What is relevant to measure and how do we do it together?

Katie Shearn, Sheffield Hallam University
Chad Oatley, Sport England
Darcy Hare, Sport England
Graeme Sinnott, Active Partnerships

Tuesday 23 March, 1.30pm-3.30pm

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What we are going to cover today

- Why we are here today
- Complexity friendly measurement
- Q&A
- Breakout room discussion
- Reflections and updates from Sport England
- Progressing together

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The measurement movement

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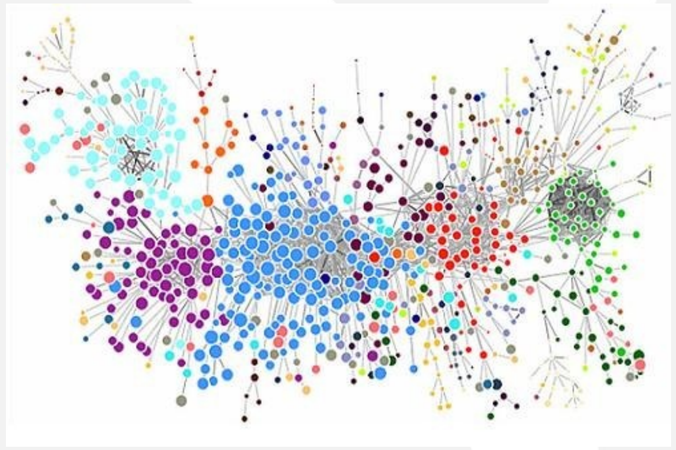
Our session today: why?

Embracing the complexity of trying to address physical inactivity



Acknowledging there is no silver bullet

Re-thinking what to measure and how

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“It’s complex”

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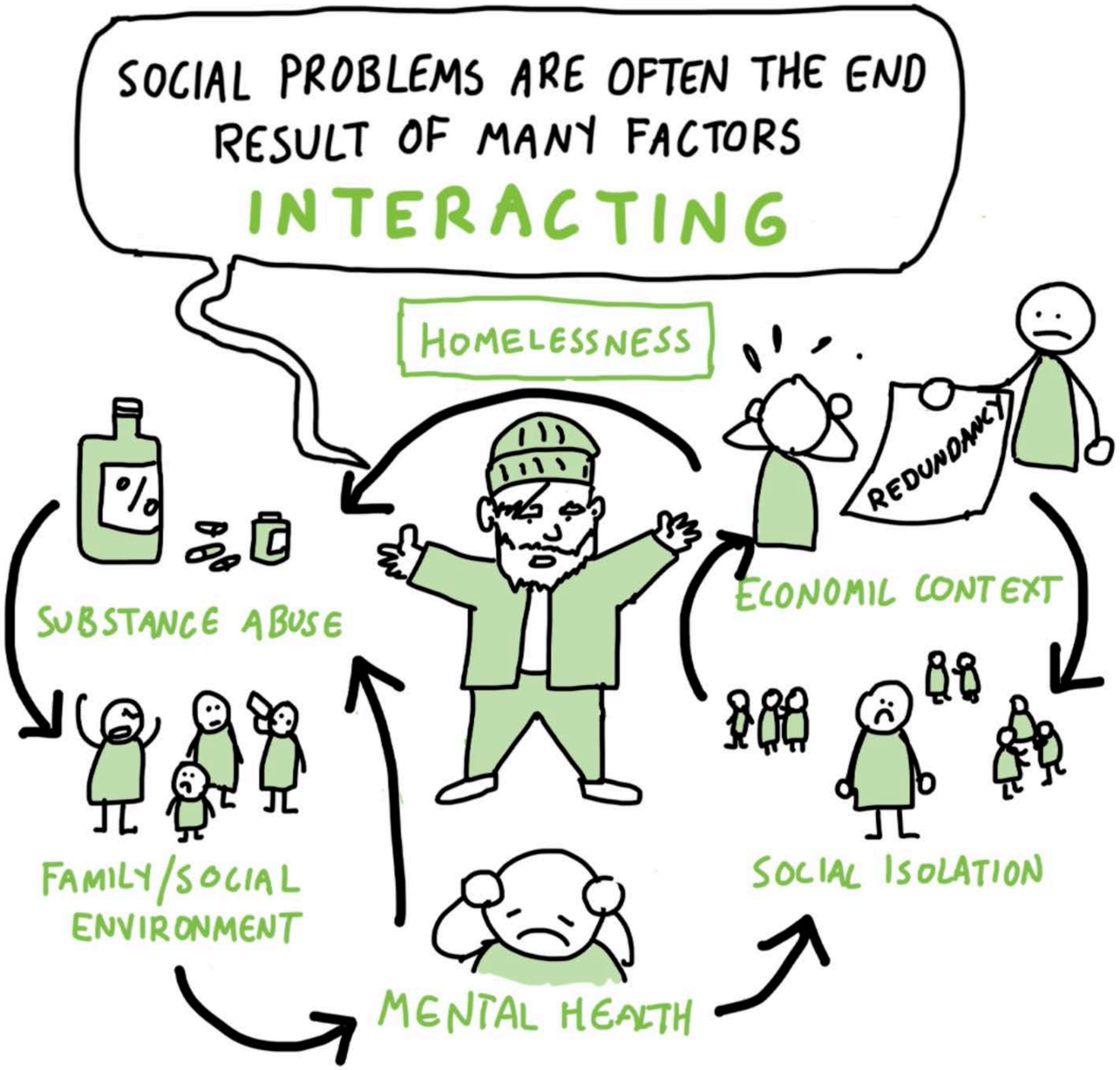

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Dr Toby Lowe

Why is complexity important?

Complexity describes the fundamental processes by which the outcomes we care about are made (outcomes such as improved wellbeing for people or having a job).

If we fail to understand and embrace complexity, we will not be able to create the outcomes we seek.

