



Supporting Social Innovation in your Local Area



HELIUM
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Cheshire & Merseyside
Health & Care Partnership



Introduction

This document provides information on how to contribute to social innovation in your local area.

It includes a simple step by step guide to setting up a Social Innovation Network, or you may prefer to incorporate the ideas in this guide into an existing community group, whatever works best for your area is absolutely fine.

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What is a Social Innovation Network?

A Social Innovation Network is a diverse network of people and organisations who have decided to come together to tackle social challenges and realise new opportunities.

The aim is to create new connections between people and organisations to stimulate problem solving, creative thinking and the co-design and co-delivery of new solutions that have a positive impact on the community. You may form a new network, or incorporate the theme of social innovation into an existing one it is up to you.

What is social innovation?

Social innovations are new products, services and models that aim to address social challenges and that lead to new relationships and collaborations*. They can take the form of:

- Social enterprises, or voluntary or community organisations
- Digital technologies such as apps or computing software
- New or enhanced services that support people in need
- Social movements – collections of people who promote or resist a change in society or in an organisation

Ultimately social innovations set out to create social value; in that they generate economic, social and environmental outcomes for the community.

*Murray, R., Caulier-Grice, J. & Mulgan, G. (2010). The Open Book of Social Innovation. NESTA, London.



What does a Social Innovation Network do?



Welcome people from all walks of life

The more diverse the group of people who get involved the more likely that creative ideas will flow. The aim is to bring together diverse people and organisations to innovate for local social good.

Identify social challenges and opportunities that matter to local people

Focus on local issues where there is evidence of need. This might include things like preventing loneliness, tackling stigma and discrimination, enhancing the local environment or tackling food poverty. You may want to acquire grant funding or partake in local commissioning opportunities to tackle such issues collectively.

Take action – by co-producing and testing new ideas in a safe and supportive environment

This might include running an awareness raising campaign, setting up a self-help group or community business, running a community event or developing a digital technology like an app.

Monitor the outcomes and impact of efforts

By keeping records of social innovation activities and measuring the differences that these bring about. You may also choose to measure the wider social value generated using tools like the Social Value Calculator for example.

Learn from successes and setbacks

By viewing both of these as a guide to the next steps to take in the social innovation process. Learning from successes and setbacks is essential in developing effective social innovations.



How often does a Social Innovation Network convene?

A Social Innovation Network can come together as often as it likes but it is advised that members come together at least four times a year (every three months) in order to keep momentum.

In the intervening periods group members may choose to work together on social innovation activities and agree appropriate methods of communication so everyone is kept up to speed with developments. It is important that progress is fed back to the Social Innovation Network to keep all stakeholders informed.



Tackling inequalities and promoting social justice

Research has shown that action is required to tackle inequalities and create positive social change.

The priorities shown here should form the backbone of your social innovation efforts to ensure maximal impact, with your Social Innovation Network focusing on local needs which map back to these:



The Marmot Six Priorities for Action

Focusing on action required to tackle health inequalities:

- 1 Giving every child the best start in life
- 2 Enabling all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- 3 Creating fair employment and good work for all
- 4 Ensuring a healthy standard of living for all; throughout the life course
- 5 Creating and developing sustainable places and communities
- 6 Strengthening the role and impact of ill-health prevention

The UN Sustainable Development Goals

These are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental:

- 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
- 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- 4 Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning
- 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- 6 Ensure access to water and sanitation for all
- 7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- 8 Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all



- 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries
- 11 Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources
- 15 Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss
- 16 Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies
- 17 Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

A Step by Step Process for starting a Social Innovation Network

1 Build a network of people who want social change

- Find people who are intrinsically motivated and who have positive energy for social change
- Look for people who bring different skills and talents
- Invite community members to be a part of the social innovation process
- Develop wide networks of people and organisations for maximal impact

2 Agree a shared purpose for your network

- Why do you collectively want to do this?
- What do you hope to achieve?
- What are the collective values that underpin your work?

3 Map the resources and opportunities at your disposal

- What do you know? Who do you know?
- What are your collective strengths / capabilities?
- What is readily available that is working well and can be used right away (don't reinvent that which already exists)
- Adopt an entrepreneurial approach (See Appendix A)
- Re-imagine what is possible with the resources at your disposal
- Are there public sector commissioning opportunities on the horizon that are aligned to your shared purpose and values that may be worth pursuing?

