

Reimagining help

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An evidenced-based approach to 'help'

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Learning new skills

Why is this important?

A lack of opportunities for people to acquire new skills can be a major barrier to behaviour change. Organisations that support people to learn and practice new skills will help people be more successful in reaching their goals.

What do we mean by learning new skills?

In Western society, a common narrative is that an individual can change their life if they simply put their mind to it. This narrative places a lot of responsibility on the individual without acknowledging the wider context of people's lives or that people need opportunities to learn and develop skills in order to reach their goals. It is often the lack of opportunity rather than a lack of trying that prevents change from taking place.

When people are equipped with new skills and knowledge - for example, training that enables them to enter more secure and rewarding careers, it can help them to build confidence and motivation to change behaviours. It also helps when opportunities for learning are easy to access - for example, low cost or free and located in non-clinical settings close to people's homes - see [Enabling environments](#), and are flexible enough to provide tailored support to those taking part - for example, personalised learning that maps directly onto people's goals - see [Working on what matters](#).



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Learning new skills



What is the behaviour change theory and evidence?

Learning new skills:

- Increases **capability** for behaviour change by helping people to learn how to manage their health and wellbeing and by applying skills that help to address the wider determinants of their health, such as communication skills and financial management.
- Increases **motivation** for behaviour change, as becoming good at something (e.g. home cooking) makes a person feel good about the behaviour and increases the likelihood that they will do it again (e.g. experimenting with new recipes).

Examples

- Blue Marble training introduces young people to a restaurant kitchen to develop the skills needed to work in a professional environment whilst being mentored to support their wider personal development needs.
- Envision supports young people to develop skills for adulthood by providing opportunities for young people to tackle social problems in teams and take community action.
- The Stroke Association provides digital training and support to people who have had a stroke to support them with their communication needs.
- The Bromley By Bow Centre understands that health is driven by social factors, not just medical ones. They offer a range of opportunities for skills development in their local community hub, including money management, starting a business, computer skills, creative arts and languages.
- Body & Soul's MindSET is a free weekly livestream for young people to learn skills to help manage emotional distress.
- Foundation for Change offers training courses for people in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction to achieve their goals and grow in confidence and self-esteem.



Generate ideas

Using the information above, start to brainstorm ideas to try out in your organisation or community. Think about how to co-design ideas with other practitioners and people in the local community who could benefit from Good Help.

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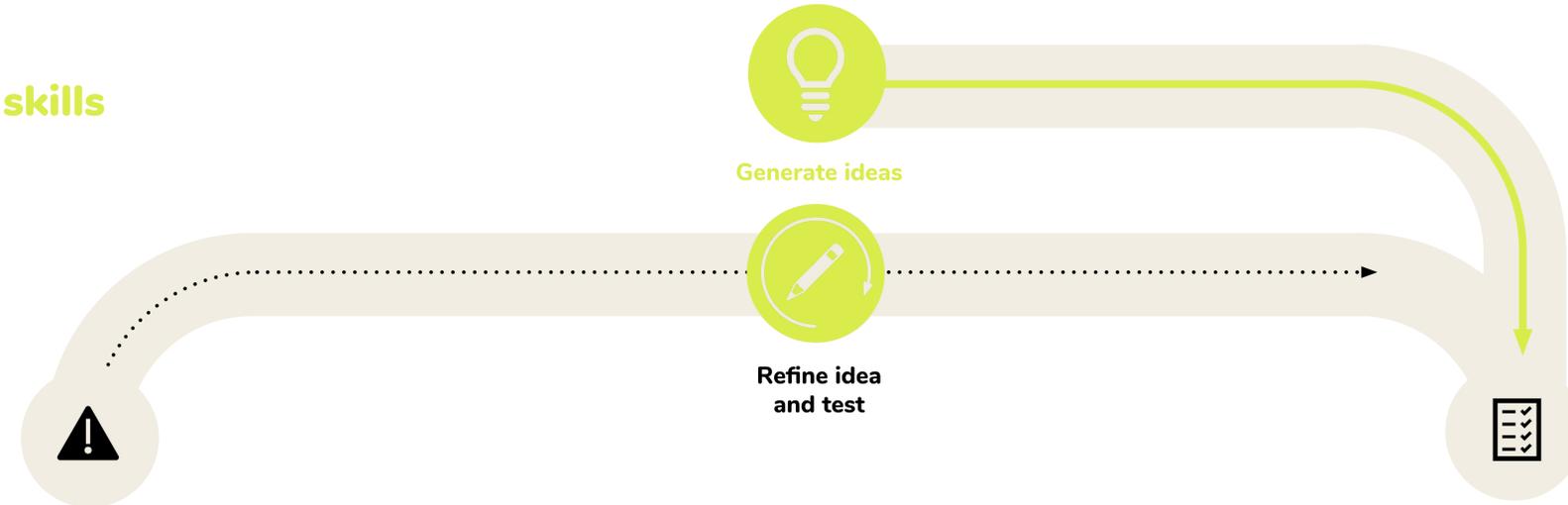
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Common pitfalls

- Making recommendations or referrals to courses or workshops based on a narrow view of what skills the person needs, without understanding their individual preferences or barriers to participation.
- Placing too much emphasis on internal drivers of health, such as mood and beliefs, without considering the wider influences on a person's experience - for example, referring someone for cognitive behavioural therapy for depression without understanding how the person's income, housing, relationships and community life might be making it harder to reach their goals.

Check in with the evidence

1. How will you identify the types of skills and learning opportunities people want? Can you speak to people in your local community?
2. How do the skills and learning opportunities help people move towards their personal goals? Will you be able to tailor the opportunities to individual needs?
3. How will the skills and learning transfer to people's wider lives or will they need further resources to continue to learn and apply them once the opportunity has ended?
4. How will you communicate the opportunity and encourage people to access it? Is it delivered in a way that everyone can understand and in a place that people can reach?

Use these questions to assess whether your idea includes the core components of this characteristic.



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