Innovation Playbook

Tools to apply innovation in sport and physical activity – and beyond
## Contents

### Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INNOVATION IS</th>
<th>The nuts and bolts of innovation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our definition of innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation mindsets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation spectrum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation and digital best practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INNOVATE BY</th>
<th>Different tools to help you practise innovation in your work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding and empathising</td>
<td>Tools to gain rich insights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting creative</td>
<td>Tools to stimulate new and different thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting better</td>
<td>Tools to share your work and build links</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding clarity</td>
<td>Tools to unblock problems and prioritise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting and learning</td>
<td>Tools to consolidate and capture learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

This Innovation Playbook is a result of an extraordinary two-year partnership between Sport England and Innovation Unit.

Together, we set out to explore the role of innovation in addressing inequalities in sport and physical activity, aligned to Sport England’s Uniting the Movement strategy.

This Playbook is a collection of tried and tested practical tools to support different aspects of innovative practice. This is a living library – with the aim that we will add new tools over time.

The tools in this library are organised into different sections, relating to particular aspects of innovative practice. You can browse by section or you can jump straight to a particular tool.

These tools represent the ‘best bits’ from our experience of innovation. While we may not have invented them, everything included here has been used by Sport England’s Innovation and Digital team. All tools can be used online or offline.

We hope you enjoy using this Playbook.

Please do get in touch for advice or to share comments or feedback: innovation@sportengland.org
Innovation is:
The nuts and bolts of innovation

This section gives a simple overview of innovation. Use this section to understand the building blocks of our approach to innovation.

Our definition of innovation

Innovation mindsets

Innovation spectrum

Innovation and digital best practices
Our definition

Our definition focuses on defining innovation for sport and physical activity. It particularly draws out the innovation Sport England seeks to encourage and support.

It is complemented by our Innovation and Digital Best Practices, which give more information on how we can all go about innovating.

The definition was created through reviewing other definitions and iterative development through comms workshops and consultation with colleagues.

This definition is a starting point. We would also encourage you think about what it means to you and your work.

“Innovation is applying a creative mindset, generating ideas and experimenting to make positive changes that improve people’s experiences of physical activity. It is an approach that puts people’s needs at the heart, continually learning and adapting to remove the real-life barriers they are facing.”

At Sport England, our innovation efforts are focused on applying innovation to address inequalities.
Innovation is a term that conjures up lots of ideas and preconceptions. It is easy to fall into certain ways of thinking about innovation.

The following mindsets are ones we all encounter and experience from time to time.

We have found noticing and identifying these mindset shifts a helpful tool in broadening our thinking about innovation and what it means to be innovative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovation mindset</th>
<th>Possible Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I’m / it’s not innovative”</td>
<td>I / it can be innovative if it is designed to solve a real-life problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Innovation is all about products”</td>
<td>Innovation is more than just products, it can be processes and skills too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Innovation must be shiny and new”</td>
<td>Innovation can be small and incremental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My mind doesn’t work like that”</td>
<td>Innovation is a mindset that can be learnt and practised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Innovation is much more than a product or a service. It’s easy to think innovation has to be new, flashy or tech-related, but the truth is that it can come in many shapes and sizes, including:

**Incremental innovation**
- Continuous improvement
- Small changes to existing systems and processes

**Radical disruptive innovation**
- Significant change
- New and disruptive, replacing the existing systems and processes

**Example of different types of innovation**
- **Creating a new approach** e.g. Our Innovation Open Call
- **Implementing a new process** e.g. the Special Project team’s new loan management system
- **Identifying a problem in a new way** e.g. the Together Fund, devolving our application and awarding processes to partners
- **Identifying a new problem** e.g. the impact of the Covid pandemic on physical activity levels
- **Developing a new solution** e.g. the This Girl Can campaign
- **Partnering to gain new skills or access new markets** e.g. Our Innovation Learning Partnership with Innovation Unit
- **Developing a new product or service internally** e.g. our Crowdfunder programme
- **Supporting someone else to develop a new product or service** e.g. our work with Hopscotch on Studio You
Innovation and digital best practices

The eight Innovation and Digital Best Practices are key approaches that underpin great work.

These practices were created by reviewing a series of innovation and digital principles, including Government Design Principles, CAST Digital Principles, NESTA and Innovation Unit principles.

These have been synthesised and distilled into our own set of practical approaches to foster innovation and digital in our work. The illustrations capture the imagination and reinforce the link between innovation and creativity.

