



Children's Communities: a model for creating resilient communities

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20 November 2017

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What is a Children's Community?

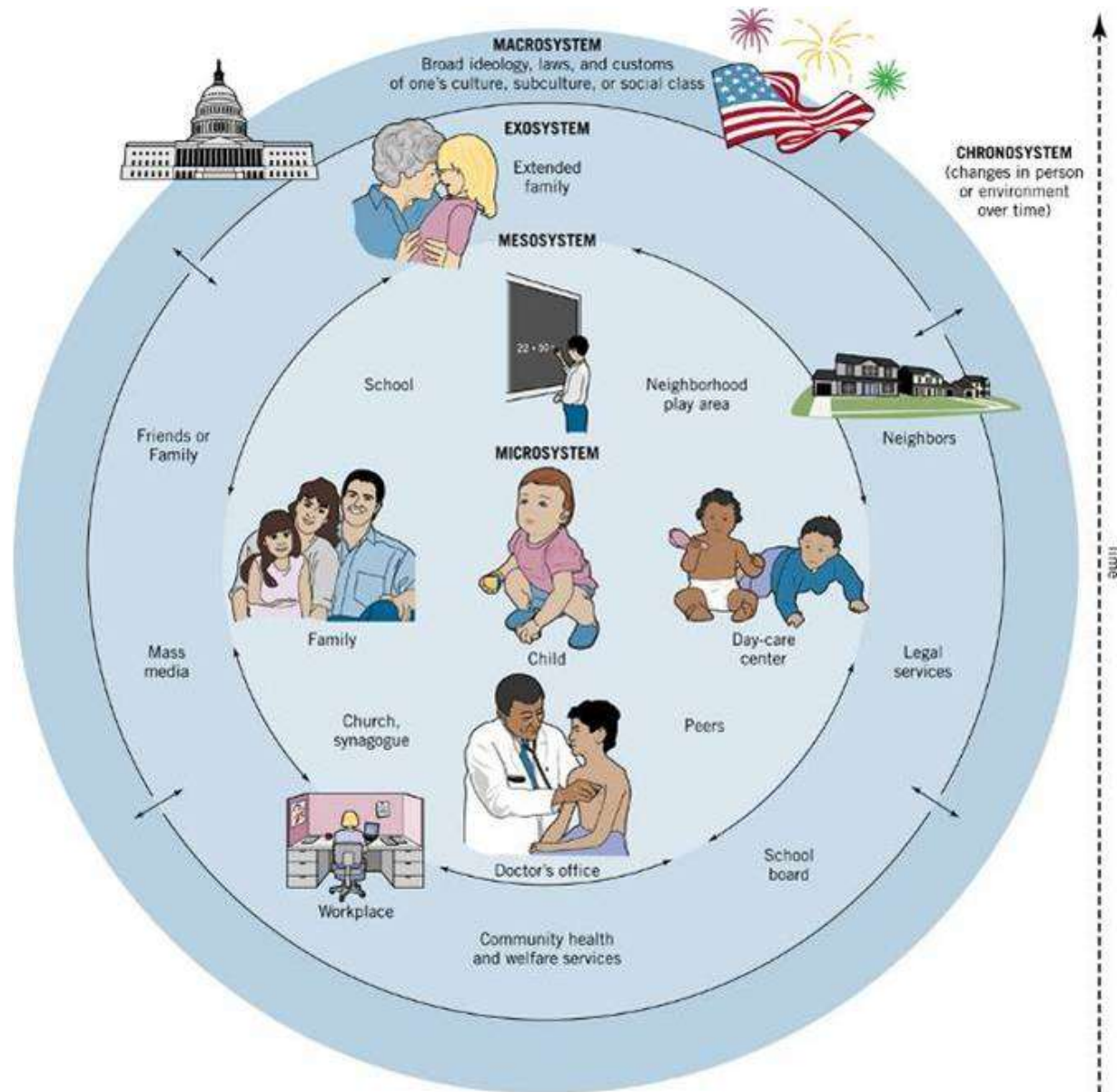
- Otherwise known as a Children's Zone
- Developed from initiatives such as Harlem Children Zone and Extended Schools
- A holistic and co-ordinated attack on childhood disadvantage across a whole community to improve outcomes from 'cradle to career'

