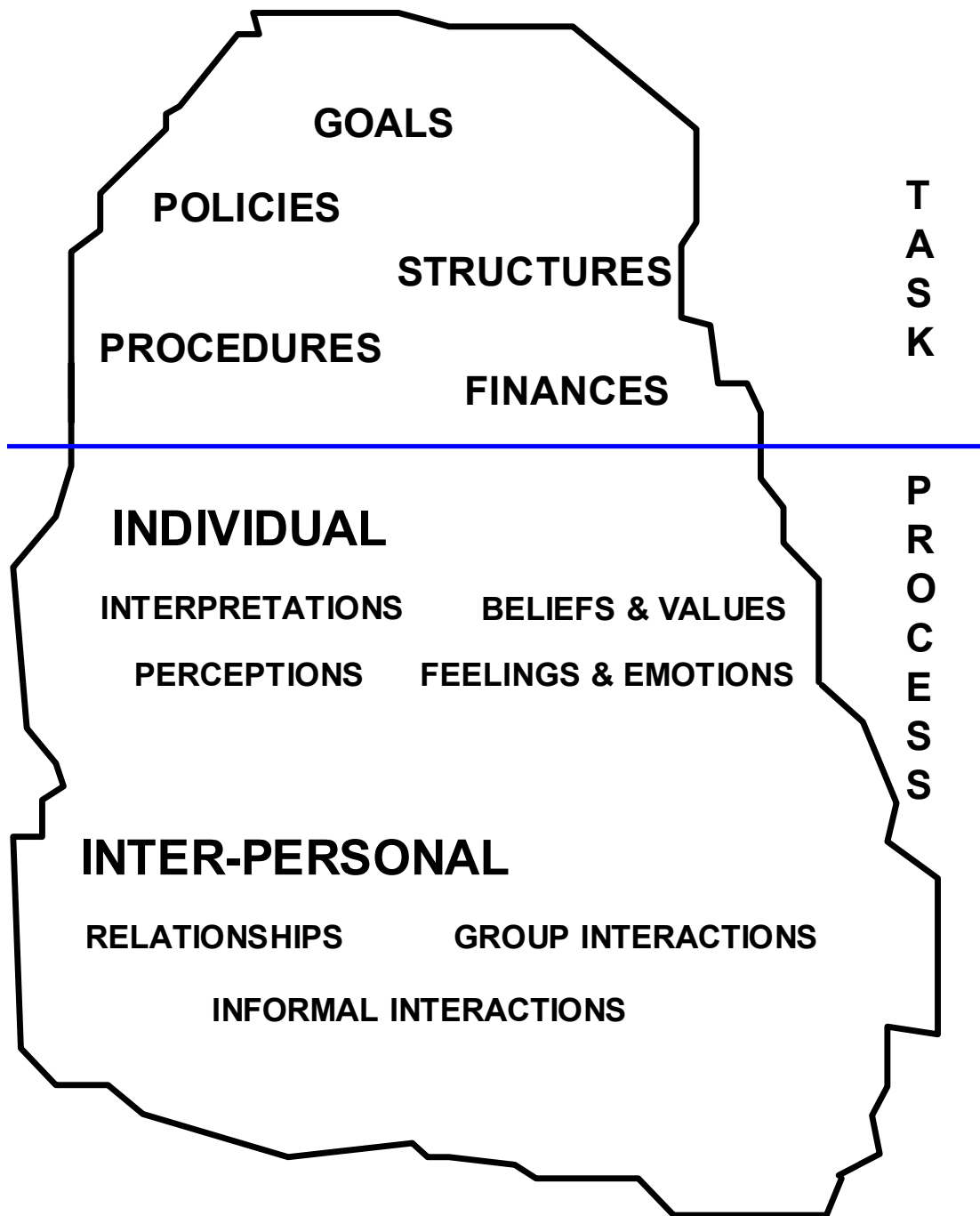




## Its about more than the Task - The Organisational Iceberg

A simple metaphor to help understanding of the twin aspects of success – both addressing the task, and also paying attention to the human process.





## The Organisational Iceberg

We can use the metaphor of an Iceberg to understand how organisations, services, and teams actually work.

The top of the iceberg, the visible part of organisations, tends to be things that are captured on paper, in writing. Things like goals, strategies, mission statements; policies and procedures; structure charts and job descriptions, budgets statements and finances. The top of the Iceberg describes the task – what we are here to do. But how well does the top of the Iceberg actually describe what goes on day in and day out in your work?

Rarely can the top of the Iceberg give a prescription for what to do in every situation. Certainly in services that work with people, the job requires discretion and judgement, and procedures, no matter how thorough, can't address every eventuality. The top of the Iceberg gives the frame within which we operate, rather than the detail of the work.

The Task, the top of the Iceberg, is turned into reality by a much less obvious human process at the bottom of the Iceberg.

At its simplest, there are two main factors at the bottom of the Iceberg – how we operate as **individuals**, and how people within and outside the organisation or service get on and relate to each other interpersonally.

**At the Individual level**, things like our feelings and emotions (the way we 'tick', our emotional 'State') on a given day, our perceptions, our interpretations, all have a major influence on how we do the job.

Do you notice people work differently when they are feeling valued, confident, positive, than if they are feeling anxious, fed up, demoralised? And do you do your job differently?

Do you notice how the different ways people pay attention to the outside world can influence their state? Some people operate from a 'glass half full' mentality, looking for the positives, before the negatives. Others do 'glass half empty', focusing on what is wrong, bad or missing. (And some people don't seem to have a glass!). And have you ever noticed how a strong character with a 'glass half empty' mindset can bring down the mood in a group of people? Emotional states can be contagious.



And have you ever known people interpret information at the top of the Iceberg differently? We can interpret the same words in quite different ways, leading to confusion and disharmony.

**At the Interpersonal level**, the way we relate to each other one to one has a big impact at work. If you have ever experienced a team where there is a lot of friction, you will know how this can get in the way of good working.

There can also be interpersonal issues between different groups – tension between teams, splits between managers and workers, and difficulties between organisations and services that need to work together.

Issues at the bottom of the Iceberg can't be dealt with just by policies and procedures. The 'Enthusiasm at Work' policy with mandatory smiling and confident body posture wouldn't be well received. Nor would the 'Getting on Well' Procedure, with obligatory compliments on a Monday morning, and group hugs on and Friday.

The bottom of the Iceberg is influenced and controlled by managers and workers themselves. For it to work well, people need a good reason to operate as well as they can personally and interpersonally, they need to know what to do, and they need to know how to do it. When the bottom of the Iceberg works well, the Task gets done as well as possible. If the bottom of the Iceberg isn't working well, poor morale and fractious relationships can lead to high sickness, stress, poor service, and complaints.

This programme has been designed to share models that help make sense of the human side of organisations, and introduces techniques and strategies that help people working with change and uncertainty to be resourceful and resilient.