

# RESPONSIVE

## Responsive social services: increasing the impact of user participation

Michael Rasell, University of Innsbruck, Austria  
Adela Setet, CFCECAS, Romania



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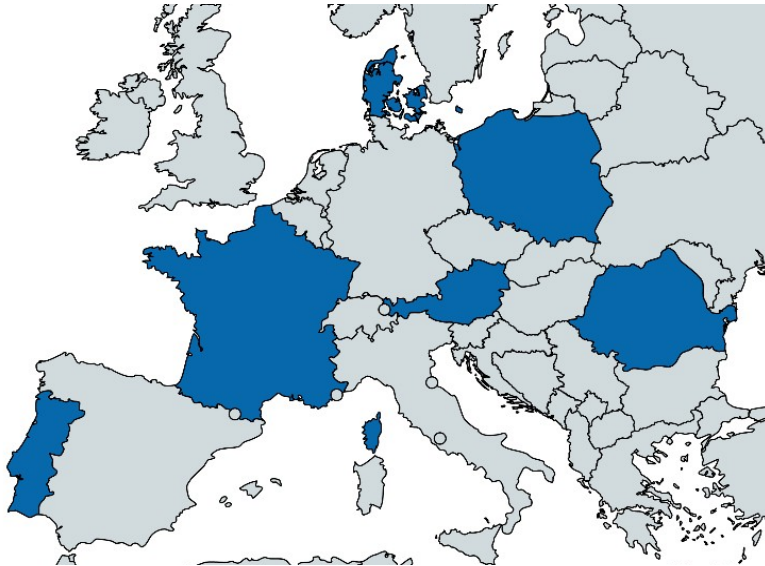
## RESPONSIVE research and innovation project (2023-2026)

- **The challenge:** ensuring that participation has an impact on social services
- **The project aim:** to enhance the responsiveness of Europe's social services to input from diverse citizens in different types of social service (disability, mental health, child protection, work with youth-at-risk)
- **Responsive social services** utilise input from users to change their operations.
- Study the factors required for co-production to have an impact: policy and organisational frameworks, resources, organisational culture.

### Three-stage methodology

1. **Analysis of legal-policy-organisational frameworks** for participation (2023)
2. **Research with service users, activists, practitioners and policymakers** about the impact of participation in social services (2023-2024).
3. **Innovation:** developing, accompanying and evaluating pilot projects in social services to increase responsiveness (2025).

# 11 project partners



- 4 providers of social services
  - 2 NGOs
  - 2 local authorities
- 1 NGO for training and evaluating social services
- 5 universities
- International Federation of Social Workers – Europe



