



Connecting Pathways to Impact

Learning seminar: September 2025

National Evaluation & Learning Partnership

evaluatingcomplexity.org

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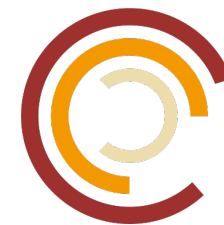
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**Sheffield
Hallam
University**



REAL Reflect
Evaluate
Act
Learn
Robin Vincent Learning and Evaluation



Welcome and overview

	Time (mins)	Format
Introduction	10	Presentation
Buzz session: what do you hope to learn today?	5	In groups
Method	10	Presentation
System maturity overall – where are we as a national system?	20	Presentation
Questions and reflections	10	Open
Movement break	5	
Explanations of change	15	Presentation
Sharing experiences and understandings	20	Breakout rooms
Feedback session: How will this shape our work in Place?	10	Open
Next steps	5	Presentation
Session feedback	10	Padlet

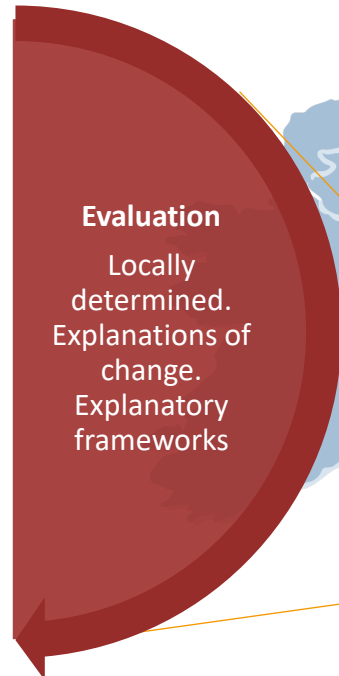
Buzz session



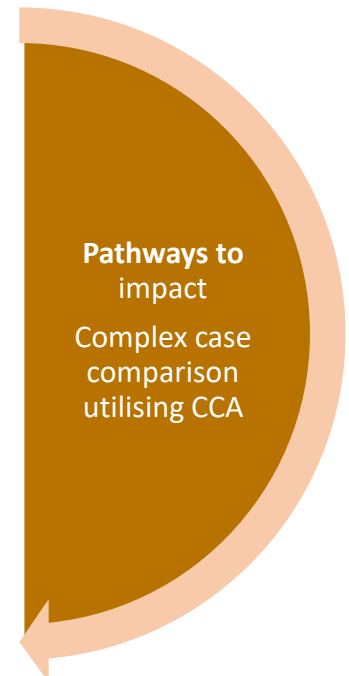
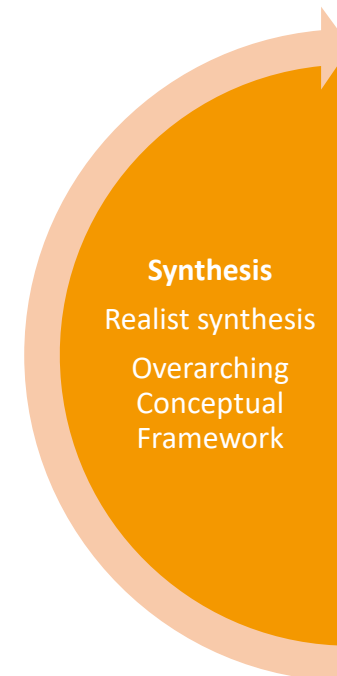
Overview of the approach and the data

Accumulating knowledge for local action

Place (n=12-100):
whole system realist
case studies



Cross-Place:
whole system realist
synthesis and
modelling



Social learning spaces –
inform action and
adaptation

Collective
sense-making

System Maturity Assessments (for CCA)

Data collection: 47 cases



10 Context measures

Wider context:

Demographics,
deprivation, social
environments, PA levels
(existing sources)

10 Resources measures

Scale,
composition and
deployment of
resources for
place-based
systemic working
(CCA survey)

26 System maturity measures

Place Partnership context and action:

Maturity of systemic
place-based working
(CCA survey)

47 Places and 552 organisations participating in responses (8.4 per place) in 2024

Evaluation and Learning Submissions (56 total)



Autumn 2024

20 Submissions

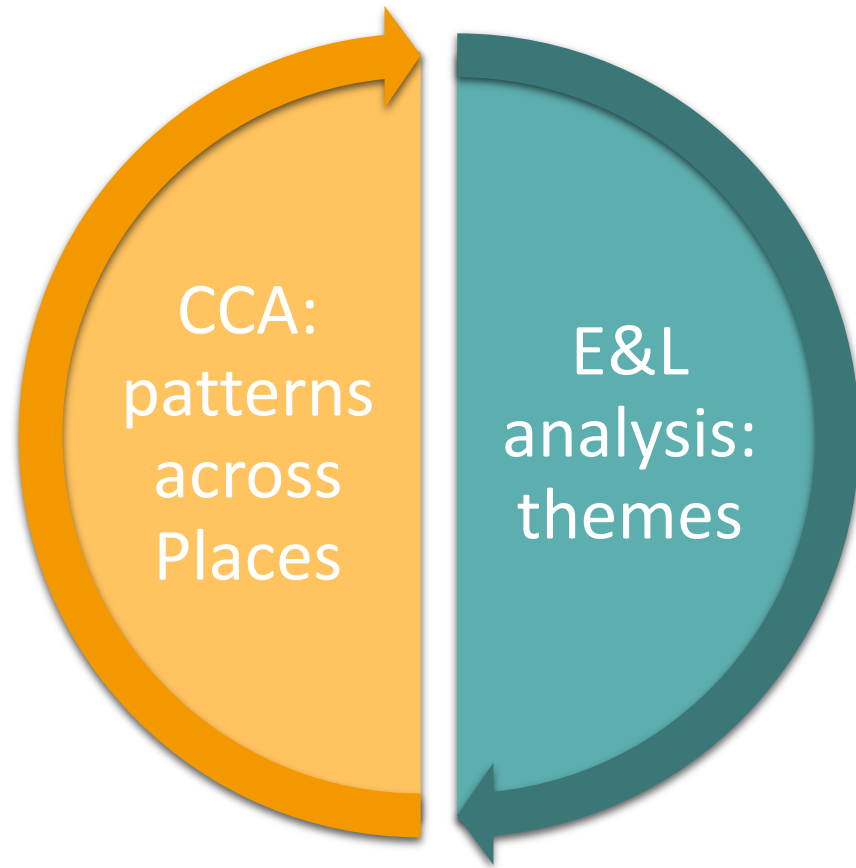
Deepening place partners
'Transition' place partners

