



Playbook for People Power

Practical frameworks, activities and
approaches to unlock the potential of people
and communities to transform systems



About the Playbook for People Power

This Playbook is designed to be a resource to help grow the people power movement, pulling together a set of methods, frameworks and activities into one document as an easy reference. It sits alongside the report 'Reflections on 10 years of People Power in Action', which tells the story of Nesta's People Powered Results (PPR) team. Both documents are part of the legacy work that the team delivered as they wound down their activity in 2023.

How to use the Playbook

The principles for people power and the conditions to bring people power to life are the foundations of the PPR approach to working in partnership with places across the UK. If you are **leading change efforts**, you might find it helpful to consider how you can use and adapt these principles with your team and to design work that supports the creation of the conditions for change.

If you are involved in **designing or delivering innovation, insights gathering and engagement or strategy development programmes**, then you might find the methods and example roadmaps helpful. These sections have been designed to give you a sense of who you might involve, the phases that you might work through and some helpful frameworks and activities that you could use.

The toolkit for creating space is for **anyone who wants to take a more people powered approach in their work**. It includes the frameworks and activities that the PPR team came back to again and again, some of which we developed ourselves and some which we adapted or borrowed from others.

The toolkit section is split into three sections and can be dipped in and out of, depending on your context and needs.

- 1. Nurture new ways of thinking
- 2. Work collaboratively within systems
- 3. Move to action and growth

For those who want to **explore people powered approaches further**, we have included links to some more of the PPR team's favourite resources at the end of this Playbook.

Contents

Principles for People Power	4
The conditions to bring people power to life	6

People powered methods 7

Methods to drive systemic change	8
Support structures and roles	9
Curating insights	10
Shaping new visions	12
Making it real	14

A toolkit for creating space 17

Overview	18
1. Nurture new ways of thinking	19
2. Work collaboratively within systems	26
3. Move to action and growth	31

Annex 42

Glossary of Playbook terms	43
Further reading and references	43

Principles for People Power

PPR's work was driven by **six principles for People Power**. Over the past 10 years, these have underpinned our methods, how we supported and partnered with others and how we worked together as a team.



1. Prioritise people

It sounds simple, but it is all too easy to lose sight of both the people our systems are set up to serve, and those who make up our systems; practitioners, managers and leaders. Targets, bureaucracy and transactional processes can often take over. Relentlessly focusing on people and creating spaces for connection and collaboration across differences, driven by a shared purpose, helps to build empathy and new possibilities.



2. Everyday innovation

Keep it simple if you are serious about people power. Overly professionalised language and complex decision making processes isolate and diminish the potential of people to create impact. Aim to make complex issues understandable and accessible to as many people as possible. In Einstein's words, "If you can't explain it to a six-year-old, you don't understand it yourself."



3. Creativity can cut through complexity

Taking a creative and playful approach to really dig into complex challenges helps us go beyond what we know, or think we know, about issues. Creativity serves as a powerful catalyst for change in helping us to connect with both our heads and our hearts – a critical ingredient for meaningful transformation. It also serves as a powerful equaliser for opening up conversations between people with diverse backgrounds and experiences.



4. Move slow first, to make rapid progress later

Spend time developing a deep and shared understanding of the challenge that you are facing, including listening to lesser heard perspectives. Intentionally holding off the natural desire to jump straight into solutions will help build a focus on root causes. This helps to set up change efforts for success and improve their chances of being hardwired into systems to create lasting and ongoing impact.



5. Nurture and amplify hope

In even the most challenging situations, there is hope to be found. Many of us have grown weary and fatigued, by ongoing restructures, budget cuts, global crises – the list goes on. Focusing on creating spaces for hope, joy and curiosity to grow can start a ripple effect of change, and help to bring new energy and optimism into how the future is faced. In Norman Vincent Peale's words, "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars."



6. Root everything in action and learning

Recognise that real progress and change happens outside of meeting rooms. Root all of your work in action and learning from the work going on out in communities, schools and hospitals. Don't listen for the sake of an insights report with powerful quotes, or strategise for a glossy document. Instead, lean into the messiness of testing out ideas in the real world and recognise that this is the real work.

The conditions to bring people power to life

If you are serious about making people powered change happen, there are four really important conditions to pay attention to. These are the building blocks for long term and impactful systemic change, driven by people power.

New modes of leadership

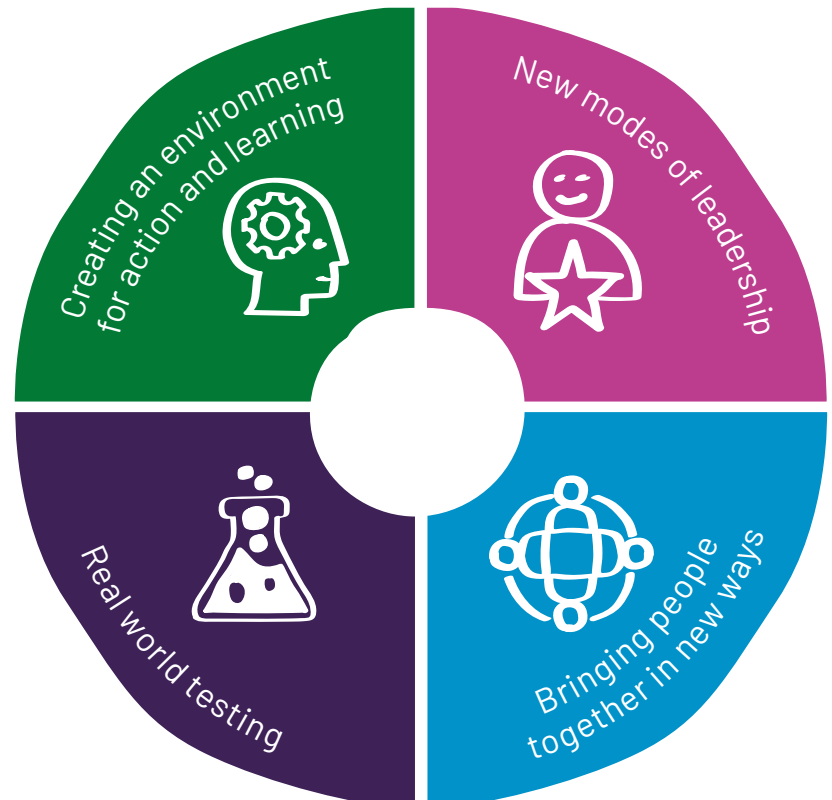
- Adopting collaborative approaches to leadership through **sponsorship of efforts across systems and places**, with commitment to use insights to inform longer-term strategic plans.
- **Active permission** from those in traditional and non-traditional positions of power to create the space and support for those closest to challenges to take the lead.

Bringing people together in new ways

- Complex challenges cannot be solved in isolation. **Mobilising and supporting diverse groups** that are representative of **different parts of a system** helps to uncover new opportunities for change.
- Focusing on a **shared challenge and goal** creates opportunities for new ideas and ways of working to be tested that **overcome systemic barriers** and boundaries.

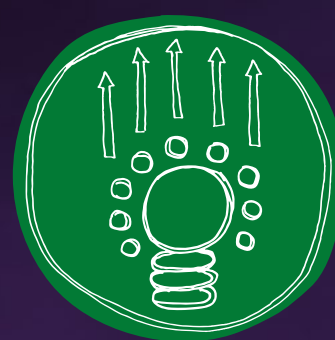
Real world testing

- Creating the space and support for **experimentation**, where learning is celebrated, even (especially!) when it comes from failure.
- Building a **rhythm and pace** around testing and iterating helps to keep up **energy and momentum** across longer term change efforts.



Creating an environment for action and learning

- Finding ways to make **data more accessible, more understandable, more timely and more actionable** – so that teams can understand in real time where they are starting from and if they are heading in the right direction. These new forms of data can then legitimise the impact of innovations within old systems.
- **Coaching teams and individuals** as they step into new ways of working, to help them to think about ‘how’ they are working together, as well as ‘what’ they’re working on.



People powered methods

Driving systemic change by
putting people at the centre



Methods to drive systemic change

PPR was set up in 2013 to take a people powered approach to systemic change. Partnering with [Re!Institute](#), we adapted their '100 day challenge' method to the UK's health and care system. You can find out more about the 100 day challenge method in the ['making it real'](#) section.

When the pandemic hit, we worked alongside our partners to take stock of what was needed to support systemic change and resilience within this new context. As a result of these conversations, we started to develop a broader offer, based upon the same principles and conditions for change as the 100 day challenge. Finally, these were refined into three methods.



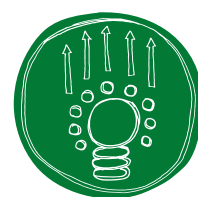
Curate insights

Support systems to understand the world through the perspectives of people closest to challenges, and curate insights that drive action.



Shape new visions

Help systems to reimagine the future, and design a path to get there through strategy development and implementation planning.



Make it real

Bring ideas to life by accelerating the pace and improving the experience of change in complex systems through people-centred and [rapid testing](#) approaches.

These methods help drive change simultaneously at multiple levels:



Structural changes

such as policy, decision making processes and the flow of money and resources



Cultural shifts

such as whose voices are heard, new relationships and connections



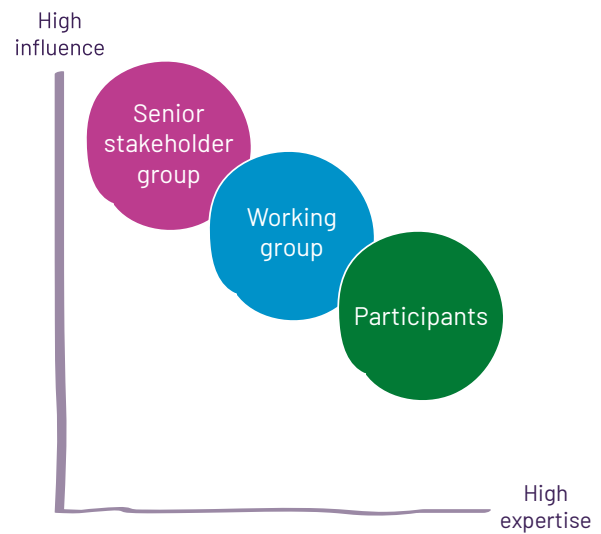
Individual changes

to mindsets, behaviours and attitudes. Providing the foundation to enable structural and cultural shifts

Support structures and roles

Setting up group structures that engage people with a breadth of perspectives and a mix of power, influence and expertise from across a system is fundamental to people powered work.

Taking a systematic and relational approach to building these support structures early on is important. Key activities in this process include:



1. **Establishing links with key stakeholders** that have influence and expertise in the the area you are working in. For example, a local NHS trust, local council departments, local and national charities and volunteer groups
2. **Inviting people to join these group structures and working together** to ensure that any gaps in representation are noticed and filled
3. **Co-creating some shared principles for the work**, considering what will make this a meaningful programme for people and how you want to work together.

There are three groups that we have found are typically needed for any people powered programme of work.

- **Senior stakeholder group:** senior leaders from across the system who help create the conditions for a people powered approach For example, by committing to a new mode of leadership. They provide the overall permission and leadership for the programme. Their role is to commit to a collaborative way of working and actively support people from across the system to participate in the work. For example, through moving resources around, removing bureaucratic barriers or relieving existing pressures.
- **Working group:** a diverse group of community leaders and staff, who shape the programme using the principles for people power and work together to create the conditions for people powered change. For example, through encouraging and enabling people to step into a different mode of leadership, responding to blockers as they are surfaced and planning for sustainability through committing to take action as a result of what is learned.
- **Participants, eg, community members and practitioners:** people who are invited to be involved, who are directly affected by the issue and/or will be affected by any decisions made. These people often have unrivalled expertise in the challenge and the solutions, while also being the less heard voices in systems. Their contribution may be through sharing insights and expertise, reaching into their networks to broaden participation, or developing and testing new solutions.

There are some additional roles that you may want to consider when undertaking people powered work. Please see the 'making it real' section for more information.