The Harlem Children's Zone

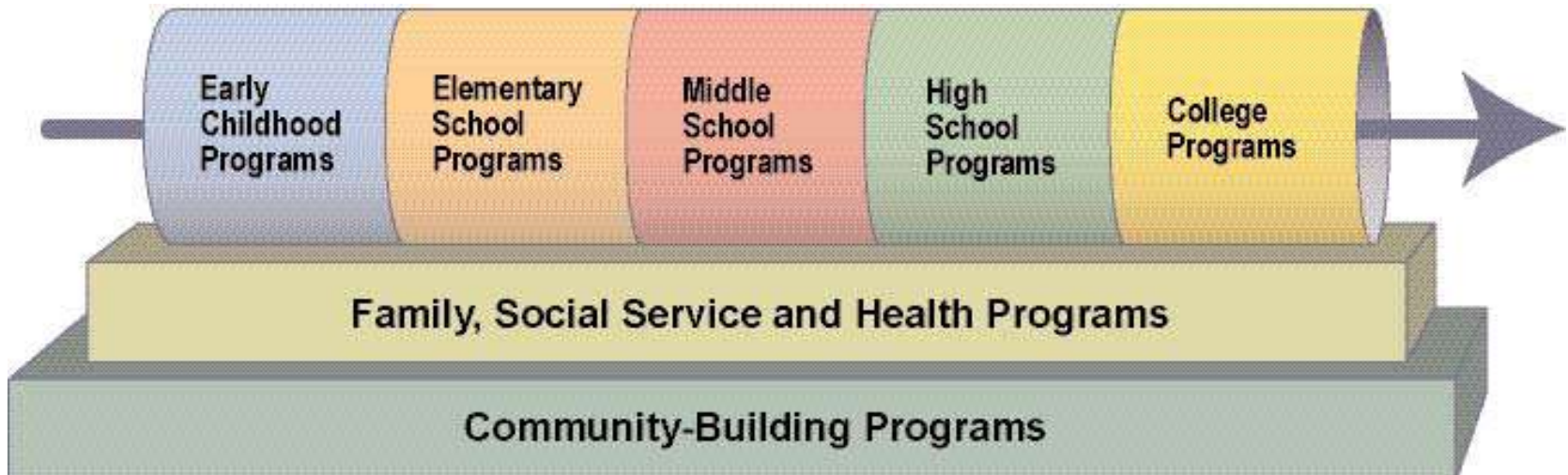


One of our core beliefs is that in poor communities where, literally, all of the institutions are failing children, you can't do one thing and expect you'll solve the issue of scale. I mean, you can save some children with an early intervention programme, and you can save some children if you work with addicted mothers, and you can save some children if you have after-school programs. But if you start talking about how you're going to save most of the children, you have to do all those things, and do them over the long term, and you have to make sure you count how many children actually received those services.

An eco-systemic approach



The HCZ pipeline



What does a Children's Community look like?

Each community will be different based on the context of the area in which it operates but will embody several key principles:

- A doubly holistic approach: support from birth to adulthood and across all contexts of their lives
- Focus on a coherent place that makes sense locally
- Involve a wide range of partners to work jointly under a common strategy
- Aim for generational change
- A strategy for local, integrated support and opportunities based on a deep local analysis, theory of change and robust continuous evaluation

Outcome domains:



Institute for
Social Renewal

- Children's material, physical and mental wellbeing
- Children's learning
- Children's social relations and personal development
- Employment and local economic prospects
- Community capacity

Why a Children's Community?

- Children's lives and outcomes are influenced by a range of factors across their lives
- Children inhabit and use different spaces: homes, schools, housing estates, youth clubs, local services
- In disadvantaged areas, children face multiple and overlapping challenges
- We often operate from a deficit approach that aims for short-term 'fixes' (particularly with short-term funding opportunities), and we need to harness and support local strengths instead for long term solutions
- A powerful rationale exists for creating a 'tipping point' based on our existing knowledge of the effectiveness of single issue strategies, clusters of issues, and the interlinked nature of outcomes

This means

- **Different needs to address**
- **Different strengths to draw on**
- **Different ways of identifying and meeting those needs**
- **A specific local area that makes sense to children and families**
- **Different kinds of partners in an area**
- **A different governance structure but every citizen who lives or works in an area belongs to it**

Different models

ENGLAND

Wallsend Children's Community: led by a federation of schools, developed from Full Service Extended Schools work

Pembury Children's Community, Hackney: led by Peabody Housing.

N.IRELAND

Shankhill Children and Young People's Zone: led by a Community Convention, made the decision not to seek funding (it should be part of everybody's job already!) and to have conversations with every single child and young person (6000) to form action plan

SCOTLAND

Stronger Communities: facilitated by local government, planned and executed by local people, assets based approaches

WALES

Government currently commissioning, but unsure what will happen

What has happened so far?

Save the Children are supporting 3 pilot projects in:

- **Wallsend (a postcode area, led by federation of 15 schools) 8000 children**
- **Pembury (an estate, led by housing) 1000 children**
- **Smallshaw-Hurst (3 areas, led by housing and LA) 5000 children**

AND:

Developments in Newcastle, led initially by Newcastle University, then a School's Trust of several primary schools.

