

# Forging the fundamentals

**A Capacity looking  
and listening report**



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



## **It's no secret that the public sector is facing some huge challenges, whether it's the rising complexity of need, the squeeze on resources or the battle fatigued workforce. Everyone is feeling the pressure.**

However, regardless of where we focus our attention it is clear that the problems that we face are too acute that we cannot and should not wait to address them. And yet, whilst the problems may seem overwhelming, the opportunities too are enormous. Across the country, through a variety of different projects, programmes and initiatives people are trying new approaches; some are working, some have failed, some are yet to be determined. But what they all have in common is a shared desire to do things differently, to change the norms, to fix the fundamentals of how we work as a 'system' before things get even more difficult.

**During Autumn 2023 we approached over 100 public and third sector leaders from across Cheshire and Merseyside to listen and to learn. We wanted to hear about the challenges people were struggling with as well as where people were achieving breakthroughs, where barriers were being broken through pioneering work and where work was breaking people through demand pressures, mismatched budgets, and rigidity in the 'system'. Nothing was off the table. We listened to their views, heard their frustrations, and started to think about the shared challenges, and with them, the shared opportunities, to try something different.**



# What's this work all about?

For some time, we've been reflecting on Capacity's role in helping our public and third sector partners 'make public services people services' - to do things differently and most importantly, more effectively. Our first 7 years have been spent working across a range of sector 'problems', to briefs and funding pots that often sit in isolation. Whilst of course we want to continue this, supporting targeted work across the region, we're now complementing it by trying something different. Working with a range of partner organisations, we're looking to use shared, in-depth understanding of people's experiences and ideas to drive fundamental change in the system itself, avoiding adopting an entrenched view on what the best solution might be.

We recognise that for Cheshire & Merseyside to thrive we need to take a more objective approach, understand what is and isn't working and imagine the kind of world we want to live in. We need to start with a strong understanding of how a problem or gap is experienced by everyday people, to find and commit to new ways of working, and to build a new normal for local people.

**In short, we want to go bolder with ideas and push the boundaries, banning the phrase 'but we've always done it that way', asking questions and encouraging brave leaders to reconsider the fundamentals as they take on the public sector's biggest challenges.**

## Three core themes

During 2023 we combined three themes of work under the 'Fundamentals' umbrella, all of which take a slightly different look at the challenges at hand:

**1** **How system design, joined up thinking and ways of working impact on public service delivery**

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**2** **How data & intelligence can help us with decision making that has impact**

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**3** **How we can better use social investment to drive change**

Together, these themes gave us a unique opportunity to get stuck into meaningful conversations (with some very time generous people) and explore some of the big challenges they face. By offering a place where leaders can be open and honest, we can then start to consider and create better conditions for change, and with-it real-life impact for the people in our region.

We wanted to pull health and social care leaders and frontline workers away from the nitty-gritty of their day jobs. By giving them the time to share and truly listening to their views, we can start work on the fundamental changes our region needs to make a bigger and bolder difference in local lives.

**Those leading and delivering public service strategy across Cheshire & Merseyside have very difficult jobs, of that we have no doubt. At Capacity we're not living through that daily reality, but we see the challenges it creates, and we hear the patterns in frustration, fear and also hope from across the region.**

Our work has given us a privileged position to speak to people across the spectrum of public, private and VCSE sectors allowing us to build relationships, understanding what makes people motivated to do what they're doing despite the complex environment they're working in and finding a way to see the wood through the trees.

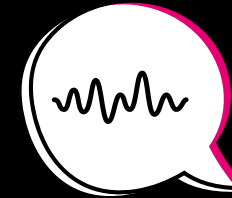


# What did we do?

First of all, we needed to learn more about the biggest public sector challenges in Cheshire & Merseyside, things that could be easier to solve if the conditions (systems, behaviours and ways of working) were dismantled and rebuilt with people at the heart of the system. It's best to be honest - we were agnostic about the actual problems to which we should be giving our energy. What we were really looking for was partners who were keen to share their thoughts and ideas, people with enthusiasm that matched ours who wanted to act as doers, and to work together to try and do things differently.

As we developed our shortlist of 'target' people we went on to complete some desktop research, exploring local public sector data, thought pieces around public sector transformation (including reviewing new ways of working) and case studies and service stories (to understand where people are doing fantastic work). This research wasn't limited to Cheshire & Merseyside - we were looking for learning, UK wide, and it wasn't limited by issue, we were looking for people doing things differently first and foremost.

Once we'd got a feel for local and national themes and challenges we returned to our 'target' list of people - the planners & the doers. We asked them for their time and brain power, leaning on them to give us the practical on-the-ground insights that would help us to build a picture. Of the 100+ people contacted for involvement we were lucky enough to have deep conversations with 43 people across the region, spending time picking their brains, feeling their pain and sharing their imagination between September 2023 & January 2024.