Spring 2025

36 Submissions

Deepening place partners
'Transition' place partners
Expansion phase 1 place
partners

Bringing together the Evaluation & Learning reports and CCA

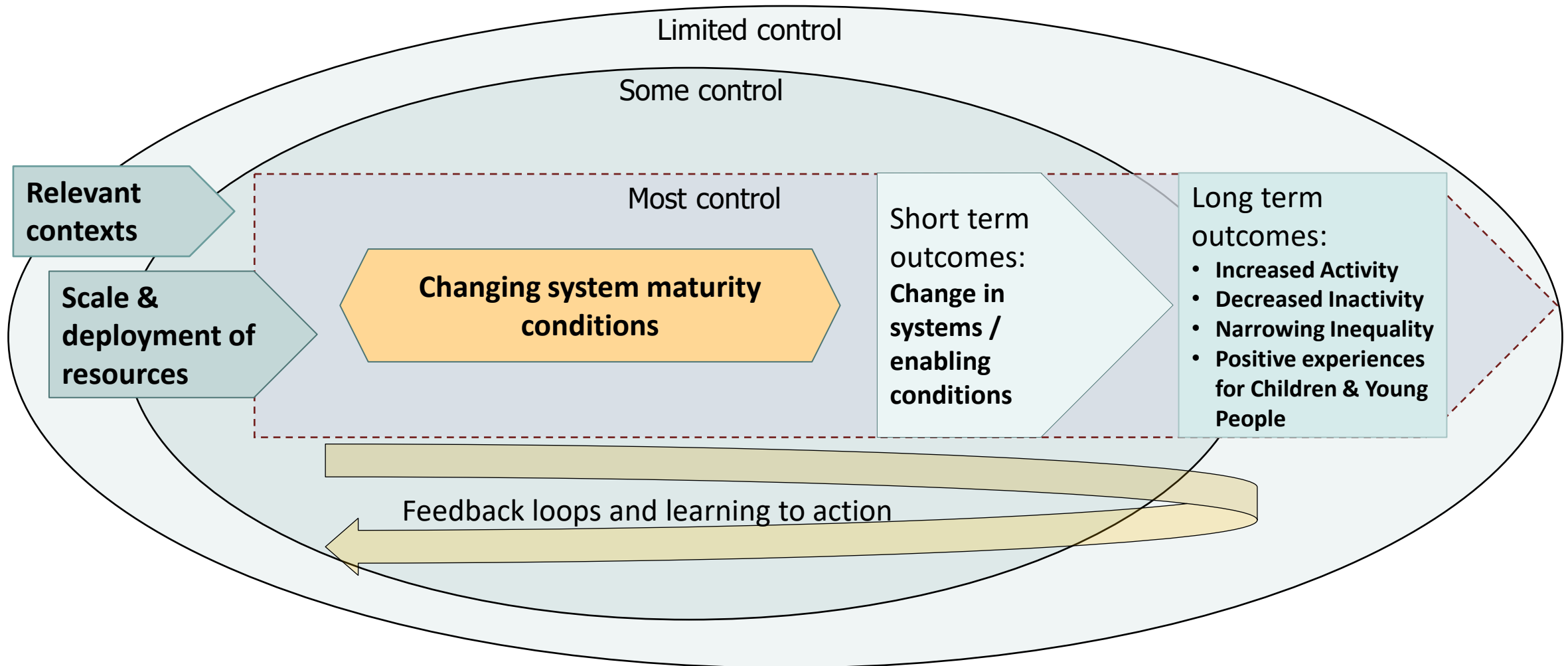


Identifying the common patterns of conditions predicting outcomes

Thematic coding of E&L reports in relation to [SMM](#) conditions

Drawing out examples and [explanatory accounts](#) to explain the relationships between conditions

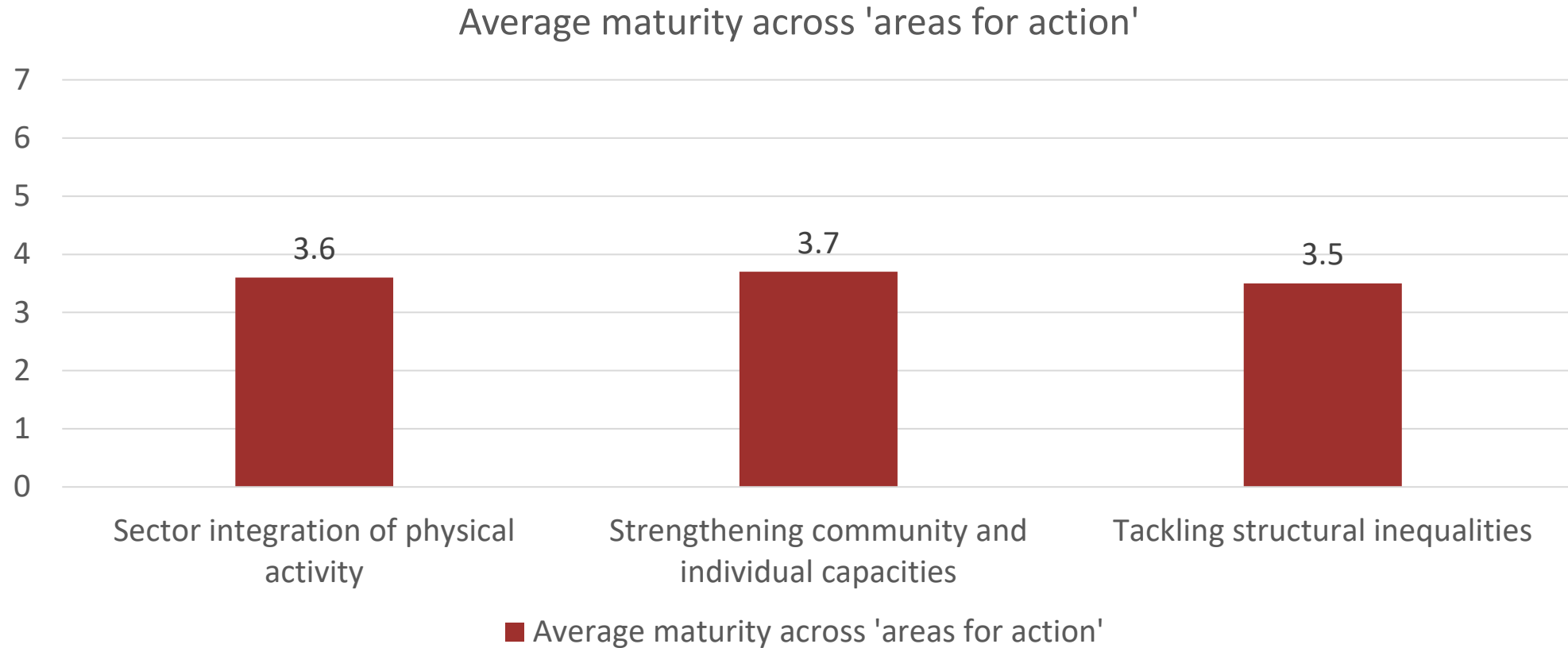
Pathways to action: stepping stones to longer term change