The content and imagery are still in draft form – so do look for ways to be involved in updating these.
Innovate by:

Different tools to help you practise innovation in your work

This section contains tried-and-tested tools and approaches to innovative practice. It’s categorised by the different types of activities you may want to use on your innovation journey.

However, just like an innovation journey, this Playbook isn’t linear. There is no need to work through it in order – you can dip in and out as suits your needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding and empathising</th>
<th>Tools to gain rich insights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting creative</td>
<td>Tools to stimulate new and different thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting better</td>
<td>Tools to share your work and build links</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding clarity</td>
<td>Tools to unblock problems and prioritise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting and learning</td>
<td>Tools to consolidate and capture learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to use this Innovation Playbook

Each of the following sections contains a range of tools to support you to embed innovation in your everyday work. There are three different types of content for you to explore and use:

**Tools**
These pages introduce and share key information about an individual tool.

**Examples**
These pages provide examples of how the tools work in practice and some ideas to get you started.

**Templates**
These pages provide templates for you to take and adapt so you can use a tool for yourself, online or offline.

Sometimes we have examples without a ‘Tool’ introductory page – where this content is a stand-alone and a best practice approach or recommendation.
Innovate by:

Understanding and empathising

Tools to gain rich insights

This section will help you to understand the challenge or problem you’re trying to respond to and empathise with those experiencing it. The tools and approaches can be used alongside research to provide a foundation for generating ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge board</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think, Feel, Do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Knowledge board

**What**
When we’re tackling challenges, we all make assumptions about the nature of a problem and how our users or stakeholders experience it. The ‘Knowledge board’ is a simple template to help structure these assumptions.

**Why**
Noting down everything you do and don’t yet know about a problem will help you identify where further research is needed.

**When**
At the start of the project, once you are clear on the challenge area you want to tackle but before you do user research.

**How**
- Organise a meeting with your partners, team, stakeholders or colleagues.
- State the problem you’re working to address.
- List your assumptions on post-its then categorise them into three columns:
  - What we know (things we know for certain)
  - What we think we know (things we need more evidence for)
  - What we don’t know (things we need to find out)

---

**Key information**

- **Time:** 15–30 minutes
- **Difficulty:** Easy

**Tip**
Everything in the “What we know” column needs to be backed up by data or evidence.

For more information and a template you can use, visit [CAST’s Digital Toolkit knowledge board tool](#).
Personas

**What**
Personas are generalised characters you can create, that encompass the needs, goals and behaviour patterns of the people experiencing the problem you’re looking to solve.

**Why**
Personas can help build empathy and understanding and ensure you’re holding your users’ experiences and needs in mind. They can also act as a soundboard to informally test initial ideas against when you come to developing solutions.

**When**
Once you’ve identified the different user groups and have conducted user research to better understand their needs.

**How**

- Review the research you’ve gathered.
- Design a persona to represent the user group you’ve identified – you could do this alone, or in a group.
- You could use the template on the next page to help map out your persona.
- Give your persona a fictitious name, or a name for the audience group they represent.
- Use your research findings to create a representative character that encapsulates as much of this insight as possible.
- Repeat the process for additional user groups.
- Share the personas with your team for feedback.
- When you come to developing ideas, sense check these against your personas to check if there are any obvious issues that might arise.

**Key information**
- Time: 60–120 minutes
- Difficulty: Medium

**Tip**
If feasible, test your persona with a real person from the audience group the persona represents to gather their feedback.

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**TOOL**
Innovation Playbook
Personas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Interests</th>
<th>Motivations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Positive influences</td>
<td>Blockers / negative influences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Innovate by: Understanding and empathising

Tools to apply innovation in sport and physical activity
**Think, Feel, Do**

**What**
A simple frame that encourages you and your team to put yourselves in the shoes of a user. It helps you design for their experience and the impact you intend to have on them.

**Why**
The ‘Think, Feel, Do’ framing will help you cater to the needs or expectations of differing groups of people and demonstrate how action is linked to both rational and emotional drivers.

**When**
- When designing a workshop or event
- When designing a process, programme or service, once you’ve conducted user research.

**How**
- Use the template on the following page individually or with your team.
- If you’ve built personas (see Personas tool) you could map out a ‘Think, Feel, Do’ frame for each audience group.

---

**Key information**

Time: 30–45 minutes  
Difficulty: Medium
Think, Feel, Do

What do you want your user **to think?**
How do you want them to respond?

How do you want your user **to feel?**
What emotions do you want to encourage?