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Dr Toby Lowe and Deborah Blackman

Compositional complexity

Outcomes are created by many different factors interacting in complex ways

Eg, no single person or organisation can be held accountable

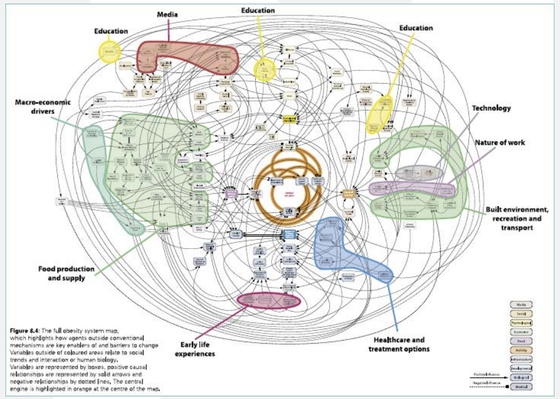
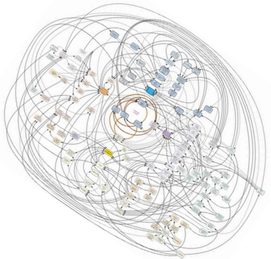


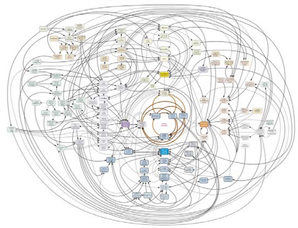
Figure 6.4: The full obesity system map, which highlights how agents outside conventional mechanisms are key enablers of and barriers to change. Variables outside of indicated areas relate to social trends and interaction or human biology. Variables are represented by boxes, positive causal relationships are represented by solid arrows and negative relationships by dashed lines. The central engine is highlighted in orange at the centre of the map.

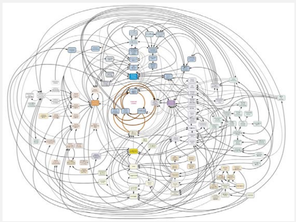
Experiential complexity

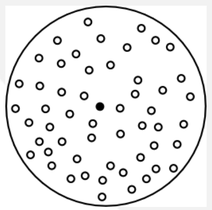
The factors which produce an outcome, and the experience of that outcome, is different for each person

Eg, standardized measures might not measure what really matters to people





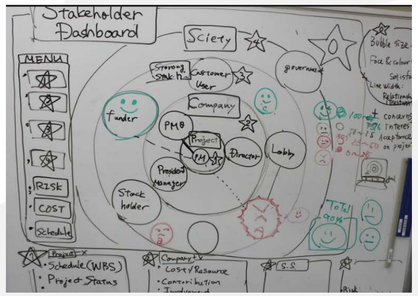




Dynamic complexity

The factors which produce outcomes interact in ever-changing ways

Eg, what works in one place or at one time, won't work in another



Governance complexity

The systems which produce outcomes are beyond the control of any of the actors in that system

Eg, role of the media and advertising in obesity

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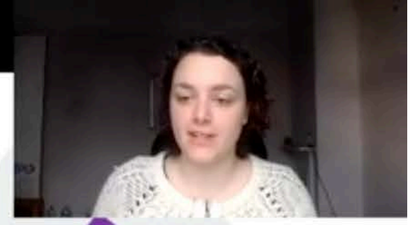


Recap

Last Time...

Systems produce their own patterns of behaviour and outcomes

Systems change is about shifting the conditions that maintain those outcomes

Complex systems generate adaptive challenges

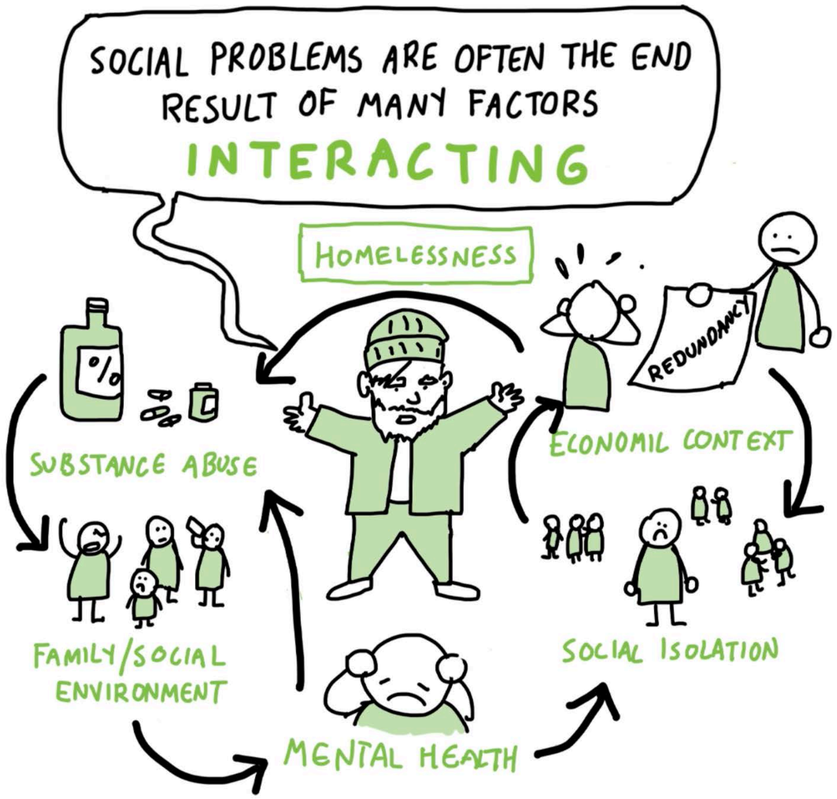
Adaptive challenges require learning and cannot be solved by executive authority alone

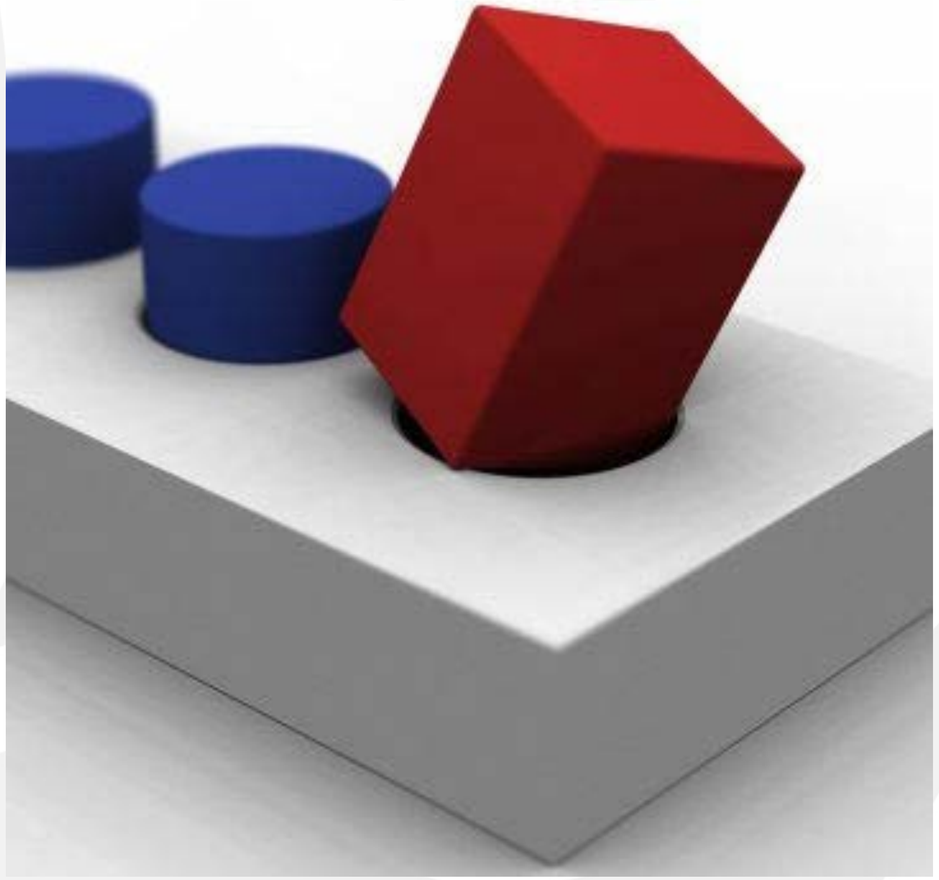
System leadership is the activity of mobilising change across a system

