

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Introduction

The organisation in this report is a residential dementia care home where management introduced an evening supper service after concerns about residents losing weight. The intention was to improve the service for residents/customers, however the decision also changed established routines for a night team already understaffed. This is a useful management case because a worthwhile organisational aim does not automatically produce an effective implementation. This assignment will analyse and critique how leaders make a strategic decision workable, fair and sustainable while protecting organisational performance. The report will look at Lewin's three stage approach, Kotter's eight step model and consider culture, power and leadership as factors shaping implementation to organisational change.

Critically analyse the current forces for change in the organisation's micro and macro environment that can impact workplace culture and capability.

Change rarely arrives in an organisation to universal applause. Even when managers can explain why a new approach makes business sense, employees may see disruption, uncertainty or an extra demand on their time. Burke (2018) distinguishes between continuous and discontinuous change, while Dawson and Andriopoulos (2017) remind us that change unfolds through people, relationships and competing interests rather than through a neat management timetable. The important leadership question is therefore not simply why an organisation must change, but how managers create the conditions in which people can make it work.

A management decision needs to respond to its environment, however environmental pressure does not automatically tell managers what action to take. Johnson et al. (2017) distinguish the wider macro-environment from the organisation's immediate operating environment. PESTLE can help managers organise external influences, although its categories may make interconnected pressures appear more separate than they are. SWOT offers a snapshot of internal capability alongside external opportunity and threat, however its value depends on managers testing assumptions rather than producing a list Helms et al (2010). In this case, a change in mealtime provision may be justified by service outcomes, but its feasibility depends on staffing, systems and cooperation across shifts. Strategic analysis should therefore inform the change process, not replace it.

PESTLE analysis -Macro(External) Environment

Factor	Management implication
Political	Parliamentary scrutiny of adult social care funding and workforce pressures highlights the need to justify priorities and manage limited capacity (House of Lords, 2025).
Economic	Labour and food costs require managers to assess value, productivity and the opportunity cost of moving duties between teams.
Social	Changing resident expectations and nutritional needs require responsive, person-centred services.

Technological	Digital meal records and handover tools may support consistency, but training and access matter.
Legal	Regulatory duties concerning safe, person-centred care and food safety mean implementation cannot compromise existing standards.
Environmental	Food waste, energy use and procurement choices influence the efficiency of service changes.

SWOT Analysis to show internal environment

Strengths	Weaknesses
Existing resident knowledge; established values; experienced care staff.	Uneven workload; limited night capacity; handover and coordination gaps.
Opportunities	Threats
Staff-led service redesign; improved coordination; stronger performance evidence.	Cost pressures; resistance if consultation is superficial; reduced quality if duties are added without support.

These tools identify questions for management, but they cannot establish if a particular organisational change will succeed. Their findings should feed into consultations and discussions, resource planning and evaluation.

These frameworks need to be used with care. PESTLE can help a manager notice pressures outside the organisation, including policy, funding and workforce expectations, but it does not rank those pressures or prove which response is best. SWOT brings attention back to capability, yet the same issue can be framed as either a weakness or a threat depending on who is making the judgement. Helms et al (2010) therefore provide a useful reminder that SWOT is a starting point for discussion rather than an objective answer. In this case the tables should lead to a management question: what organisational capacity, employee support and evidence will be needed to deliver the intended improvement?

Change is not one single event. Burke (2018) distinguishes between adjustments to everyday practice and more substantial shifts in organisational systems and assumptions. The supper service may look like a small operational adjustment, but it crosses catering, nursing, handover and staffing boundaries. According to Dawson and Andriopoulos (2017) we should understand change in its organisational context rather than treating it as a tidy sequence of tasks. This challenges a common management assumption that a relatively modest initiative will be easy to implement. Its size on paper tells us little about the disruption it creates for employees.

Readiness matters as much as the decision itself. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) connect successful change with the conditions that shape employees' understanding and responses. Managers therefore need to establish whether staff understand the reason for the change, believe it is achievable and trust that the organisation will support them. There is a difference between announcing that a change is necessary and demonstrating that the organisation is ready for it. A credible leader asks what must be prepared before setting a launch date, while also recognising that prolonged consultation without a decision can undermine confidence.

