

Prompt cards for open space discussion on the learning themes

## Physical activity - showing its role in the whole:

*What are we seeing across the pilots?*

- Pilots have observed a disconnect between the recognition of the importance and relevance of physical activity in improving the lives of individuals and communities, and how far action is being taken to embed physical activity in an overall coherent sense across the work of places.
- It has often been isolated as a 'part' (e.g. 'leisure services) rather than an important contributor to the whole.
- This means that lots of the things that influence activity levels aren't considering their role in that.
- This can seem overwhelming, but actually presents an enormous opportunity and potential.
- The Local Delivery Pilots have been working hard to shift the conversation from 'how do we make our piece work as perfectly as possible?' to 'how do we achieve something important as a whole?'
- A lot of work has been done to demonstrate the power of physical activity in contributing to what matters in their places and making increasing activity 'everyone's business.'

*What are the practical tools and techniques that have helped?*

- Theory of change – i.e. starting the conversation with what long term impacts you really want to have, and then tracking back to the things you'd expect and like to see in the medium term, and the indicators that things are going in the right direction in the shorter term
- System mapping – i.e. the act of plotting the important factors that influence activity levels within a place – ideally as a group of partners with responsibility across these influencers to see the connections and 'breakages'
- Bringing together the various small organisations in the community to discuss what everyone provides and look at the overlaps and shared ambitions.
- A 'Think Tank' session which supported partners to consider how resources are deployed to add most value across the whole system, how physical activity can add value and complement existing policy and activities at the locality level, and 'call to action' to start some collaborative work.

*Prompt questions – to get discussions going*

- What does this bring up for everyone?
- What resonates particularly with you?
- Are you dealing with this in your work?
- What opportunities or dilemmas does this present?

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## **Bridging the empathy gap - aiming for 'zero distance' between communities and people who work to support communities to thrive:**

*What are we seeing across the pilots?*

- The pilots have highlighted that it feels like many degrees of separation have emerged between the people who make decisions and take actions that effect communities, and the communities themselves.
- The ways to connect with residents and communities are often not well established or known by people running services. Mechanisms to connect with communities are diminishing.
- The way community consultation typically works is not providing people with a chance to meet people, hear different perspectives, and take decisions based on empathy and understanding - efforts to consult with communities have become typically narrow (in terms of topic) or distancing (in terms of methods).
- This means that the real root issues are often missed.
- The LDPs have been exploring ways to bridge the empathy gap and reduce the distance between communities and the parts of the system that are there to support them.

*What are the practical tools and techniques that have helped?*

- Empathy mapping – what does the 'system' that surrounds people look like from the perspective of the people you're trying to support?
- Walk and talks – around places and spaces – makes it easier to talk and see a place through someone else's eyes
- Community events – to help people to build relationships with services and with each other and to reclaim spaces for the community around them
- Community idea and voting sessions
- 'Snowball' approaches – having conversations and building relationships via residents groups, community groups etc and following connections to other people that naturally occur to gather perspectives and find community representatives and influencers
- Bringing members of the community into decision making
- Creating ways for the community to reach out and ways to have dialogue – e.g. direct phone numbers, and using empty retail space in the town centre as hub.

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## Saying 'yes to the mess' - meeting complexity with simplicity:

### *What are we seeing across the pilots?*

- A central part of working in a more systemic, joined up, and interconnected way is the huge mindset shift of letting go of the myth of total control.
- Once all the people and things that influence physical activity in a place become clear, it can feel very messy.
- The temptation is to try to control or harness that messiness, or to cut things and people out of the equation to make it more manageable.
- The LDPs are exploring how to keep connection and relationships building and thriving, and how to say 'yes to the mess.'
- It is involving different ways of working and resourcing – that allow for flexibility to changing circumstances, responsiveness to communities, and emerging ideas and opportunities.
- This involves serious project management – but more agile – not in the linear, traditional sense.
- Many pilots are meeting complexity with simplicity through the creation of simple rules and principles.
- Starting to work this way by making a start on one area, audience or issue allows momentum to build and solutions to form without the overwhelming task of taking on the whole system (being willing to start anywhere, but follow it everywhere).