What do you want your user **to do?**
What action do you want them to take?
Innovate by:

Getting creative

Tools to stimulate new and different thinking

This section will help you introduce creativity into your workshops or meetings. The tools and approaches can be used to create fun and exploratory spaces supporting the generation of ideas.

Check ins and check outs

How might we?

Ideation mindsets
## Check ins and check outs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What</strong></th>
<th>Check ins and check outs are simple activities designed to top and tail a meeting.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why</strong></td>
<td>It can be tempting to dive straight into business and to allocate all your time to progressing your work. Taking time at the start of the meeting to ‘check in’ with participants allows everyone to arrive mentally in a space and creates psychological safety and stronger connections among participants. Checking out at the end can consolidate learning and allows space for reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When</strong></td>
<td>At the start and end of meetings. Particularly when you are bringing new groups of people together for the first time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **How**  | • Build time into your agenda for a check in and check out at the start and end of the meeting. Allow enough time to hear from everyone.  
• Choose a check in and check out which feels suitable for your group and type of meeting. There are some suggestions and examples on the following slides.  
• Welcome people to the meeting and move straight to your check in. This can be helpful if people are arriving at slightly different times.  
• Finish your discussions with enough time to allow everyone to consider and contribute to the check in you have set. |

### Key information
- **Time:** 10-15 minutes
- ** Difficulty:** Easy

### Tip
Be creative and vary your check ins to keep things feeling fresh. You can make connections to the work in the themes that you choose.

Encourage everyone to respond. It can help to provide multiple ways for people to do this – to everyone, to a smaller group or typing it in a chat – to make sure everyone is comfortable, particularly when you are first introducing this.

Stay mindful of the time – it can be easy to lose track and risk losing momentum! You will build more of a feel for this over time.
Check in and check out examples

Below are some ideas for check in and check out questions

**Check in**

- **Highlight** of your week / weekend?
- What would you like to get out of this meeting?
- **On a scale of 1–10,** how are you feeling today?
- Tell us about a time when you had a massive **fail** – and what you learned from it.
- What invention would you take to **Dragon’s Den**?
- What did you want to be when you **grew up (or when you grow up)!**?

**Check out**

- What **gem** are you taking away?
- What’s been **squared away** in your mind?
- What is still **circling** in your head?
- What are you **looking forward to** after today?
- Complete this sentence "As a result of this session I am going to..."
- What’s been your ’**Ahah!**’ moment?

Read more

[Random check in generator](#)
Check in and check out examples

Add GIFs or photos to a slide or collaboration platform and ask participants to choose one that best represents their answer to a question.

E.g. Choose the GIF/image that best represents how you feel about innovation
How might we?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>The “How might we...” activity is an approach to generating multiple ideas around a specific challenge or problem by reframing it as an opportunity.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>It can be easy to get bogged down in the negatives of a challenge. Framing challenges as opportunities and being intentional about creating time and space to think creatively with your team can be a fun and energising way to generate new solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>When you’ve defined the problem(s) you’re looking to solve. (This should be based on insight gathered from people who are experiencing them).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| How    | • Organise a meeting with your partners, team, stakeholders or colleagues. Let them know it’s going to be a creative session and to bring paper and a pen.  

• Use the ideation mindsets in this Innovation Playbook to help set the tone for the session and enable creative thinking.  

• Select a problem to focus on. Use this guide to help frame your ‘How might we...’ questions, changing problem statements into opportunities. The examples on the following slide might also help.  

• You might want to do some creative rounds of ideation e.g.  

  o Round one: Individual rapid ideation around a couple of ‘how might we’ questions.  
  o Round two: Building on each other’s ideas using the frame “Yes and...” |

**Key information**

- **Time:** 30–60 minutes  
- **Difficulty:** Medium

**Tip**

You might want to identify a problem with your team / stakeholders by using the ‘Stinky fish’ tool in this Innovation Playbook.
How might we? examples

“Some user groups aren’t engaging with the platform”

“How might we tailor the platform to engage specific groups?”

“Partners are not engaging in existing shared community spaces”

“How might we ensure partners’ value and benefit from being part of a wider community.”

“Colleagues don’t feel confident to try this way of working”

“How might we understand what support colleagues need to try this way of working?”
Ideation mindsets

**No judgement**
There are no bad ideas because one idea always inspires other ideas.

**Ideas don’t need to be fully formed**
Someone else in the room might have the other half of your idea.

**“Yes and…”**
Build on the ideas you like to take them a step further.

**We are designing together**
We’ll combine our ideas and refine as a group. This is a team effort.

**Draw on insight and learning**
What worked brilliantly in the past? How can you incorporate key learnings into new solutions?
Innovate by:

Connecting better

Tools to share your work and build links

This section will help you to collaborate and connect with others to strengthen your innovation activities. The tools and approaches can support more open and transparent working.