See also [NELP conceptual model](#)



Maturity across different 'areas of action'



- Maturity of approaches are on average 'emerging' / 'establishing' and not 'embedded', yet!

Maturity scores year on year indicate systems maturing

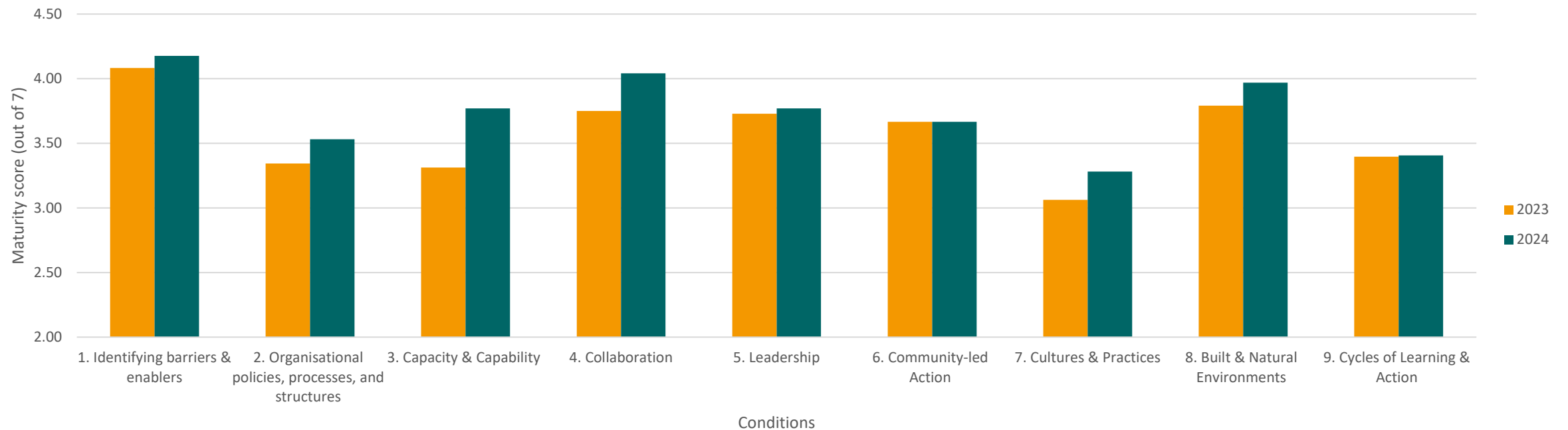


CAUTION:

- Shift in the model and tighter definitions based on pilot year data
- Significant development in local partner understanding of maturity matrix
- Input from wider stakeholders

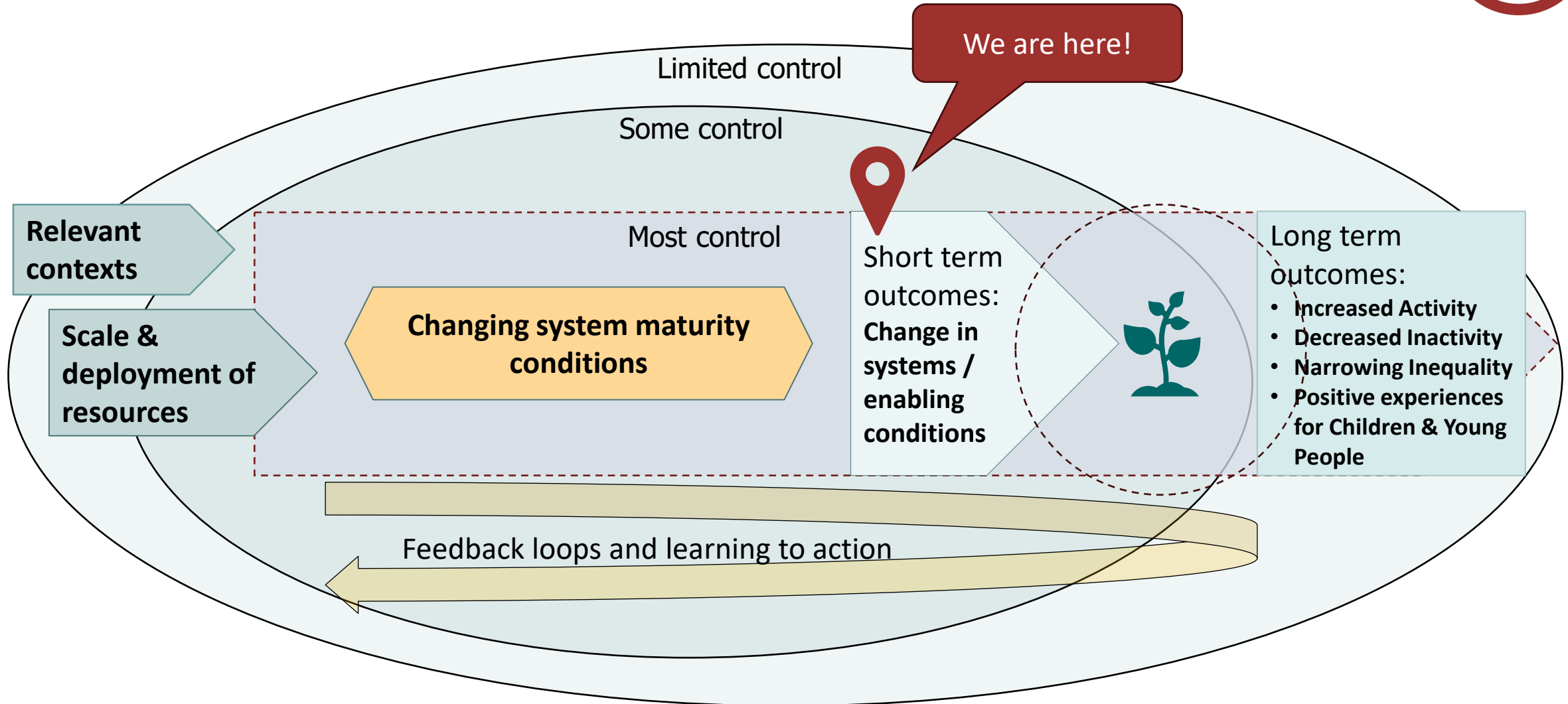
Maturity changes indicative only
Treat 2024 as Y1 data