### *What are the practical tools and techniques that have helped?*

- Changing the language – consciously rejecting obscure technical language and jargon and talking 'in plain English' – being willing to ask 'what does that really mean?'
- Consciously challenging processes and ways of working – 'Are we doing this because it's the right thing to do, or because it's the way we've always done it?' 'Does the way we're doing this reflect our ambition?'
- Rules of thumb / principles and mantras – for when things get complicated – e.g. 'Will doing this really help an inactive person to be more active?'
- Reviewing information flows within the local system – are the right people getting the right information in the right ways?
- Creating cross functional implementation groups to make decisions and move work forwards in the room (rather than 'another layer of bureaucracy')

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## It's less what you do, and more the way that you do it:

### *What are we seeing across the pilots?*

- There is a lot of guidance about the steps that should be taken to change a system or take a systemic approach.
- An emerging 'pathway' and set of steps or 'ingredients' is coming from the LDPs.
- Many of these are helpful and can give ideas about how to understand what is going on, and how to identify the ways that you could change it.
- Increasingly though, we are learning that the way that these steps or tasks are done is the thing that makes the biggest difference in terms of how successful it is - the tone, style, and human element of the approach.
- The LDPs have reflected on the 'over-professionalisation' of the services we work in and with, and the need to make this work more human.
- We have been learning what ways of working connect more people to other people, other perspectives, and build a shared sense of what matters.

### *What are the practical tools and techniques that have helped?*

- Directing capacity towards changing the nature and quality of relationships and connections – building trust and a shared sense of what is significant – what matters.
- System mapping events – using this exercise as a way to get a lot of 'unusual suspects' around a table, sharing and hearing their different perspectives and experiences – i.e. the process of relationship building, sharing information and hearing different perspectives is the powerful component – more than an 'accurate' system map
- Community engagement events – aimed at creating the environment for relationships to build

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## **Stuck in the middle - the existing system has got in the way more than it should have:**

*What are we seeing across the pilots?*

- There is a tension emerging between the new and established ways of doing things. These are real and are being strongly felt by those working on the pilots.
- There is a tension between some different styles and skills, with some wanting to spend time gaining a deeper understanding and planning, whereas others want to crack on and learn by doing. These should be viewed as part of the same continuum and the pilot offers the perfect opportunity to demonstrate this.
- When trying to work in a way that responds flexibly to community needs, new opportunities and perspective, and changing circumstances, the rigidity of the existing system can present real barriers and delays – ‘how can we be adaptable whilst constrained by hierarchy and bureaucratic systems?’
- These barriers and delays feel like they cripple innovation and erode trust.
- This has transpired in the LDP places and also within Sport England’s own processes.
- The LDPs have been finding ways to uncover and challenge long standing assumptions, unwritten cultural rules, and bits of process that are not helpful in the world we find ourselves in presently.
- This is taking a lot of energy and resilience for those involved but the hope is that some of these methods and ‘fixes’ can be transferable to other situations and places.

*What are the practical tools and techniques that have helped?*

- Senior leadership and buy in – to provide ‘top cover’ and support challenges.
- Recognised role as ‘unblocking’ the system – permission to challenge the existing processes where they don’t work for communities or towards outcomes.
- Capacity hosted by partner organisations who don’t have the same recruitment limitations.
- Removal of targets and KPIs from pilot work that has the primary aim of innovation, creative problem solving and learning.
- Making the case for prevention in a system that is largely set up for treatment and reaction.
- Using the pilot to demonstrate a different way to do things – i.e. ‘de-risking’ something experimental for other stakeholders and showing proof of concept
- Being conscious about risk tolerance and what that means for a process – i.e. higher risk might mean different processes

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## Counting what counts:

### *What are we seeing across the pilots?*

- The world of measurement and evaluation has become a world of performance management and tracking accountability
- This can create signals and unwritten rules to a system about what really matters, which doesn't often fit with what people within that system would personally say really matters to them or the place.
- The pilots are showing us that 'not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.'
- It is making us question what is needed from measurement and evaluation – especially how to capture unintended consequences
- The LDPs have been trying to think beyond measurement and evaluation to decide what 'matters around here' and then finding ways to understand if and how that is changing.
- A major part of this is reflecting on what is being learnt in a live and ongoing way, and using this to adapt and respond.

### *What are the practical tools and techniques that have helped?*

- Theory of change – i.e. starting the conversation with what long term impacts you really want to have, and then tracking back to the things you'd expect and like to see in the medium term, and the indicators that things are going in the right direction in the shorter term. This has been especially effective in deciding 'what counts' when done with a wide range of people with different perspectives.
- Methods of evaluation that focus on stories and blends of tangible and intangible changes e.g. 'Sensemaker' and 'Re:valuation.'
- Sport England's evidence review – a summary of all the proven connections between physical activity and other important outcomes – to help 'make the case'
- Voice notes and recorded messages to log reflections and learning - it's sometimes easier to say it than write it - can send thoughts to other people and they can choose when to listen to it and provides an 'in the moment' record
- Journals - individually making space to process what is happening and what hearing and seeing and making meaning out of it - which helps you adapt your own actions accordingly and also sort what you need to tell other people or not
- Learning logs - shared resources where people can capture things they think they've learned - as people put things into them, they can see what other people have logged. Idea is they are snapshot and bite-sized. People can always follow up for more information.
- A forward calendar of reflection time and protecting that time (from straying into operational issues).

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