- Huddles
- Weeknotes
- Show and tell
A ‘Huddle’ is a regular, short format team meeting, held daily or weekly. They are more than a catch up but not as big as a formal project meeting.

The aim of this meeting is for everyone to get a collective understanding of progress being made against goals. It’s also an opportunity to surface any blockers or challenges that could impact the work. A huddle can be used to:

- Clarify team objectives and priorities.
- Provide regular and open updates and to raise issues/blockers.
- Identify actions to solve blockers, rather than solving them there and then.
- Maintain excitement about everyone’s contribution
- Provide accountability and support.
- Increase alignment across the team.

You can run Huddles on a continual basis throughout the lifetime of a piece of work.

Keep them short (~15 minutes) and take turns to chair.

Daily huddles are meant to be a quick round table of updates in which everyone answers the same three questions: What did you do yesterday? What will you do today? Are there any blockers/obstacles in your way?

Weekly huddles are appropriate for less frequent updates. Everyone can answer the same questions: What have you done since we last met? What will you be doing until we next meet? Are there any blockers/obstacles in your way?

In both examples, once everyone has shared their blockers, the group then identifies how we could solve or overcome them.

Key information

- **Time:** 15 minutes
- **Difficulty:** Easy

Tips

- You should come prepared to huddle, with your answers ready.
- Your answers should be short and succinct.
- You shouldn’t wait for a huddle for problem solving or decision making.
- You should feel comfortable to say that you don’t have an update.
- If you are unable to make the huddle you must let the group know in advance and share your answers to the questions.
- Aim to finish huddles early.

You may hear alternative names for huddles such as stand-ups, scrums, morning roll-calls. Sport England has chosen huddle as a more inclusive term.
# Weeknotes

## What

Weeknotes are personal reflections on the working week that you share with others. They follow no set format or rules.

## Why

Writing weeknotes helps you to reflect on your work, as well as offering the chance for those interested in what you’re working on to find out more. They promote an open-working culture, sharing what’s working well and what’s not going so well. This can build better connections and understanding around your work from others. They are also a good way help you and your team hone your writing skills, as well as supporting monitoring and reporting.

## When

As the name suggests, you write weeknotes on a weekly basis. Try to write them on a Friday (or at the end of the working week) so the information from the week is fresh in your mind.

## How

- Team members can take it in turns to write the team’s weeknotes each week.
- 15:5 rule of thumb – 15 minutes to write, 5 minutes to read.
- Don’t worry too much about structure.
- Be open, candid and honest.
- For more information see our Weeknotes guidance on Inside Track.
- Check out some of the examples on the next slide.

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### Key information

- **Time:** 15 minutes
- **Difficulty:** Easy

### Tips

You don’t need to send your weeknotes to everyone. Think about who they’re most relevant for and the most appropriate channel to share them.
Weeknotes examples

1. The ‘jump straight in’ – no structure: just thoughts and words. Simple and quick.

2. The daily breakdown – simple. Use days of the week as your headings.

3. Lean-notes – communicate about specific projects or programmes.

4. The ‘[X] things that happened this week’ – flexible, repeatable and concise.

5. The Good, The Bad and The Ugly – group by theme, without thinking of themes.

6. Stretching questions – like themes, but framed as questions, to help you think, e.g. What did you experiment with? What was hard? What did you enjoy? What was fun? What did you learn?


Sam Villis at Weeknotes wrote some great ideas for formats and styles, with examples

CAST weeknote templates that you can copy and reuse, based on Sam’s styles.
Show and tell

‘Show and tells’ are an opportunity to share your team’s progress with a wider audience on a regular basis. Content includes the things you’ve been working on – like live updates on services, working prototypes or research findings. It’s also an opportunity to show what didn’t work so you can share the learning with other teams.

Show and tells create an opportunity to engage, gather feedback and encourage challenging questions. They share work in progress, to create openness and greater transparency. They give stakeholders a way to check in with the work and understand progress, beyond a report. It’s efficient, as you give one update for everyone at the same time. Working through problems together enables others to give valuable feedback and create connections.

Show and tells usually have a regular slot each week, fortnight or month.