Common to each

**Incorporating several strands of action:
e.g. Wallsend:**

- **Getting things right early**
- **Being fit for life**
- **Realising aspirations**

All supported by a robust identification of needs and assets and a bespoke 'Theory of Change' and currently being evaluated by Sheffield Hallam University.

The starting situation

What it's like now – and why

Strands of action

What we are going to do about it

Intended outputs

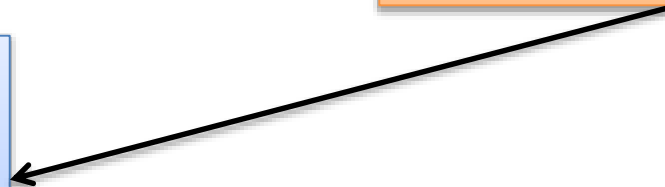
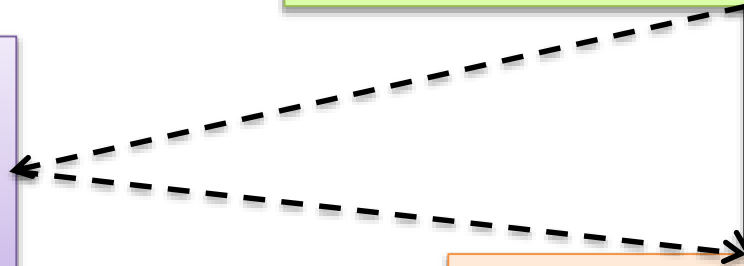
What we will need to do differently

Steps of change

*How things will change
(for beneficiaries)*

Intended outcomes

*How the starting situation will
change*



So how does it work?

(adapted from Funnell and Rogers, 2011)

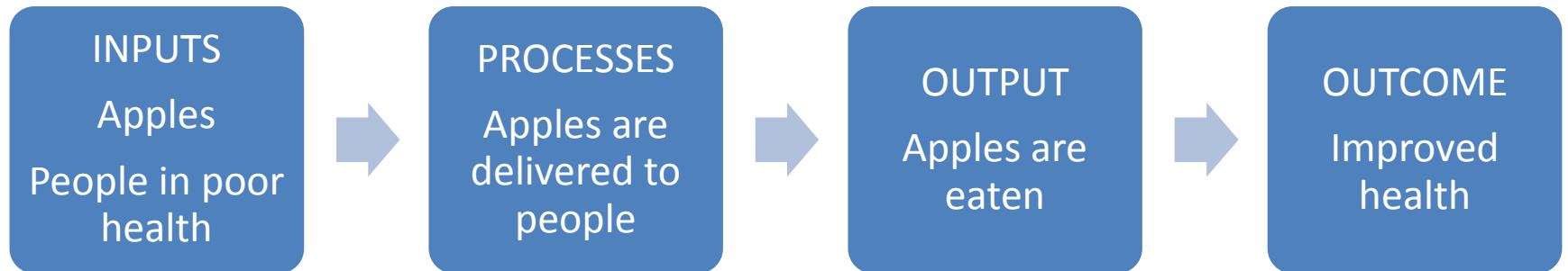
Hypothesis: An apple a day keeps the doctor away