## Of the 43 people who were a part of this engagement, we spoke to:

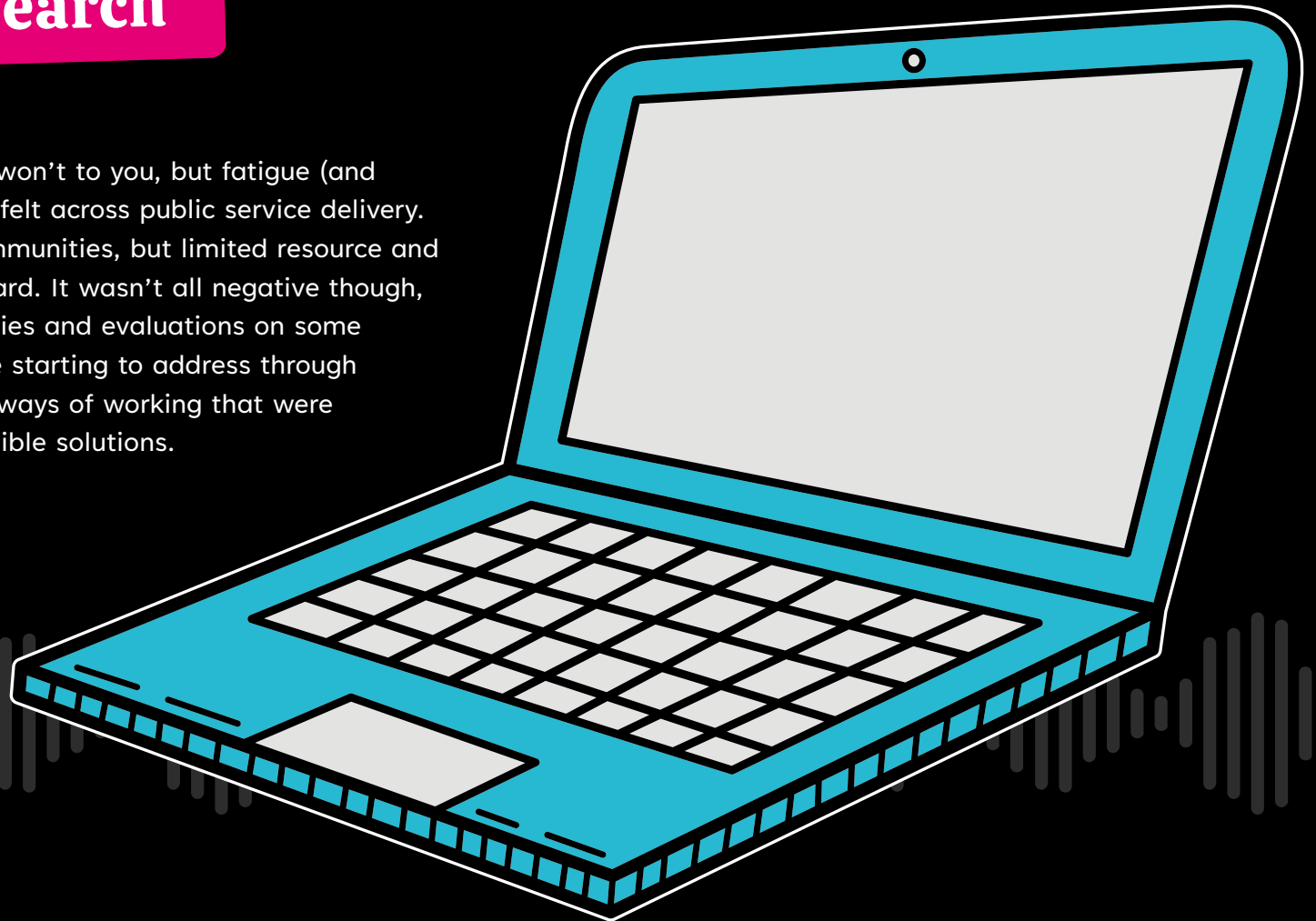
- ✓ LA directors of Finance, Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Place, Public Health & Communities
- ✓ Public service leaders & systems thinkers
- ✓ Policy leads
- ✓ Health professionals
- ✓ VCSE providers
- ✓ Former LA leaders
- ✓ Governmental organisations
- ✓ Academics
- ✓ Data innovation leads
- ✓ Social investors



# What did we read?

## The desktop research

It didn't come as a surprise to us, and it won't to you, but fatigue (and more importantly battle fatigue) is being felt across public service delivery. People want to make a difference for communities, but limited resource and prescriptive ways of working make this hard. It wasn't all negative though, we found reams of information, case studies and evaluations on some really complex problems that places were starting to address through collaboration, creativity and community: ways of working that were breaking past barriers and acting as tangible solutions.



## Areas of impact that stood out included:



### PEOPLE POWER

- **What did we find?**

Examples of great practice and learning around involving communities in both the design and planning of support and also the process of bringing it to life.

- **Why was it of interest?**

Research shows us that we need a relational approach to public services that facilitates the development of communities capable of mobilising and resolving issues. Working with communities using participatory design, the focus can be shifted from treatment of problems to prevention.

- **What could this look like in practice for Cheshire and Merseyside?**

This means public service planning prioritising the voice of residents, enabled by prioritised budgets and patient timelines.

- **Give me some examples:**

Across the country, we found that communities are doing this in pockets to take hold of the problem in hand, creating solutions that work for them. In the Claremont community in Blackpool, they came together with the aim of improving the standard of private rented accommodation and also to create a sustainable partnership model of local governance to improve the health of its residents. The Northwood Together Partnership in Kirkby (funded through Big Lottery) have created a 10-year project to improve the opportunities for local people.



**“...a relational approach to public services that facilitates the development of communities capable of mobilising and resolving issues.”**



# CARING FOR EACH OTHER

- **What did we find?**

There's no getting away from the difficulties faced by children and adult social care teams. Communities are under stress with inadequate resources to support the complexity of need.

In 2021/22, LAs total expenditure on adult social care was £26.9 billion (up £2.6 billion on the year before) and £11.1 billion on children's social care. There has been a 9% increase in those requesting support from their Adult Social Care services since 2015/16, with people living longer with multiple or complex needs. In Children's Social Care, there was an increase of 43.2% on spending between 2009/10 and 2021/22, at the expense of universal and preventative services such as Sure Start children's centres and other spend on children under five, which fell by 73.4% over the same period. In 2021/22 alone there was a 14.6% increase in spend on children's residential care nationally.

Whilst issues vary across Local Authorities, there are some that surfaced over and over again, including workforce challenges, such as low pay, job insecurity and poor working conditions leading to poor recruitment and retention of staff, the cost, shortage and quality of placements, years of under investment, with all of these compounded by ever-increasing population health issues.

- **Why was it of interest?**

The ever-increasing spending on social care is at a crisis point, creating a widening gap between the point at which early intervention could make a difference and when people are actually receiving help and support. This means people are only getting help when situations have developed to the point that they are really struggling; when there's nowhere left to turn.

- **What could this look like in practice for Cheshire and Merseyside?**

There needs to be a focus on early intervention across the board with real investment going into upstream, preventative initiatives; fostering opportunities for people to get support from within their community at a hyper-local level, helping to build confidence and resilience in individuals, in organisations, in communities.

- **Give me some examples:**

Wirral's family toolbox does what it says on the tin! It's a toolkit for parents on a range of topics to give them the information they need when they need it. With early intervention services over-stretched, this initiative helps give practical and grounded support that is both impactful and easy to access at point of need.





## JOB SECURITY

- **What did we find?**

It is evident that the region has severe issues with job security - 5.4% of adults in the Liverpool City Region are in non-permanent employment as opposed to 4.8% in England as a whole.