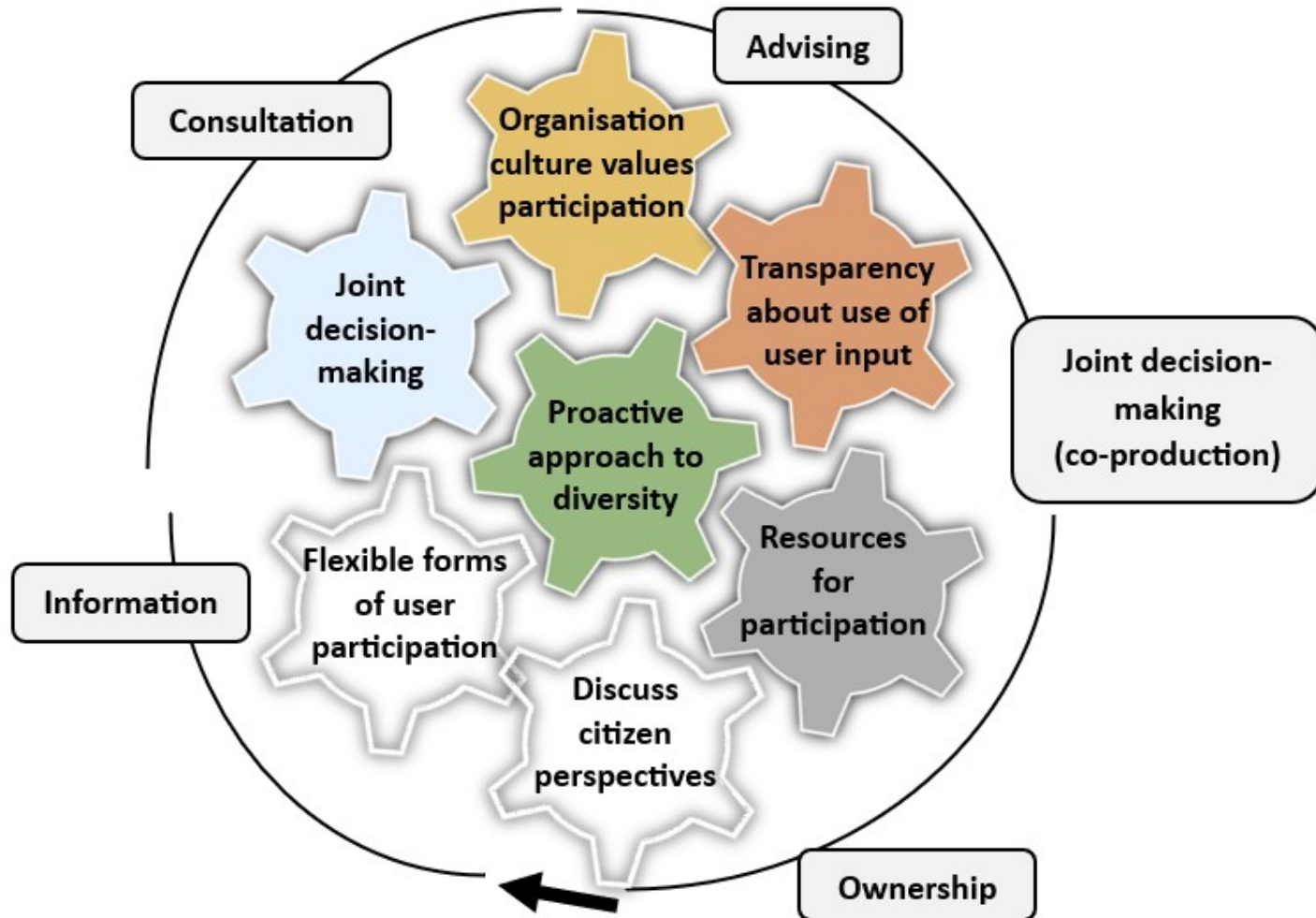
## Barriers and facilitators of 'responsive' social services

- There are limited legal, policy and organisational frameworks for citizen participation to have an impact on social services.
- Social services rarely have clearly defined internal structures for learning from and reacting to citizen perspectives.

### Service user perspectives about responsive social services

- Responsive social services are ones that can make a difference in people's life
- Participatory processes sometimes focus on organisational questions (social service-led agenda) and divert from people's own cases and lives
- Dialogue and transparency about how social services function are important
- Responsiveness is experienced primarily through interaction with frontline staff
- Dislike of labels like 'user', 'patient', 'resident', 'child' or 'customer'
- Important to address fears of negative consequences for speaking openly or critically, e.g. by providing information on entitlements to services
- Support for participation and voice is important (flexible formats, peer meetings, informal groups, participation staff in social services).

## Elements of a 'responsive' social service



## Good practice examples

- **Romania:** Law 7/2023 mandates user representation on advisory boards of residential centres for persons with disabilities.
- **Austria:** the Tyrol Participation Act 2018 for disability services and personal budgets was designed using participatory methods and established a mandatory user advisory board.
- **Portugal:** The active participation of children and young people at all stages is a key principle of the “Escolhas” (Choices) programme to promote youth inclusion and social integration in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Young people can also be included as community facilitators in the project staff.
- **France:** creation of guidance for participatory structures in social services from the Agence Nouvelle des Solidarités Actives (ANSA, 2022).

## Recommendations for social service organisations

- Develop initiatives to involve people who use your services in core decision-making and governance structures.
- Promote an organizational and professional culture that prioritises citizen participation, knowledge and co-creation
- Conduct an internal review of how participation and user feedback are conceptualised, operationalised, gathered, distributed and utilised.
- Publish feedback from users and responses from management.
- Use proactive outreach and a range of participation formats to collect views from the full breadth of people using your service.
- Provide understandable information about the functioning of the service and the professional practices implemented.
- Allocate staff and financial resources for participation activities
- Training for staff about working in participatory and dialogical ways
- Support for citizens to act in participation and in voicing their needs and ideas
- Create participatory structures within associations of social service directors and practitioners.



**Wishing you an inspiring conference!**



**Michael Rasell, University of Innsbruck, [michael.rasell@uibk.ac.at](mailto:michael.rasell@uibk.ac.at)**

**Adela Setet, CFCECAS, [office@cfcecas.ro](mailto:office@cfcecas.ro)**





# Embedding Lived Experience in Care Practice and Research

“Good support isn’t just about  
‘services’ – it’s about having a life.”