More apples
eaten

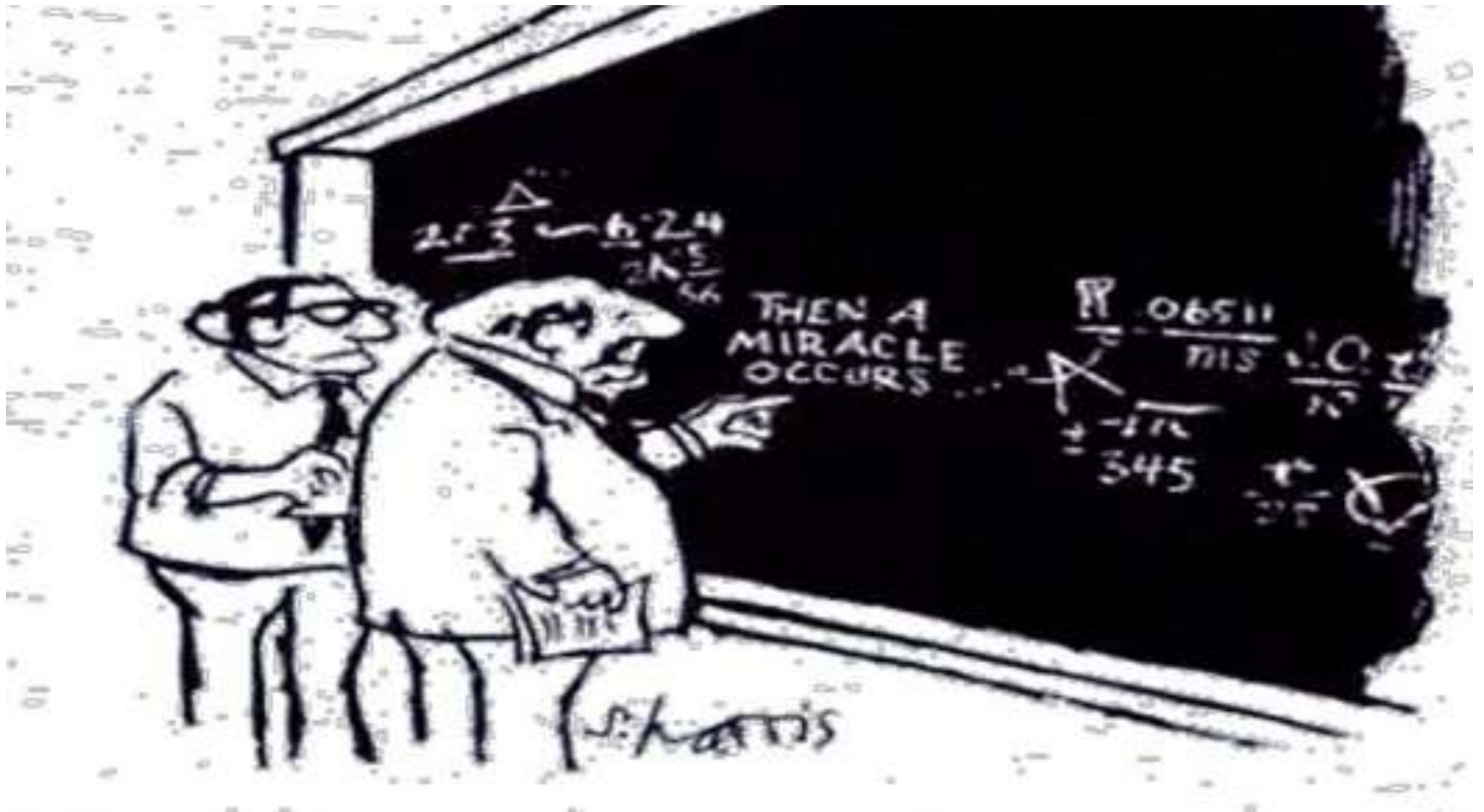


Improved
health

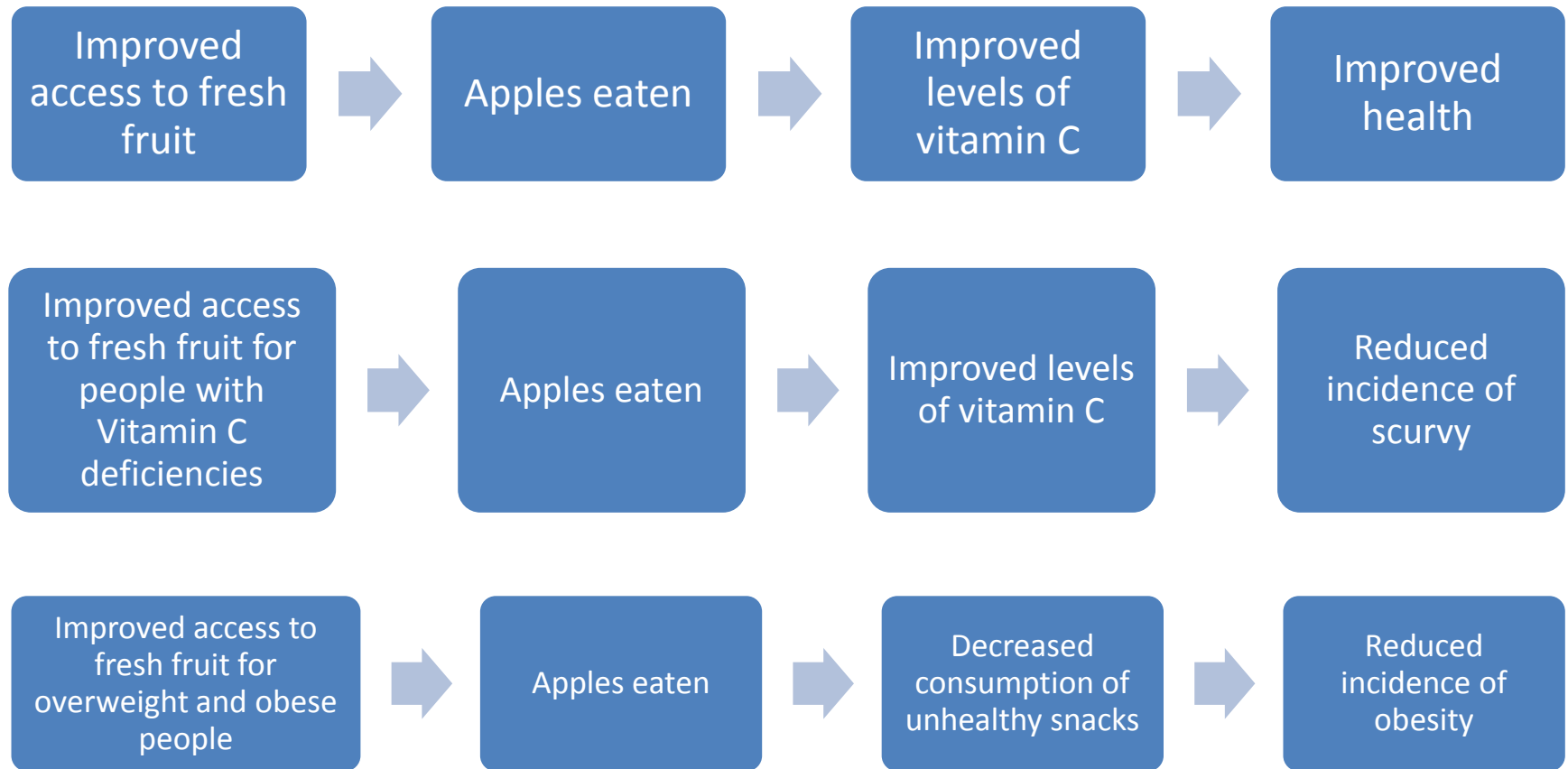
Or, developed further as a logic model...