4 Dream for a better world

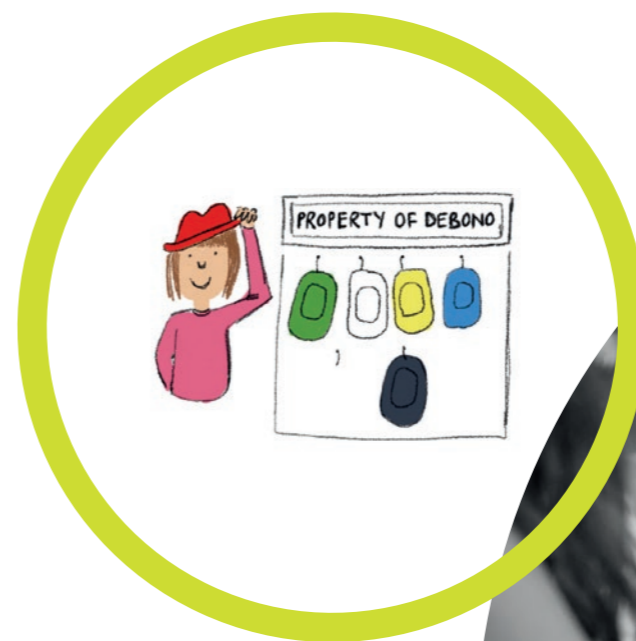
- Imagine what this would look like in your community
- Articulate this in a way that works for your network - in a plan, a story, an illustration, a poem or a song
- Revisit this every time you meet
- Ask of the network - what would need to happen to bring about this change?

5 Build knowledge about social challenges and opportunities

- What data can you collect? This can be data and statistics but it can also include stories and testimonies of people who are impacted
- Who can help you with this task? Professionals in the public sector perhaps?

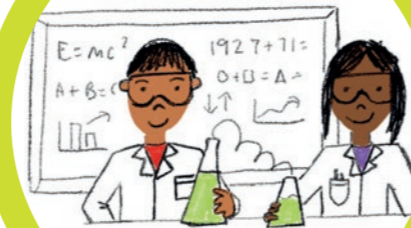
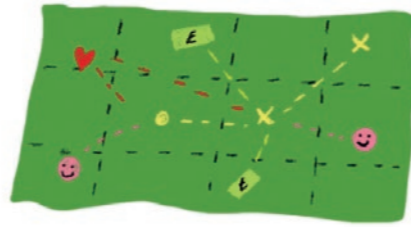
6 Engage in a creative problem solving process

- Try a structured approach - for example Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats (See Appendix B)
- Allow all ideas to bubble up; no matter how outlandish you think they may be
- Refrain from critical thinking until all creative ideas have come forward
- Devise a process to identify the most feasible solutions; weighing up the pros and cons of each
- Get involved in public sector co-production activities that support local commissioning for service transformation and re-design to create innovative solutions



7 Develop a simple plan

- Detail the problem you are setting out to tackle
- The solution you will explore
- The key steps required to get to the solution
- What resources you will require to achieve this?
- Over what timeframe will you achieve this?
- Work as a team – delegate tasks
- Communicate your progress; using accessible language that speaks to different audiences
- Think SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time specified)



Celebrate your successes,
no matter how small!

8 Co-produce, test and refine your solution

- Ensure that approaches are co-produced with beneficiaries and other key stakeholders
- Test your solution in a safe environment
- Record the results
- What worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Reflect and refine your solution
- Repeat the cycle
- Think: Plan, Do, Study, ACT



The aim is to bring together diverse people and organisations to innovate for local social good.



Top tips to accelerate social innovation



1 Treat members equally

- Everyone should be afforded an equal opportunity to contribute
- The opinions of professional 'experts' are not any more important than those of 'experts' by experience
- Everyone should be given equal chance to contribute
- Involve beneficiaries as equals in the whole design process

2 Seek 'buy in' and support from local organisations

- Invite representatives from organisations like the NHS, the Local Authority, Housing Trusts, businesses and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector
- Recruit representatives who are intrinsically motivated to bring about social change and who will contribute on equal terms with other network members and assist where possible to overcome any barriers that may get in the way of progress
- Identify how the aims and objectives of your network can assist larger organisations to achieve their goals. It is always a good idea to build common ground and support all local efforts to bring about positive social change
- Try to think beyond organisational boundaries. Clarify in the governing rules that your network is a cross sectoral, citizen-led collaboration. It is owned by everyone, not any one organisation or person

3 Create a fail-safe space

- It is important that we do no harm when we innovate
- Consider the risks and returns before setting out to address a social problem
- Seek appropriate professional support when assessing the feasibility of projects and always be clear as a network about what you can afford to lose if the project doesn't work out as intended

4 Support each other's wellbeing

- There will likely be challenges and setbacks along the way. It is really important to build a supportive network and to invest time promoting your own and your network members health and wellbeing
- Develop a supportive environment where you can talk about any problems and concerns you may have
- What top tips will you advocate to improve the health and wellbeing of network members? For example, you might like to try the Five Ways to Wellbeing*
- Ask for help. No matter what the issue there is always help available. Make sure network members have the contact details of local organisations that can provide help and support

5 Have fun!

This is really important. Although innovating can be hard work it is also incredibly rewarding to give back to your community. It is also a great way to build new friendships, learn about yourself, develop new skills and refine your creating thinking!



* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

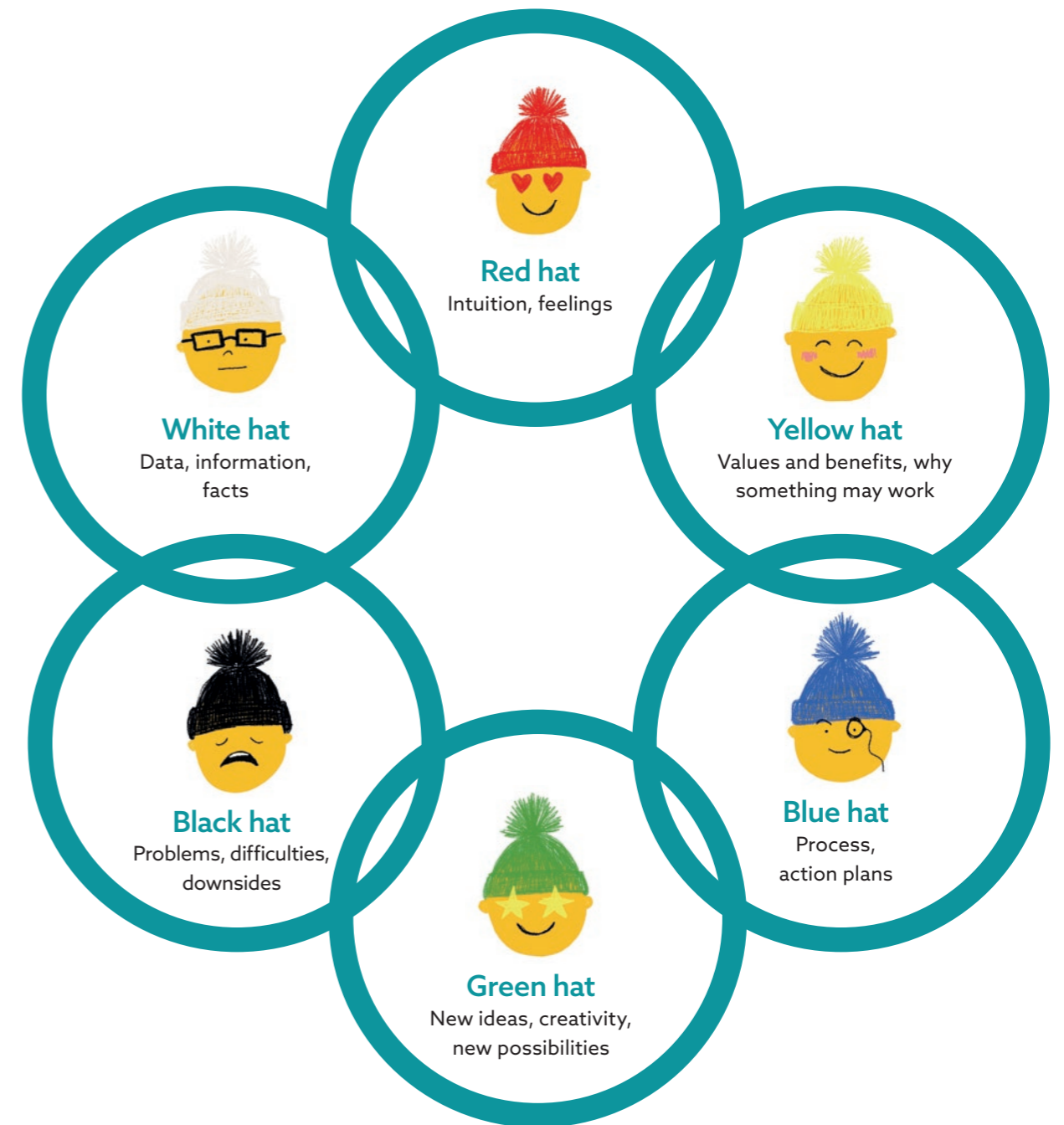
Entrepreneurial thinking

Effectuation is a way of thinking used by innovators/entrepreneurs in the process creating new ideas. It was first posited by Prof Sara Sarasvathy*. There are five core principles of effectual thinking (see diagram below):



Problem solving strategy

Six Thinking Hats was developed by Prof Edward de Bono* and is a tool for group thinking. Each of the six thinking hats represents a different thinking style. These are worn collectively, in a pre-agreed sequential order, depending on the nature of the group activity.





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