- **Why was it of interest?**

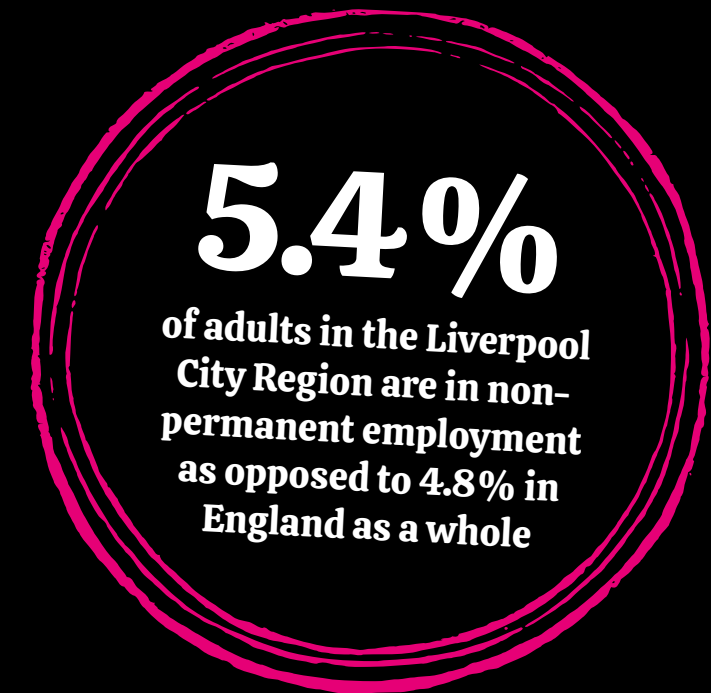
We know that having a job with a secure contract is a protective factor against deep poverty. **The level of severely insecure work is an important factor in the health of the labour market as well as the quality of work within a region.** In addition, childcare costs impact on parents ability to work, the impact of which exponentially increases for those in the bottom percentages of household income.

- **What could this look like in practice for Cheshire and Merseyside?**

We need to think more about how we prioritise job security, not only as recommended practice but as required practice in the region. We need to understand the public sector's interaction with temporary employment and find new ways to incentivise permanent contracting for local employers.

- **Give me some examples:**

In Merseyside, the Economies for Healthier Lives programme works closely with residents, employers and other key stakeholders to get to the root of the challenges for unemployed residents with a health condition who want to get back into employment and stay in employment.





# HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES

- **What did we find?**

62% of Liverpool's population live in the top 20% most deprived areas in England, a pattern which is replicated across the North West. **Men and women in Merseyside and Cheshire have a lower life expectancy than the English average, but there's also a vast disparity between the most deprived areas of the region and the most affluent, with residents in the most deprived areas living an average of 15 years less than residents in the most affluent areas.** Austerity, Covid-19 and Cost of Living crisis have impacted the most vulnerable hardest, creating significant health and educational inequalities across our region. Schools in the most affluent areas have had 8-9% increase in real-time funding as opposed to 5% in the most deprived areas. Pupils in London receive 9.7% more funding than those in the north.

- **Why was it of interest?**

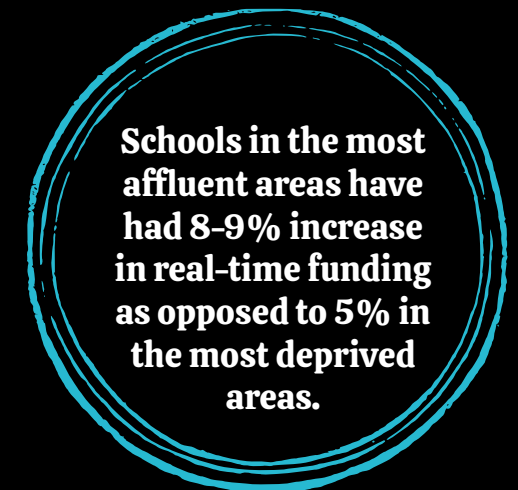
The best outcomes for people are heavily influenced by a good education and a healthy environment and lifestyle. Unless the current imbalance is addressed, people in the region's most deprived areas will continue to experience poor quality of life and lower than average life and healthy life expectancy resulting from both health and educational inequalities, as well as requiring higher levels of support from already over-taxed public services.

- **What could this look like in practice for Cheshire and Merseyside?**

Targeted health interventions are often delivered in the areas of lowest life-expectancy and highest deprivation - a continued focus on place-based approaches across public sector services will drive up standards of education, healthy living, and hope for the future.

- **Give me some examples:**

Liverpool City Region's multi-million pound investment in the groundbreaking 'Cradle to Career' programme is delivering real impact across the region's most deprived areas, with people and local organisations at the heart of decision making about their local area.





## GREENER HEALTH

- **What did we find?**

A greener region is a key priority area for all Cheshire and Merseyside local authorities as well as the LCR Combined Authority.

- **Why was it of interest?**

This is not only about environmental sustainability, it is intrinsically woven into public service delivery - air pollution alone is having a significant impact on population health including an increase in respiratory conditions, cardiovascular disease and lung cancer. We need to find ways of taking a regional approach to reducing emissions and working towards cleaner air.

- **What could this look like in practice for Cheshire and Merseyside?**

Joined up approaches to transport, shared investment in green travel schemes, incentivised environmental targets for local businesses with above average levels of carbon monoxide production (e.g. regional bus companies, manufacturing industries and delivery services).

- **Give me some examples:**

All LAs in Cheshire and Merseyside have commitments to a greener future. Cheshire East have committed to becoming a carbon neutral borough by 2045 with a range of projects and programmes taking place to support this. They're getting the community involved with toolkits & hubs, school competitions and conferences all supporting them to move towards their goal.



**Cheshire East  
have committed to  
becoming a carbon  
neutral borough  
by 2045**



## Tying up the desktop research and moving onto **the next stage**

Organisations big and small have been experimenting with how to transform services into relationships, and many leaders and doers in the public sector are already pushing the boundaries in innovation.

The problems we've focused on are complex; but we know that through this research we haven't necessarily identified new or unknown issues. Our intention was to read and digest where the issues are the loudest to be able to steer our conversations, armed with data, good practice and knowledge.

We're aware that we can't take on every issue all at once. So, in the next phase, where we listened to the planners and doers, we focused on the areas where we felt we could have the biggest impact, where we have expertise and relationships, where we can really push the dial and bring about change. That means that some of the issues, such as Greener Health, although of vital importance, are not ones that we are best placed to tackle. Whereas there are issues where we have a strong track record of driving change, such as health inequalities, and service reform in health and social care. We also know that there are lots of challenges that we haven't mentioned, and that those that we have we may have barely scratched the surface, but if we're going to stand any chance of bringing about change we're going to have to start somewhere but not be afraid to go everywhere.