'I think you should be more explicit here in step two....'



But how does eating apples lead to improved health?



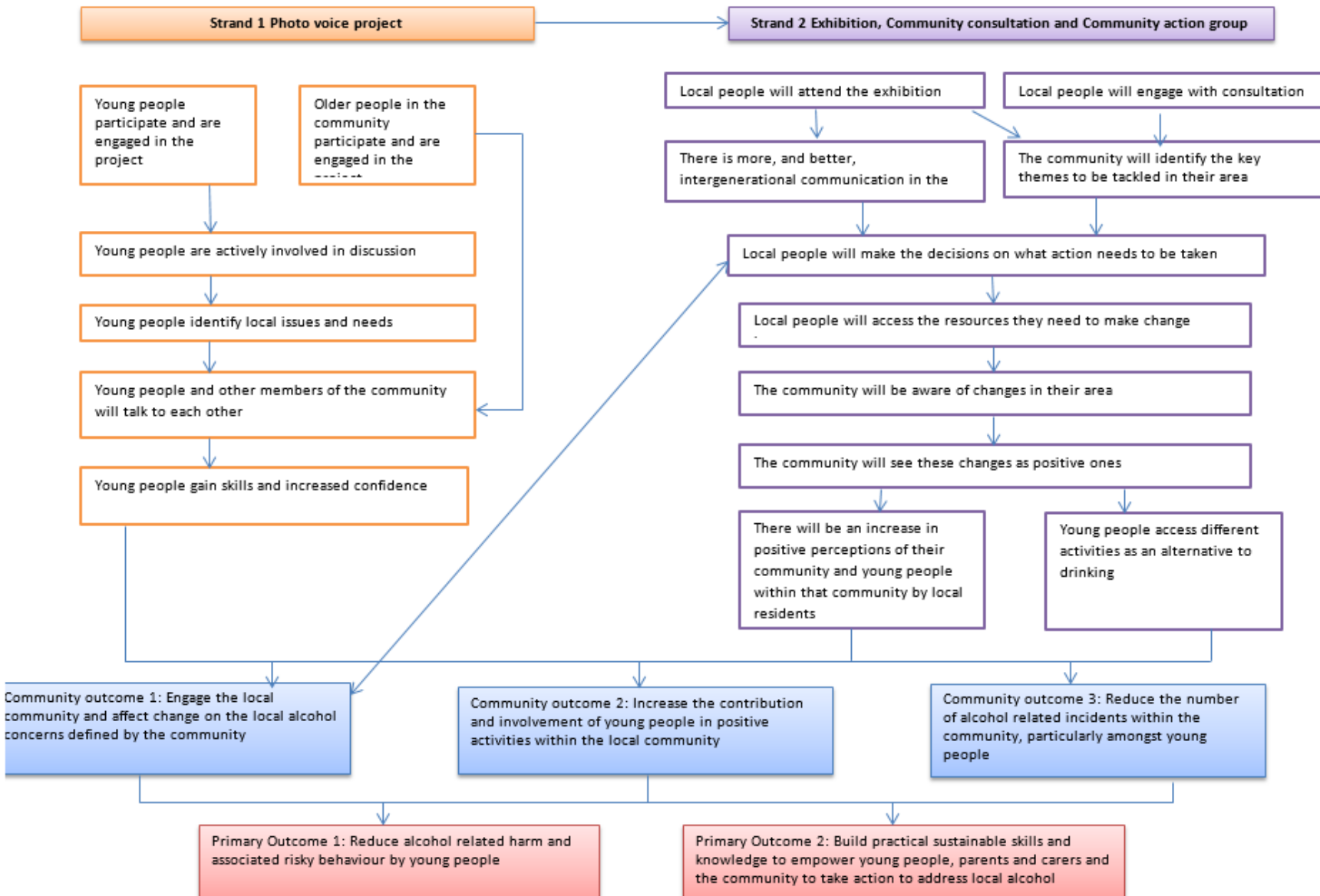
Steps of change



Asking the right questions

- What is the situation you face?
- What needs to change?
- How will these changes be made?
- What actions will you take?
- What effect will those actions have? On whom?
- How will you know if change is happening?
- What will happen for person A, person B etc

Mountainside: Steps of Change



ASPIRATIONS

① Getting to do what you want

what we need to do it

- transport
- determination
- knowledge
- motivation

how we get there

- parents
- listen to yourself.

who helps?

- careers advice - all had access
- Air cadets
- school productions

what to do?

- get to know you
- career advice in the lessons
- teaching life skills
- taxes,
- things to relieve pressure