collaborate
for social change

Lives

Embracing complexity = complexity friendly measurement





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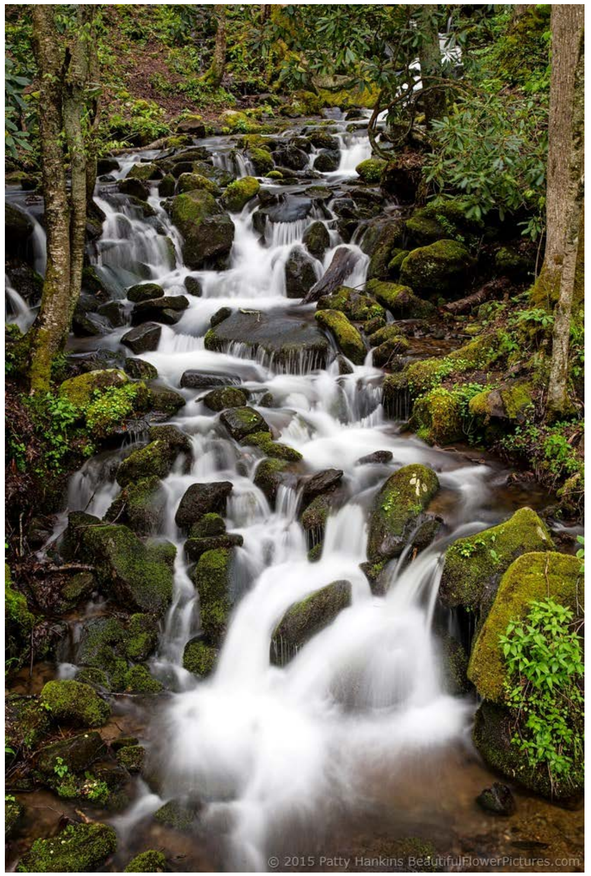
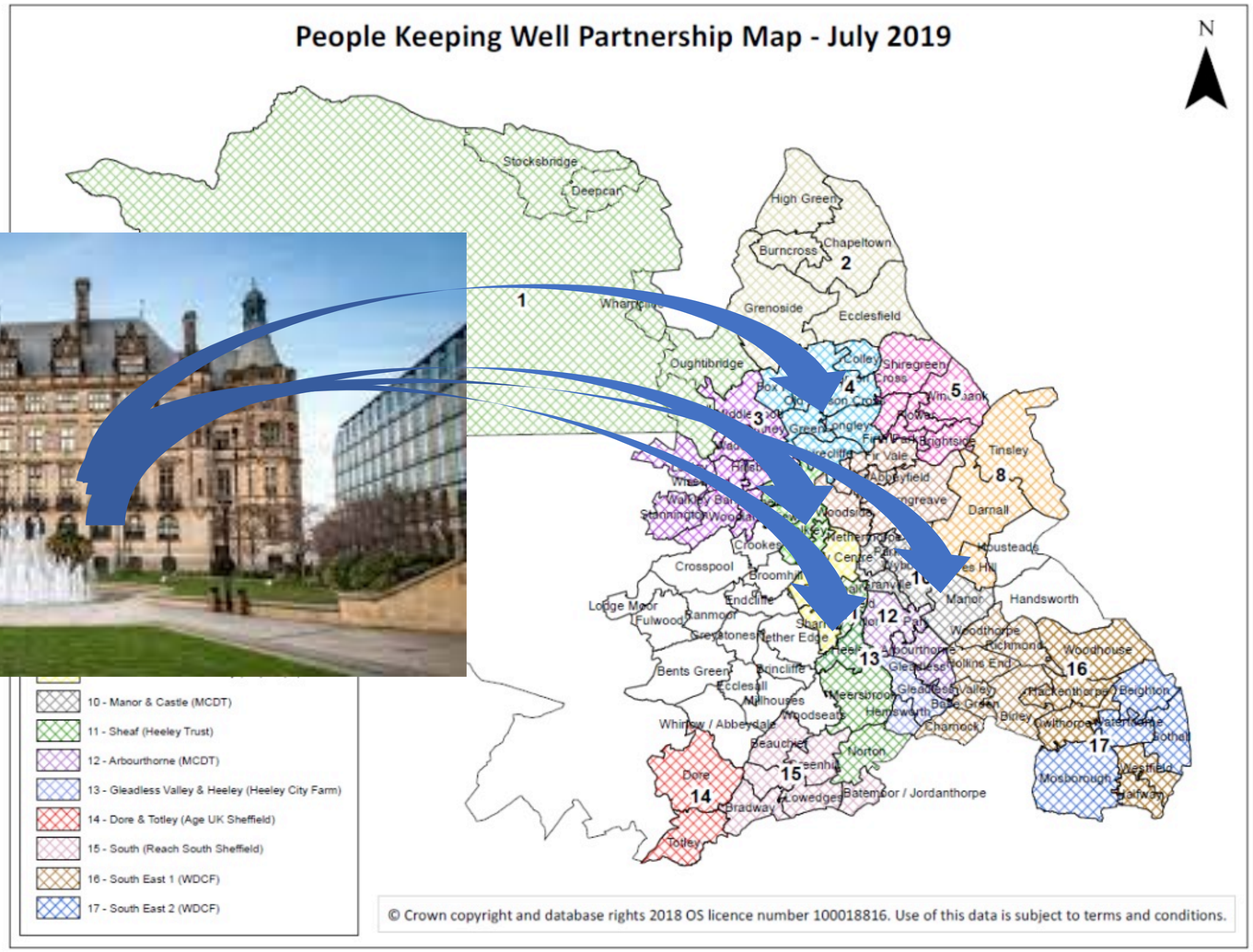
This Girl Can – a project within a complex system



TGC Sheffield Context – Community Development Approach

£100K



What did we *need* to measure?