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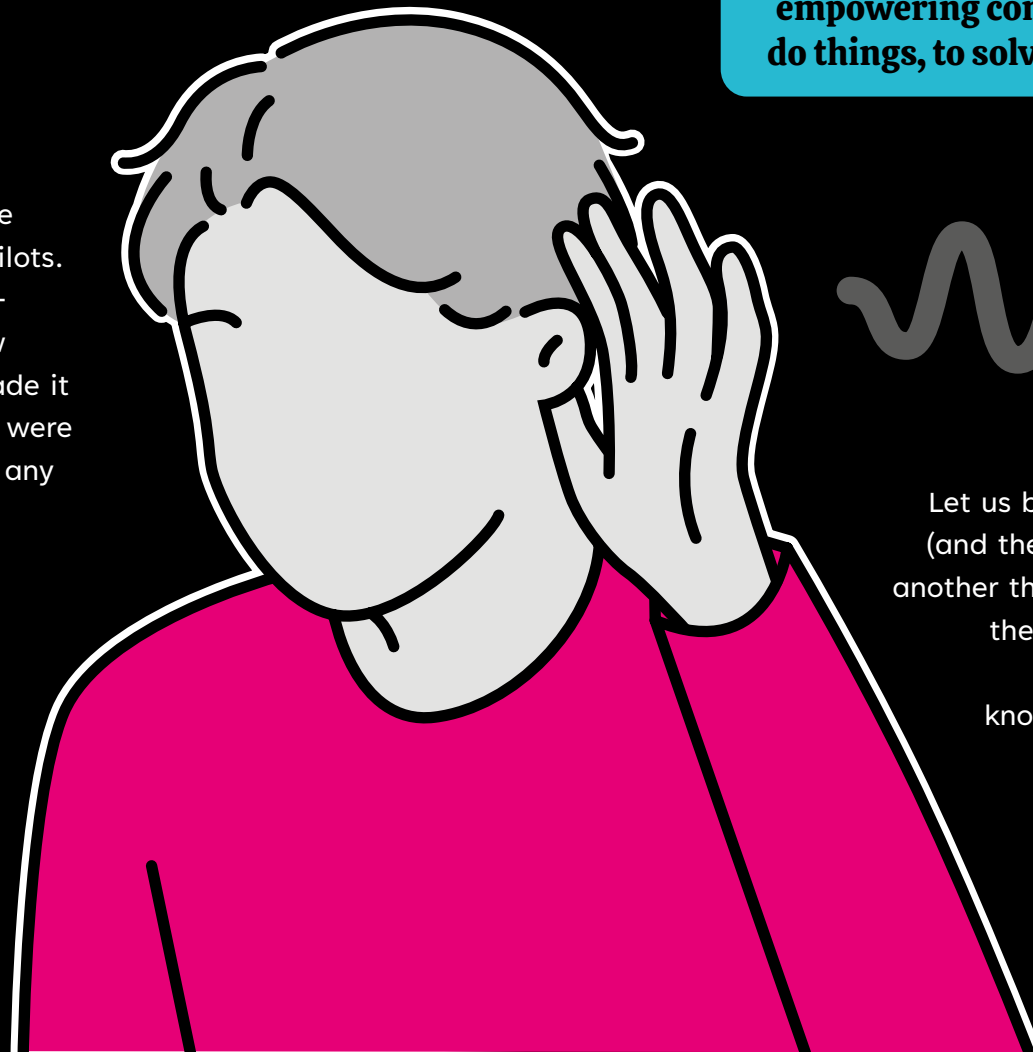
# What did we hear?

## The interview themes

Once we'd absorbed the themes from our desktop research we started our interviews, we were intrigued to see if similar themes emerged, cementing the focus of current strategies, data and pilots. We also anticipated that these one-to-one conversations would draw out new challenges, things that hadn't even made it to strategy yet, or possibly things that were too vast or even too political to sit on any one organisation's 'desk'.

**“We don't meet basic needs and put too much time into 'sexier' stuff... and that's not working, we're not shifting the dial.”**

**“We should be engaging and empowering communities to do things, to solve the issues.”**



Let us be clear across those interviews (and the emails, attachments and 'just another thought' messages that followed them) we collated a huge array of thoughts, ideas and nuggets of knowledge. The current and recent experiences shared were vast, with complexity, contradictions and with them wide ranging opportunities and challenges.

# What jumped out?

## WHERE CAN WE MAKE PROGRESS QUICKLY?



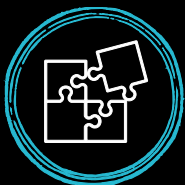
**More action:** Everyone was having more difficult days than easy ones in their present role, but they shared an appetite for change and, with it, action.



**Back to basics:** People recognised a need to get the rudimentary stuff right – offering the types of support people want and need, focusing on service quality, making sure departments are doing what they say they'll do.



**Listen then design:** There was a belief in stronger listening and using community led design to better direct their spending.



**Joining up at 'place':** People felt it was important to organise leaders at 'place level' before getting the community involved.

## WHAT WILL TAKE A LITTLE LONGER?



**Longer-term thinking:** There was shared frustration with short-term thinking and short-term funding.



**Making intelligent decisions:** People want to be making decisions for the right reasons. There has to be good intelligence as well as robust data for this to happen.



**Community connections:** There is a need to move from a transactional approach to a relational one that can successfully harness the power of the community, building connections and relationships across communities, services and organisations.



**Beyond budget battles:** Although it felt a long way off there was a keenness to get away from the conflict around 'who is paying for what'.



**Accepting some managed risk:** Balancing some risk to allow creativity is key, many felt the public sector needs to be a braver (with systems that allow this) if we want real change.

# Where can we make progress quickly?



## MORE ACTION:

What was clear from our conversations was that there is too much energy and focus going into strategy and governance and not enough resource being put into making real change happen for the people of Cheshire and Merseyside. We heard that there is a desire for creativity and flexibility and an overarching willingness of 'let's give it a go'. The desire to try something new and move on from the 'talking shop of change' was clear across the spectrum of services and people we spoke to. However, the blockages and barriers that often got in the way of 'action' created frustration and contributed to the existence of battle fatigue we highlighted in the introduction.

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“We need help to translate policy into delivery.”

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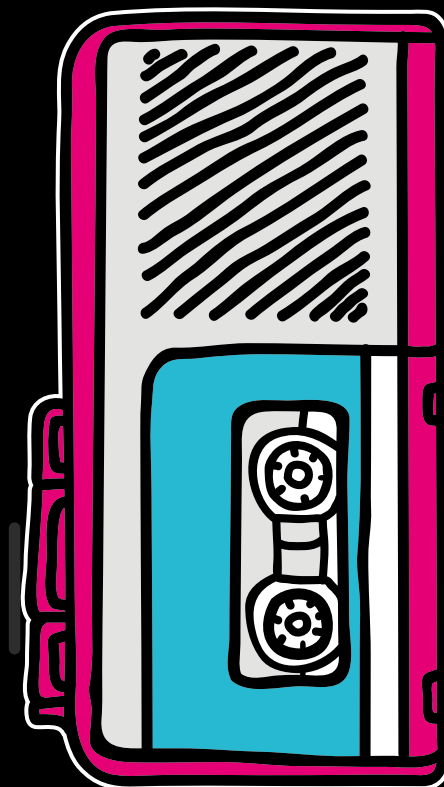
“We (public services) need to organise ourselves before we can expect the community to play an active role. We have got to start taking collective action to build trust.”