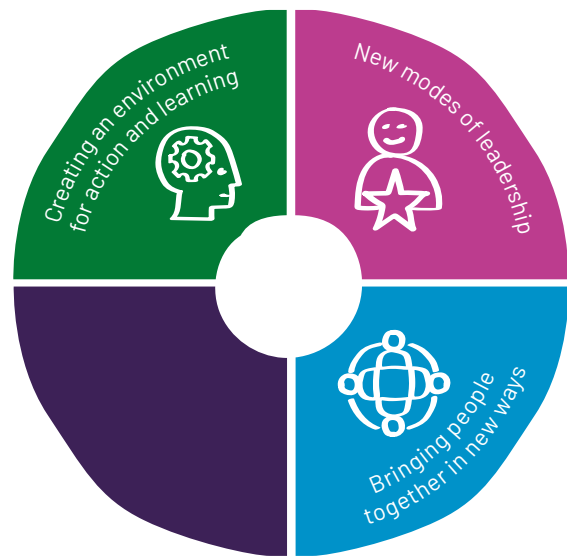


Curating insights

Listen to and learn from communities

Curating insights was influenced by a range of methods, including participatory research, lived experience engagement and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). It is a people powered approach to engagement that involves listening to and understanding people’s experiences, contexts and needs through rapidly gathering insights and engaging with a wide range of people.

There is a growing need for national bodies and local and regional organisations to listen to those most affected by issues, hear about the needs and priorities of communities and integrate these into strategic decision making. By adopting this approach, you will be more likely to work in partnership with a diverse group of people who are invested in the local context, understand what needs to shift and be prepared to take action.



Use this method to:

- Understand the root causes and impact of complex problems
- Generate buy in from communities into strategies, policy or action plans
- Improve understanding and use of local resources
- Develop a set of shared priorities and opportunities to create change.

Helpful frameworks and activities:

- Support different groups of people living in the same place to come together for the first time
- Unlock people’s imaginations to shape a desirable future
- Help people pick their top priorities
- Spread influence.

An example roadmap for a curating insights programme

1. Design and set-up

(2-3 months)

Set up a working group and a senior stakeholder group to identify the questions for exploration, design opportunities for engagement and commit to the ways the insights generated will be used to inform decision making.

- Agree the changes** that the insights you will be gathering will influence.
- Agree **who** you will engage with and **how**.
- Develop engagement and comms materials** that are tailored to the populations you are seeking to engage. Make sure that the comms materials make it clear what the work is about and how participant insights will be acted upon.
- Launch comms and recruit participants** through the working group's collective network.

2. Listening

(2-3 months)

Create opportunities for multiple diverse voices to participate in a meaningful way that works for them. Summarise and theme insights.

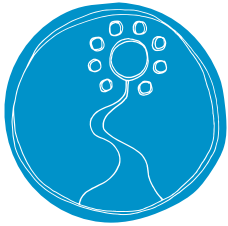
- Run community engagement activities** alongside partners. These can be virtual or in-person workshops or interviews, online surveys or paper-based questions (include pre-paid postage with these).
- Meet regularly as a working group** to take stock of progress, begin initial collation of insights and consider how you might need to adapt to reach those whose voices you have yet to hear.
- Synthesise insights** into a draft summary report.
- Share the summary report** with partners and participants for sense checking and feedback before finalising.

3. Prioritising and planning action

(1-2 months)

Sense-check the insights and define key priorities alongside participants. Translate people's views into action plans and next steps.

- Design and plan final workshop(s)** to validate and refine insights, prioritise and plan action to bring key recommendations to life.
- Synthesise and share a final report** which includes the insights and the agreed priorities and actions.
- Support the group to agree on **how to maintain and grow their momentum**, and hold each other accountable to take actions and move the work forward.

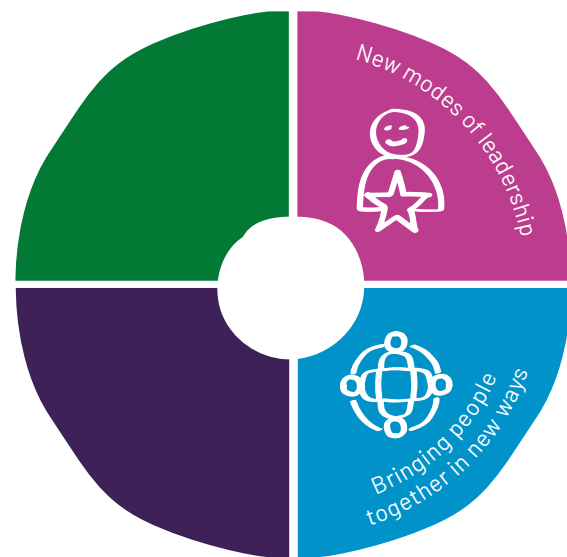


Shaping new visions

Develop a new strategy and plan how to put it into practice

This method is grounded in participatory approaches to shaping new strategic plans. It was developed in response to traditional top-down approaches to strategy development and places a greater onus on broadening participation by involving and responding to a greater number of more diverse perspectives. It can be applied to a one-off away-day type session or as part of longer pieces of work that allow for more iterative thinking and planning.

It comes into its own when refreshing the vision and purpose of an organisation, sector or collaborative, or developing a shared vision of a system, local place, sector, organisation, service or programme. The method is also effective as a way to work in collaboration to plan for and build the foundations for implementation.



Use this method to:

- Understand and focusing on what truly matters to local people and developing new ways of thinking and working in partnership with people
- Tackle wicked, systemic challenges at a strategic level and creating and enacting shared plans to instigate change
- Build shared ownership over the future of an organisation, place or system.

Helpful frameworks and activities:

- Help people to think differently about the future
- Take a whole-systems approach to explore what needs to be done
- Help people make decisions about what to start, stop, evolve and continue
- Help people to agree on a way forward together.

An example roadmap for a shaping new visions programme

1. Contracting and mobilisation

(1-2 months)

Build buy in and momentum for the work and shared clarity around scope, process and outputs.

Work with the senior leadership and working group to:

- agree on the outputs** you will be developing
- develop **questions you want to explore** through this work
- map stakeholders**, and set up any additional group structures
- identify sources of **information and data** in the system.

2. Information gathering and consolidation

(1-3 months)

Develop a well-rounded narrative about the current state of play, informed by a wide range of perspectives. Integrate insights and learning into accessible and engaging formats.

- Gather data and insights about the **current state of play** from a wide range of sources (this can include a curating insights or a making it real phase or any existing data and insights available in the system).
- Consolidate** the information gathered into an accessible output that can be shared with stakeholders.

3. Stocktake, reflection, future visioning and implementation planning

(2-3 months)

Create a shared understanding of the current challenges and opportunities and agree a way forward and a step-by-step process of how to bring the vision, goals and objectives to life.

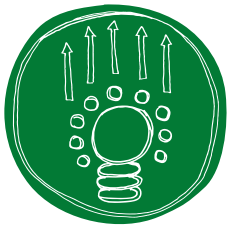
- Facilitate group spaces with a wide range of participants to:
- share and reflect** on the data and insights gathered
 - agree on the **vision, goals and objectives**
 - plan for implementation**, considering things to start, stop and/or continue doing to **bring the vision to life**.

4. Consolidation and publication

(1-2 months)

Develop an engaging and accessible final output. This can be a summary of insights, a strategy document and/or an implementation plan.

- Develop draft outputs.**
- Share draft outputs with stakeholders** to collate and integrate feedback into outputs.
- Plan any comms and publications**



Making it real

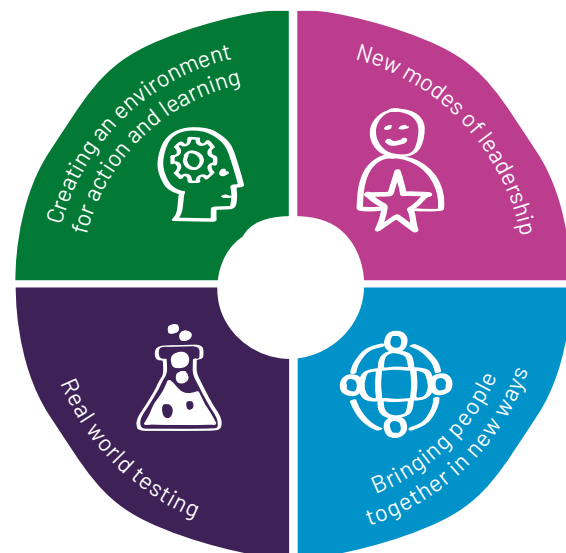
Experiment with new ideas and ways of working

Re!Institute originally developed the **100 day challenge** methodology. We worked with them to adapt it for use within the UK health system. The method can be seen as a practical application of the principles of Ronald Heifetz's adaptive leadership theory and is designed to help people address complex and wicked challenges collaboratively, to create systemic change.

The 100 day challenge works by unlocking the knowledge and skill of frontline staff and service users, to accelerate the pace and impact of change across complex systems. It complements traditional top-down approaches to change and transformation, by empowering and mobilising those closest to the action to be an integral part of innovation.

During the early days of the pandemic it became clear that while resources were stretched, there was still a need to support people who were closest to the challenges being faced, to develop and test new

ideas, capture their progress and learn along the way. With this in mind, we developed a lighter touch **sprint** and **prototyping method**, that applied many of the same principles of the 100 day challenge at a smaller scale.



Use this method to:

- Drive change from the bottom up with support from the top down to achieve sustainable impact, quickly
- Create a safe space for people to test new ideas/ experiment and learn from failure as well as success
- Provide insight into the feasibility and impact of longer term thinking
- Stimulate new ways of working and relationships, fuelling collective energy for change across a system.

Helpful frameworks and activities:

- Help people to understand and make a decision on whether rapid testing is the right approach in a given context
- Support people to identify opportunities together
- Help teams to plan their 100 day challenge or sprint
- Encourage people to think about the long game.

Roles that are important in the 100 day challenge

The 100 day challenge is designed to bring to life all of the conditions for change in one go. As such, there are a number of additional roles, in addition to those listed on page 9, that are important to consider when using this method. These roles can also be deployed in the other methods, depending on local needs and contexts.

- **Sponsors:** from the senior stakeholder group. They work with each of the testing teams as their primary contact point, unblocking challenges as and when they arise.
- **Diverse place-based teams (participants):** approximately three teams of 8-12 people with lived experience, and community members and practitioners who are closest to the challenge you want to explore. Teams are invited to develop and test new ideas over a defined period of time.
- **Data lead:** from within the system or place, whose role is to help the teams access and understand data that helps to track their progress and the impact of the ideas they are testing.
- **Designer:** either from the delivery team or from within the system or place. Their role is to help teams prototype their ideas visually and communicate in accessible and creative ways.
- **Coach:** usually someone from outside of the system whose role is to coach the teams and the leaders through the uncertainty of the challenge and help to design and facilitate milestone events.



An example roadmap for 100 day challenges and sprints

1. Design and set-up

(2-3 months)

Work with a cross-system leadership group to identify the challenge/ focus of the sprint. Build leadership commitment and orientation and a robust team support structure. Develop a learning agenda and agree the cohort focus. Identify challenge teams and design the launch event. Prepare a data pack to share at the launch to inform goal setting and ideas generation.

- Build a **co-design leadership group** with representatives from across the system.
- Identify sponsors** for each team.
- Explore the local context**, including challenges and opportunities to inform the focus of the work.
- Identify and reach out to others** who should be involved, depending on focus.
- Build and invite the **100 day challenge teams**, reaching out to managers to provide permission.
- Create **data packs** to help teams decide their goals at the launch.
- Recruit and train **team coaches** (if applicable).

2. 100 day challenge or sprint

(3-4 months)

A specified timeframe for testing. Typically 100 days (as described below) but shorter sprints can also be effective. Cross-system teams (usually two or three) develop and test ideas to address a shared challenge. Milestone events keep the teams focused, and coaches work with teams and sponsors from the leadership group to surface and unblock challenges as they arise. In PPR sprints, the testing period may be shorter and involve fewer teams.

