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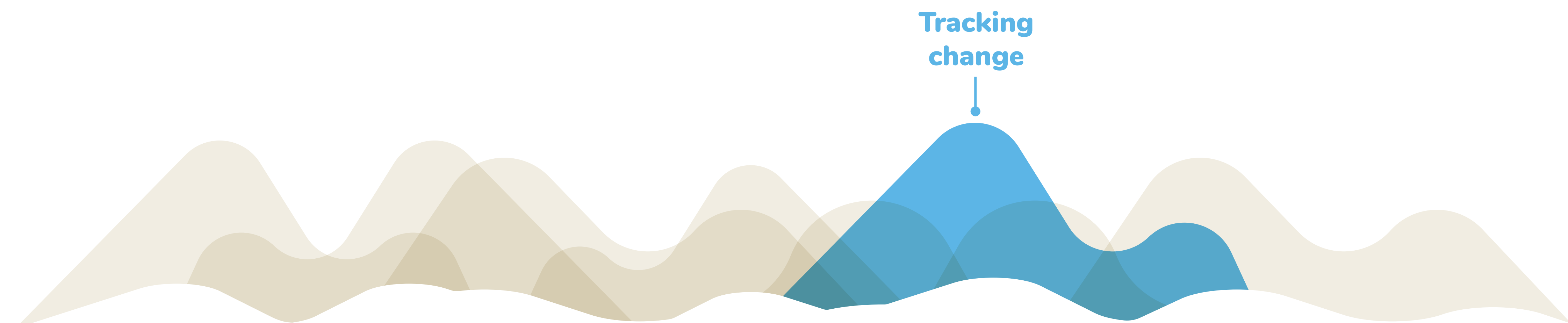
Tracking change

Why is this important?

Seeing how behaviours change over time can help people to understand their own patterns of behaviour, feel motivated by progress, predict when things might be getting worse and get support at the right time.

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What do we mean by tracking change?

When anyone sets out to make long-term changes in their lives, whether related to health, relationships, work or any other aspect of life, it is likely they will experience variations in their ability to focus and do what is required to move towards their goals. Some weeks or months might go better than others, and life events and other external factors will contribute to fluctuations in activity. For example, an unsuccessful interview may discourage a person from applying for more jobs and an upcoming social event may motivate a person to exercise more regularly. Tracking change can help a person understand their own patterns of behaviour (and how they relate to things like mood, work and relationships), identify common obstacles and adapt their plans accordingly (see **Managing setbacks**).

People should find it easy to track changes - if too much effort is required to enter data, this can be a deterrent. People should be able to decide which behaviours or other things (e.g. outcomes such as weight) they want to track and the way to do this that works for them. They should have control over their own data and make choices about who to share their data with. It can be motivating to know that someone else, such as a practitioner or a friend, is following your progress, particularly if feedback and support is tailored accordingly.

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What is the behaviour change theory and evidence?

- People often underestimate or overestimate changes in their behaviour - for example, they underestimate the number of calories consumed or overestimate the time they spend exercising. Tracking behaviour increases **capability** by people having a better understanding of their progress, barriers and patterns as well as the ability to put solutions in place based on their observed progress.
- Tracking change increases **motivation** when people can tangibly see their successes.

Examples

- Taking regular blood pressure readings at home alongside keeping diet or activity diaries and sharing the results directly with practitioners to discuss progress or plans to change behaviours.
- Sleep diaries or sleep data from a wearable device that is connected to tailored psychological support.
- A text message that asks a person to rate their mood each day and which notifies a known practitioner if mood is consistently low for an agreed amount of time.
- Apps that use activity-tracking functions - for example, Fanfit tracks football fans' step counts and shares this information in a visual leaderboard allowing fans to share and compare their progress with others. See case study for more detail.
- OWise cancer app uses tracking tools to monitor wellbeing and notify people when their health deteriorates. It also enables users to share their real-time data with practitioners directly.