- **The number of participants**

- **Standard demographic information**

- **Starting activity levels / follow up activity levels**

Reconsider the purpose and consequences of measurement

Orientate measurement to explanation and transferability of knowledge

Nothing is more practical than a good theory

Ludvig Boltzmann

What did we *want* to measure?

Inputs (TGC)

Outcomes

Facebook/ Whatsapp forum

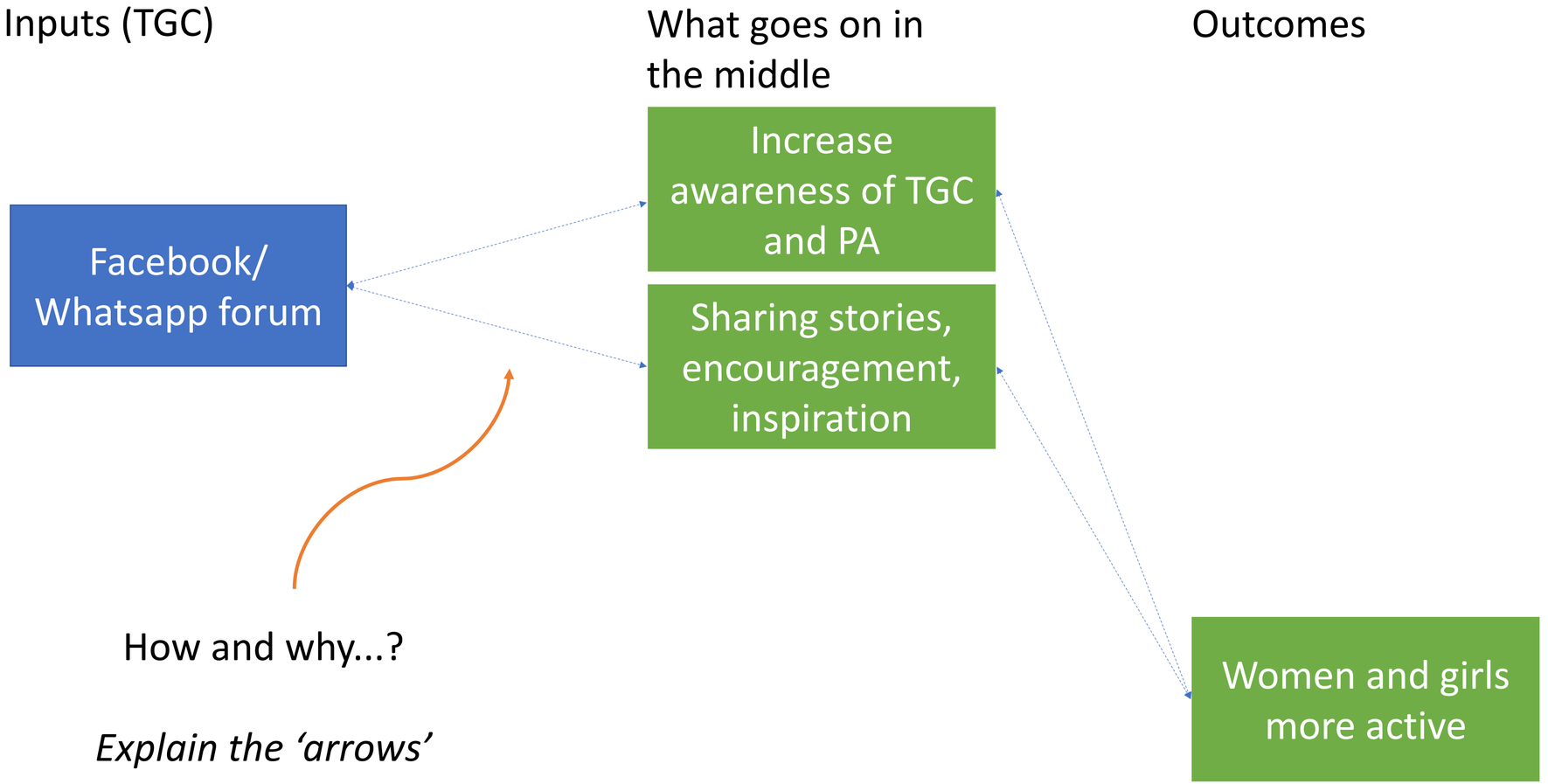
Capacity for Coordination and insight (Staff)

Ambassadors

Capacity to deliver activities

Women and girls more active

What did we *want* to measure?



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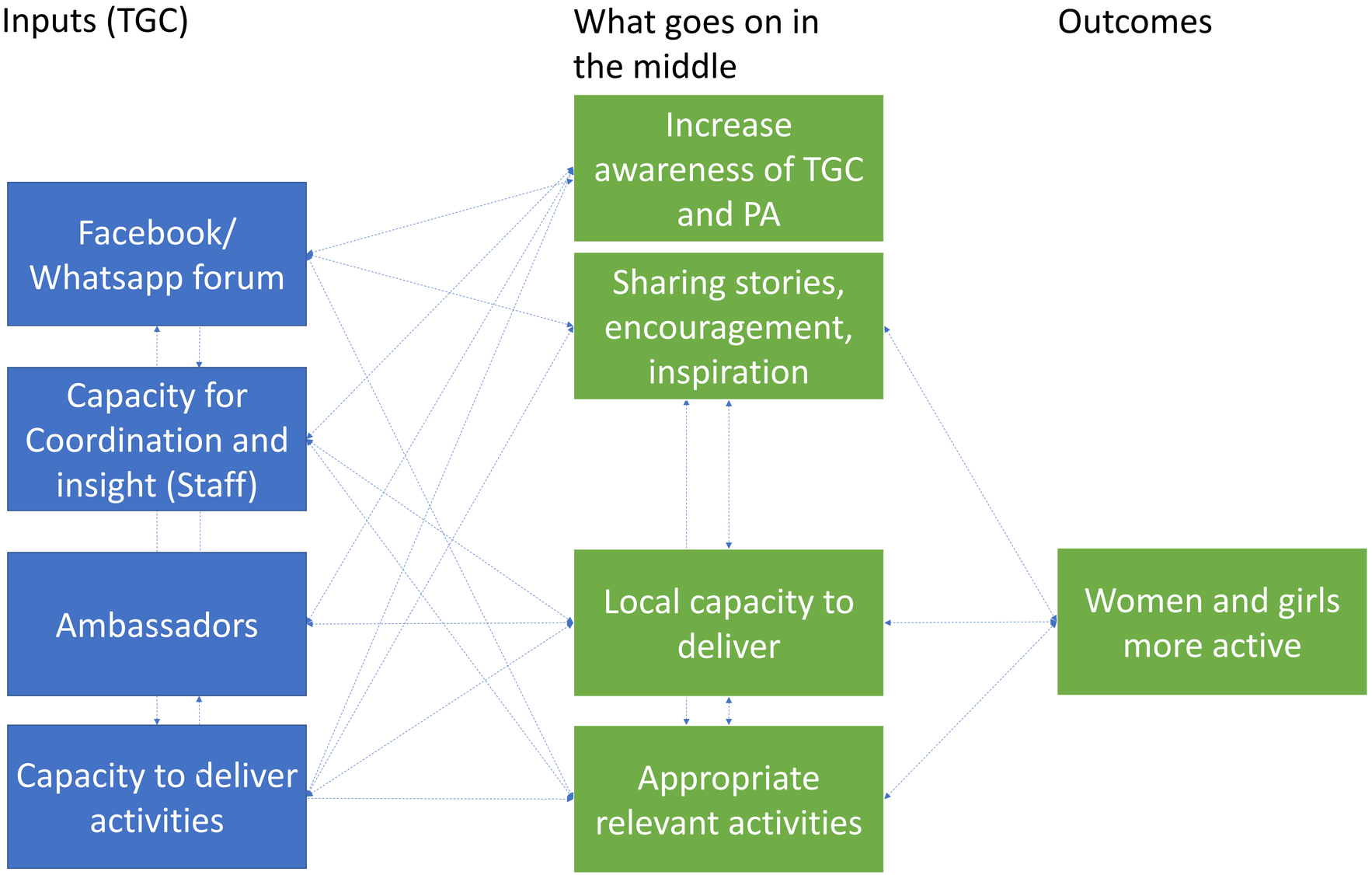