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“We have plenty of people who theoretically strategise but there's either a lack of capacity or capability to tip this into action.”

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“We're trying to do the strategy but we have no money or people to make it happen... We focus on 'just good enough' or 'not failing', and it isn't good enough.”







## BACK TO BASICS:

Our systems have become overly complex as we've moved towards crisis level management public sector service delivery. There's a feeling that we've lost sight of what's important to people. The only way we're really going to know the answer is talking to our communities. We have to get back to the grass roots so that we can thrive as a region. It's clear that there are some fantastic people working in public sector delivery across the region. However, people are struggling against the tide to do the work that they know needs to be done. Through relational, back to basics methods, we can move back from the brink of a reactive, transactional approach to free people up to deliver the change for which so many are crying out.

“Just about every urgent care system is log jammed, the government would normally find money to ease the issue, but that seems unlikely this winter - the tide has turned.”

“Cost of social care is what is crippling local authorities, but it's not a political vote winner.”

“What motivates people to be healthy? It's because they have hope and confidence in their own loved ones, their futures, their dreams, feeling secure, happy and well-fed.”

“Welfare state is undervalued, Adult Social Care is not protected in terms of finances.”

“We should be engaging and empowering communities to do things, to solve the issues.”

“We've never succeeded in paying enough joined up efforts in people's wellbeing - harnessed around those people who really need support.”

“Fatalism can be deep-rooted, but often it's in services and organisations.”





## LISTEN THEN DESIGN:

People agreed that good strategies are developed by all those people it's delivery will impact; at the heart of this are communities themselves. Many participants highlighted the huge depth of knowledge and ideas within our communities and the desperate need to support communities to mobilise themselves, shifting power to the grassroots to support people to change from within. The value of lived experience within service design is well documented and as a region we want to make bigger steps towards embedding this.

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“People can be creators of their own solutions, doing with, not to, as co-creators.”

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“We need to give power for people to make decisions and create space for people to have a voice and feel heard.”

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“Coproduction x 10,000... We need to embed this.”

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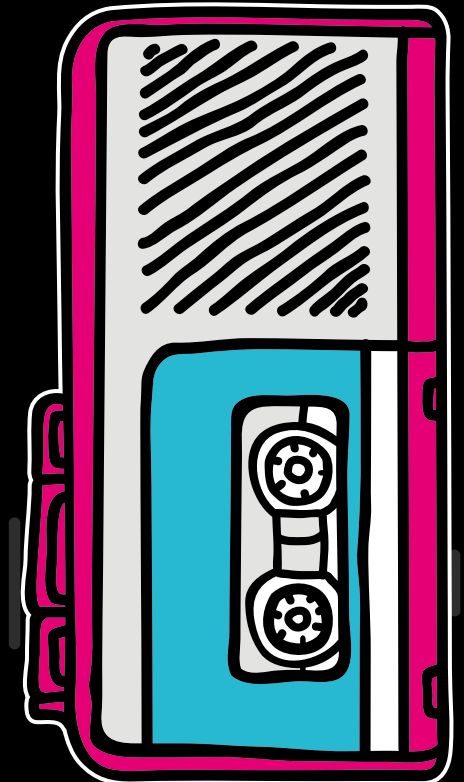
“Bring leaders together at place, get things done at community level.”

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“We talk about inequalities, but we don't really understand them at place- need to do this through working with residents and tease out what will bring this forward.”

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“We need to create space for people to have a voice and feel heard.”





## JOINING UP AT 'PLACE':

Participants agree that having a clear vision for the future was key to good delivery but many felt there wasn't enough focus on tipping time & headspace into action, particularly when there isn't enough resource to go around. There's a movement nationally towards coordinating at place level and we think Cheshire and Merseyside has the appetite to be a forerunner. Working at place level doesn't just mean bringing a few organisations together and talking about the issues in an area. It means getting into the detail of how to put words into action for communities to thrive. That's what the work has to be.

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**“Health and social care professionals are not trained in a sense of ‘place’, they are not trained to think of people in their communities, it’s about diagnosing a problem.”**

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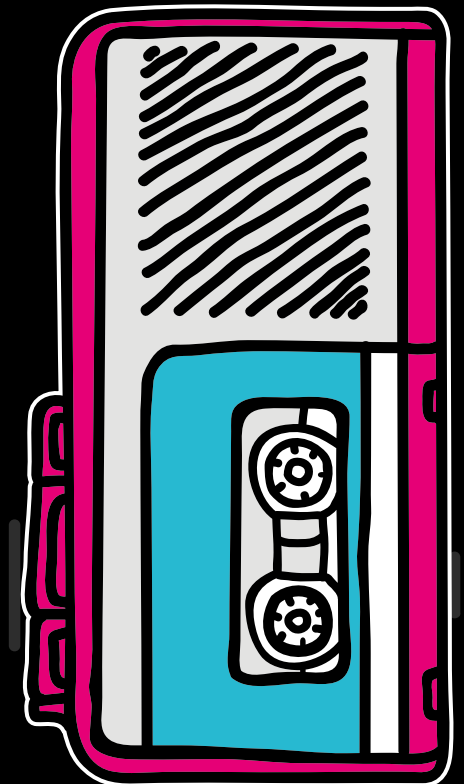
**“Most of what keeps people healthy is local to their home.”**

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**“We are fragmented, we need to mandate collaboration.”**

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**“‘Place’ needs to be able to manage its own resources and then allocate to communities to deliver without opaque architecture.”**



# What will take a little longer?

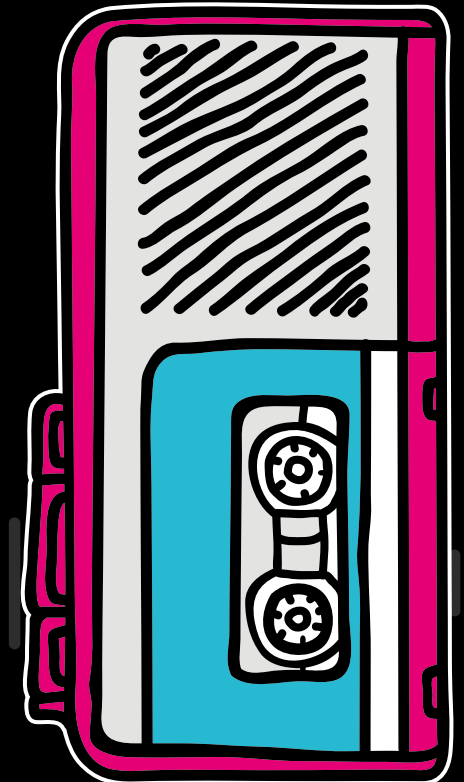


## LONGER-TERM THINKING:

Alongside trying new things there was a real keenness to focus on 'longevity not legacy'. Participants recognised that 'initiatives, programmes & projects are great for testing out new ideas and gathering evidence but what comes next is just as important'. Short term funding cycles create only short term solutions, and if we continue to focus only on alleviating the symptom, we'll never make progress in healing the underlying cause. We heard the same thing from the public sector leads (with restrictions on procurement and funding) and the third sector providers (who were unable to develop long-term plans), there are tonnes of fantastic pieces of work which have no way of accessing longer-term funding. Once they're over, they get filed away, with an impact report and a refused business case, the people supported left wanting, the staff employed left with a P45 - the frustration was palpable.