100 day challenge milestone events

- Launch event:** team building/goal setting/work planning.
- Day 25 check in:** learning and reflection on progress, impact and learning.
- Day 50 mid-point review:** What is emerging? What impact are the ideas and new ways of working having?
- Day 75 check in:** learning and reflection and sustainability preparation.

In PPR sprints, milestone events were still important but there may have been fewer or they were held over a shorter time scale depending on the local context.

Throughout the challenge or sprint

- Weekly team meetings** to maintain pace and momentum, identify and unblock challenges and take stock of progress.
- Regular coaching calls** with team leaders.
- Local leadership group** meetings every 25 days.

3. Sustain and scale

(2-3 months)

Work with teams and the leadership group to consolidate learning and shape sustainability plans.

100 day challenge/PPR sprint milestone events

- Day 100/end of sprint sustainability event:** prep needed from testing teams to clearly articulate their findings, and prep from sponsorship for clear responses and commitments.
- Leadership group sustainability sessions:** ideally one session before the sustainability review to prepare the leaders and help them to consider next steps and one afterwards to plan more fully once they have heard from the teams.
- Sustainability action planning.**

Throughout the challenge or PPR sprint

- Regular coaching calls with sponsors and leaders to support them to **actively unblock barriers and plan for sustainability.**



A toolkit for creating space

Practical activities and frameworks
to support facilitation, adaptive
coaching and capacity building

Overview

This toolkit includes activities and frameworks that the PPR team came back to time and again to support the delivery of people powered change. It is split into three sections, each relating to different themes.

1. Nurture new ways of thinking

Transition in and out of spaces

bringing attention and intention to how people are arriving, settling into and leaving shared spaces.

Step out of the here and now

making sense of shared challenges and thinking about the future in new ways.

Build a shared understanding of co-production

and set shared ambitions around it.

2. Work collaboratively within systems

Equalise power dynamics

enabling the contribution of people in positions of formal authority and expertise and those with less formal power and expertise (eg, practitioners, people with lived experience and activists).

Work with others

supporting people to come together, work in new ways and build influence.

Build empathy

helping people understand the world from the perspectives of others.

3. Move to action and growth

Test and take action

rapidly experimenting with an idea by turning it into action.

Reflect and learn

applying adaptive coaching to help groups and individuals take stock of learning and integrate this into their next steps.

Plan for sustainability

channelling learning into long term plans and identifying levers to drive systems change.

1. Nurture new ways of thinking

Creating people powered change within a complex system requires time to connect and think with others. Yet back-to-back meetings, flooded inboxes and constant firefighting are a daily reality for many people's work days and this can get in the way.

These activities and frameworks help to:

Transition in and out of spaces

bringing attention and intention to how people are arriving, settling into and leaving shared spaces.

Step out of the here and now

making sense of shared challenges and thinking about the future in new ways.

Build a shared understanding of co-production

and set shared ambitions around it.



Transitioning into spaces

Purpose of these activities

To help create a space in which people are present, leave their 'baggage' at the door and get the most out of their time together.

Things to think about when using these activities

Consider what you can do to help people enter the space well. This might depend on the content of the session, the context of where you are working or the dynamics across the group. Asking questions, like those suggested below, helps the group to understand how their peers are joining the space and helps you as facilitator to quickly get a sense of the mood in the room and adapt accordingly if needed.

Example activities

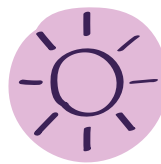
There are lots of prompt questions that might help. Here are some examples.

- **The weather forecast:** Which weather best describes how you're entering this space? Sunny (happy/excited)? Snowy (relaxed/peaceful)? Rainbow (hopeful)? Stormy (angry/frustrated)? Windy (anxious/stressed)? Foggy (confused/depressed)?
- **The cloakroom/car park:** What 'baggage' do you want to leave at the door today?/What do you want to 'park' outside?

These prompts can be followed up in lots of different ways, including asking people to share in the chat and giving people the chance to discuss their answers in pairs or threes.

The weather forecast

What weather best describes how you're entering this space?



Sunny

(happy, excited)



Snowy

(relaxed, peaceful)



Rainbow

(hopeful)



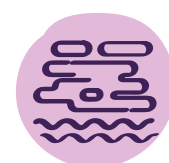
Stormy

(angry, frustrated)



Windy

(anxious, stressed)



Foggy

(confused, depressed)

Transitioning out of spaces

Purpose of these activities

To help to close sessions in a way that celebrates participants and their contributions, strengthens connections that have been made and provides space for feedback and reflections.

Things to think about when using these activities

Consider how you might want to close a session. What feels important to capture, resolve or park before the group leaves? The approach you take may depend on what you covered and what played out in the group during the session.

Example activities

- **Using the heart, head, bag, bin framework to share feedback:** Ask participants to share their thoughts on anything they've learned, loved, will be taking away or want to be leaving behind. This can be done on a flipchart, a digital collaborative platform (like Miro, Jamboard or Google Slides) or via the meeting chat function.
- **Using appreciation bunting to celebrate each other:** Create a bunting triangle for each participant, this can be printed or virtual using a digital collaborative platform (like Miro, Jamboard or Google Slides). In a face-to-face session, the bunting can be threaded together using ribbon and used to decorate the space. Explain that you are going to play a game like musical chairs, but no one will be eliminated. When the music starts, everyone will move around the bunting clockwise. When the music stops, ask them to write one thing they've admired about the person whose piece of bunting is in front of them. Repeat until completed. Afterwards, each person can take home their appreciation triangle.

Head, heart, bin, bag



Head

Something you learned



Bin

Something you want to leave behind



Heart

Something you loved



Bag

Something you want to take away

Connecting with a theme or a topic

Purpose of these activities

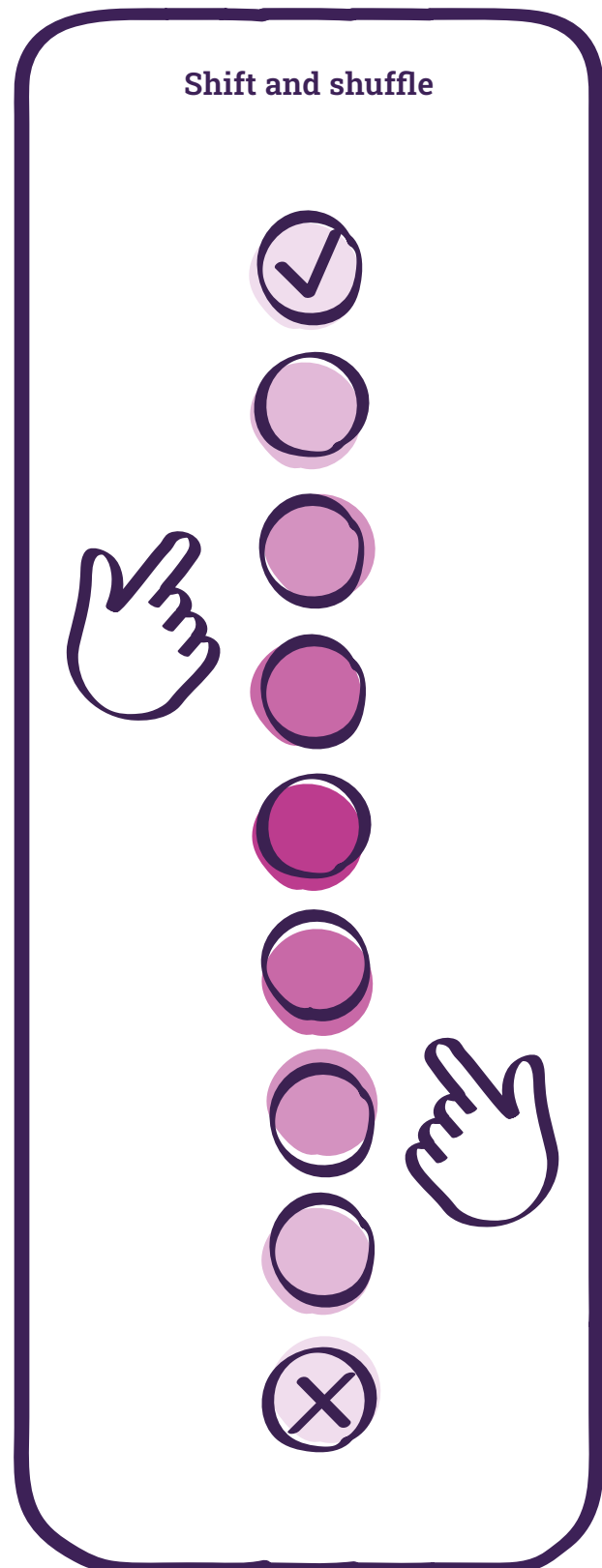
To help people warm up their thinking about, and connect with, a theme or a topic.

Things to think about when using these activities

Consider the theme that you'd like to explore with the group and how you might engage people with it in new ways that feel less 'high stakes' than asking people to share their thoughts in plenary.

Example activities

- Shift and shuffle:** Make a series of statements and invite participants to express how much they agree with each statement by standing close if they agree, far away if they strongly disagree, and in the middle if they're neutral. This can be done virtually on a video-conferencing platform (by getting closer or further away from the camera) or face-to-face by moving around a room. Statements can be a mixed level of 'seriousness'. For example:
 - Everyone in our city has access to good food.
 - People with learning disabilities in my neighbourhood are living their best lives.
 - I like marmite.
- Sharing reflections:** Going around the room or as a discussion in pairs or threes, ask participants what does [insert topic] mean to you? For example:
 - What does good food mean to you?
 - What does a meaningful life mean to you?



Thinking about the future

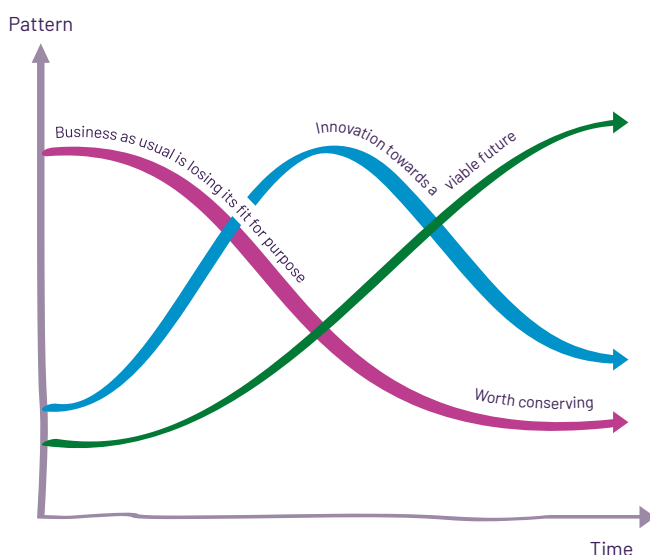
Purpose of these frameworks and activities

To support participants to think ahead and consider what they want to invest in and let go of to reach a desirable future.

Things to think about when using these frameworks and activities

Consider what you are trying to achieve and therefore, which different frameworks and activities might best engage your group and help them to think about and plan for the future. This might include exploring questions like: What is the future we are working towards? Where are we seeing ways of working or innovations that are helping to move us towards that future? What's holding us back or creating a barrier?

The three horizons model



Example frameworks and activities

- **The three horizons model** (see diagram below): This model provides a structure to think about the transitions required for transformational change. **Horizon one (in pink)** is the current system, which is losing its relevance as contexts starts to shift. **Horizon two (in blue)** shows where innovation has already started, which will at some point become more relevant to the current context than the 'business as usual' of horizon one. **Horizon three (in green)** is where radical innovations are taking place, these may not seem relevant today, but are the long term successor to business as usual. Through looking into the three horizons, people can identify the future that they would like to see and seek hope from the change that has already started.
- **The futures cone:** This helps to illustrate the variety of possible futures.
- **Picture cards:** These are helpful to think creatively about a new vision for the future. You can download free images online or buy printed picture facilitation cards. Invite participants to choose the picture that best represents their vision or hope for the future and then share this, either in small breakouts, one-to-ones or as a whole group.
- **Megatrends:** This is helpful to consider global trends, how they might affect our future and how we can prepare and respond.