**IMPACT**  
Improving Adult Care Together



Economic  
and Social  
Research Council





**“Good support isn’t just about  
‘services’ – it’s about having a life.”**

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***IMPACT (Improving Adult Care Together) is a £15m centre (2021-27), funded by the ESRC and Health Foundation***

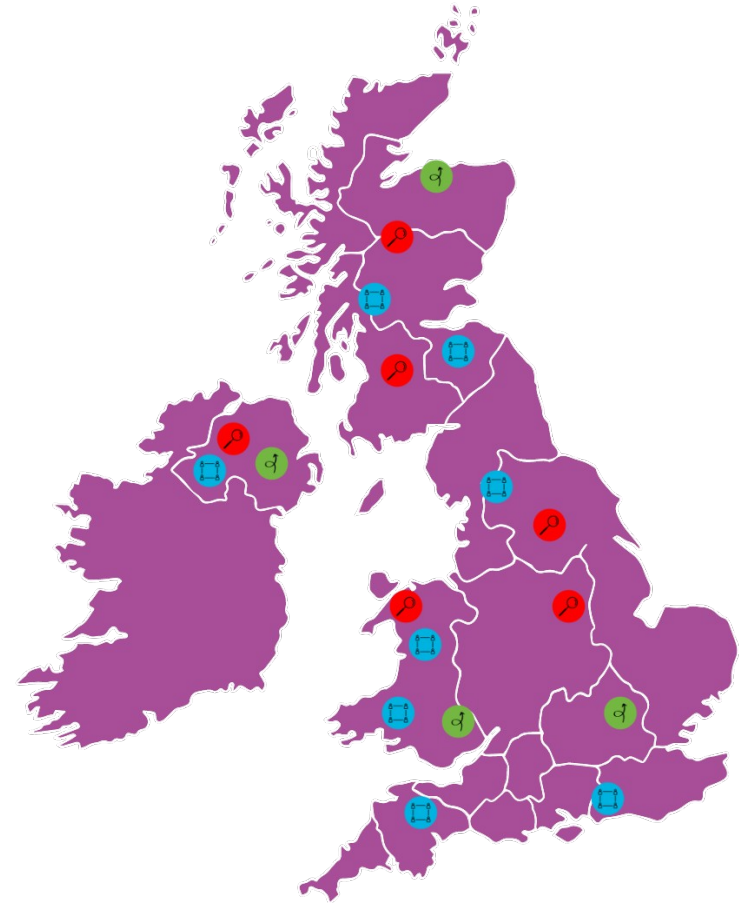
**Increasing the use of high-quality evidence**, leading to better care practices, systems and outcomes

**Building capacity and skills** in the adult social care workforce to work with evidence of different kinds to innovate and deliver better outcomes

**Developing relationships** between a wide range of stakeholders across the sector, to improve outcomes for people who draw on services and their families

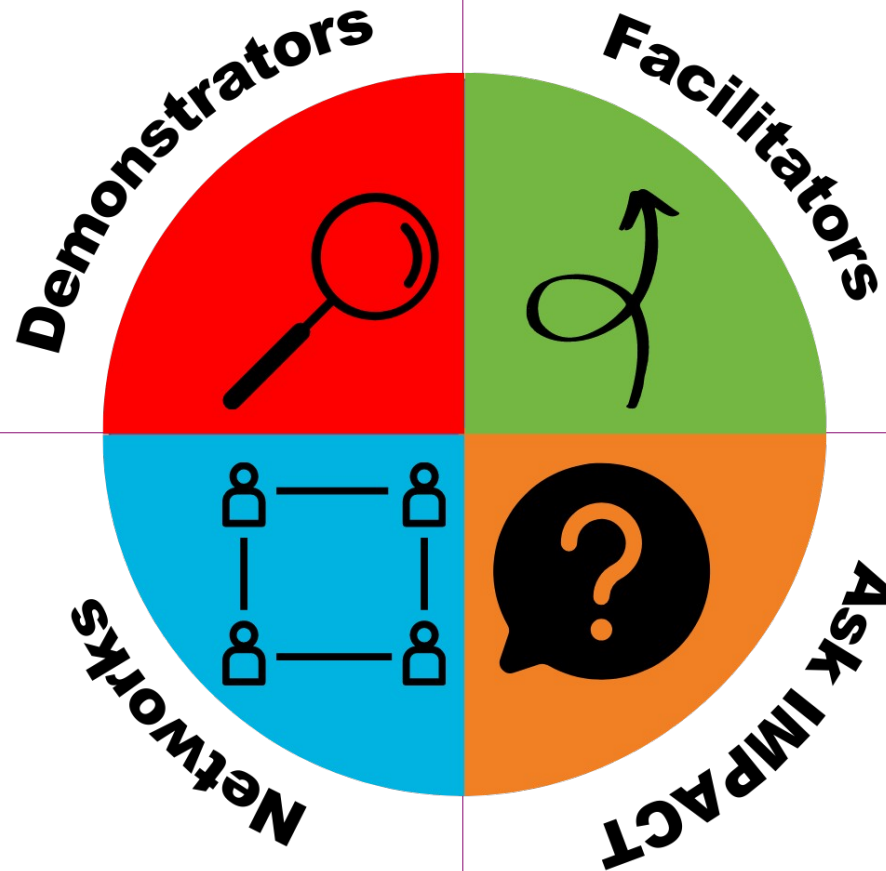
Improving understanding of **what elements of evidence implementation do and do not work in practice**, and using this to overcome barriers