“We've been asked not to try anything different.”

“This idea of being 'initiative' led creates a sense of this being temporary and as a result there is no real change, shift in control or moving of resources.”





## MAKING INTELLIGENT DECISIONS:

For many of those who we spoke to, data is part of their day to day job, but capturing and reporting on data isn't the same as using data to make informed decisions. Technical limitations, data governance and resource are all impeding opportunities for innovation data driven design and delivery. When we talk about data, we're looking at the quantitative and qualitative stuff which is the way we can really make good decisions.

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“We are really rubbish on data - got loads of data but no intelligence.”

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“Trust in data sharing & governance is low; we need this to get better to understand what's going on.”

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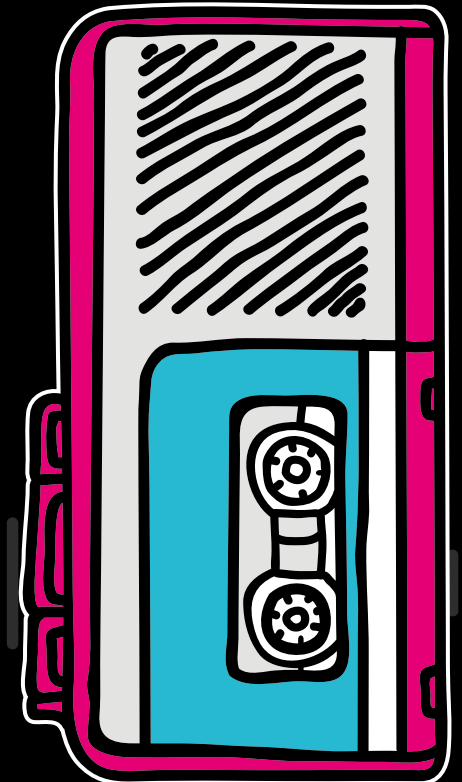
“We need to be able to track the life course of a person to tell a story. We only look at population not people.”

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“We should be using data for a case for change but it often comes down to whether it's delivering a saving, not what the community needs.”

“

“We need the 'so what' narrative around the data.”





## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:

Too often a transactional approach to service delivery has either been consciously or unconsciously adopted. However, we will never successfully harness the power of the community as long as we treat public services as individual transactions between one person and statutory bodies. If we are to achieve a truly relational approach to public services, every opportunity to build connections and relationships across the different communities that the public sector serves should be maximised, whether through participatory design, community engagement, formal delivery partnerships or through an honest and genuine openness to engage. This is far more likely to succeed if services are devolved to community or a hyperlocal level, where those making the decisions don't just recognise but sincerely live and breathe the uniqueness of their locale. However, in order to fully realise the power of local relationships and connections, community organisations need to be able to operate within a mechanism of supportive infrastructure, from local government as well as the wider state, from pioneers and innovators as well as from other service providers who are addressing similar issues and needs.

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**“Families want to care for themselves - we need flexibility in the system to enable this. We need the process to be more human focused, not process focused.”**

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**“Carers... We need to support them. Carers need to be part of the care community.”**

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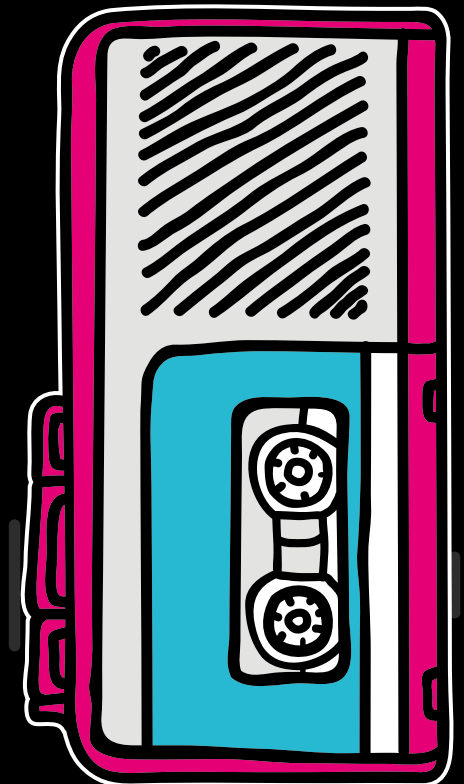
**“People know each other less.”**

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**“We need to build trust with people; trust has dropped since Covid.”**

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**“We only look at population not people.”**





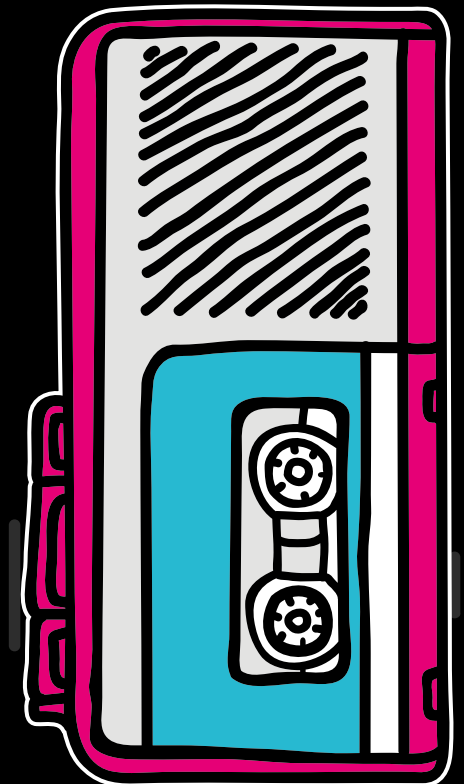
## BEYOND BUDGET BATTLES:

In simple terms, public sector bodies have a duty to spend public funds well; this forms part of key decision making daily. There's great work going on to fund short-medium term work, but long-term allocation of resource is more complicated with funding being increasingly designated to reactive work, covering only statutory duties. There's a thirst for shared, long-term visions to join up working (and therefore budgets) to get to a place where we're able to look at the whole person - not just individual issues.