Lewin

Lewin's model is often presented as unfreeze, change and refreeze. Its appeal for managers is its simple recognition that established habits cannot just be replaced by announcing a new procedure. Unfreezing means making a credible case for change, questioning existing routines and creating enough psychological safety for staff to discuss concerns Lewin (1947). In practice, leaders should share the evidence behind a proposed service improvement and invite those doing the work to challenge the assumptions. However this is not a courtesy exercise, employees may hold information about operational constraints that senior managers lack.

The change stage is where consultation becomes action. Managers need to agree on responsibilities, train staff, allocate resources and test the process before expecting it to operate consistently. Lewin's emphasis on group dynamics suggests that shared norms matter as much as individual compliance. A small, evaluated trial is preferable to an instruction that leaves the same team to absorb every additional task. Refreezing then means reinforcing a workable routine through handovers, supervision, agreed standards and feedback. However, the word "refreeze" can sound too fixed for a service facing continual changes in demand. Burnes (2004) critiques Lewin model as a rigid three-box formula. Managers still need to explain how stable standards can coexist with ongoing improvement. Lewin's model can be used as a strong framework for understanding readiness and collective behaviour, but may be weaker as a detailed implementation plan.

Kotter

Kotter (1995) gives managers a more detailed route through change: establish urgency, build a guiding coalition, develop and communicate a direction, enable action, secure early wins, maintain progress and embed the new approach. The model is especially useful when change cuts across departments or shifts, because it makes visible the leadership work that can otherwise be overlooked. A convincing sense of urgency should rest on evidence and organisational purpose, not on frightening employees into agreement. The coalition must also represent people with practical knowledge, rather than simply gathering senior staff who already support the proposal.

Kotter's emphasis on communication is particularly relevant to a change that alters established working relationships. An announcement tells staff what management has decided. The dialogue allows them to understand why, ask questions and influence how it happens. Removing barriers should mean addressing workload, training, equipment and decision making authority, not merely telling employees that an extra meal is added to the workload. Early wins could include evidence that the pilot runs safely, residents receive a more suitable service and essential care is not displaced. Yet these wins need to be measured honestly. A successful first week does not establish long term sustainability.

According to Appelbaum et al (2012) who supports aspects of the Kotters model but also questioned the strength of evidence for treating all eight steps as a universal sequence. Real organisational change may be messy, with stages overlapping and leaders having to revisit earlier decisions. The danger is that a manager follows the checklist while missing the lived experience of staff. Compared with Lewin's model, Kotter offers more operational direction, but can become overly leader driven unless employees have genuine influence.

Kotter's model is attractive to managers because it makes leadership responsibilities visible. Nevertheless, the stages can be interpreted too mechanically. Appelbaum et al. (2012) question whether the evidence supports treating the eight steps as an unavoidable sequence, while Hughes (2016) challenges overly confident explanations of why change programmes succeed or fail. As a leader we could use Kotter's model to organise questions about direction, communication and obstacles, not to claim that completing eight activities guarantees success. This is especially important where the organisation must respond to feedback during implementation rather than wait for the next formal stage.

Resistance is useful evidence about organisational readiness, rather than proof that employees dislike change. Oreg et al. (2011) show that responses are shaped by how change is experienced, while Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) emphasise the importance of readiness. Managers should distinguish concerns about the principle of change from concerns about the way it is being introduced. In this case, the evening service may be a reasonable strategic response, but its implementation still needs testing against available capacity. The implication is that consultation is part of sound management decision making, not an optional courtesy.

Culture influences what employees believe management genuinely values. Schein (2010) argues that underlying assumptions shape organisational behaviour, while Edmondson (1999) shows why psychological safety matters when staff need to speak openly. A culture that invites challenge can expose weak assumptions before a change is embedded. However, listening alone is insufficient: management must show how feedback changes decisions. This connects organisational culture directly to capability and makes the organisation better able to adapt.

Lewin and Kotter should be used as complementary tools to change. Lewin explains why leaders must unsettle established assumptions and support new group norms while Kotter offers more detail about building coalitions, communicating a direction and sustaining momentum. Both are limited when managers assume change moves neatly from one stage to the next. Dawson and Andriopoulos (2017) instead highlight the political, social and ongoing nature of organisational change. This matters because a new process may produce unintended consequences, prompting managers to revisit their plans.

A capable manager would therefore combine strategic evidence with employee involvement and continuous evaluation. Before implementation, leaders should agree what success looks like, who has authority to act, what resources are needed and which existing duties must change. During implementation, they should create opportunities for feedback, provide practical support and review emerging risks. Afterwards, they should compare results with the original objectives and be prepared to

adapt or stop an ineffective approach. Measures must go beyond whether the new task was completed: they should include service quality, workload, safety, staff experience and organisational performance.