Defining the challenge and approach to tackling it

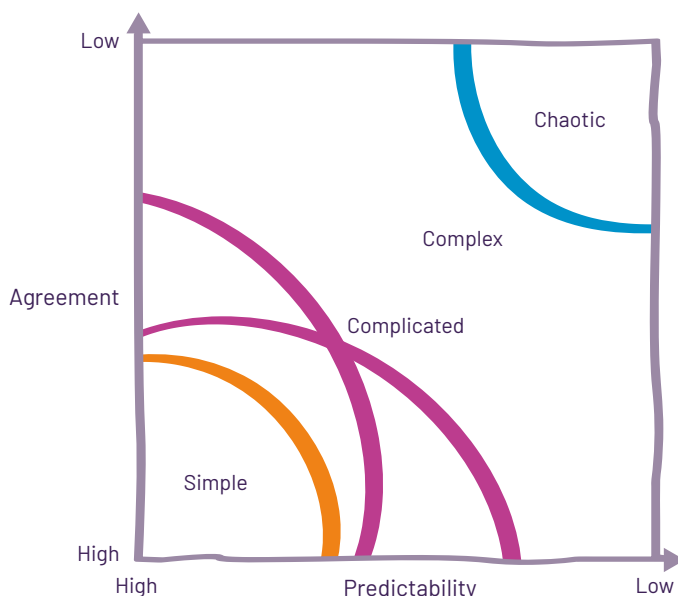
Purpose of these frameworks

To help participants to better understand the nature of, and consider what approach best suits, the problem or challenge that they are trying to address.

Things to think about when using these frameworks

There is often disagreement within groups about the best way to approach challenges. Some people prefer to quickly come up with and implement solutions without testing these first. In the context of a complex or chaotic problem, this approach rarely offers the best chance of long term, sustainable impact. These frameworks can help people understand why this might be.

The Stacey matrix



Example framework

The Stacey matrix: This framework provides a way of understanding what sort of problem or challenge you are looking to address and what approaches might therefore be best suited to apply. Each problem we tackle can be:

- **Simple:** can be solved reliably with practices that are easy to duplicate, eg, following a recipe
- **Complicated:** experts need to devise a solution to yield desired results predictably, eg, building a rocket
- **Complex:** several valid ways to proceed but outcomes are not predictable in detail, eg, ending homelessness or food insecurity
- **Chaotic:** there is no obvious cause and effect relationship and the context is too turbulent to identify a clear path forward, eg, a pandemic or natural disaster.

Complex or chaotic problems often present as 'adaptive challenges', in that they are:

- **Systemic:** they don't belong to one person/ group
- **Stubborn and persistent:** a technical solution might quiet them down, but they keep coming back
- **Beyond business as usual:** we need to generate learning to better understand these problems.

When tackling these sorts of problems, we need to focus on creating environments for experimentation and learning, with people, for people, eg, by using the 100 day challenge methodology.

Reflecting and setting ambitions around co-production

Purpose of this framework

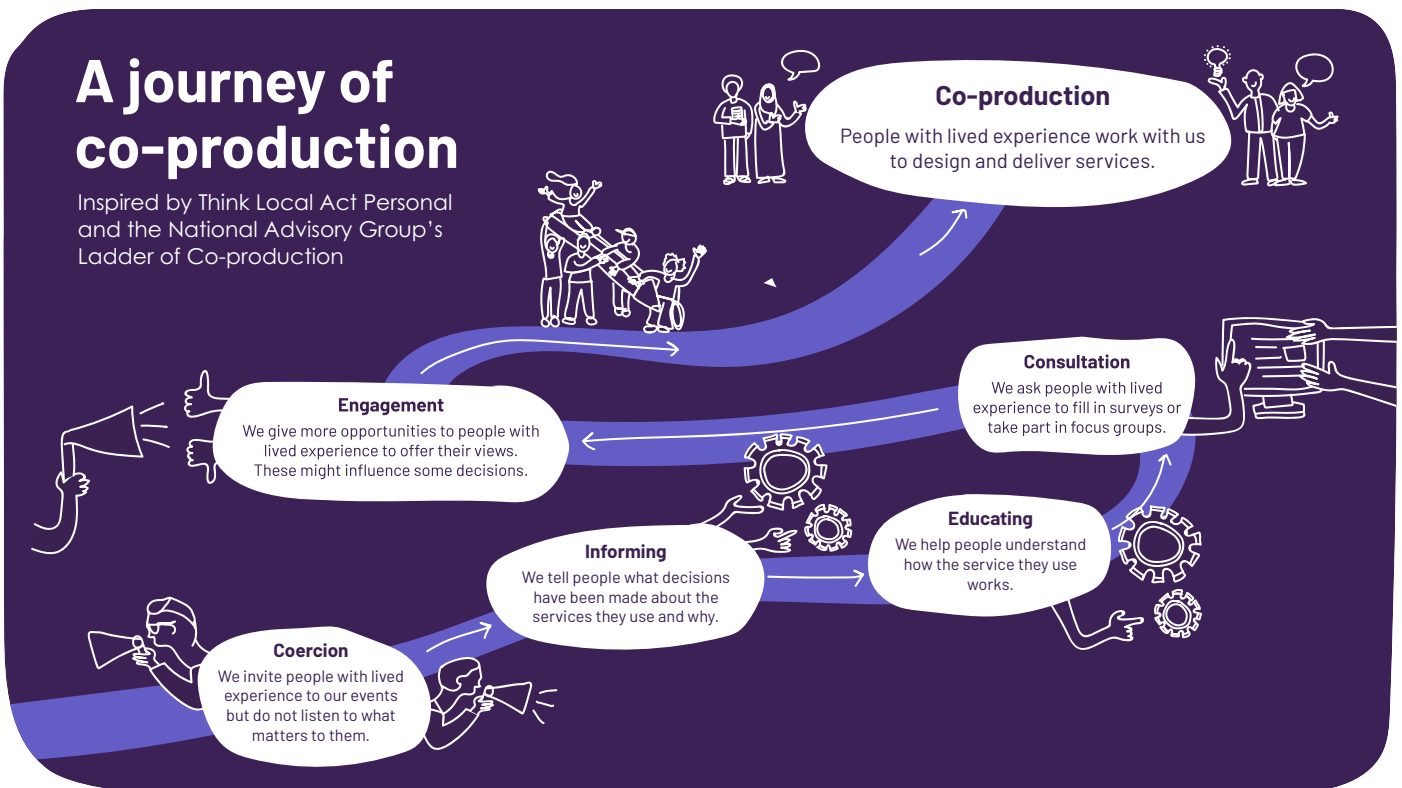
To help participants understand that nurturing participatory approaches is an ongoing journey. It also allows participants to reflect on how they are currently working with people with lived experience, and to consider what is working well and how this might be strengthened and developed through your work together.

Things to think about when using this framework

Consider if there are any goals that participants might be prompted to set themselves in relation to co-production and participation. You could also use this framework as a way of highlighting whose voices might be missing from the programme and consider how they might be brought in.

Example framework

PPR's journey of co-production diagram (below) and [Think Local Act Personal](#) and the National Advisory Group's Ladder of Co-production.



2. Work collaboratively within systems

Creating people powered change within complex systems requires working with others to better understand and tackle challenges. Yet the way organisations and roles are traditionally designed can make it difficult to collaborate across or within organisations, look at issues collectively and understand the interdependencies between different parts of a system.

These activities and frameworks help to:

Equalise power dynamics

enabling the contribution of people in positions of formal authority and expertise and those with less formal power and expertise (eg, practitioners, people with lived experience and activists)

Work with others

supporting people to come together, work in new ways and build influence

Build empathy

helping people understand the world from the perspectives of others.



Ice breakers to level the playing field

Purpose of these activities

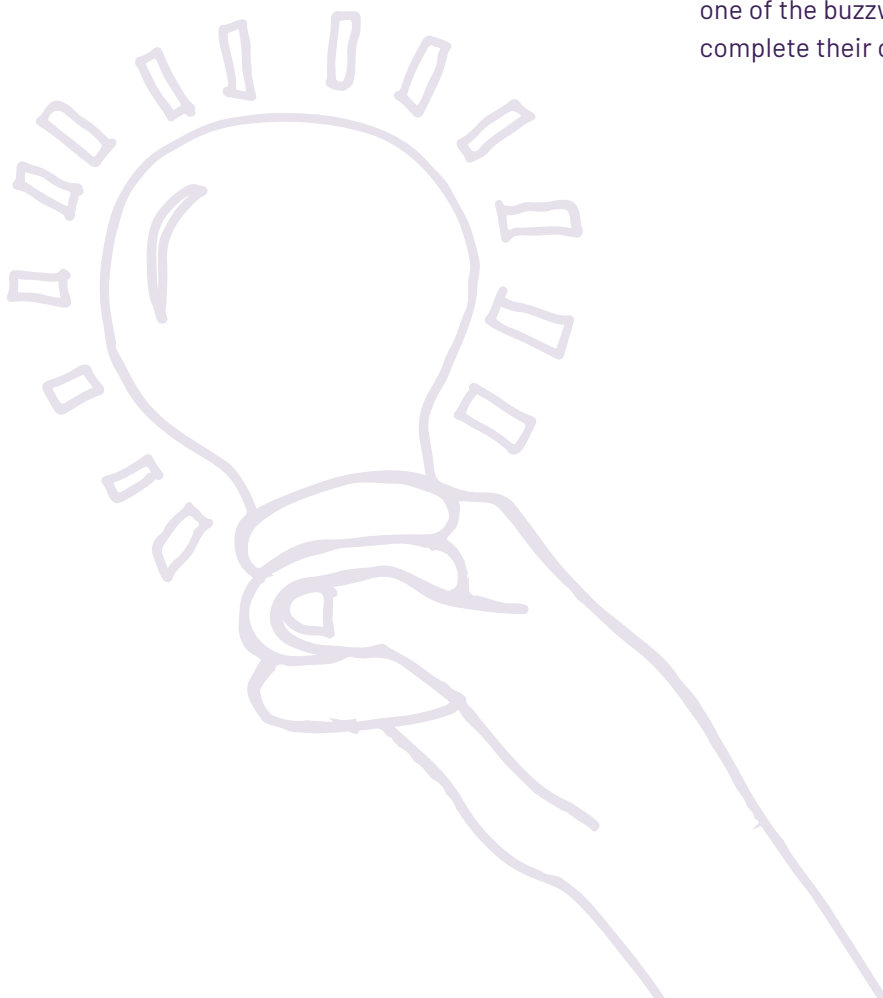
To call out and disrupt any hierarchy in the room in a playful way, help everyone get to know each other, connect as 'humans' and be more mindful about the language that is being used.

Things to think about when using these activities

Consider how hierarchy and power dynamics might show up in a space and get in the way of collaboration. This might depend on the participants of a group, how well they already know each other or the context of where the work is taking place. Choose an icebreaker that will help people step out of their 'job role' and connect with each other on a human level.

Example activities

- **Building connections through a place-based icebreaker:** Ask everyone to imagine the floor of the room is a map of that place (city, region etc). Point to where North is so everyone can orient themselves. Ask people to walk to the spot on the map where they live or work, thinking about one thing that their place is great at. Go around the room and ask people to introduce themselves and share what they love about their neighbourhood.
- **Encouraging accessible language through Buzzword Bingo:** Make bingo cards using 'buzzwords' that are regularly used. Leave the bottom row blank. 'Buzzwords' are words or acronyms that are not used in most people's day-to-day life and language we have picked up on the job. Examples include: permissioning, CCG, VCSE, asset based etc. Hand out bingo cards and ask participants to add new entries to the bottom row that they consider to be a buzzword. Explain to everyone that throughout the session, they need to mark on the bingo card when they hear one of the buzzwords. The first participant to complete their card will win a prize.



Working effectively as a group

Purpose of these activities

To work well as a group, tap into each other's expertise and make shared decisions effectively.