- Contact Internal Comms to discuss your requirements and agree scheduling (so they don’t clash with others).
- Length – no more than 60 minutes (up to 45 mins update, and at 15 mins for questions).
- Frequency – either every week, fortnight or month (depending on speed of work).
- Content – Use what you have (drafts are fine), spend minimal time creating the slides.
- Presentation – informal – talk about how it’s feeling, what is (or isn’t) working, and what you have done since the last one.
- Record the session – People can catch up when it suits them / Share links in Weeknotes and on Inside Track.

Key information
- Time: 60 minutes
- Difficulty: Medium

Tips
- Show and tells are for people who are interested in what you are working on.
- Attendance at show and tells should be positioned as completely optional.
- If you are communicating essential information, make sure it is also shared via other channels.
Innovate by:

Finding clarity

Tools to unblock problems and prioritise

This section will help you to move forward in your innovation journey. The tools and approaches can support you to make decisions collaboratively and confidently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matrix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delta 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle of influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stinky fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>An adjustable matrix to help you and your team consider and decide on a route or idea against different credentials.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>To build confidence in an idea or approach to take forward when there are multiple options to decide between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>When you have a range of different ideas which you need to prioritise (e.g. using the ‘How Might We’ tool included in this Innovation Playbook).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| How           | • Book a meeting in with your team/relevant stakeholders.  
• Create a blank axis, either on a wall or online collaboration board.  
• Decide the considerations you’ll be comparing your ideas against e.g. **Impact** (the difference it will make) vs **feasibility** (how practical it is)  
  **Impact** vs **effort** (how much work it will require)  
  **Impact** vs **desirability** (how much it aligns with priorities)  
  **Impact** vs **sustainability** (the extent to which it can be maintained)  
• Collate ideas, options or routes on physical or virtual post–it notes.  
• Go through each idea, option or route with team, plotting them against the credentials.  
• Use the placement of post–it notes to guide a conversation around which to take forward e.g. if an idea scores highly on impact but low on feasibility, you could decide not to take it forward, or you might consider how else you could feasibly achieve the impact. |

### Key information

- **Time:** 60 minutes  
- **Difficulty:** Medium

---

**Effort and Impact Matrix**

- Low effort  
- High effort  
- Low impact  
- High impact
Effort and impact matrix

- **High Impact**
- **Low Impact**
- **High Effort**
- **Low Effort**
**Delta 6**

**What**
Delta 6 is a workshop tool designed to help people collectively prioritise a long list of issues or ideas. It facilitates conversations between people, enabling them to discuss important topics or ideas together.

**Why**
This tool can be used to come to a consensus about the focus of a project or the importance of particular challenges. It can also be used as a way of having conversations about different people’s perspectives and assumptions that would otherwise remain unsaid. It can help a group to refine its shared aims.

**When**
When you have a range of different ideas which you need to prioritise (e.g. following a ‘How might we’ exercise using the tool in this Innovation Playbook).

**How**
- Book a meeting in with your team/relevant stakeholders.
- Pre-prepare what you will be prioritising (e.g. physical cards or virtual post-it notes with all the ideas or challenges on them). You might wish to leave some blank in case members of the group come up with new ideas or if one has been missed.
- Get members of the group to select their top six ideas or challenges and to arrange these into the shape of a diamond with the ideas/challenges of most importance to the group closer to the top. You could use the template on the next page.

**Key information**
- **Time:** 30–60 minutes
- **Difficulty:** Medium

**Tip**
You could do this for a different number of ideas, but ideally no more than 9.
Delta 6
Circle of influence

What
An exercise that gets a group to consider what’s within their circle of influence, what’s not and how they might seek support or support each other to achieve change.

Why
There are so many things we can’t control, yet we often focus on these and miss opportunities in front of us. This is a tool that will help groups to focus energy and move towards change that is actionable and within their control.

When
This can be a good exercise for the end of a meeting or workshop to mobilise a group towards action.

How
- Either use smaller individual copies of the template on the next slide, or a larger copy for the whole group to add to together
- Using the prompts on the next slide, list different areas which connect to the work you’re involved in on post-it notes.
- Consider each one in turn with your team and decide whether it’s something that:
  - concerns the work and is something that you can influence or change – pop it in the middle
  - concerns the work but is something that you cannot influence – pop it in the outer circle
  - is of no concern to the work – pop it outside the circle.
- Focus on those post-its in the middle of the circle, that you can influence or change. Explore your next steps in response to these areas.

Key information
Time: 30–60 minutes
Difficulty: Medium
Circle of concern

Circle of influence

How might we support each other to make this change?
Stinky fish

‘Stinky Fish’ is a short activity to play around with your fears, anxieties and uncertainties about the future of a project.