Maturity assessments year on year – indicative of systems maturing



- Maturity of conditions are on average 'emerging' / 'establishing' and not 'embedded', yet!

Pathways to action: stepping stones to longer term change



Pathways to action: Green shoots indicative of strengthen support for physical activity



Health, wellbeing and activity routinely assessed in 'Planning' and 'Transport'.

Broader sector policy change to support physical activity
E.g. 31 examples of working with Health.

Resonant campaigns and initiatives reflecting local communities
E.g. 33 strong examples working with communities

People using, and taking pride in local parks, water and open spaces



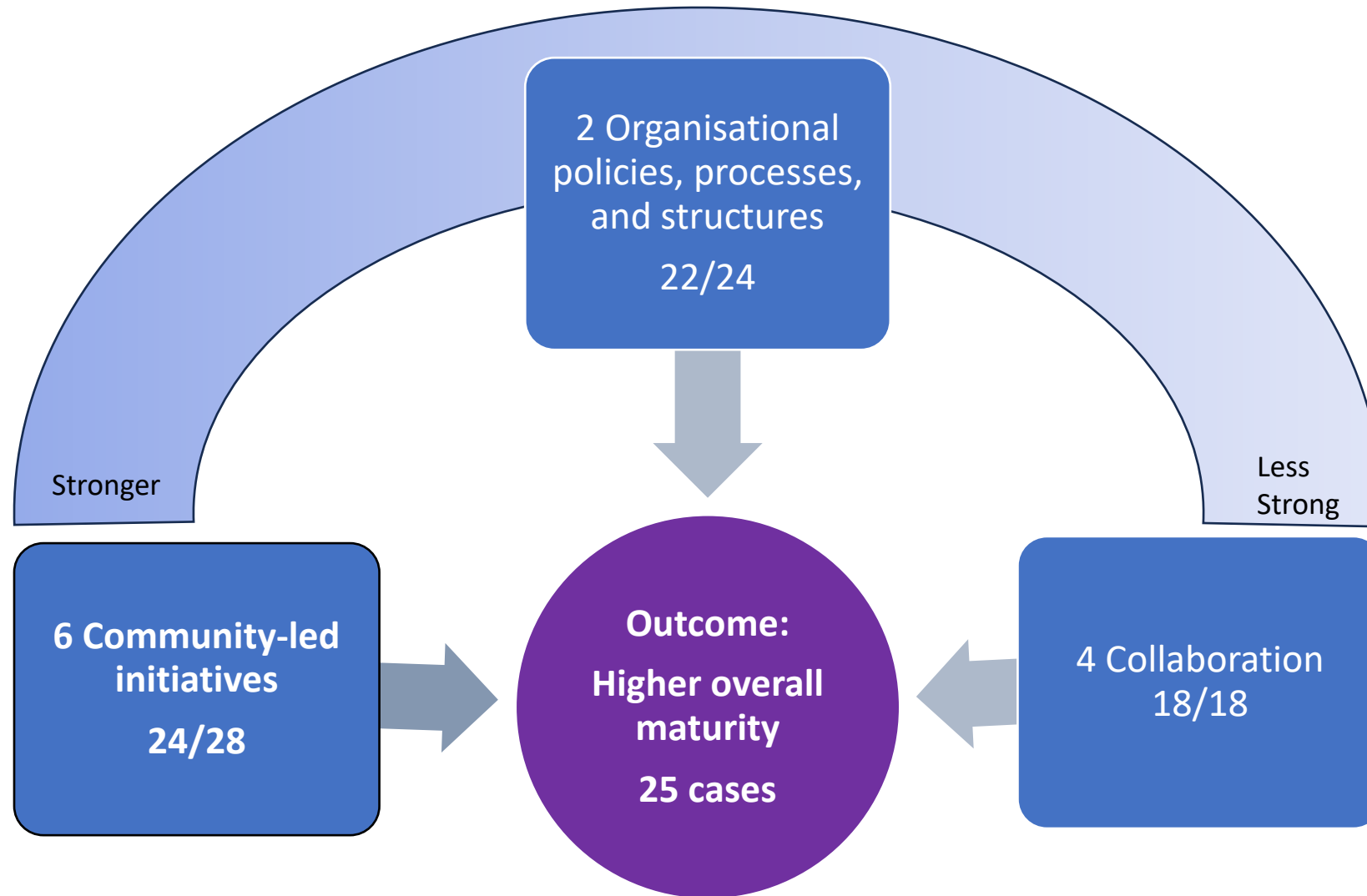
Regular partnership meetings → Collaboration beyond project funding

Community-led projects → Training, mentorship, paid roles meaningful community contribution

Programme design shaped by local perspectives → Regular resident input to strategic planning. More equitable decision making