One weakness of relying on a change model alone is that it can make the implementation process look separate from business strategy. Strategic fit matters because a change that improves one service may create pressure elsewhere. Johnson et al (2017) argue that strategic choices must be considered against the organisation's environment, capabilities and stakeholders. In this case, managers cannot judge a supplier initiative simply by whether the service starts on time. They must also examine whether the organisation can deliver it consistently without weakening other essential care work. This is a leadership judgement about priorities, not merely an operational scheduling issue.

PESTLE identifies influences that managers cannot directly control, while SWOT highlights the organisation's position and resources. However, both tools are open to criticism. Helms et al (2010) point out that SWOT is widely used but can become a superficial list rather than a basis for decision-making. Managers should therefore convert the findings into choices: which risks need mitigation, which capabilities need strengthening and who will be accountable? For example, workforce pressures highlighted in parliamentary discussion House of Lords (2025) make staff development and resource planning strategically relevant, but Hansard is evidence of political debate rather than proof of conditions in this particular organisation.

Change also has a timing problem. Burke (2018) distinguishes between changes that adjust existing practice and those that challenge deeper organisational assumptions. A small operational change can become culturally significant when it alters what different teams believe is fair. Managers should not assume that a limited change in procedure produces only a limited change in employee expectations. Dawson et al (2017) similarly emphasise the unfolding and sometimes unpredictable nature of change. Their perspective challenges the neat sequence suggested by staged models, managers need direction, but they also need room to learn as implementation develops.

Change Models help managers organise decisions, but real organisations are shaped by competing priorities, informal relationships and unexpected consequences. A sound approach uses the models to guide action, while treating evidence from employees and performance measures as reasons to adapt the plan Burnes (2004).

Evaluation should look beyond whether a new routine has been introduced. Kaplan et al (1992) argue for balanced performance measures and say, management should assess outcomes, operational capacity and employee experience as one. This prevents an apparently successful service improvement from hiding a deterioration elsewhere in the organisation.

Organisational change succeeds through more than a sound business case. Environmental analysis helps managers recognise pressures and capability gaps, but leadership determines how people experience the response. Lewin offers a useful explanation of readiness and shared behaviour, while Kotter provides a more detailed guide to communication, coalition-building and momentum. Neither should be applied mechanically. A participative, evidence-led approach that takes resistance seriously, allocates resources fairly and evaluates outcomes offers a stronger basis for lasting organisational change and improvement.

Evaluating how stakeholders can be led through complex workplace change

Leading people through change is often harder than deciding that change is necessary. A management team may have a clear business reason for a new approach, but employees still need to understand what it means for their work, whether it is achievable and whether their concerns will be taken seriously. The challenge is therefore not simply to persuade people to agree. It is to create the conditions in which the organisation can change while protecting trust, performance and its core values. This section evaluates how leadership, communication, involvement, motivation and practical support can be brought together to make change sustainable.

Effective change leadership needs both a clear direction and the ability to respond to people. Kotter (1990) distinguishes leadership, which establishes direction and gains commitment, from management, which organises resources and controls delivery. The distinction is useful, although separating the two too sharply risks suggesting that planning is less important than inspiration. In practice, an inspiring vision without sufficient staff, time or training can quickly damage confidence. Managers therefore need to combine the leadership task of building commitment with the management task of making the plan workable.

Transformational leadership is particularly relevant because it encourages staff to connect their daily contribution with a wider purpose. Bass et al (2006) associate this approach with shared vision, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. In a care organisation, leaders can use these behaviours to explain why a change matters and invite employees to improve how it works. However, transformational leadership can be overstated when managers assume enthusiasm will compensate for a difficult workload. A credible leader must show that employee concerns have consequences for decisions, rather than treating consultation as a way of securing agreement with a predetermined plan.

Transactional leadership also has a place. Clear responsibilities, performance expectations and feedback can reduce uncertainty when routines change. Yet relying only on targets and corrective supervision risks producing minimal compliance rather than commitment. Situational leadership offers a more flexible alternative: Hersey et al. (2008) suggest that leaders adapt the amount of direction and support to the needs of followers. Newer staff may require more practical guidance, while experienced employees may be ready to contribute solutions. The limitation is that managers can misjudge readiness or apply labels too easily. Good leadership therefore involves asking staff what support they need instead of assuming it.