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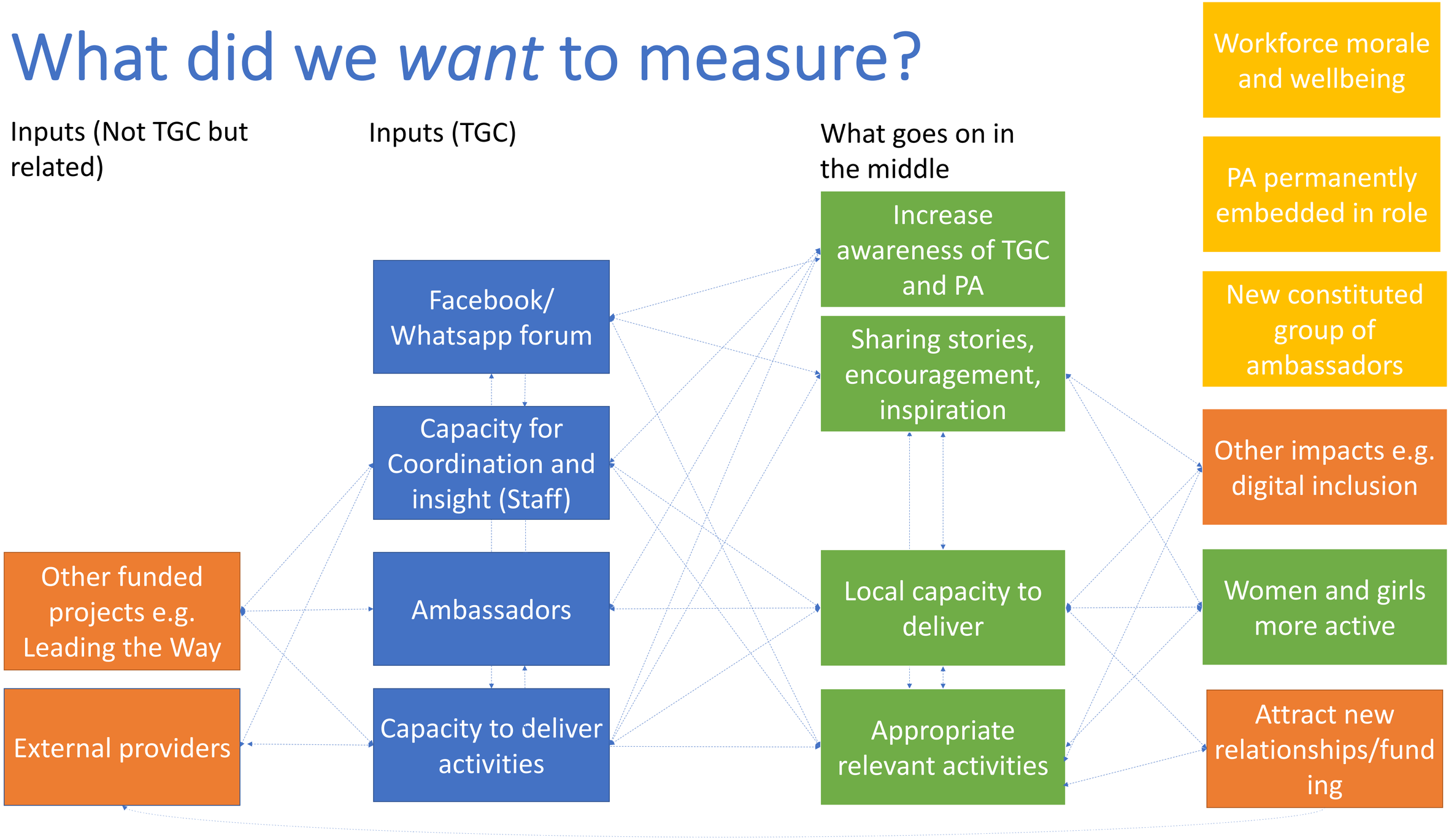
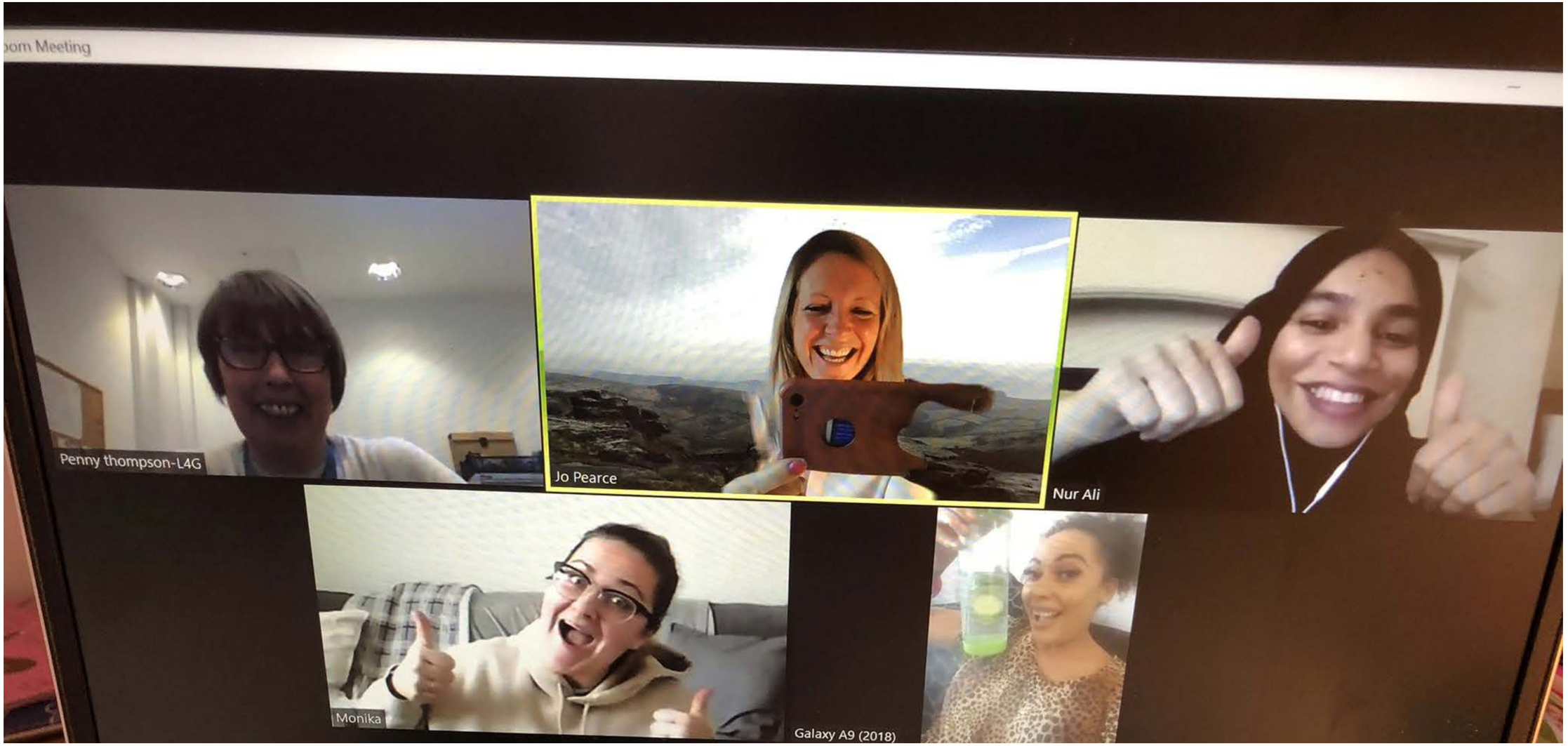