Place partnerships trailblazing 'new ways of working' → Lending and receiving capacity from on aligned efforts to tackle inequalities

Headline findings: Conditions predicting higher overall maturity (3.5+)



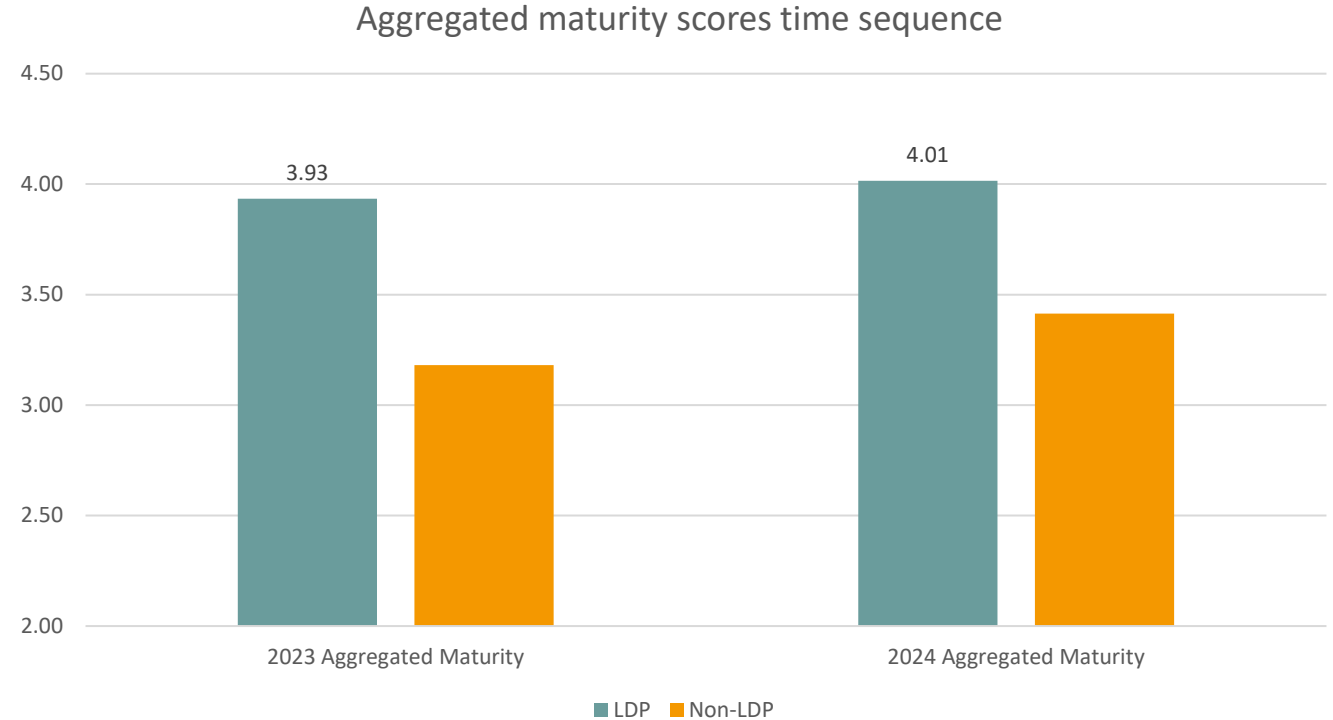
See more information on each condition here:

[Organisational policies, processes, and structures](#), [Community-led initiatives](#), and [Collaboration](#)

Deepening Place Partnerships (LDPs) and Expansion Place Partnerships



- DPPs are slightly more mature at the aggregated condition level.
- DPPs have matured, but at a slightly slower rate than Expansion Places
- Caution, aggregation masks large variation across places.
- Comparable conditions (n=9)
- Sample of 32 places based on repeat participation



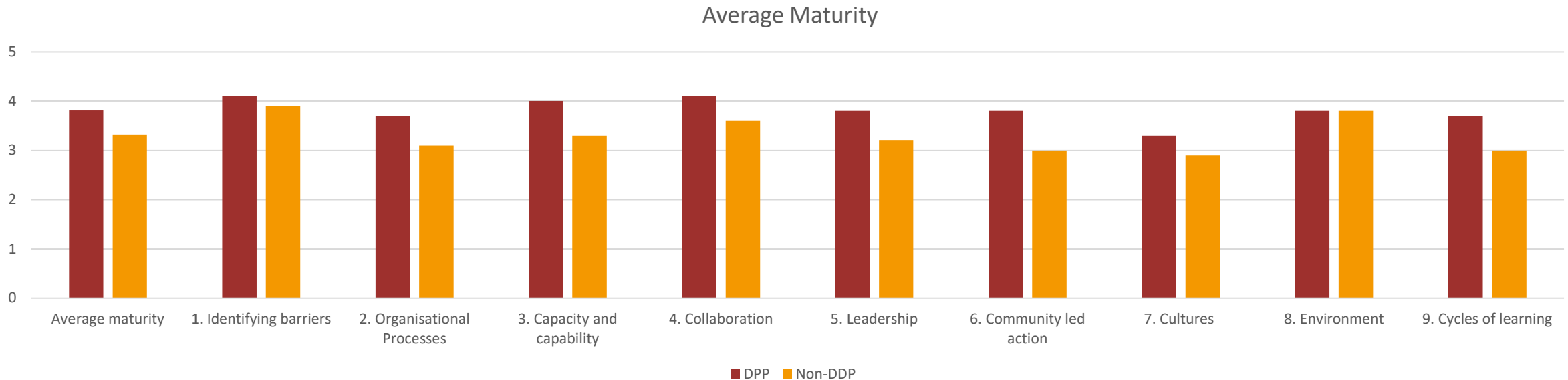
- Rapid expansion of “Place” investments not inhibiting maturation.
- Maturity of expansion places also result of system partner investments, strategy direction and wider policy shifts (beyond PA and SE).
 - Maturation is not necessarily linear – to reach ‘embedded’ status might require new strategies.



Maturation differs across different conditions

NOTE:

➤ Maturity across PPs (2024, 9 conditions)



- Some conditions are already mature / harder to differentiate
- Biggest differences in maturity of 'Organisational Processes', 'Capacity and Capability', 'Community led action' and 'Cycles of learning'.