The stinky fish is a metaphor for ‘that thing you carry around but don’t like to talk about; but the longer you hide it, the stinkier it gets.’

Innovating involves uncertainty, so it’s normal to feel some level of concern about what lies ahead. ‘Putting fish on the table’ helps create openness and empathy to enable everyone to confront and overcome their fears together.

Useful when you’re adapting, improving or scaling existing work.

- Start by creating the right mindset for the exercise. Reassure everyone that this is a safe space where people should feel comfortable sharing open and honest thoughts.
- Explain the purpose of the exercise: to explore and share individual concerns (aka ‘Stinky fish’) held about the next stage of the work.
- Give participants a stinky fish template (see next slide).
- Ask everyone to spend a few minutes thinking up their stinky fish and writing them in the template. It could be one singular stinky fish, or a whole shoal!
- Invite the group back and have each person share their stinky fish with the rest of the group.
- When everyone has shared, spend some time discussing the concerns. How does it feel to air those stinky fish? Are there any emerging themes?

Key information

Time: 20–30 minutes
Difficulty: Easy

Tips

It can be useful to come back to the Stinky fish later in a project to see if they’re still held (and if so what more can be done to address them).

It’s also a chance to decide which fish can be released back into the water!

“Thought this was a juicy exercise and actually very revealing.”

Workshop participant, Moving Healthcare Professionals reflective session

Tool

Innovate by: Finding clarity

TOOL Credit: HyperIsland

Innovation Playbook
Stinky fish examples

- I’m worried we’re not going to reach the target we set.
- I don’t think we’ve got enough evidence to justify scaling this programme right now.
- I’m not sure we’ve got the right expertise in the team.
- It’s going to be difficult to balance making progress whilst also onboarding new staff.

EXAMPLE Credit: Hyperisland
Stinky fish
Clarifying questions

These are some examples of prompt questions which can be used when facilitating a group to explore common issues related to a project or process:

**Questions to pose to individuals:**
- Is there anything X has said that you’d like to reflect or build on?
- Does this remind you of anything you’ve experienced before?
- What do you find yourself resonating with the most?
- Is there anything missing from our conversation so far?

**Questions to pose to the whole group:**
- What might you do to work together differently to solve this?
- What is most important here to tackle collectively?
- What practical steps can you take to address this?
- What do you need to unlock your collectively ability to solve this?
- What’s transferable here?
- What do you need clarified in order to progress?
- How are people feeling about the direction of these ideas?
- What perspectives are missing from this dialogue?
- What remains unresolved?
- What needs to happen next?
- What is the first practical step you could take?
- Is there anything else you’d like to talk about?
Innovate by:
Reflecting and learning

Tools to consolidate and capture learning

This section will help you encourage reflective practice and translate learning into action. The tools and approaches can support you to make time for sensemaking and sharing individually or as a group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retros</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gibbs’ reflective cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective rollercoaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective journalling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose, Thorn, Bud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three little pigs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Ls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective mindsets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Retros, retrospectives or reflective sessions are opportunities for a team to look back on work and ask – What went well? What could have gone better?

Running Retros creates the space to learn, celebrate achievements and reflect on what you should keep doing and what you should consider adapting in the next phase of the work. It helps build in regular, reflective practice and supports an iterative approach to delivering the work.

You can run Retros at frequent intervals throughout a project e.g. at the end of a sprint. You can also run a longer form Retro as an in-depth session at the end of a significant stage of the work.

- Decide with your team how frequently you’d like to hold your Retros and set up a rotating Chair, so a different team member runs the session each time.

- You can run a Retro in person or online using a collaboration platform.

- Pick a selection of activities to help draw out the team’s reflections. It’s good to have a blend of activities which enable everyone to share:
  - What’s gone well since the last Retro
  - What’s proved challenging
  - What have you learnt

- You could use some of the tools on the following slides within the session.

- End each Retro by deciding what your reflections mean for the next stage of the work and how you might adapt what you’re doing – document these as actions.

- Mix up the activities you use each month to help Retros feel fresh.

Key information

Time: 60 minutes
Difficulty: Medium
Retros

Innovate by:
- Reflecting and learning

Tools to apply innovation in sport and physical activity

Example

Credits: Metro Retro and Miro

Innovation Playbook
# Gibbs’ reflective cycle

**What**
The ‘Gibbs’ reflective cycle’ developed by Graham Gibbs is a helpful structure to guide reflection and learning around a particular experience.

**Why**
The frame guides users through a cycle of reflecting on what’s happened and what they’ve learned, through to what they might apply or change in the future.