- teach about different jobs.

what we want

- law enf
- marine engineer
- medicine
- nursery teacher
- drama teacher / actress
- RAF engineer
- car mechanic

we aren't in control

→ people taking decisions for you

- parental pressure
- being told what to do
- ~~sexism~~ going on
- pressure at school?
- not many teachers we can trust to talk to.

- stop shouting
- teachers focused on what you want rather than them
- listen to your opinion
- stop telling you you will fail!
- teachers need to take time to help & understand

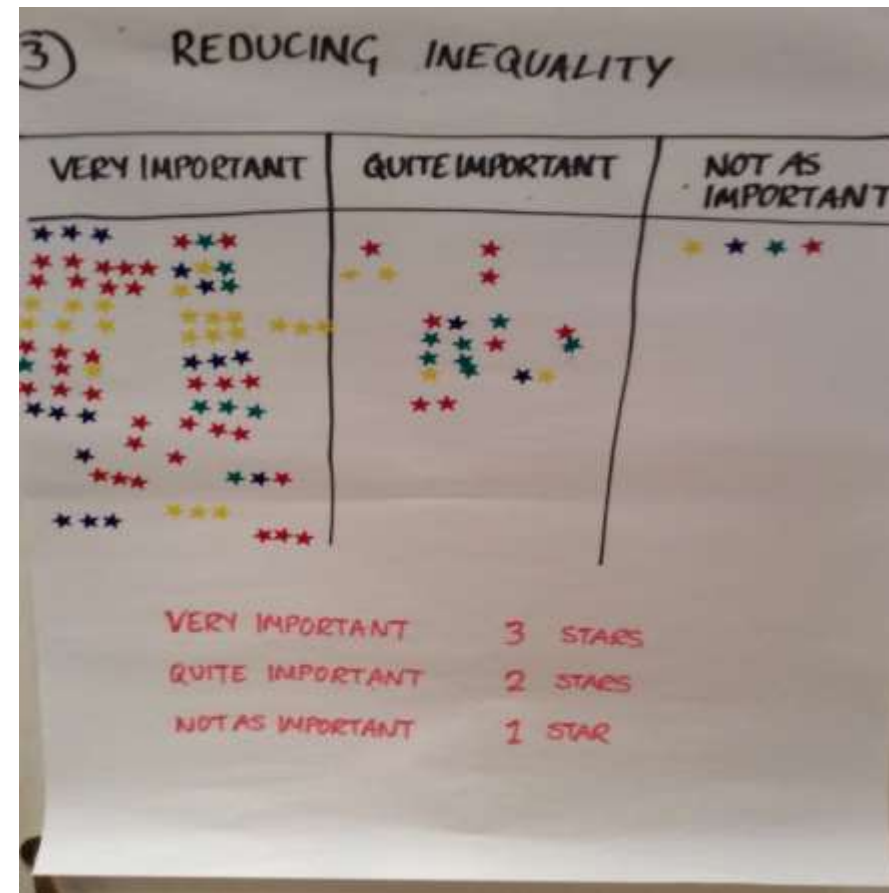
Developing a children's community in Newcastle: key activities

- Feasibility study
- Awareness raising and consultation
- Getting partners on board
- Deciding priorities
- Finding a 'lead'
- Community mapping
- Establishing a governance structure
- Establishing a boundary
- Finding a starting point
- Consultation with children

