify and simplify the structures, responsibilities, tools, channels, etc. used for daily operational communication and for communication related to change processes (including how change communication is carried out within the line management structure and ensuring that the message has been received).</p> <p>Short-term: (10) Better utilise the intranet in the service line's change communication: a single location where essential information is always available (including links to relevant locations) on upcoming and ongoing changes (e.g. as a yearly calendar), as well as the presentation of results and benefits obtained. Investigate how to enable two-way communication. (Related to Recommendation 3 regarding one-pagers for change initiatives)</p>
The Element Leadership	<p>Short-term: (11) Improve the situation within the existing structures: Prioritise more precisely what needs to be addressed in joint encounters (e.g. identify what is for information and what requires discussion, and identify the appropriate forum for change issues within the service line, area, or health centre). Adhere to the principle: "The greater the change, the more time is needed for discussion." This recommendation is closely related to Recommendation 1, which suggests that the number of simultaneous changes should be carefully considered, as if there are too many, time allocation becomes impossible.</p> <p>Short-term: (12) Enhance the framework for supervisory work to facilitate supervisors' development of leadership skills, and implement communication and training related to this matter.</p>

As seen in Table 1, the correction based on the feedback gathered during the validation phase concerned mainly refinement of the recommendations.