*“Good support isn’t just about ‘services’ – it’s about having a life.”*



**Demonstrators** focus on major strategic issues and long-term change. 'Coaches' work with a local system to facilitate an evidence-informed change and embed lessons in national policy and practice.

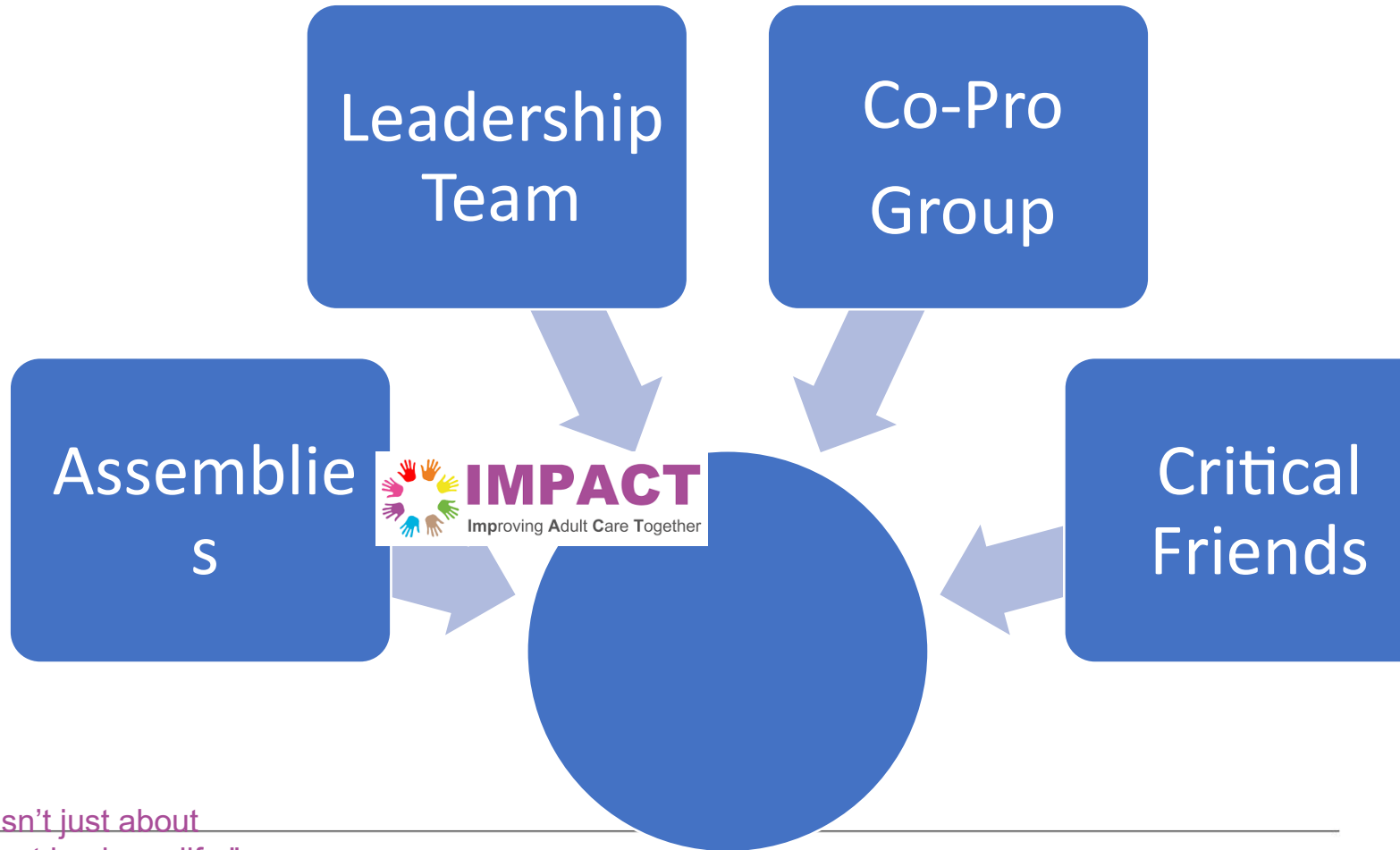
**Networks** focus on complex but everyday practice issues. Local groups all work on the same practical issue, with learning shared and scaled across the country.