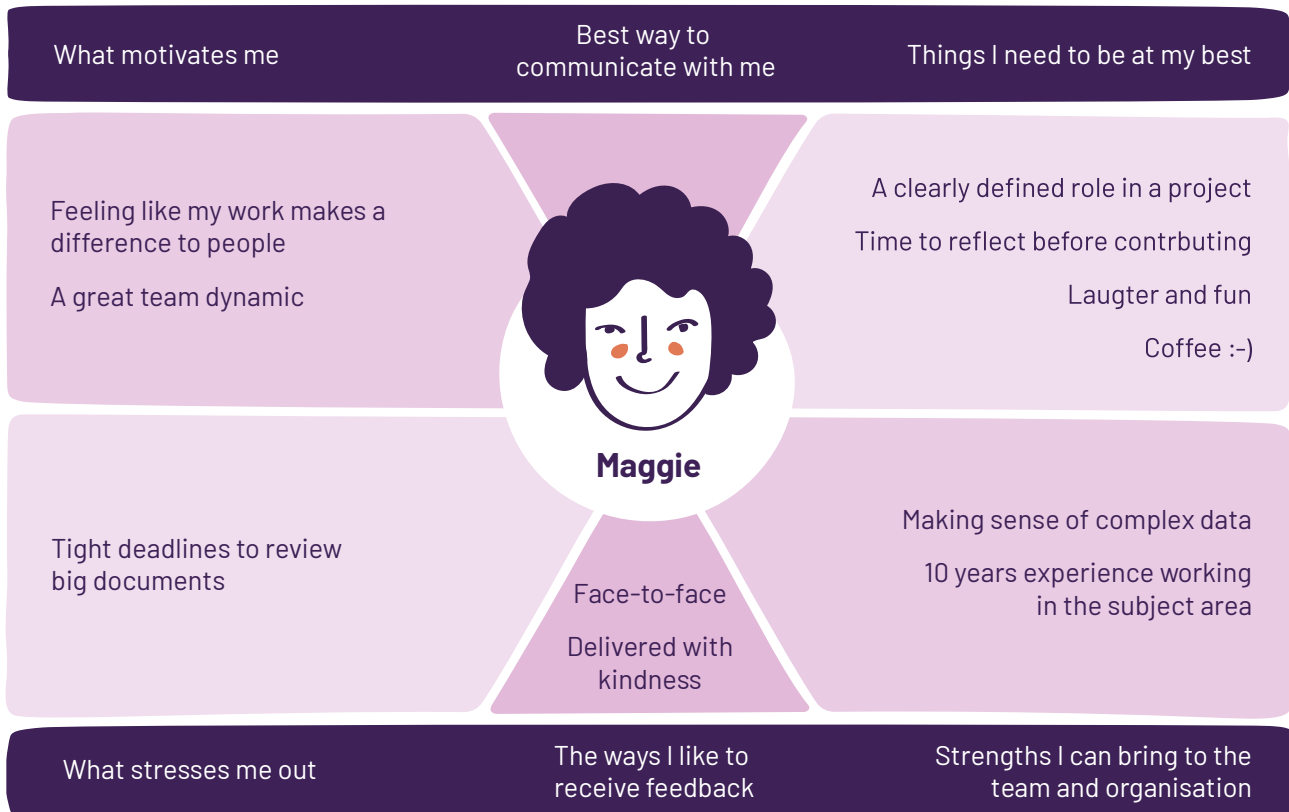
Things to think about when using these activities

Consider the diverse individual perspectives and preferences that may exist in a new group. When facilitated effectively, these differences have the potential to add richness to discussion and solutions. If not managed well they can lead to division and become points of contention. Think about how you will help the group start off well by considering the diversity in the room and agreeing how they will work together.

Example activities

- Setting intentions around ways of working:**
 Protecting time for groups to think about and set intentions around **how** they want to work together, as well as **what** they are working on, can be really important for them to work well together. It can be helpful to start with each team member filling out their own **ways of working preferences template** and sharing with the team. The team can then discuss a series of questions as a group which can help identify values and behaviours they want to nurture. These can be revisited throughout the time the group is working together.
- Making decisions by 'consent' or 'consensus':**
 This introduces the idea that everyone has a 'range of tolerance' and that decisions can be made through finding the overlap of ranges of tolerances within a group (as opposed to all having to agree for a decision to be made). This gives groups much more to work with when it's time to make decisions.

Ways of working preferences template



Influencing others

Purpose of these activities and frameworks

To help identify people you might need to build relationships with and influence so that the work you are doing can start gaining traction and momentum.

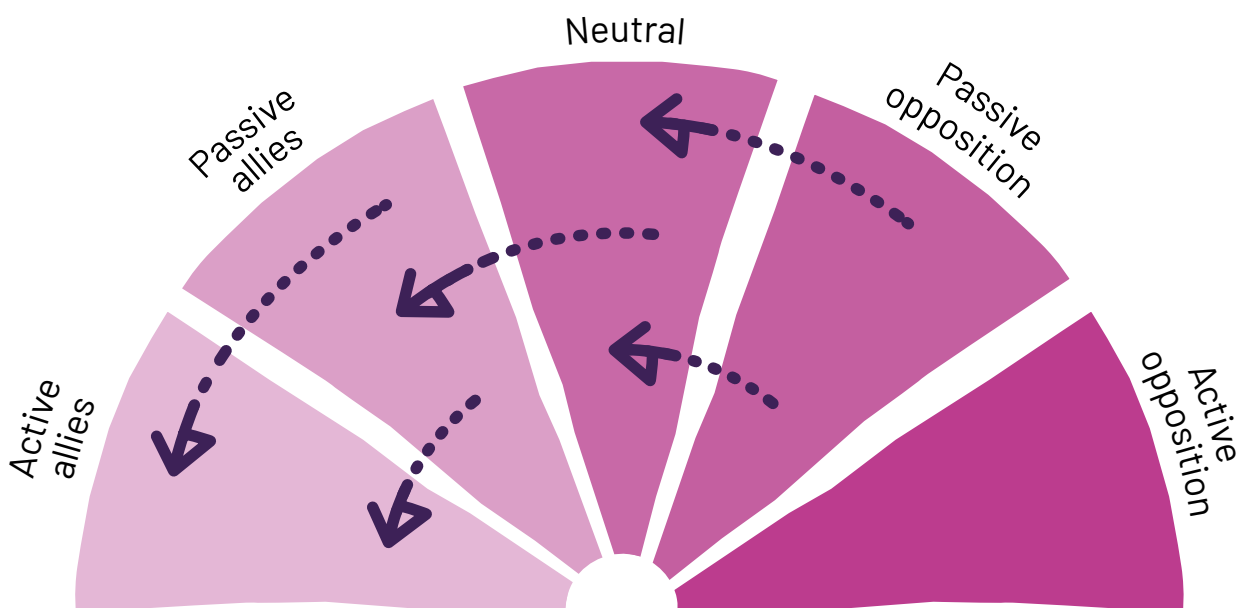
Things to think about when using these activities and frameworks

There are lots of ways to map and think about stakeholders, and consider where your group (or you) are starting from and the challenge that you want to explore. You might want to better understand your local context by mapping assets and networks, or identifying who within these networks you might leverage as an ally to your cause or movement.

Example activities and frameworks

- **Spectrum of allies:** This helps participants consider where stakeholders fall in the spectrum of allies and what action you can take to move them towards 'active allyship'. First, locate people, teams and organisations around you on the spectrum. Then, consider where time and energy is currently mostly spent. Often our attention is taken up by the active opposition and those who have the loudest voices and are unlikely to shift their points of view. Alternatively, finding ways to shift those in the middle towards active allyship can be a far more effective way of increasing your support.
- **How to start a movement:** This TED video is a simple yet effective way to demonstrate the value of starting a movement. Play the video and ask participants to draw learning from the video into their own context.

Spectrum of allies



Seeing through a different lens

Purpose of these activities

To build empathy and understanding across a system and encourage people to view things from a range of different perspectives. This is an essential part of working with others to make progress on complex challenges. Building understanding from different points of views and challenging assumptions and habitual patterns of thinking helps to surface challenges and identify opportunities for change.

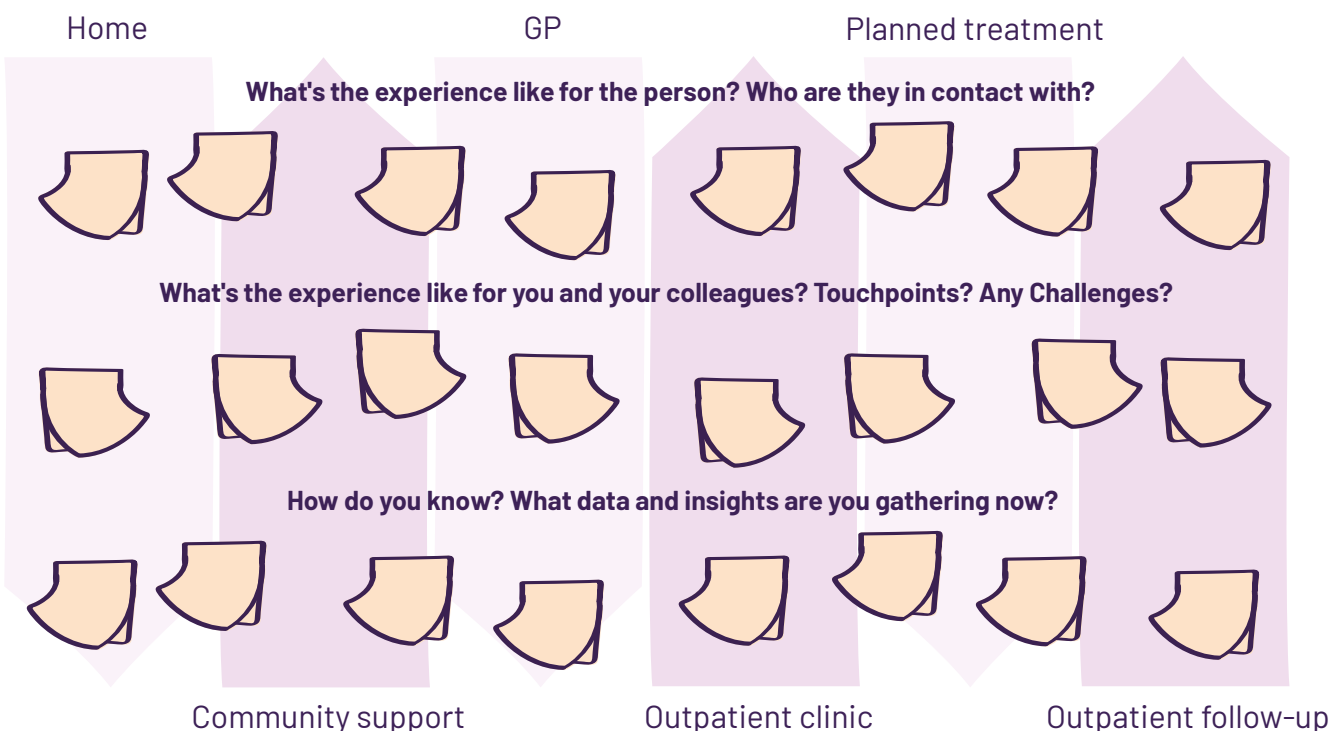
Things to think about when using these activities

Consider the range of different voices and perspectives involved in your work – be aware of your own assumptions and unconscious bias when doing this. Identify an activity to support individuals to understand things from different viewpoints within the team or wider work.

Example activities

- **Journey map:** This is a way of using a ‘persona’ to build up a picture of people’s experiences within a system, including what was happening for them, their interactions with services and their feelings at different points. It also helps people from different parts of a system identify where they are part of challenges, e.g. duplicating or overlapping activities, such as multiple referral forms and see where there are opportunities for things to change for the better. Participants can even create their own ‘personas’ as a first part of the activity. More on journey mapping and personas can be found in [Nesta’s DIY Toolkit](#).
- **Edward de Bono’s six thinking hats:** This can help develop awareness of different modes of thinking and approach challenges in new ways and with different perspectives.

Journey map



3. Move to action and growth

Creating people powered change within complex systems requires a good balance between thinking and action. Yet, too often, this balance is tipped, with people either being in 'firefighting mode', constantly taking action and responding, or feeling stuck analysing and thinking.