What data did we capture along the way?

Feature	Data	Tool	Responsibility	Frequency
Forum	# members over time Social media sentiment analysis	Analytics	Anc org SCC	Monthly One month, six monthly
Ambassadors	# ambassadors identified # ambassadors received training if applicable Ambassador experience	Reflective logs Certified by training completion Interviews ~ 2	Anc org SHU / SCC	Six monthly Six monthly
Activities	# Additional activities Different activities introduced/maintained Reach to new members/communities # external inquiries / new relationships Experience and impact of taking part	Reflective logs contain activities/events Case studies / stories Analytics Interviews ~ 8 Co-produced impact	Anc org Anc org YSF Anc Org SHU SHU / SCC / Anc Org	Monthly Bi-monthly Six monthly End of project
Explanatory accounts	Sharing stories, experience and other data	Community of Learning Collective sense-making	SCC / VAS / YSF / SHU	Quarterly


oom Meeting
Penny thompson-L4G
Jo Pearce
Nur Ali
Monika
Galaxy A9 (2018)

What is important to evaluate?

- Process – how inputs may lead to outcomes/impacts.
- Equifinality – how and why different ideas may lead to the same result.
- Contingency - how and why the same idea may lead to different results, depending on context.
- Plausible contribution – to what extent the outcomes/impacts may plausibly be explained by the inputs, and what else might explain them.
- Unexpected (positive or negative) outcomes.
- Emergent outcomes – outcomes which can’t be explained purely be the constituent parts

GM Moving – a social movement in a complex system

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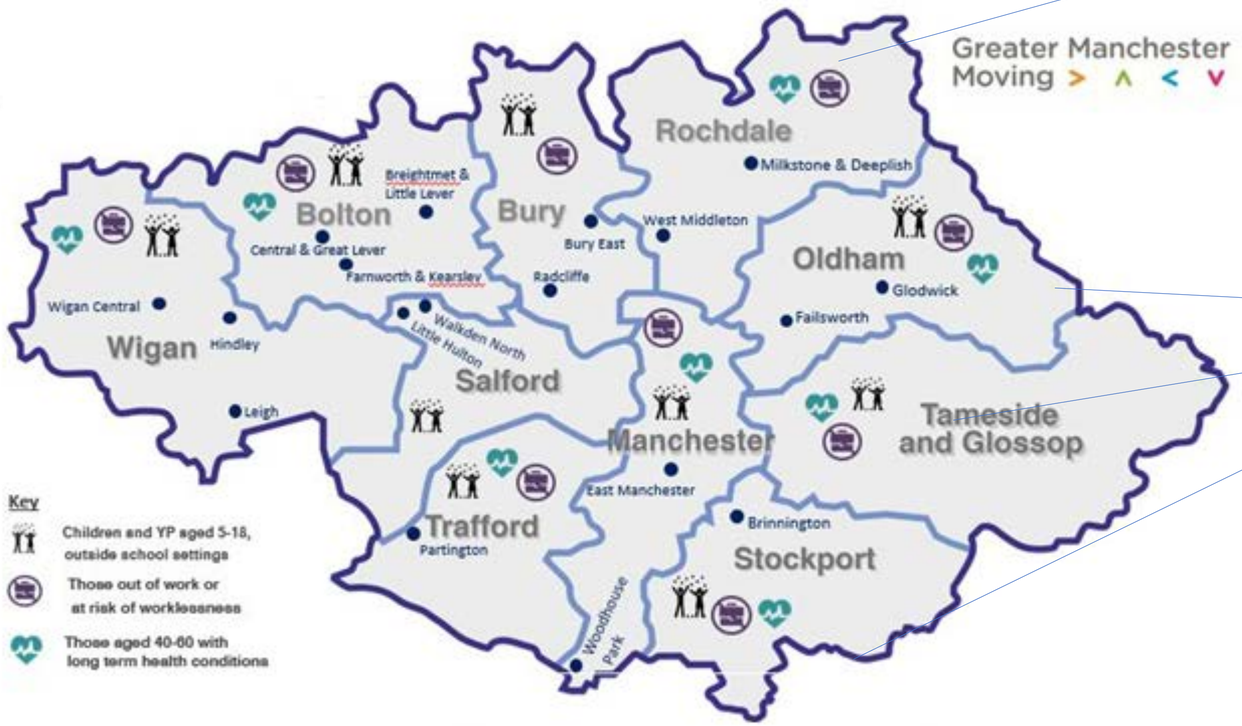
"We won't succeed using machine mind. If we want humans to thrive, if we want human connectedness, and want people to feel free to use their creative energies and be fully themselves, we won't get there through policies that treat them like cogs in a machine" Sue Goss

https://hayleyleverblog.wordpress.com/2021/02/16/creating-the-conditions-for-integration/