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.
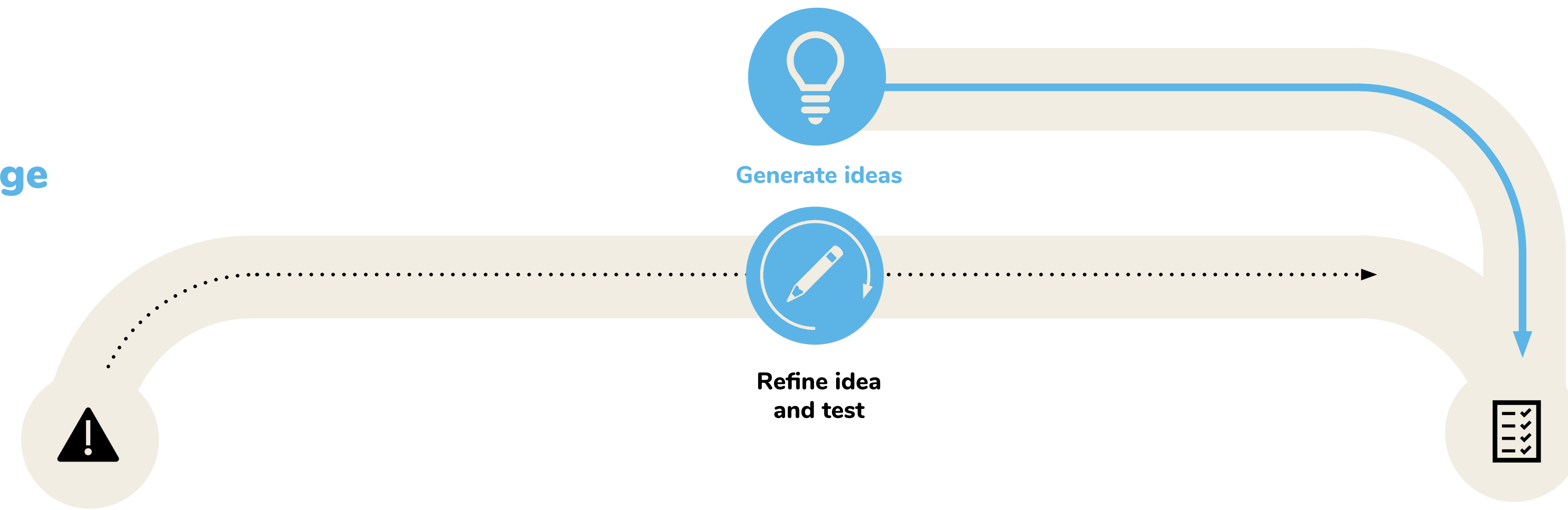
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Tracking change

Generate ideas

Refine idea and test

Common pitfalls

- Suggesting which behaviours or metrics a person should track without asking them if they feel comfortable doing this and explaining how they link to the person's goals. Some people won't want to share their data and will feel like they are being monitored.

- Asking a person to spend time tracking their progress and then not using the data to inform support. People who are motivated by sharing their progress with others might not continue to track changes if no one is looking at what they are achieving.

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

Check in with the evidence

1. How will people decide what behaviours or other metrics they can track? What behavioural or non-behavioural metrics (e.g. weight, confidence, knowledge) could be tracked?

2. How can tracking be made as easy as possible? - For example, taking pictures of meals rather than keeping a food diary?

3. How are people supported to use the data they track for example, visualising how close they are to their goal or opportunities to review data at different points.

4. How will the idea help to tailor support or feedback based on the data tracked? Are there opportunities to agree in advance with the person when to reach out - for example, if activity or mood dips to a certain point? (see *Managing setbacks*)

5. How will people share their progress with others and is there opportunity for peer feedback (see **Celebrating success**)?

6. How will you address concerns about how data will be used and accessed?