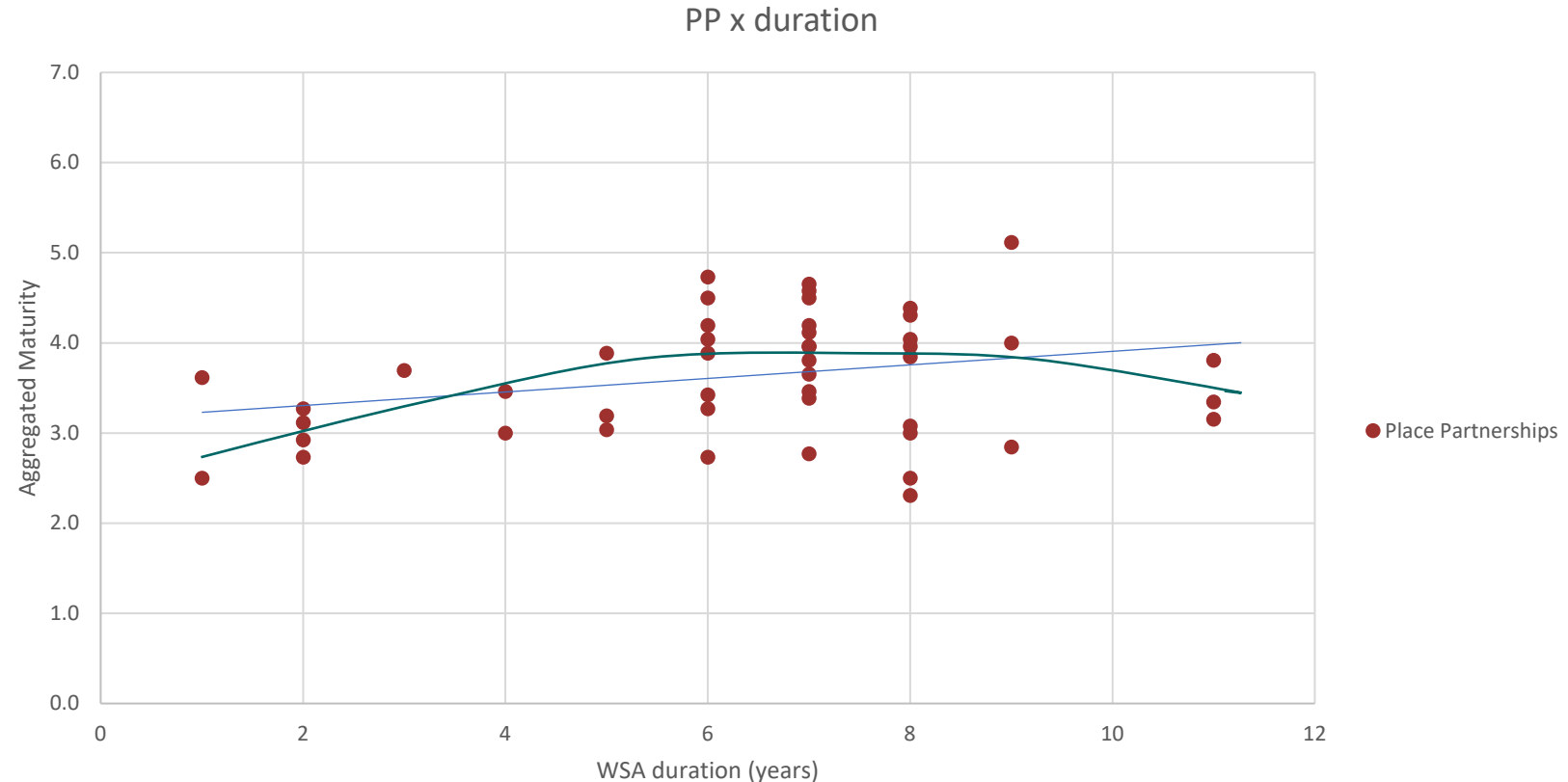
Maturation over time



- Cluster of PPs claim to be 5-8 years duration.
- General trend is for maturation over time (linear, blue line).
- Relationship could be more complex – showing a rise, and then potential to dip (polynomial, green line).

CAUTION

- Early adopters of WSA not all DPPs/ recipient of large investment.
- COVID 19 disruption of momentum.



- Maturation is not necessarily linear, or 'a given' – to reach 'embedded' status might require evolving strategies.

Pathways to action: Consideration of two broad phases in Place-Based Systemic Working



Phase 1: Emerging / establishing
Characterised by:

- New partnerships.
- Innovative reach and inclusion.
- Exemplar projects and initiatives.
- Working with / winning over stakeholders.

Phase 2: Embedded
Characterised by:

- Meaningful institutional relationships
- Routinely equitable participation
- Allyship beyond SPA sector on tackling inequalities?

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR THE BREAKOUT:

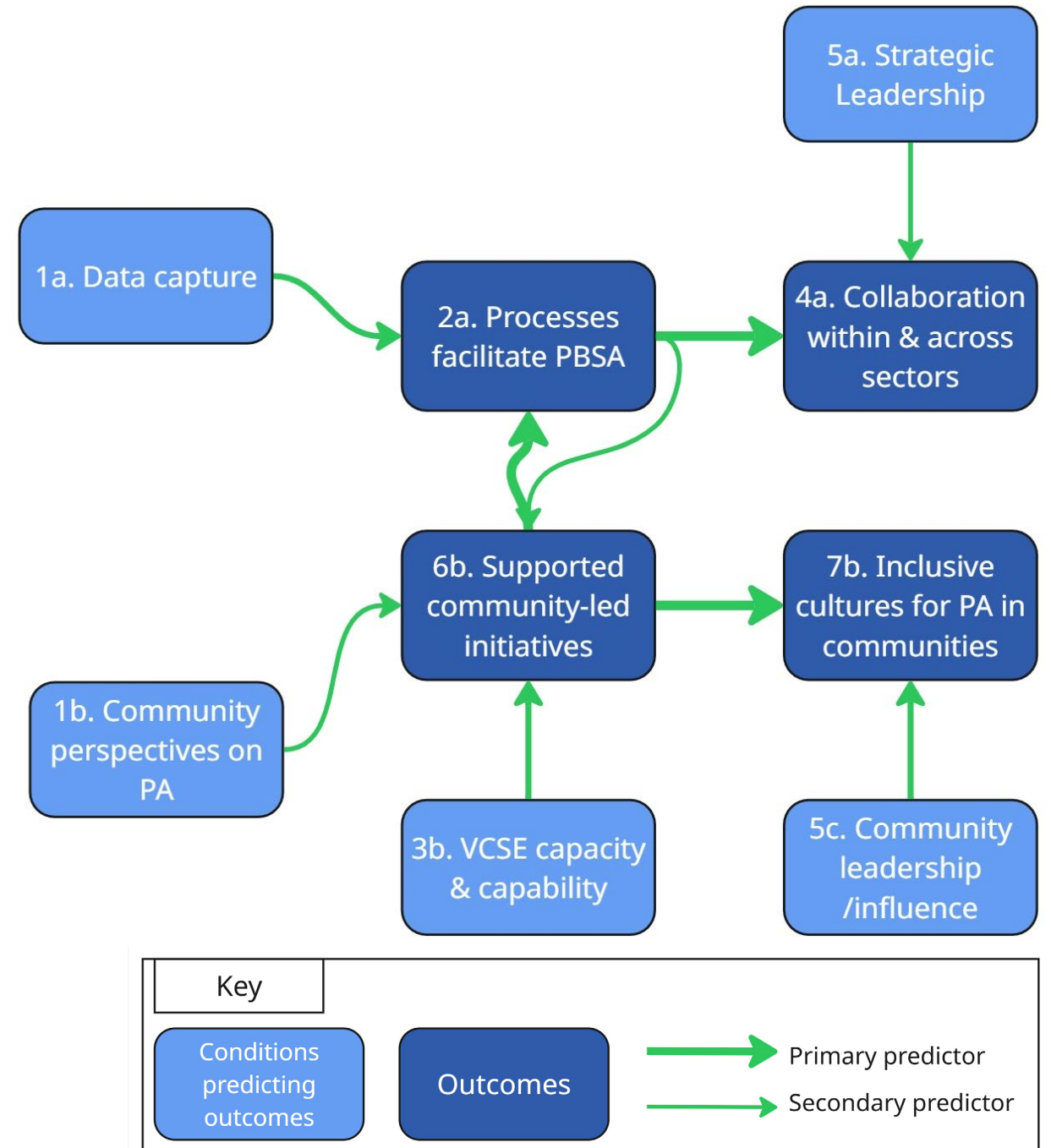
Does it make sense? Where is your place within the phases? How comfortable are you with the idea of evolving strategies over time?



**Have a
break!**

Combining the models: how interim outcomes relate to each other

- Overlay of four models discussed at our workshops shows interdependencies
- Foundational conditions enabling community-led initiatives which combined with community voice predicts Inclusive Cultures for PA
- Processes for PBSA key to collaboration and in two-way relationship with Supported Community-led initiatives

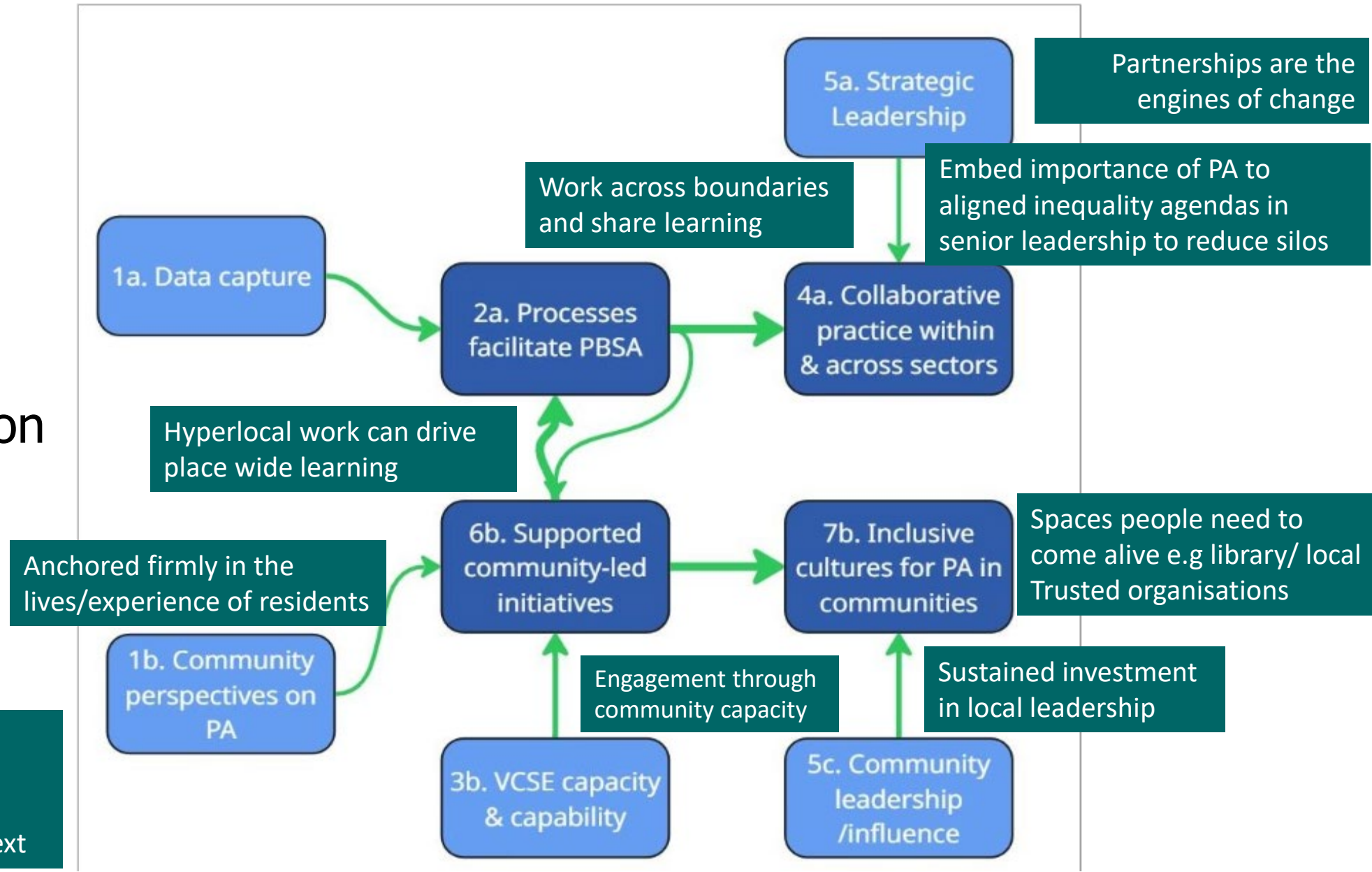


How can the conditions work together in practice?