**When**
Good reflective practice should be prioritised throughout a project and space can be created for it at multiple points. You might wish to use specific stages of this cycle after an event or workshop or do a more thorough reflective meeting at key milestones in a process.

**How**
- Organise a reflective session with relevant members of your team and stakeholders. You might wish to bring a large piece of paper or create a board via an online collaboration tool for capturing responses to the questions.
- You’ll find a ‘Reflective mindsets’ tool in this Innovation Playbook that can help you to create the safe and reflective space required.
- The next slide in this playbook is a breakdown of the six stages of Gibbs’ reflective cycle with example prompt questions under each stage. Guide the group through a discussion using these stages. You might wish to give people space to reflect on the questions individually and as a group.
- Ensure you leave time to consider the ‘so what?’ Capture the actions, changes and priorities for the group moving forward. You might also want to agree when you’ll next come together as a group to reflect on learnings and progress.

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**Key information**

- **Time:** 60 minutes
- **Difficulty:** Medium

---

**Gibbs’ reflective cycle**

- **Description**
- **Action Plan**
- **Feelings**
- **Conclusion**
- **Evaluation**
- **Analysis**
### Gibbs’ Reflective Cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>Action plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explaining the experience</td>
<td>Understanding responses</td>
<td>Assessing the experience</td>
<td>Sense making</td>
<td>Considering what could have been done differently</td>
<td>Making changes in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened?</td>
<td>What were you feeling during the situation?</td>
<td>What was good and bad about the situation?</td>
<td>Why didn’t this go well?</td>
<td>What questions are you left with?</td>
<td>What would you do differently if you were to do this again?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the outcome?</td>
<td>How did this change?</td>
<td>What was challenging?</td>
<td>Why did this work so well?</td>
<td>What does this mean for you / us?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was involved?</td>
<td>High point?</td>
<td>What worked well?</td>
<td>What was underlying this?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low point?</td>
<td></td>
<td>What’s your understanding of the most important factor?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example**

**Innovation Playbook**
Reflective rollercoaster

What

‘Reflective rollercoaster’ is a tool to look back on a project from start to finish and extract key learning in a creative way.

Why

When looking back at work that’s completed, it’s easy to say it went ‘well’ or ‘badly’, forgetting the highs and lows that happened along the way. A reflective rollercoaster helps unlock learning chronologically, to better understand what worked and what didn’t at key stages of a project. The lessons learnt can be shared with others and considered when you’re embarking on the next challenge, so successes can be built on and issues avoided.

When

Useful when you’re at the end of a project, or you’ve completed a significant phase.

How

• Get a piece of paper and pen or set up an online collaboration board. Draw a line from one side to the other. Along it plot the key moments through the process, for example: Gathering insight, Defining the challenge, Investment process. Launching the programme, Sustaining the project. (You can also use the template on the next slide).

• Along the line of key moments draw with a squiggly line how the moments were for you. Above the line represents positive experiences (e.g. feeling really confident) and below the line represents negative experiences (e.g. feeling stuck).

• Annotate your squiggly line explaining why the stage was either positive or negative. For example, “I found this stage stressful as we were rushed and there was limited support.”

• Share your reflections with colleagues to discuss your experience and capture what you learnt.

Key information

Time: 15–45 minutes
Difficulty: Easy

Tips

You can do this individually, or guide a group through each stage together.

“...a really useful exercise. Also think it’s great to have the visual representations as an output.”

“Good to look at how I feel it’s going but even more valuable to hear everyone else's feelings on this.”

Workshop participants, System Partner Evaluation & Learning Retro session
Reflective rollercoaster

Gathering insight | Defining the challenge | Investment process | Launching the programme | Sustaining the project

This template uses suggested milestones. These can be edited to suit your project or work programme.

Innovate by: Reflecting and learning

Tools to apply innovation in sport and physical activity
## Reflective journalling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>A learning journal exercise that encourages a team to reflect on a specific experience or learning focus.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>The purpose of learning journal is to get a group or team to slow down and connect with how an experience has affected them more personally through the act of writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| How | • You might wish to come prepared with specific questions or learning areas for the group to reflect on, e.g. What has had the most impact on you? What have you learnt about yourself? What have we learnt about collaboration through this process?  
  • Set a certain amount of time for individual writing. Encourage the group to not worry about punctuation or language but to just get started and see what comes up. The prompts are there as a starter, but encourage the group to follow their own stream of consciousness and not to be restricted. You might want to play classical music to create a more relaxed and reflective atmosphere.  
  • Take the time for the team to share any thoughts that have come up whilst journalling. Sharing back should be informal and based on what individuals feel comfortable doing.  
  • You could finish off by loosely identifying key themes or takeaways for the group to reflect on as you move forward. |

### Key information

- **Time:** 60–120 minutes  
- **Difficulty:** Easy

### Tips

This activity can work well in a group setting or individually. If doing it with your team, book in a good amount of time with pen and paper or laptops ready.