**Facilitators** are focused on supporting bottom-up change. They work within a local organisation leading an evidence-informed change project. Facilitators review evidence, lead local change and evaluate.

**Ask IMPACT** identifies 'hot topics' and produces rigorous, but accessible and very practical guides to the evidence. Aims to build a trusted repository over time.

# GOVERNANCE OF IMPACT



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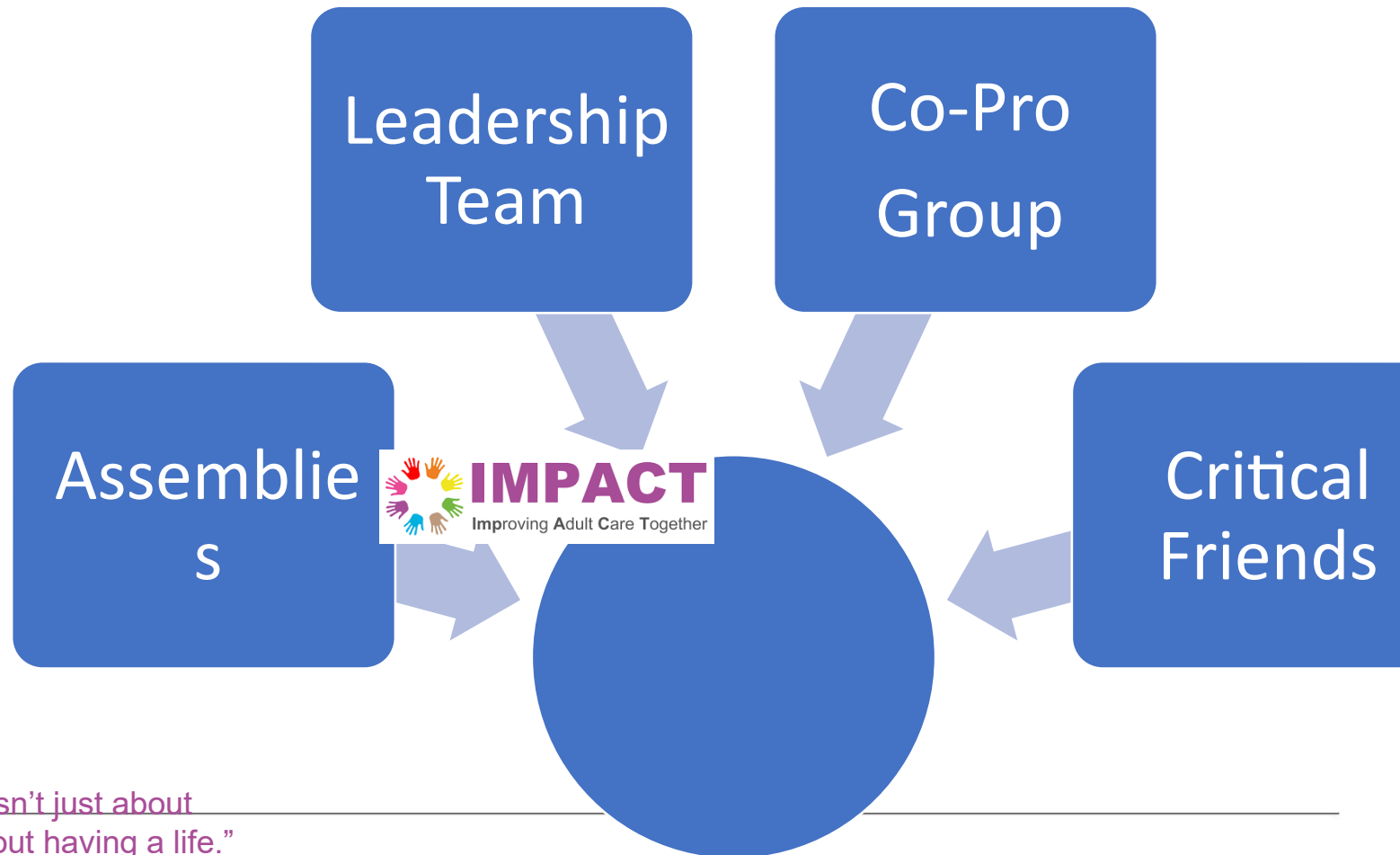