These activities and frameworks help to:

Test and take action

rapidly experimenting with an idea by turning it into action

Reflect and learn

applying adaptive coaching to help groups and individuals take stock of learning and integrate this into their next steps

Plan for sustainability

channelling learning into long term plans and identifying levers to drive systems change.



Building the case for prototyping

Purpose of these frameworks

To explore and build a shared understanding of the value of rapid testing and iteration when developing a new solution and demonstrate the value of failing early to learn quickly.

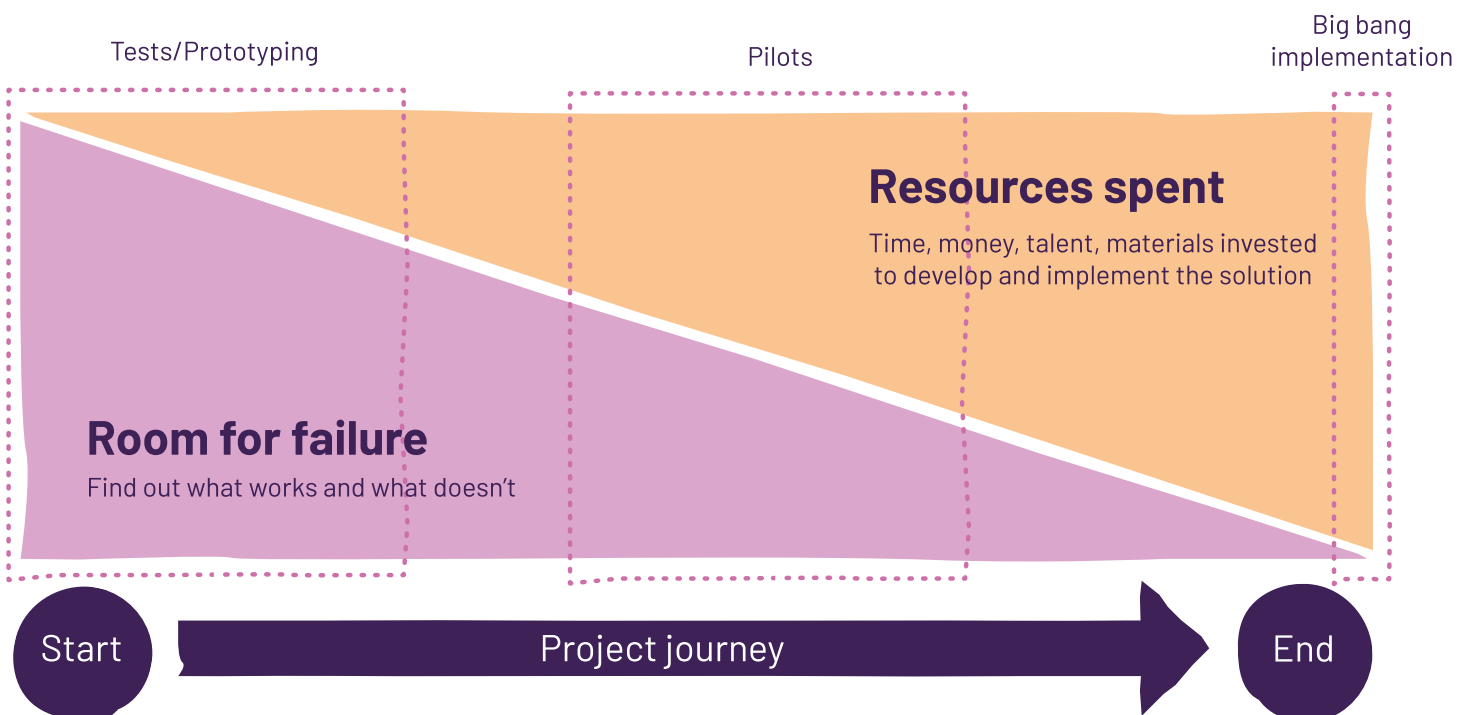
Things to think about when using these frameworks

Ideas that are translated directly from pilots into plans and strategies may feel like a safe bet, but in reality this can often lead to a lot of resources being used at an early stage and leave very little room for failure. Rapid testing, on the other hand, aims to gather feedback and generate learning at an early stage without using vast amounts of time and resources. Here there is room to learn from failure as well as what works.

Example frameworks

- **Prototyping vs big bang implementation:** We have adapted this diagram from [Nesta's Playbook for innovation learning](#), to include pilots as a mid-point between tests and big bang implementation. It illustrates the different levels of investment and room for failure in each approach and positions prototyping as a way of managing risk by understanding earlier, and at a lower cost, what works and what doesn't.
- **Continuum of experimentation:** This framework (also from [Nesta's Playbook for innovation learning](#)), highlights three different approaches to experimentation (explore, trial and error, validate) and outlines their respective purposes and methods.
- **Tests vs pilots:** [Bromford Lab](#) have developed a useful diagram that helps to illustrate the different levels of resource and investment needed for tests vs pilots. This could be used to support the case for rapid testing processes over longer/bigger scale pilots.

The benefits of rapid testing and prototyping



Experiencing prototyping

Purpose of these activities

To enable participants to experience the process of ideation (coming up with new ideas) and iteration (evolving and adapting ideas) in a fun and light way. This can release people's creativity and strengthen their creative muscles while helping them prepare for a prototyping sprint.

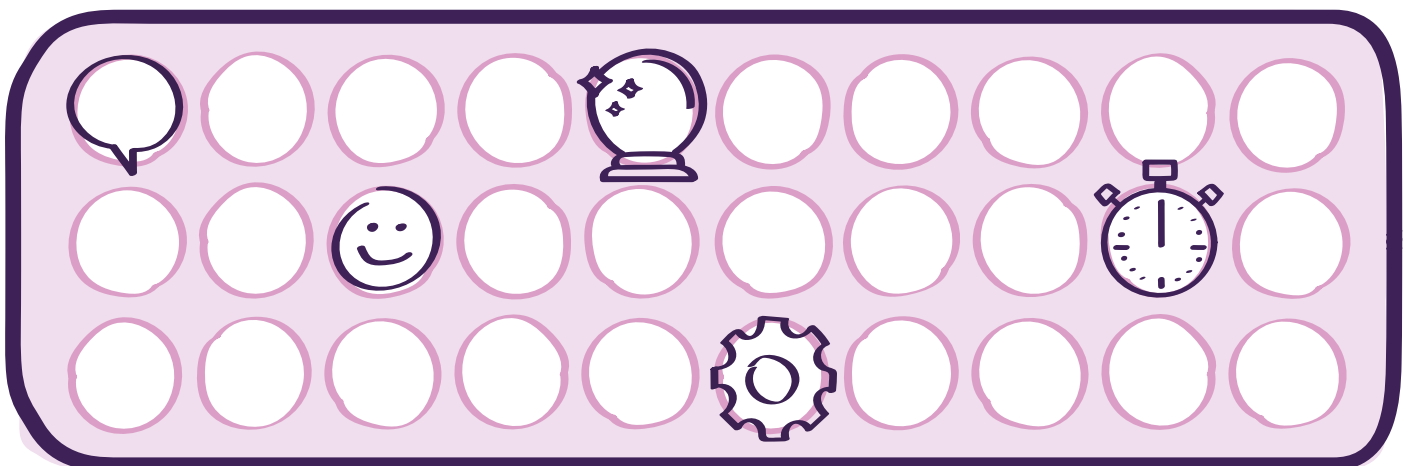
Things to think about when using these activities

It can feel daunting to introduce a very lighthearted and creative exercise to some groups (eg, senior leaders), but be brave. Activities like these can often completely shift the tone of a meeting and the mindsets of participants.

Example activities

- 30 circles challenge:** Ask people to draw 30 circles on a piece of paper then, in three minutes, turn as many of the blank circles as possible into recognisable objects, giving one minute reminders along the way. Ask the group how many people filled in 5, 10, 15, 20 or more circles? Typically most people don't finish. Then, ask people to share some of their ideas and the process they went through, reflecting on how having a time limit helped with the fluency of ideas, the value of the diversity of ideas in the group and whether any rules were explicit vs assumed (eg, connecting circles together or drawing outside of circles).
- Spoons prototyping exercise:** Ask people to draw four boxes on a piece of paper. In the top left box, give 30 seconds to draw their spoon. Then give them two minutes to come up with three ideas of how they'd improve the spoon. These can be as weird and wacky as they like, but the spoon must be improved and functional. For example, they could split the spoon into three spoons, to eat three curries at the same time. Or give the spoon the ability to play music to make it more fun for children. In a pair, give five minutes to discuss their ideas and offer feedback on which ones work, and which weren't as successful and why. In the main room give them 90 seconds to draw a new spoon using what they've heard. Invite reflections and debrief on the process they went through and how ideas changed throughout the process. In the discussion, highlight the parallels with prototyping/rapid testing journey and this exercise. Include not overthinking, letting go of initial ideas and using feedback to evolve ideas.

30 circles challenge



Coming up with ideas to test

Purpose of these activities

To help a group (or individual) rapidly generate, sort, prioritise and choose ideas to develop and test.

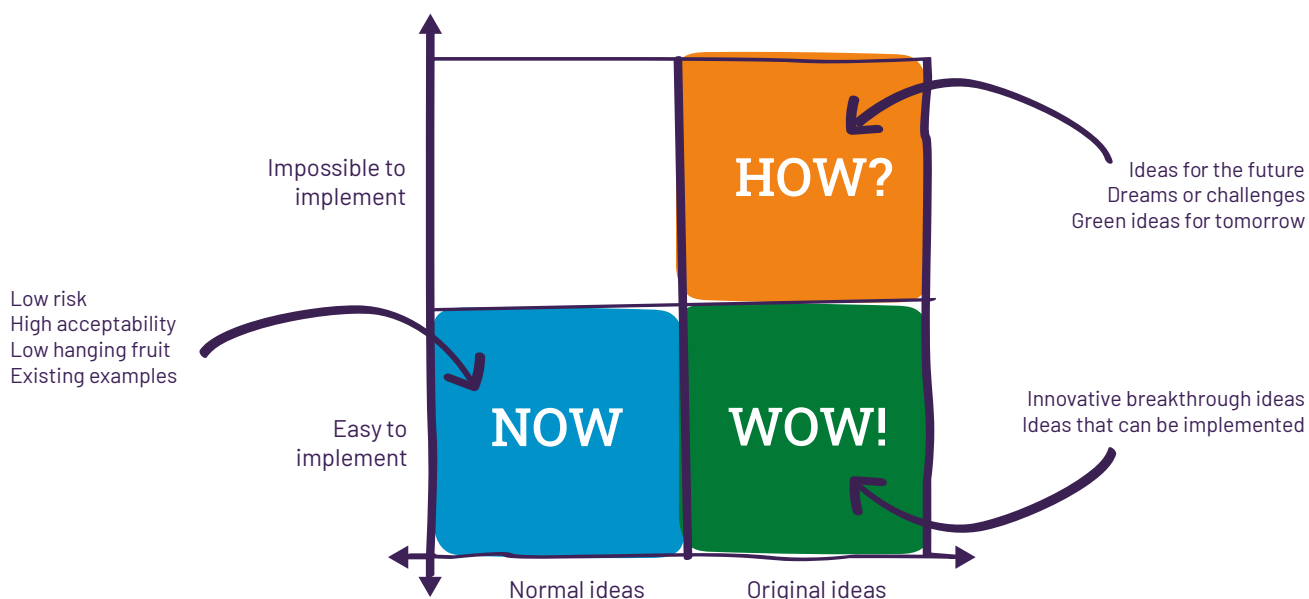
Things to think about when using these activities

Using creative and fun exercises to generate ideas can help people to feel able to voice their opinions and ideas safely and without judgement. Encourage participants to come up with big, bold ideas (don't be tempted to skip this step), then work with the group to build consensus around promising ideas.