The most convincing approach is neither purely directive nor entirely democratic. There are moments when managers must make a decision because standards or safety are at stake. There are also areas

where staff knowledge should shape the detail. According to Yukl (2013) effective leadership behaviour depends on circumstances and the work being undertaken. Applied here, senior managers should set the non-negotiable outcome, while teams help design a realistic process. This balances accountability with participation and avoids confusing employee involvement with a lack of managerial responsibility.

Stakeholders do not experience organisational change in the same way. Senior leaders may focus on outcomes and reputation, supervisors on coordination, employees on workload and fairness, residents and families on the quality and consistency of service. Treating these interests as identical can create conflict later. Freeman (1984) argues that organisations should recognise the interests of groups affected by their decisions. For managers, this means identifying stakeholders early, understanding their influence and ensuring that those with less formal power are still heard.

A stakeholder discussion should move beyond telling people what is happening. Staff need opportunities to challenge assumptions and offer workable alternatives before procedures are fixed. According to Ford et al. (2008), resistance can reflect the actions and communication of change agents, rather than being a fault in employees. This changes the managerial question from “How do we stop people resisting?” to “What is their response telling us about our plan?” Such a shift does not mean every objection must be accepted. It means managers should investigate objections before deciding whether they represent misunderstanding, a practical risk or a genuine conflict of interests.

Employee involvement also affects organisational culture. Schein (2010) explains that shared assumptions are reinforced by what leaders consistently notice, reward and tolerate. If managers invite ideas but routinely dismiss them, the underlying message is that participation is pointless. By contrast, explaining why an idea was adopted or rejected demonstrates respect and makes decision making more transparent. Involving representatives from different shifts and functions can reduce the danger that a change is designed around one group’s priorities. Shared ownership is built through influence, not simply attendance at a meeting.

Communication is one of the most visible leadership responsibilities during change, but sending information is not the same as achieving understanding. Kotter (1995) identifies inadequate communication as a major reason initiatives lose momentum. Employees need a consistent explanation of the purpose, expected benefits, timescale, responsibilities and available support. However, a one way briefing cannot reveal what people have understood or what they are worried about. Managers should use short discussions, questions, written updates and feedback loops, with consistent messages across different shifts.

Uncertainty can be unsettling even when the change itself appears sensible. Bridges (2009) distinguishes the external change from the psychological transition people go through when leaving familiar ways of working. His approach helps leaders recognise that employees may be at different stages of adjustment. Nevertheless, transition models should not be used to label staff emotions or assume everyone follows a predictable path. Reactions depend on previous experience, trust, personal circumstances and the quality of management. Oreg et al. (2011) found that employee reactions to change are shaped by multiple contextual and personal factors, supporting a more individual and less judgemental approach.

Emotional awareness matters, but it cannot replace honest discussion about operational issues. A leader who listens sympathetically yet leaves a serious concern unresolved may make matters worse by creating expectations without action. Goleman (1998) links emotional intelligence with self-awareness, empathy

and relationship management as these abilities can help managers respond without becoming defensive. Their value is greatest when used alongside fair decisions, reliable information and visible follow through. The objective is not to remove every uncomfortable feeling but to maintain enough trust for staff to raise problems early.

Resistance is often described as a barrier to be overcome, but this assumes the change plan is already correct. Oreg et al (2011) show that responses to change vary according to how change is managed and experienced. Employees may resist because they distrust the decision making process, anticipate additional demands or fear losing control over their work. Managers should distinguish between resistance to the objective and resistance to the way it is being implemented. Someone may support improved service outcomes while questioning whether the proposed arrangements are safe or fair.

Fairness is especially important when the benefits of a change are widely shared but its workload falls unevenly. Adams (1965) suggests that people judge fairness partly through comparisons between their contributions and outcomes. This does not mean managers can satisfy every preference, but they should explain how responsibilities were allocated and be willing to adjust them when evidence supports change. Where employees believe their effort is ignored, even a worthwhile initiative may damage morale. Recognition should therefore be specific and meaningful, rather than used as a substitute for adequate staffing or reasonable workloads.