GM Moving – a social movement in a complex system



‘Whole’

- Geographic, political and economic context
- Physical Activity levels across the whole of GM

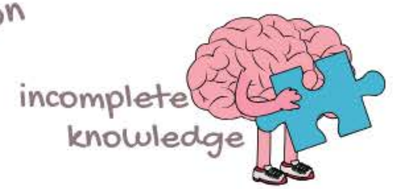
‘Parts’

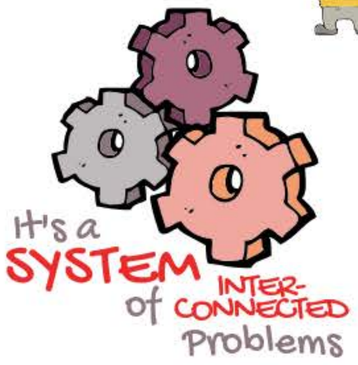
- 10/11 Localities (+ multiple hyper-local action areas and key audiences)

‘Cross-cutting focus areas’

- Work and health/social prescribing/transport

Interactions





Paul Taylor... https://paulitaylor.com/2019/11/15/how-to-keep-focussed-and-remain-sane-in-a-world-of-complex-problems/

Reconsider the purpose and consequences of measurement

Innovation in methodology – the ‘gap’ in systems evaluation methodologies?

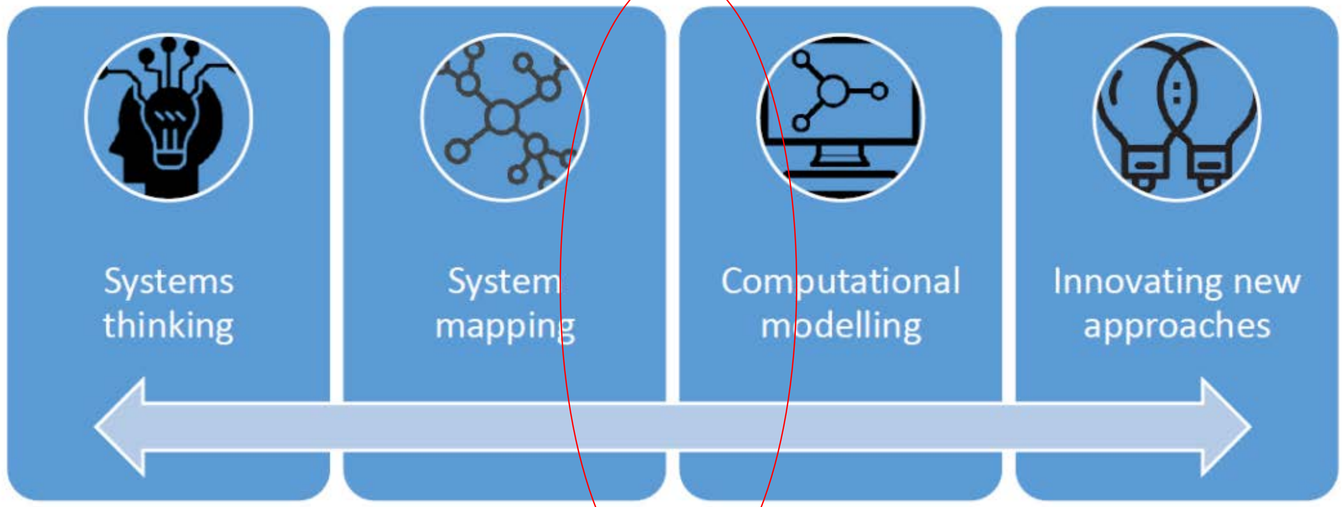


Figure 1: Approaches to systems evaluation

Egan et al (2019)

- Existing methods map, model, and connect the visible.
- Gap = methods which explain the interconnections and processes by which change may occur.
- Gap = ‘codifying the landscape’.

Realist, development, participatory evaluation methods

Methods: Multi-method, iterative and cyclical.

Theory gleaning from academic literature (theoretical and research evidence)
Theory gleaning from grey literature

Qualitative observation (context) exploration (mechanisms)

- "Embedded" researchers
- Monthly observations
- Monthly forums
- 6 x monthly interviews
- Facilitated team reflections

Intermediate 'outcomes'

- Frequency counts based on emergent areas of work
- Updated quarterly with numbers and examples to demonstrate change

System change 'outcomes'

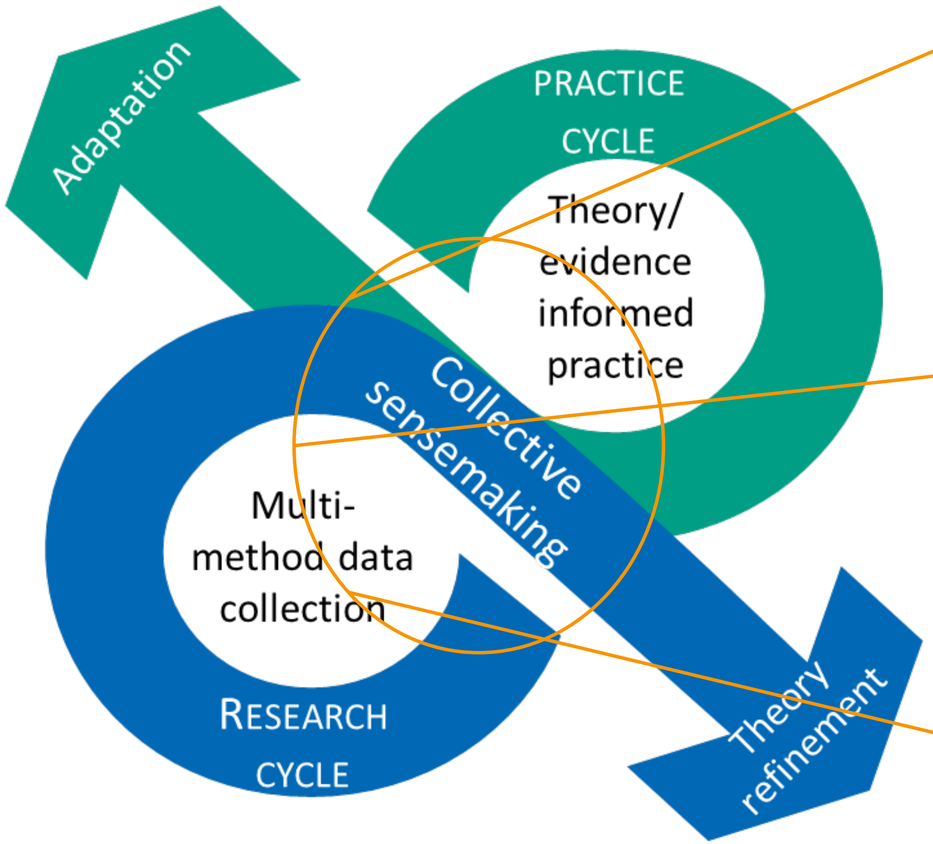
- Yearly stakeholder perceptions survey
- Yearly social network analysis
- Yearly secondary data analysis – Active Lives