- Inform, support, and challenge overall vision and progress
- Co-participate in strategy & developmental events
- Provide constructive review of individual projects
- Involved in all core processes – e.g. interviewing, project

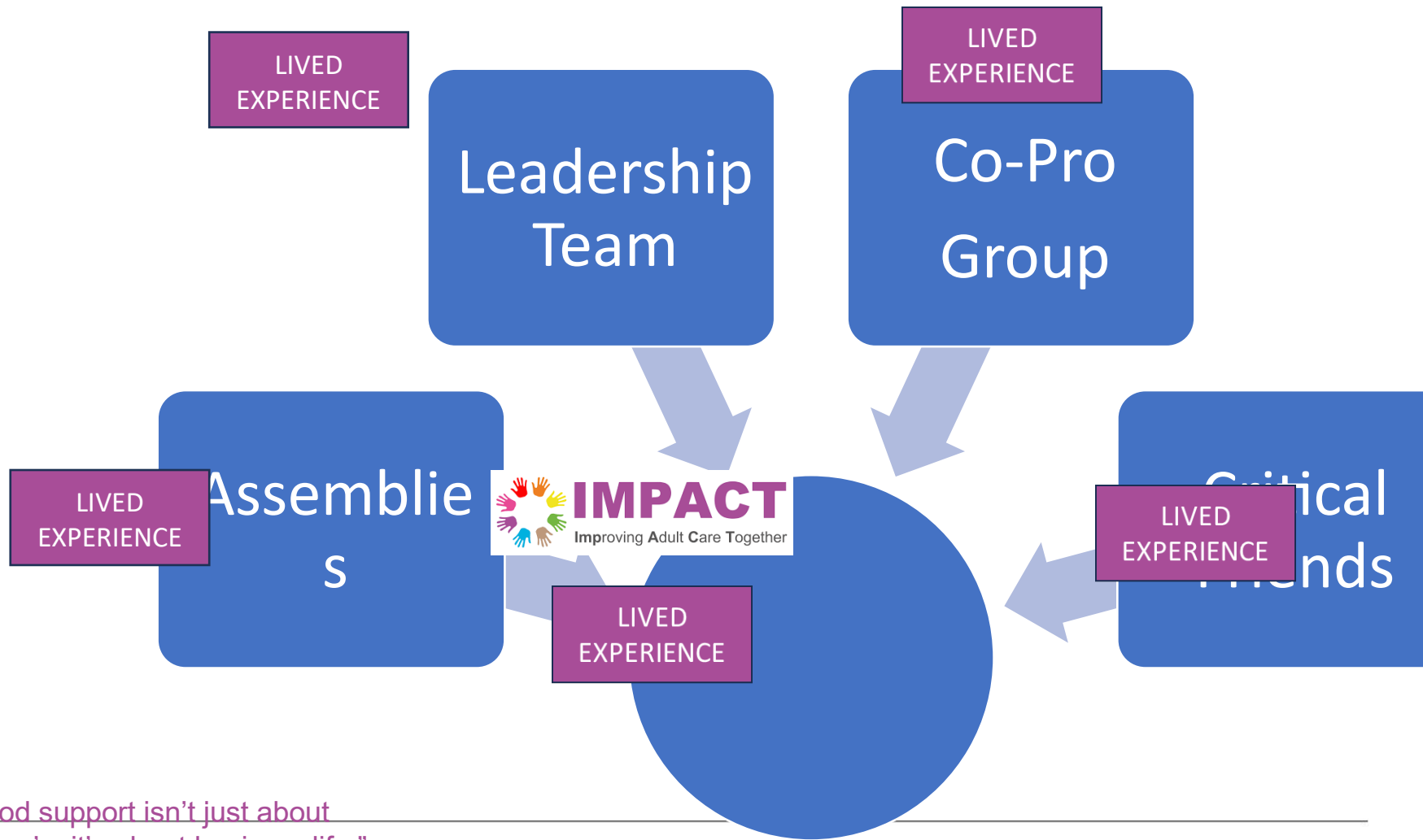
*Representatives from across UK*  
*Dedicated co-production lead*  
*Recognition payments*