Example activities

- Rapid idea generation:** Ask participants to come up with ideas individually that will address the challenges identified, noting one idea per post-it note. If the group is having trouble, you can use these prompt questions:
 - If you only had £1 how would you achieve this?
 - If you had unlimited resources, what would you do first?
 - If there were no rules how would you solve this?
 - What would happen if service users/community members were in charge?
 - What if you took something away from the current service offer?
 - What if you combined or integrated offers?
- A-Z of ideas:** A playful exercise to get any burning ideas out there and encourage people to think outside of the box. The exercise runs like a relay race, with each person adding an idea next to a letter of the alphabet, eg, a is for art classes, f is for football team, etc. The first team to fill in all the gaps is the winner and will get a prize.
- Building consensus:** After sorting through ideas and combining any duplicates, build consensus around promising ideas by asking participants to vote on the ones they think have the most potential. Then place ideas on an impact vs feasibility matrix, such as the How-Now-Wow matrix from the Hyper Island Toolbox to help prioritise them further.

How-Now-Wow matrix



Planning ahead

Purpose of these activities

To help participants visualise and plan the journey ahead, identify actions, milestones and potential obstacles, as well as what support is needed.

Things to think about when using these activities

A structured approach to work planning helps to make sure that the group is clear on who is doing what and the milestones that they are working towards over a defined time period. A shared written document helps with accountability and review. Once you have completed the planning activity, make sure to revisit people's reflections as a group and agree on priority actions moving forward.

Example activities

- **30 day work planning:** You can use a simple table as a work planning template, with rows for each idea and a column for each week, eg, to day 30. First, decide on a goal the team wants to reach in the next 30 days and add this it onto the 'Day 30' column. Capture each action step that needs to be taken to achieve that goal. Make sure each action is owned by a team member, has a due date and that each team member has at least one action to carry out in the first week.
- **Get creative:** Prepare for the journey ahead using a virtual, printed or drawn template, which can be as simple or creative as you like! Invite people to add post-its with their reflections under each of the following questions:
 - What is your overarching goal?
 - What is going to help you on your way?
 - What can your colleagues or organisation do to help?
 - What barriers might you need to overcome?

30 day work planning

Work planning				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Day 30
Idea 1				
Idea 2				
Idea 3				

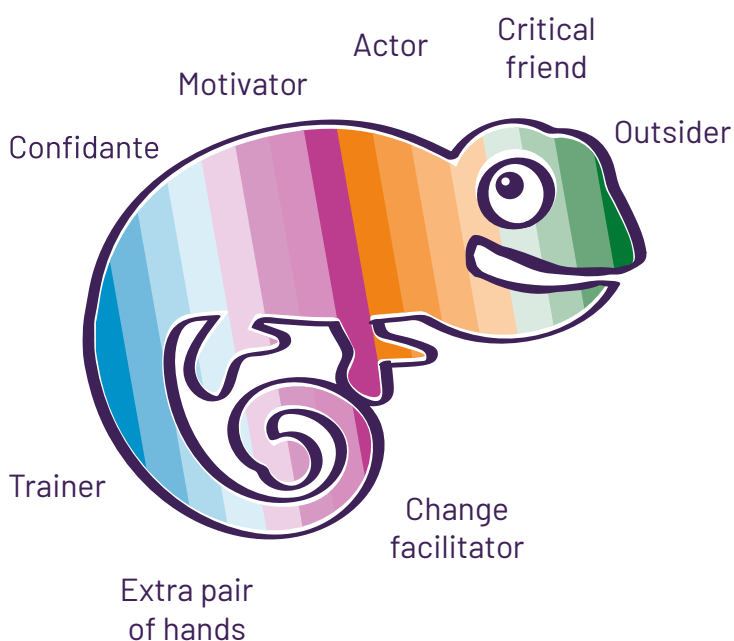
Adaptive approaches to coaching

Purpose of these frameworks and activities

A coach and facilitator creates space for people to work better together, helping individuals and teams to bring their ideas to life and make change happen. Adaptive coaching describes an approach that is responsive to what's happening on the ground, bringing empathy and a natural curiosity, particularly to complex or chaotic challenges. Anyone can take this approach (peers/line managers/leaders) to support people they are working with to think differently and start to work in new ways.

Things to think about when using these frameworks and activities

We often assume people will innately know how to work together when, in fact, group dynamics, relationships, and unhelpful thinking patterns etc. can be real barriers to collaboration and experimentation. While working in new ways can be highly energising for some, for many it can bring up feelings of anxiety and worry.



The chameleon coach

- **The chameleon coach:** We developed this framework and found it helpful to support people taking on people powered work. It can also be used as a reflective tool to think about which roles people naturally find themselves in and which they might need to be more intentional about. This framework includes eight different modes or roles that you might step into and dial up or down as a coach supporting people through systemic change.
- **Outsider:** stretches thinking and ambition, connecting the person to learning and people outside the local system.
- **Critical friend:** asks uncomfortable questions and challenges assumptions, helping to shift the mindset and focus efforts better.
- **Actor:** when a certain perspective is missing, the coach can act a part to help understand another perspective.
- **Motivator:** builds positive morale by connecting to people's purpose, sense checking how they are feeling, giving positive feedback and celebrating achievements.
- **Confidante:** when people are under a lot of pressure, they may sometimes disengage due to a lack of understanding or confidence. In these situations the coach can connect, listen to concerns and provide clarity to keep them engaged.
- **Trainer:** helps people grow as practitioners by shifting their thinking, adopting new skills and developing capabilities, eg, support to facilitate team meetings.
- **Extra pair of hands:** sometimes people's capacity is a challenge. You might need to step in to support people with practical actions, eg, sending out follow-up notes.
- **Change facilitator:** Supports creative thinking and clarity in thinking to move to practical action.
- **Others:** May include connector, convener, facilitator, dot-joiner or consolidator!

Additional frameworks

- **Active listening:** This turns a regular conversation into a coaching chat. It requires the listener to absorb, understand, respond, and retain what is being said. These are some key active listening skills from the [Center for Creative Leadership](#).
- **'Dance Toward Insight':** This coaching approach can be useful for drawing out people's thoughts and feelings on a particular area, using different stages to gain insight. For more details refer to ['further reading and references'](#).
- **The GROW model:** This coaching framework is used in one-to-ones and group conversations to set goals, problem solve and plan next steps.



Reflecting and sharing feedback

Purpose of these activities

To reflect on progress and learning to date, help plan next steps and ask each other for help and feedback.

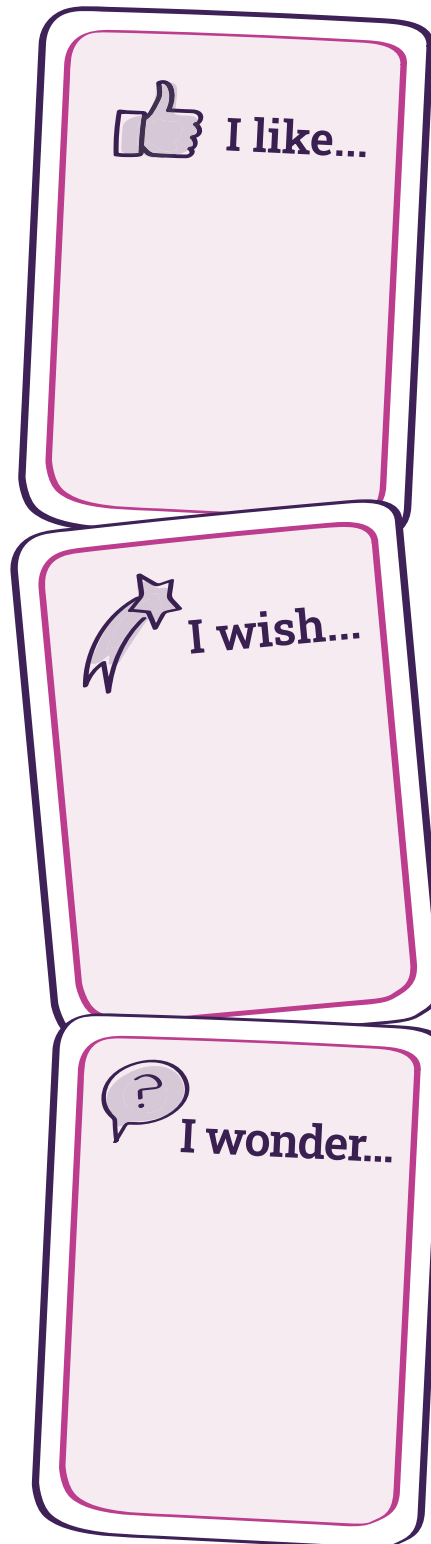
Things to think about when using these activities

There are lots of different prompts that can be used for reflection. The ones that you choose might depend on the focus of the group you are working with and the challenge that you are working on together. With feedback activities it is important to keep your prompts clear and simple.

Example activities

- **I like, I wish, I wonder:** This helps participants share feedback with each other, prompting them to think about something they like, something they wish was different and a suggestion that could push the idea further.
- **Stop, start, continue and evolve:** This helps participants triage ideas or projects, considering which they would like to stop, start, continue or evolve.
- **What, so what, now what:** This helps participants reflect on an idea or initiative, considering what they've learned and planning next steps.

I like, I wish, I wonder



Considering the shifts needed to change a system

Purpose of these frameworks

To help diverse groups and leaders to consider the different levels at which change or intervention is needed in order to go beyond individual or organisational change and achieve wider systemic change.

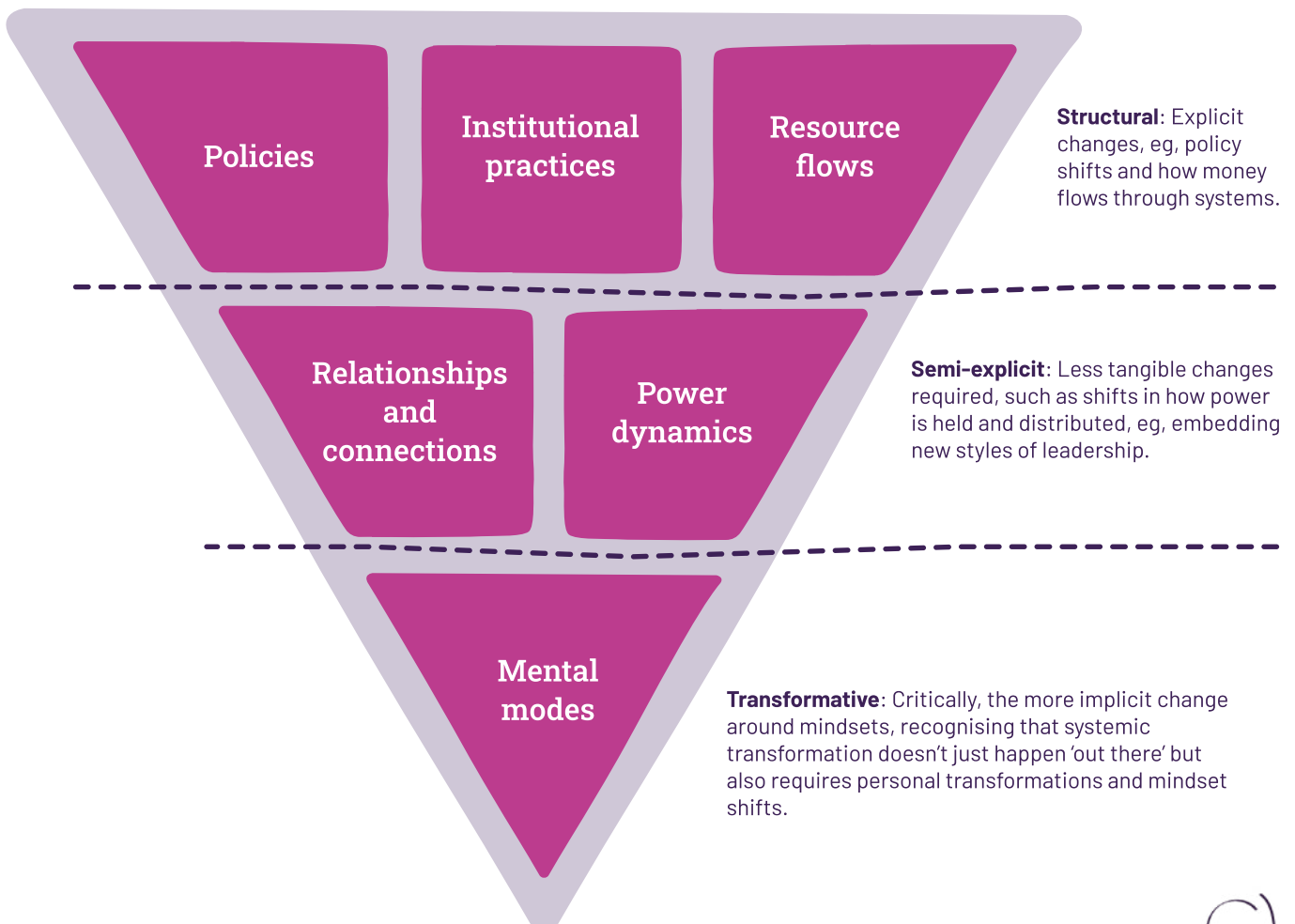
Things to think about when using these activities

Think about who you have around the table and what 'levers' they are able to pull to help make the shifts needed to scale and embed change. Are there any gaps in representation? If so, how might you use these tools to highlight this and engage the group in recruiting more members to bridge these gaps?