National Evaluation Community of Learning / Practice

Sheffield Hallam University

Greater Manchester Moving

Realist evaluation as part of a learning system



Collective sense-making

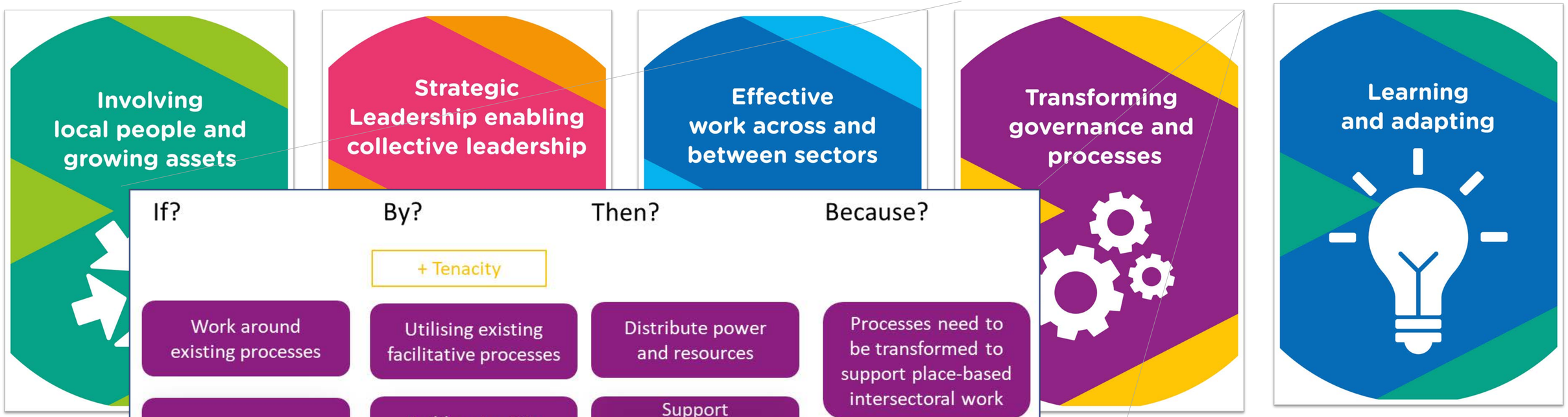
1) Story telling, rich examples

2) Extract meaning and explanations – referring to theories

3) Thought experiment - if theory and explanations can be 'transferred' to different contexts – if not why not

An exercise in building R*eusable Conceptual Platforms and working Middle Range Theories*

Emergent theories/models: system conditions that support whole systems approaches (to PA)



If?	By?	Then?	Because?
	+ Tenacity		
Work around existing processes	Utilising existing facilitative processes	Distribute power and resources	Processes need to be transformed to support place-based intersectoral work
Change processes	Building trust in partners	Support collaborative working	- Accountability for public funds
	- Risk of bias?	Act swiftly and flexibly	- Risk averse
	+ Proportionate governance		- Top down performance metrics
		+ Perceived urgency of the need	
		+ Contribution not sole claim	

Informed and inspired by:

- Bagnall et al (2019)
- Buckner et al (2017)
- de Leeuw et al (2014)
- SCIE (2017)
- Local data collection
- Stakeholder sense-making

Principles for complexity sensitive evaluation

- Measure for improvement
- Measure for explanation
- Gather different perspectives
- Honour different forms of evidence
- Look for alternative explanations and unintended consequences
- Collective sense-making
- Share knowledge.

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Breakout room discussion

- What complexity friendly methods and principles are you adopting?
- What might you do differently in the future to adapt your approach?

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Reflections on Place-based Discussions in Evaluation and Learning

4 months into the role…

A Positioning Statement on Place-based Approaches to Evaluation and Learning

Our acceptance of complexity, and the unpredictability, of our work, has opened-up thinking about how we evaluate and learn.

Moving from linear to more complex ways of understanding has caused a headache in how we think about measurement, and how we can and/or should use data to learn and improve as we go.

Enhancing collaboration in practice generates a tension in how we challenge, influence and satisfy the different data needs of stakeholders we are working with/ trying to engage-involve (which are also susceptible to change).

We now acknowledge the importance of context, as key; it informs how we think, act and implement, the need to be adaptable and responsive, and look out for emergent things as they occur. However, how can we account for this within how we measure and our claims?

Where is the Direction of Travel in Evaluating and Learning through, and from, Place-based Approaches?

What is seen as important for evaluation and learning within place?

Before we focus on the solution, we need to identify the existing assets for evaluation and learning within a place.

Identify who holds the ‘reins’ in evaluation and learning within place, and how this relates with the principles and values of your approach.

Think big, start small.

Consider the value of mixed-method approaches which attempt to follow, and account for, the footprints of our efforts and the change they generate.

Build from where people are, not where we think they should be/how it should be.

Invest in the relationship between the stakeholders we are evaluating and learning with.

Just like we are taking a ‘test and learn’ approach to our work, we need to a ‘test and learn’ approach to how we evaluate and learn. This means building in routine review of evaluation and learning practices.

Ask how different stakeholders want to be involved in and/or receive findings/learning throughout what is being evaluated.

If tendering an evaluation and learning partner, engage procurement early on to help develop a specification and contract that enables us to evaluate and learn in more adaptable and developmental ways.

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Refining our approach to evaluation and learning

- What Sport England is doing
- Why we're doing it
- What it means for you
- What it means for Sport England
- What next?

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