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“Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand.”  
Confucius
Rose, Thorn, Bud

What
A method for categorising data or experiences as positive, negative or having potential.

Why
‘Rose, Thorn, Bud’ can provide an effective method for quickly identifying patterns in information which can be translated into emerging themes.

When
Use it as part of a reflective session when you want to consider work from different angles.

How
- Use the template on the next slide in an online or in-person session.
- Invite people to reflect on the work individually, adding post-its to categorise their experiences in three categories.
  - Rose: highlights or successes.
  - Thorn: challenges or concerns.
  - Bud: ideas that could blossom with support.
- Review the board as a group and identify any key themes and what this might mean for them for the next stage of the work.

Key information
Time: 30 minutes  
Difficulty: Easy
Rose, Thorn, Bud

Rose: Highlights or successes

Thorn: Challenges or concerns

Bud: Ideas that could blossom with support

Credit: facilitator.school/templates
Three little pigs

**What**
Three little pigs is a fun, reflective exercise to consider a team’s ways of working and identify things which you could continue, improve or stop.

**Why**
When you’re working at pace it’s easy to get stuck in set ways of working without considering which processes or habits might not be serving you well. This exercise helps you take a step back and identify areas you could adapt based on what you’ve learnt.

**When**
Best used at the end of a significant phase of work, before starting the next.

**How**
- Draw out three columns or use the template on the next slide. Explain the three columns to participants.
  - **House of straw**: What do we do that just about hangs together, but could topple over at any minute?
  - **House of sticks**: What do we do that is pretty solid, but could be improved?
  - **House of bricks**: What do we do that is rock solid?
- Ask participants to share their comments on sticky notes and place them under one of the three columns.
- Group thoughts into themes and consider what they mean for how you work together going forwards.

---

**Key information**

- **Time**: 30–45 minutes
- **Difficulty**: Easy

"I liked this a lot and there were no inhibitions about using it – good honest feedback collected."

Workshop participant, System Partners Evaluation & Learning team reflective session

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**Innovate by:**
Reflecting and learning

**Tool**

Innovation Playbook

Tools to apply innovation in sport and physical activity
Three little pigs

House of **straw:** What do we do that just about hangs together, but could topple over at any minute?

House of **sticks:** What do we do that is pretty solid, but could be improved?

House of **bricks:** What do we do that is rock solid?
4 Ls

The 4 Ls framework helps you to reflect as a team on your experiences and feelings about a completed piece of work.

Why

By noting what people learnt, what they found helpful or difficult, as well as what might have been missing, you can be better informed on what to prioritise for the next stage.

When

When you’ve completed a significant stage in a piece of work.

How

• Organise a meeting with your team, or key stakeholders who were involved in the work.
• Create a space with four columns or use the template on the next slide.
  o Liked: What supported you towards achieving success?
  o Loathed: What was frustrating and you’d aim to avoid or remove next time?
  o Learned: What did you learn from this experience?
  o Longed for: What were you lacking and wish you’d have had?
• Invite everyone to add their thoughts on post-its to the board. Group thoughts according to emerging themes. Prompt the group to consider what these themes mean for what they should prioritise for the next phase of the work.

Key information

Time: 30–45 minutes  
Difficulty: Easy
Innovate by: Reflecting and learning

4 Ls

**Liked:**
What supported you towards achieving success?

**Loathed:**
What was frustrating and you’d aim to avoid or remove next time?

**Learned:**
What did you learn from this experience?

**Longed for:**
What were you lacking and wish you’d have had?
Reflective mindsets

**Avoid blaming**
Everyone did the best they could within their circumstance.

**A growth mindset**
Nothing is ever perfect, but we can all learn and develop.

**Don’t overthink it**
Share your initial response – this will develop as you reflect with others.

**Value failure**
Mistakes are the best way to learn and we’re all learning.

**Respect confidentiality**
What is shared in this space stays in this space.
Thank you

Thank you for using Sport England’s Innovation Playbook.

We will continue to add tools, so please do keep checking back.

For further information or to share feedback please contact: innovation@sportengland.org