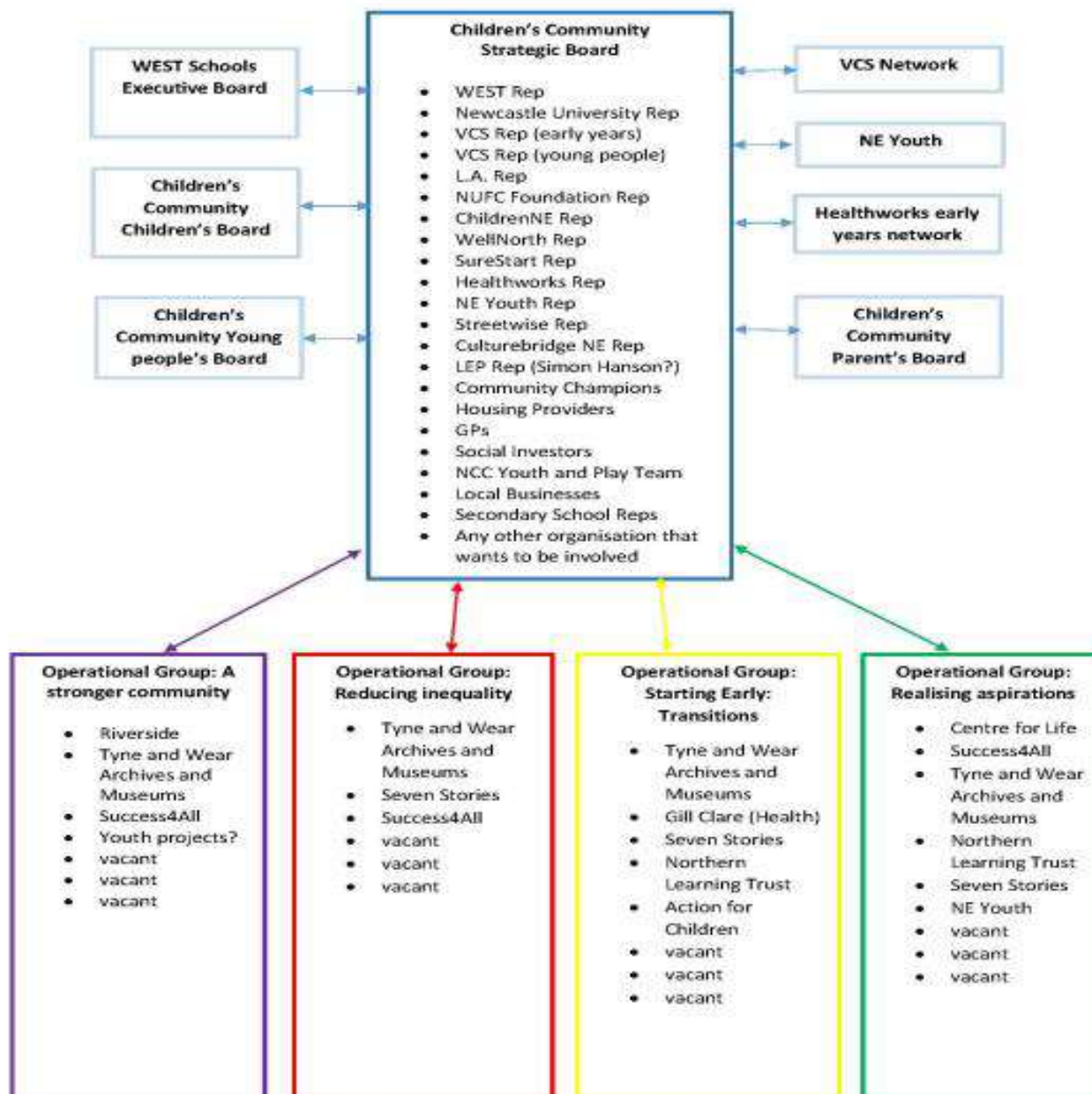


Newcastle Children's Community priorities

- ***A stronger community.*** A vision of a West End where everyone works together, building a cohesive, supportive environment.
- ***Reducing inequality.*** Challenging poverty to ensure everyone can achieve and be healthy, and ensuring people are accepted for who they are.
- ***Starting early and supporting transitions*** Getting things right from before birth, ensuring healthy child development and supporting children through key transitions in their lives.
- ***Realising aspirations.*** Aiming high for young people and providing more opportunities for success.



West End Children's Community Governance Structure



What's next?