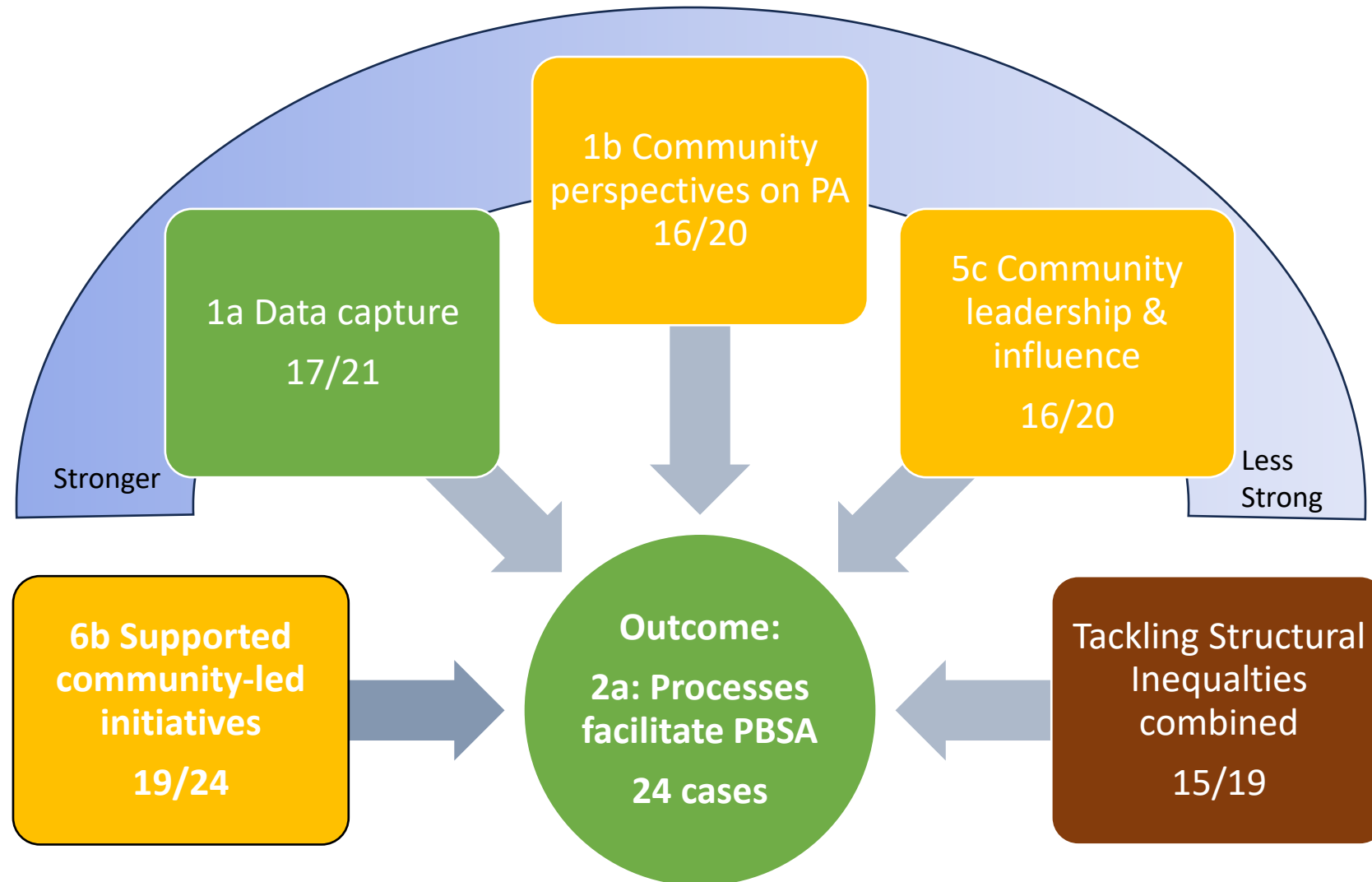
Example based on Hackney

Long-term Investment in local relationships /equitable partnerships
Time to understand local context

Meaningful change in one small corner of Hackney while generating learning and momentum that could influence system change across the whole place



Headline findings: Conditions predicting 2a: *Processes facilitate PBSA*



Findings: Conditions predicting Processes for facilitating PBSA



Supported Community Led Initiatives

When organisations with funding don't share power effectively, it prevents communities from taking the lead in creating new ways of working together **even where they have the necessary skills and confidence**. We can see examples where communities lose motivation.
How place teams see their role – facilitator

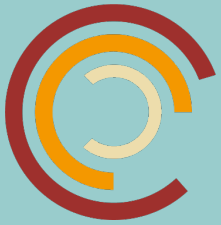
Data Capture

Use of **local data** and **insight** can sometimes be sufficient to **persuade gatekeepers** to change processes that enable place-based systemic working.

Engagement with VCFSE enables programme leads to development of insight into the **systemic barriers to collaboration with community organisations**

Processes (C)

Where there is a **lack of policies, administrative systems, structures and processes to enable more equitable sharing of power and resources** this limits what **innovative processes** local people and community organisations can develop because they do not have the **resources, security and stability** themselves to drive innovation.



Question to the group:

We often say and hear it is beneficial to share power with communities and create community leadership - but does something still hold us back..

- **How might we share power for community leadership?**
- **What might be standing in the way?**



Session feedback

- [Padlet]



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REAL Reflect
Evaluate
Act
Learn
Robin Vincent Learning and Evaluation