“We need a shared vision for what success is.”

“The short-term cycle means we're making spend/cut decisions on a hamster wheel without medium-long term planning.”

“ASC is a challenge - lots of people need help, we can't help them all. We need to be honest about that.”



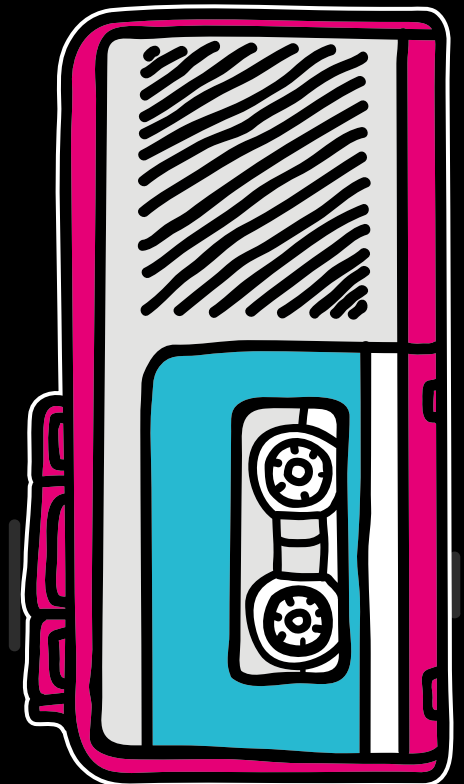


## ACCEPTING MANAGED RISK:

Many individuals highlighted the importance of policies & processes and their purpose around protecting people and public funds. However, there were concerns about conflict (both internally and externally) when balancing risk and creativity. Rather than supporting change there was a belief that these protective factors are hindering progress. This comes from public sector organisations and their service providers; there's a sense of 'enthusiasm but hesitancy' around trying, for example, alternative funding routes to innovate.

“It used to be difficult...  
now it feels impossible.  
We can't do anything  
differently.”

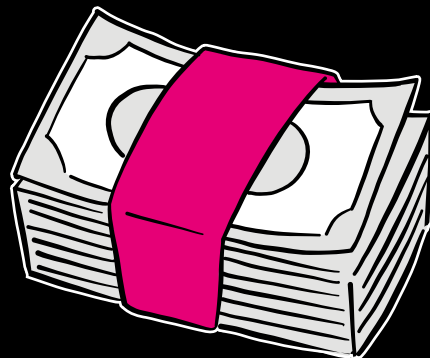
“When times get tough,  
we shrink away from the  
principles of public service and  
retreat into our contracts.”



# The elephant in the room

When we look for insights around public sector redesign like this one, we ask people to try not to focus on money alone, but to imagine possibilities that aren't about existing budget restrictions. We ask them to focus on things like different ways of spending or different ways of bringing more money into the sector, so they don't get too hung up on 'the lack of cash stopping us'. There are things the public and third sectors can still do whilst budgets are tight and when "if only we had a decent budget, if we had more money, if our funding was fair" becomes the circular conversation, we lose some of the additional value that conversations like this one can bring.

That said it was of course acknowledged that trying to run services on shrinking budgets takes a lot of time, effort and firefighting. Participants were clear that tightening budgets creates more competition between different organisations and different public sector bodies, and more time is subsequently spent looking inwards than outwards. There was an acknowledgement that this then makes it lot more difficult to focus on partnership working and collaboration, joint thinking which would be of benefit to all.



**During our interviews we also explored the role of local authorities in partnership social investments – learning from existing projects and identifying public and provider sector barriers when considering this type of funding.**

There's lots to share from these more targeted conversations, too much to include here, but we'll soon be sharing more detail and recommendations in our 'Fuelling change in LCR: the role of local authorities and social investment'.

By working together we're hoping to build a stronger understanding and action plan to attract and use more social funding to make a bigger and bolder difference in local lives.