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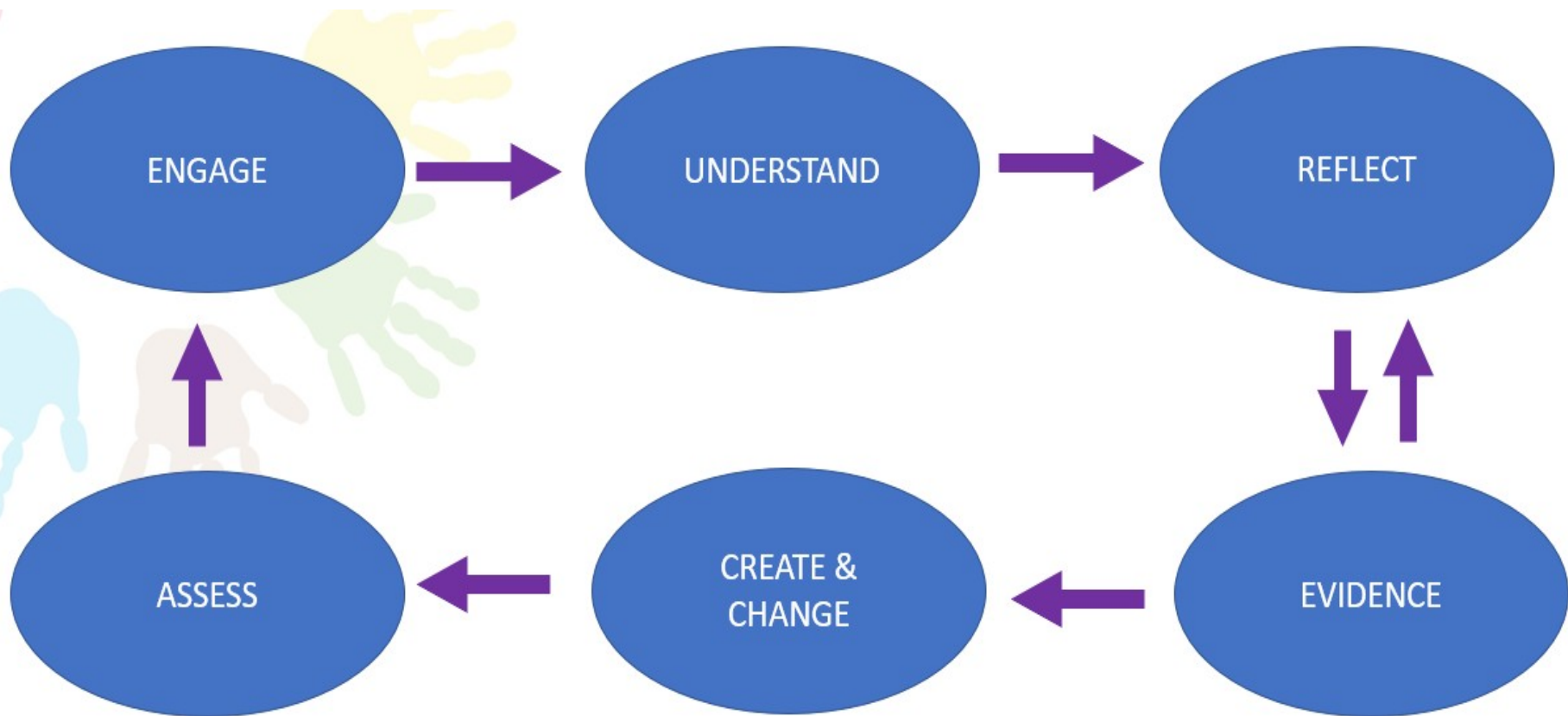
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# Demonstrators

- Focus on an issue of **strategic importance** in adult social care (for local area and across the UK)
- Twelve-month project is **co-produced** with local stakeholders, including people with lived experience
- Partnership approach with **contribution of resources** from IMPACT and from local stakeholders
- Will draw on **evidence** (research, practice & lived experience) to understand the issue and how it could be addressed
- Undertaking of a **local evaluation** based on theory of change which will also provide data for the evaluation of IMPACT as a whole
- Wide sharing of **learning** on the **strategic issue** and the overall process of **using evidence** within strategy