Motivation is not achieved simply by telling staff that change is positive. Deci et al (2000) emphasise the importance of autonomy, competence and relatedness for self determined motivation. This suggests that employees are more likely to engage when they have some influence over implementation, receive appropriate training and feel supported by colleagues. Managers can strengthen motivation through shared problem solving, practical coaching and visible appreciation. The risk is that motivational language becomes manipulative if employees are asked to feel empowered while having no real discretion.

Leaders also need to challenge their own assumptions. When employees question a proposal, a defensive management response can turn a solvable operational issue into a wider trust problem. Ford et al. (2008) suggest that change agents themselves can contribute to resistance through broken expectations or poor relationships. A stronger response is to acknowledge the concern, test it against evidence, agree an action and report back. That approach treats disagreement as useful management information without surrendering responsibility for the final decision.

Change plans commonly focus on what people should do differently, while giving less attention to what they need in order to do it. Armenakis et al (1999) highlight the relationship between the content of change, its context and the processes used to introduce it. Managers should therefore assess skills, time, equipment and coordination before implementation. In the chosen organisation, that means agreeing which activities belong to each shift, what preparation can happen earlier and what training is necessary. These details should appear in a practical implementation plan with named responsibilities and review points.

Training must be relevant to the work rather than delivered merely to demonstrate that a box has been ticked. Employees may need clear procedures, demonstrations, supervised practice and opportunities to ask questions. Bandura (1977) emphasises the importance of confidence in one's ability to perform tasks saying, practical mastery experiences can strengthen this confidence. Yet training alone cannot correct an unrealistic allocation of work. Management should test whether the task can be completed within available capacity and redesign the process where necessary. This is where leadership credibility becomes measurable.

Implementation should also make room for learning. A limited pilot allows managers to compare intended and actual results before extending the change. Greenhalgh et al. (2004), reviewing innovation in service organisations, show that adoption is influenced by organisational context, networks and the perceived characteristics of the innovation. A pilot therefore offers more than a rehearsal, it provides evidence about fit, staff experience and unintended effects. Managers should agree in advance what would trigger a revision or pause. Without clear criteria, a pilot can become a symbolic exercise in which the decision to proceed has already been made.

Conclusion

Introducing an organisation change or meal time is not the same as embedding it. Lewin's refreezing stage draws attention to the need for new practices to become reliable group habits, while Kotter (1996) emphasises the importance of connecting change with organisational culture. Both ideas are valuable, but they need to be interpreted flexibly. Burnes (2004) challenges the simplistic view that Lewin advocated permanent rigidity. In a changing organisation, sustaining improvement should mean stabilising what works while continuing to review whether it remains appropriate.

Leaders need measures that reflect more than activity. A service can meet a timetable while failing to achieve its intended outcomes. Evaluation should therefore combine service results, employee feedback, operational reliability and evidence of unintended consequences. Kaplan et al (1992) argue for a balanced approach to performance measurement rather than dependence on one financial indicator. For the care organisation, that principle means judging the change through outcomes, consistency, workforce experience and the use of resources. Where results are weak, management should adapt the plan rather than defend the original decision.

Organisational learning can help prevent the same problems recurring. Senge (2006) places shared vision, team learning and systems thinking at the centre of a learning organisation. This is useful because changes to one part of a service can have consequences elsewhere. A short review after implementation should ask what worked, what did not, which assumptions proved wrong and what needs to change next. However, learning cultures require psychological safety as well as good intentions. Edmondson (1999) found that team psychological safety supports learning behaviour and says employees are less likely to report mistakes or weak processes if they expect blame.

The organisation's values should be visible in how the change is managed, not merely in how its aims are described. A commitment to care and respect becomes more credible when managers involve staff, respond to concerns and hold themselves accountable for resources and outcomes. Schein (2010) suggests that culture is shaped through repeated leadership behaviour. If the new approach becomes routine because people understand it, contribute to it and see evidence of its value, the change is more likely to survive beyond the initial enthusiasm of its sponsors.

Successful workplace change is not about persuading employees to accept a management decision at any cost. It is about giving a clear direction, creating genuine involvement and making sure the organisation has the capability to deliver. Transformational leadership can build purpose, while transactional and situational approaches provide structure and appropriate support. Resistance, communication and culture all influence whether change becomes accepted practice. The strongest management approach combines Lewin's attention to group behaviour with Kotter's focus on leadership and momentum, but remains willing to question both models. Ultimately, the quality of leadership is shown through fair decisions, practical support and honest evaluation of results.

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