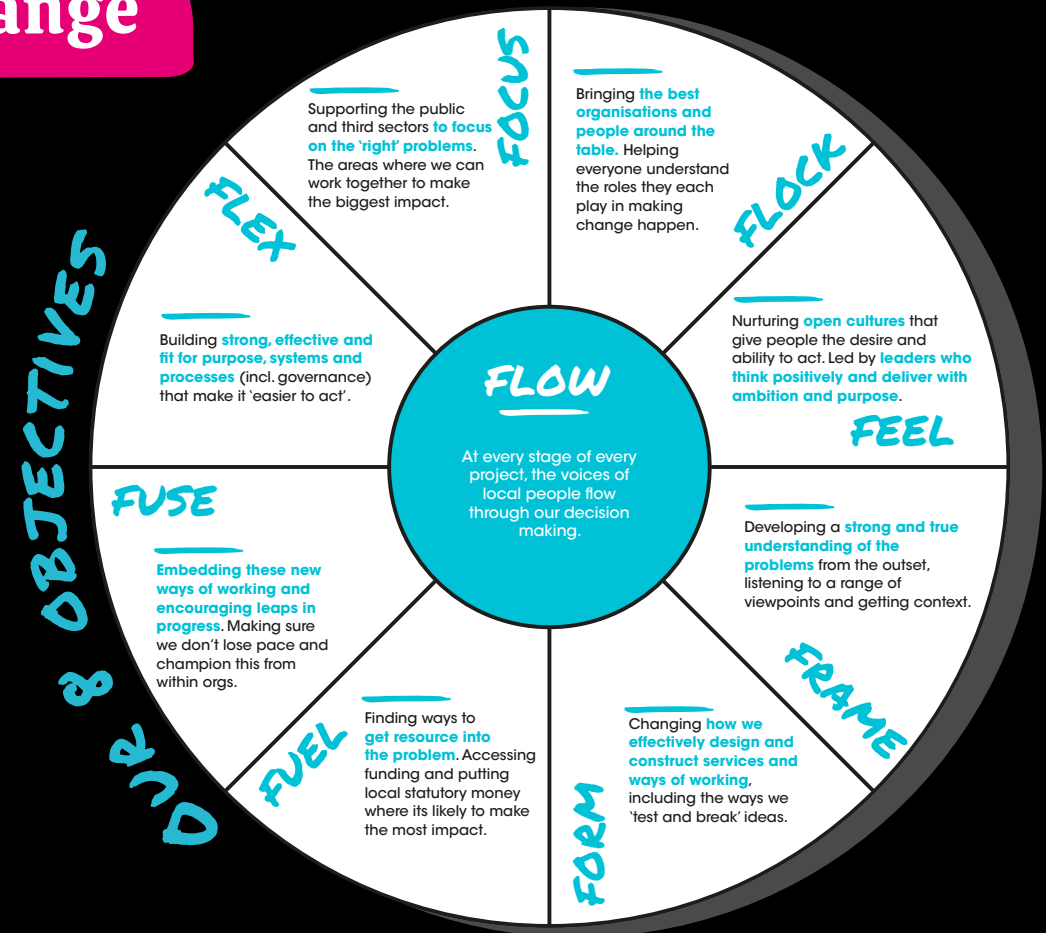




# So how do we make it make sense?

## Creating a framework for change

As can be seen from the first theme of our interviews, generally people in the third and public sectors just want to get stuff done and it's a big part of our job at Capacity to not only see the sticky issues, but to put them out in the open, design ways through them and then work with partners to do the doing. Through this phase our activity has been centred on 'Focus' and 'Frame' from the Capacity Fundamentals. These will continue to be central to our work as our work on Fundamentals progresses. But first, let's be clear, we know that none of these challenges can be solved simply or easily, they're complex and embedded and they need to be tackled cautiously. So, to take a measured and steady approach, we've taken what we've heard and pieced it together from our birds eye view of public service delivery across the region. Putting some structure around it and creating our 'Capacity Fundamentals' framework, an outline of the things we'll be considering when working with partners to bring about the 'conditions for change' in our region's public services.



## Capacity Fundamentals Theme

## Reflections from these insights

### FLOW:

At every stage of every project, the voices of local people flow through our decision making.

There is an absolute desire to **listen and then design**. Embedding a strong approach to true, grassroots community led design and decision-making was seen as a priority for the region.

### FEEL:

Nurturing open cultures that give people the desire and ability to act. Led by leaders who think positively and deliver with ambition and purpose.

**Relationships and personalities** were seen as key to success in public service delivery. Having the right people in the right jobs, behaving in authentic and personable ways.

### FLEX:

Building strong, effective and fit for purpose, systems and processes (incl. governance) that make it 'easier to act'.

Public sector workers and providers alike want to adapt systems and processes to make them fit for purpose, including more bravery in governance to **accept managed risk**.

### FORM:

Changing how we effectively design and construct services and ways of working, including the ways we 'test and break' ideas.

Designing strong services that meet need requires flexibility, to 'try things out' and get to take **more action** - allowing for much more creativity in what's commissioned/piloted.

### FLOCK:

Bringing the best organisations and people around the table. Helping everyone understand the roles they each play in making change happen.

People need to come together regularly, it's too easy to keep focusing inwards at the moment so we need to find to keep those external conversations going. We particularly need to start these **joined up conversations at 'place'**.

### FUEL:

Finding ways to get resource into the problem. Accessing funding and putting local statutory money where its likely to make the most impact.

We need to find new ways to bring resource in that parks the **'budget battles'** conversations. If we can access shared investment that sits in no-one organisation's budget, we can truly collaborate on spending it in the best way.

### FUSE:

Embedding these new ways of working and encouraging leaps in progress. Making sure we don't lose pace and champion this from within orgs.

The absence of **long-term funding** for change making work was a key frustration of public and third sectors. Moments when something new makes an impact and then the funding goes. Ending short-term funding and thinking is a theme of strategic change which requires more thinking.

# We know we all want better

There is no shortage of problems (or ways we might solve them), but the following are the ones that we have heard loudest throughout conversations:

**More action**

**Joining up at place**

**Beyond budget battles**

**Listen then design**

**Accepting some managed risk**

**Going back to basics**

**Community connections**

**Longer-term thinking**

**Making intelligent decisions**

We know that there are fantastic people doing quality work and that we only managed to speak to a small percentage. If we could wrap this up in one sentence it would be: we want better for our people and communities, and we're focused on achieving this. Our job at Capacity is to get into the detail of sticky problems, take your visions of how and what to change and bring them to life. And with this in mind, our next step is to get into the detail of a couple of areas where we know there is appetite for change. We know we can't do this by ourselves, we want to work with you to imagine a world beyond what's currently possible. You have told us you want to eliminate siloed working and we couldn't agree more. We're bringing to life an alliance for change in the region, and we want you to be part of it.



# What next?

## Taking this work into 'doing'

Up to now, the people we've spoken to have done the hard work. Now we want to bring people together to hear from experts on ways that they've led systemic change across the sector. The purpose of this piece of work is to identify the big problems in Cheshire and Merseyside. We've narrowed them down to areas where there is appetite for change to really test out the Fundamental principles.

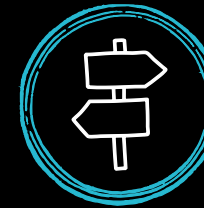
We'll take these themes forward at our upcoming Fundamentally Different event where four of the key areas above will form round table and discussion topics on the day.



**1. Local place leadership to action:** how do we give our communities and frontline teams the full permission to innovate?



**2. Intelligence led decision-making:** how can we join up intelligence to improve decision-making and ensure that decision-making is about what communities really want and need?

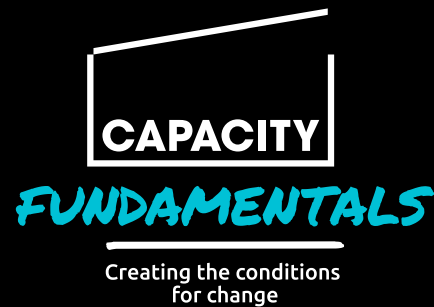


**3. Getting the right resources to the right places:** are we proactively shifting resources to where the investment more than pays for itself?



**4. What are the conditions for change:** what do Local Authorities, Service Providers and communities need to enable them to do things differently?

**Through discussion, through challenge and through reflection we'll narrow our focus and then it'll be time to design and do. We'll roll our collective sleeves up and set out on the journey to turn what we've read, what we've heard and what we've discovered into action.**



# Thank you.

**Throughout the report, we've referenced the people who we were lucky enough to speak to during this project. We'd like to say thank you to everyone who we've talked to during this work, we've pecked until interviews were scheduled, thrown probing questions at you and now created a big to-do list. But we hope bringing it together and seeing your views and your hopes represented and matched by those of others excites you as much as it does us.**

Capacity Fundamentals is about bringing together our learning from lots of projects and through collaboration supported by a variety of funders including the National Lottery Community Fund, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, the Civic Data Cooperative and the Barrow Cadbury Trust. We would like to thank all of our funders for their support.

We'd particularly like to thank our funders at the National Lottery Community Fund for their support in helping us get under the bonnets of these key partners and start to form some shape and understanding about the fundamental changes we must go on to make.

*IN PARTNERSHIP WITH*