- Resourcing a co-ordinator
- Deciding key actions and pilot work
- Establishing a theory of change
- Involving local people
more effectively

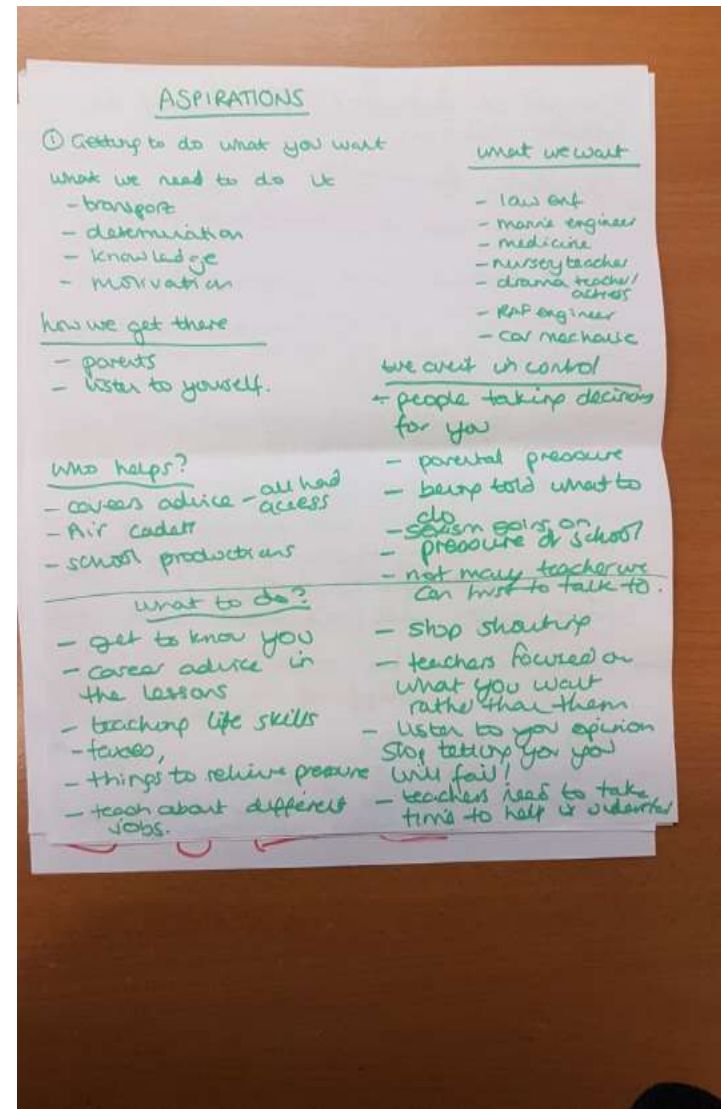


Challenges

- How to manage multiple partners – 100+
- Confusion about how this differs from ‘partnership working’
- Mapping assets, not just needs – this is not just about ‘services’ for the needy, but about creating a resilient community with opportunities for healthy, happy lives
- Encouraging collaboration not competition in an age of austerity, avoiding empire building
- Wider non-traditional partners (e.g. cultural sector) often want to get involved – but don’t know how
- Involving secondary schools

Learning from developing Children's Communities in England

- We often make assumptions about things we 'know' about our community. Asking 'what is life like for you?' instead of 'what do you need?' can result in different kinds of knowledge being created
- Long-term change is difficult when we are dealing with current difficulties with limited resources
- Leadership with community ownership – a difficult balance to strike
- Organisations with longevity (anchor institutions) and trust are often the best placed to drive initiatives



And back to the vision:

“If a children’s zone is to act to improve outcomes for all the children in a particular area, it must:

- understand educational outcomes – and children’s outcomes more broadly – as the product of a wide range of social processes operating over time*
- think in terms of a ‘cradle-to-career’ programme involving schools, families and communities – rather than a school improvement programme alone*
- find ways to bring schools together in the interests of all the children and families in the area, bring services together on the same basis, and link the two so they can develop holistic strategies*
- begin with an analysis of the local situation and the needs of children and families within this, and get partners to develop a shared understanding of this situation*
- develop a robust, long-term strategy for tackling disadvantage, and identify and/or develop effective actions to implement this strategy*
- monitor outcomes, and subject the zone’s work to public scrutiny*
- sustain its activities over time.” (Dyson et al. 2012, p26).*

What does this mean for resilience?

- A focus on place and a long-term strategic focus means work is not just focused on building individual resilience
- Children's outcomes are complex and interlinked, so work to enhance their resilience needs to include work to enhance the resilience of families, systems and places – wider systems change
- Building resilience runs alongside prevention of adversity
- A belief that resilience in one area of a child's life will encourage resilience in other areas

Resources to find out more

<http://www.childrenscommunitynetwork.org.uk/about>

<http://shankillzone.org/>

<http://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/institutes/cee/Developing-Childrens-Zones-low-res.pdf>

Key questions

- How far does Blackpool see itself as a Children's Community?
- How could the concept of a Children's Community help to foster a resilient community in Blackpool?
- What are Blackpool's strengths?