Example framework

The water of systems change: This framework helps to support and structure thinking about the shifts required to achieve system change. It looks at explicit (structural), semi-explicit (relational) and implicit (transformative) shifts.

The water of systems change



Different ways to think about impact

Purpose of these frameworks

To reflect on the different types of impact at all/ different levels of the system and what it would take to sustain and scale the work.

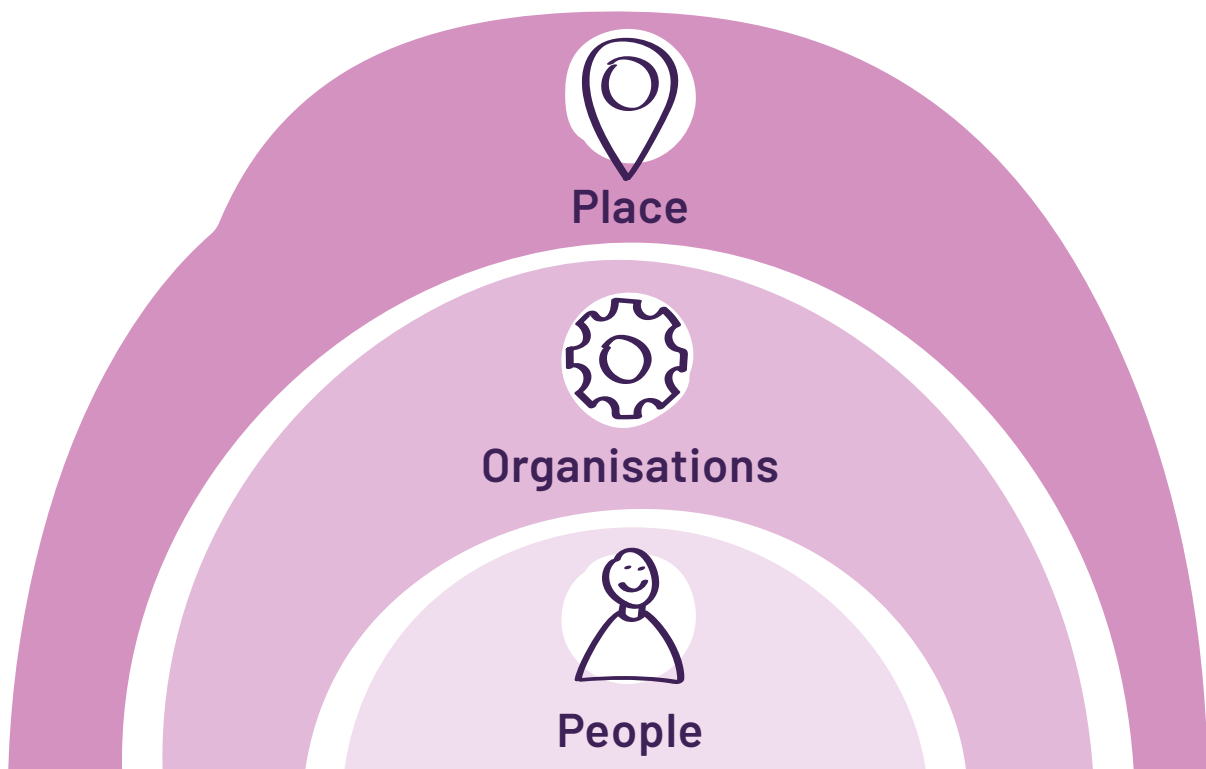
Things to think about when using these activities

There are lots of ways to plan and reflect on impact. Helping groups and individuals to consider the impact that they want to make at different levels, will also help them to think about different ways of measuring progress and success.

Example frameworks

- **Ripples of impact:** This helps participants think about the impact on individuals, organisations and place.
- **The iceberg analogy:** This helps participants reflect on and appreciate the value of both explicit shifts (eg, new tools or processes) as well as implicit shifts (eg, building trust, relationships, communication).

Ripples of impact



Reflecting on the journey travelled

Purpose of this framework

To reflect on what has been learned over the course of taking part in a programme or project, and to consider how that learning might be applied in the future.

Things to think about when using this framework

An extended metaphor can be helpful to frame the activity, and unlock a deeper level of reflection. Using creativity in this way can help reinforce that a participant's personal/professional journey finishes long after the end of the programme.

Example framework

- **Journey maps:** These enable participants to reflect on the whole life cycle of the programme and surface learning. Choosing a metaphor such as a car journey or a voyage on a ship can help bring this to life for the group. This can be done virtually using digital illustrations, or in a room by drawing out the different journey points on a flip chart eg, a petrol station, bumps in the road, road works. Learning can be captured individually on post-it notes and as part of discussion.

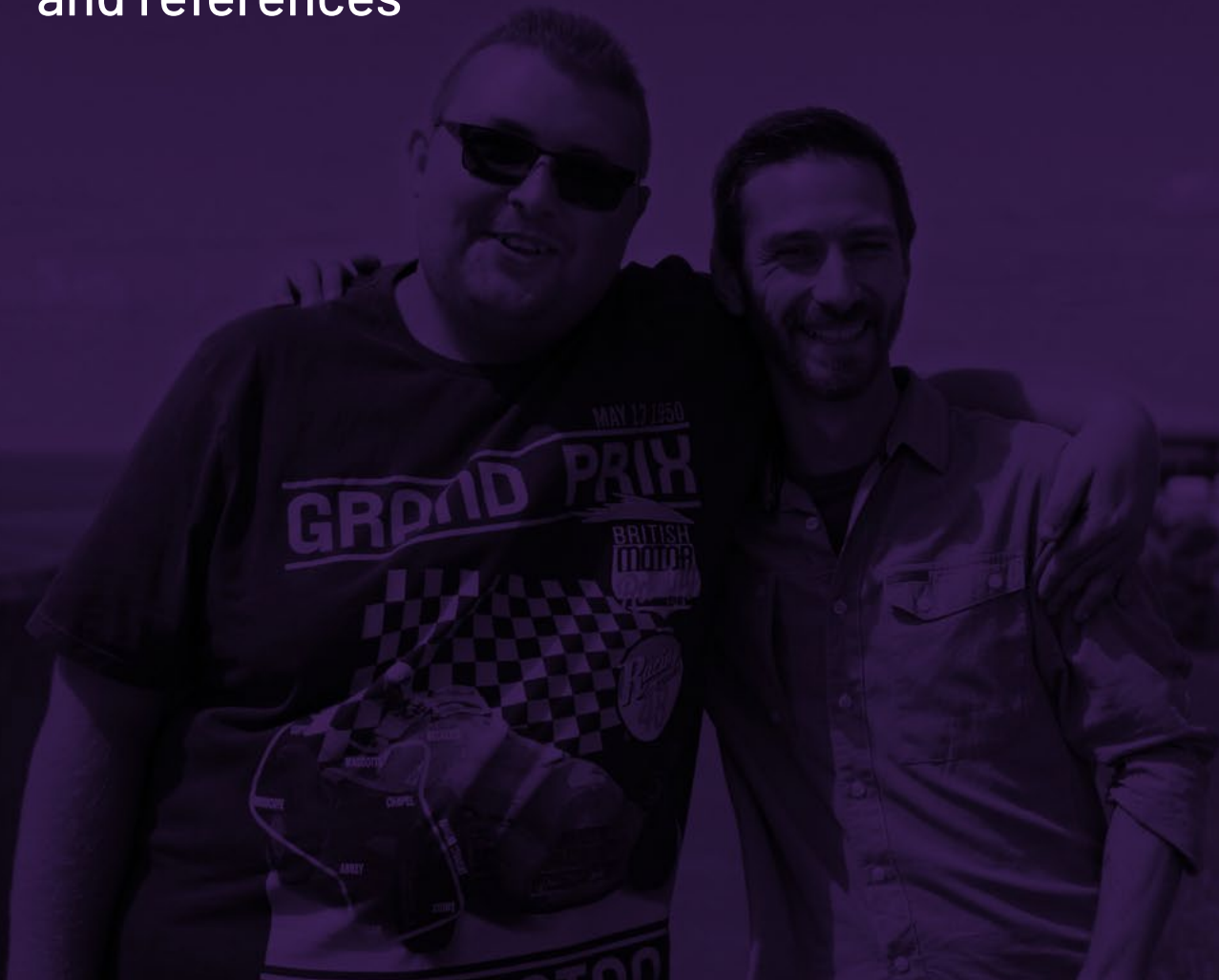
Journey map





Annex

Glossary, further reading
and references



Glossary of Playbook terms

100 day challenge

A structured innovation approach that enables citizens and practitioners to tackle complex problems and create change in 100 days.

Activity

A tool or exercise that can be used with participants in innovation programmes/sessions.

Adaptive

Having the ability to change to suit shifting conditions. Can refer to a problem, a way of working, or a leadership mode.

Capacity building

The process of developing the skills and confidence needed to take ownership and make change happen.

Framework

A structured model to support and guide thinking.

Prototype

An approach to develop, test and improve an idea or more at an early stage, before large-scale resources are committed to implementation.

Rapid testing

A mindset and approach focused on trying ideas out quickly and on a small scale to learn and adapt solutions quickly.

Sprint

A set period of time during which specific work has to be completed and made ready for review.

System

A socially-created configuration of parts connected by a web of relationships towards a purpose. Systems can be small, such as single organisations, or large, such as a whole country's health and care.

Wicked problem or challenge

A complex problem that is difficult to solve or make progress on.

Further reading and references

For more inspiration, check out some of the PPR team's other favourite resources.

- [SessionLab](#)
- [Liberating Structures](#)
- [Hyper Island Toolbox](#)
- [Game Storming](#)
- [Nesta: Playbook for innovation learning](#)

- [Nesta: Don't stop thinking about tomorrow](#)
- [International Futures Forum](#) (for more on the Three Horizons framework)
- [XPLANE](#)
- [Nurture Development](#) (for more on Asset Based Community Development)
- [Center for Creative Leadership](#) (for more on active listening)

Book reference

To read more about the '**Dance Toward Insight**' discussed under [coaching approaches](#):
Rock, D. (2007) '*Quiet Leadership: Six Steps to Transforming Performance at Work*'



Thank you!

**Acknowledgements
and thanks to former
PPR and Re!Institute
team members,
partners and
everyone we have
had the opportunity
to work with.**



Nesta would like to thank Mike Green for designing this publication and Beth Crockatt for the photography.

58 Victoria Embankment
London EC4Y 0DS

+44 (0)20 7438 2500

information@nesta.org.uk

 @nesta_uk

 nesta.uk

www.nesta.org.uk



Nesta is a registered charity in England and Wales with company number 7706036 and charity number 1144091. Registered as a charity in Scotland number SC042833. Registered office:
58 Victoria Embankment, London EC4Y 0DS.