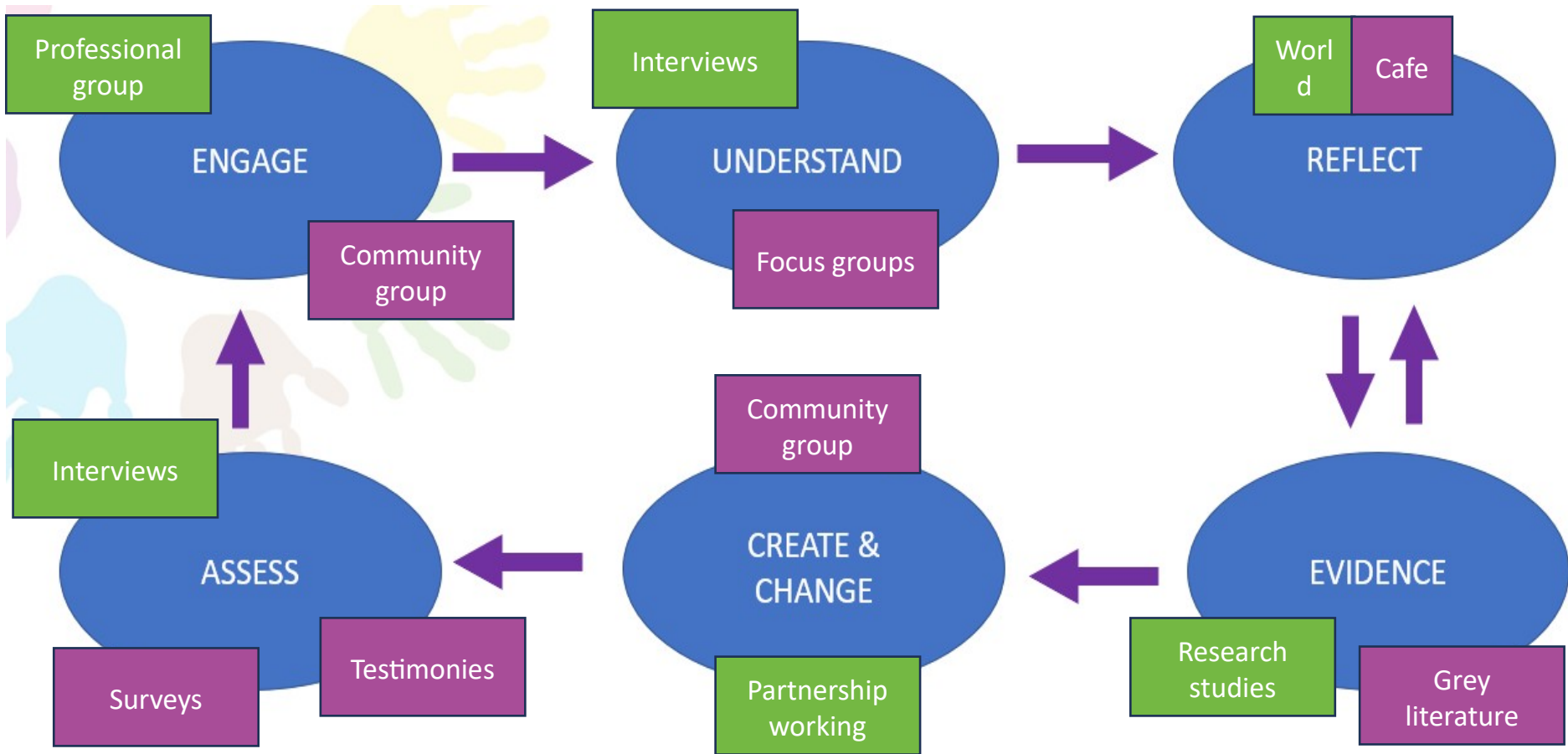
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# Insights from Demonstrators

## Challenges

- Lack of skills, confidence & infrastructure
- Short term engagement with no feedback
- Lack of diversity of perspectives
- Openness to challenge
- Little continuity of people

## Responses

- Invest in processes, resources & capacity: practicalities are important!
- Long term opportunities enable reciprocity & honest dialogue
- Review membership &



Remembering that people are the experts in  
their own lives

May 16, 2024

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Find out more about our projects,  
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<https://impact.bham.ac.uk/>

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**Twitter: @RobinUoBham**  
**Email: [r.s.miller@bham.ac.uk](mailto:r.s.miller@bham.ac.uk)**

**Linkedin:**  
**[Professor Robin Miller](#)**

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