here are a couple of provocations written following our last get-together
hopefully to prompt some further thoughts and discussionsin december
carol

Provocation 1

D Mystification: or a technocrats guide to creativity.

As part of the workshop we explored the creative process and mapped it out.
Though some individual's processes were different there were lots of similarities.

A stimulus.
Mulling/thinking/working around the stimulus.
Working on the ideas through additional stimulus, testing, gathering info, talking, testing, further stimulus.
Forming the 'product' – working and refining.
Da da!
Critique and sharing.
Committing to the past – 'banking' but learning too.

This made me think of the way we think about processes in the NHS.
Because, in the NHS (and maybe in other care services too) we absolutely love process maps.
(Not that) many years ago, access to NHS services moved at glacial speed. To speed the service and increase capacity, techniques from industry - like process mapping – were introduced. This exposed the working of the care process or the 'journey' a person made in getting through the NHS maze. Success in re-engineering services made the use of process maps widespread.

If we can present the creative process as a process I think this would have more resonance in the healthcare environment. I know it feels as though this would make the creative process a bit safer, a bit less mystical, a bit less creative maybe. But looking at the process maps we put together as part of our workshops I'm not sure the difference is that great. And the research we've looked at helps to identify conditions and processes (e.g. no worry of failure, distractions are excluded etc).

And I guess it also depends on what we're trying to achieve.
If we do want to spread creativity to those whose first response is 'I can't paint you know' then maybe a safe process map would be a way in. A set of small changes within a very familiar framework would be more digestible and recognisable – credible even. It also means that the 'language' barrier between the sectors is avoided. The creative aspect could be 'snuck in' like a Trojan horse.

So then, what do you think?

Provocation 2

Creativity 'to go'

The research we have looked at shows that when under pressure, there is a tendency for people to revert to tried and tested techniques and to pull in their creative horns. I know this to be true.

A few weeks ago a (nother) national NHS review process was launched from a clear if cloudy sky. It is running at breakneck speed through our system with a series of non-negotiable outputs and timetables. It will be systematically driven nationwide throughout the NHS in the next 3 months; it will engage over 2000 clinicians nationally in a heftily structured but very political debate about the future of the service.
The work to deliver the review must be absorbed within current staff time. This is not at all unusual so we pick up the shovels and get digging.

So the challenge is - given that this is how it is – how can we introduce an element of creativity?
In my experience, many NHS staff do support the notion of introducing creativity. They believe that it will add something. But when it comes to the crunch we bring a lot of preconditions and inflexibility – so we often whirl away from each other unable to make things work.
In my own opinion its this – more even than funding – that has prevented a more developed use of creativity.

Is there a 'short circuit' creativity or does it necessarily mean that there is a lengthy developmental engagement? I believe it can be used in short blasts and we should put more energy into developing these alongside other ways in.

A couple of years ago I commissioned some time with a writer for our team.
I had no idea what would happen so it was a bit risky.
For some colleagues it was a dangerous excursion into self-expression.
But one of the exercises really hit home for all of us. We had to write a poem using only words of one syllable. What a tough challenge that was and it did a job – with impact - that a month of plain English training couldn't have done. How bad are we at saying things simply? But how powerful when we got it right.
The exercise took a half hour.

I think a package of these 'mini' incursions using different techniques would be a terrific way to spread creative approaches. If anyone were interested I'd love to have a go at putting "creativity to go" together.